

# Regions of British Columbia

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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## 1. BC Economic Regions

### *Introduction*

B.C.'s economy is constantly evolving. These changes affect the number and type of jobs available. Over the next decade, the demand for workers is expected to surpass the supply for many occupations.

Influences driving BC's economy include:

- attracting major project investment throughout the province
- an increased focus on small business and the service sector
- a strong relationship with Japan, China, Korea and India making BC an important trade hub between Asia and North America

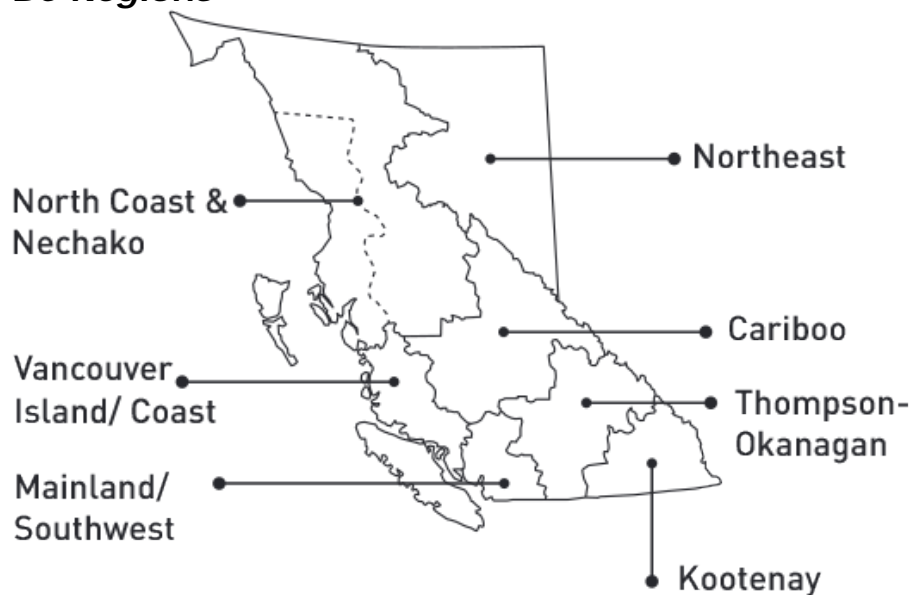
Several industries are expected to offer particularly strong job opportunities:

- green technology, digital media and life sciences
- traditional industries such as natural resources (expected to grow through innovation)
- service industries including health care, high-tech and retail sales

Source: WorkBC, <https://www.workbc.ca/research-labour-market/bcs-economy>  
<https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/about-british-columbia-canada/regions/>  
<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Choose-B-C/Explore-British-Columbia/Regions-in-B-C>

British Columbia is a large province with seven different economic regions. The economic development regions are diverse and each have unique labour market conditions. The majority of BC's population lives in the Mainland/Southwest region. However, there is a demand for workers in all regions of the province. This guide discusses job opportunities in each region of BC.

***BC Regions***



WorkBC <https://www.workbc.ca/research-labour-market/bc-and-regional-profiles>

## 2. Cariboo Region

### Region Overview

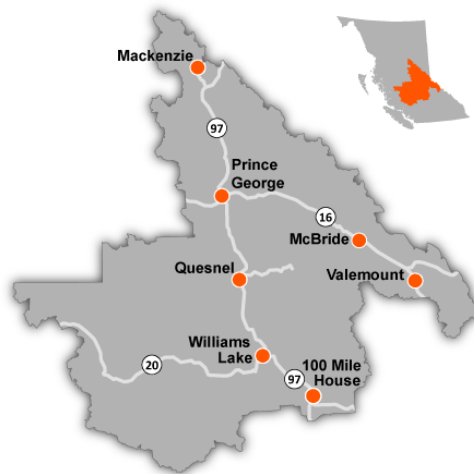
Located in central B.C., the Cariboo is an area of vast landscapes and outdoor recreational opportunities. The population is 154,300, 4% of BC's total population.

More than half of these people live in the city of Prince George, the largest city in the region. It is known as the northern capital of BC. Prince George is also home to the main campus of the University of Northern British Columbia.

### Cariboo Region

Community	Total Population ▾
Prince George Area	84,232
Quesnel Area	22,096
Williams Lake Area	18,490
100 Mile House Area	12,821
Mackenzie	3,507
Valemount	1,020
McBride	586

Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2011.



With a considerable number of large natural resource-oriented projects slated for construction across the north, existing Prince George businesses are already seeing an increased demand for their products and services. The city is seeing an influx of new businesses.

In response, the City of Prince George established the *Move Up Prince George* initiative, designed to recruit workers from other areas of BC.

For more information see:

- **Move Up Prince George**  
<https://moveupprincegeorge.ca/>

## **Industries**

Traditionally, the Cariboo region has been a resource based economy mostly focused on the forestry industry, mining, and oil and gas.

However, due to the large number of major projects proposed or currently underway, the professional services, construction and manufacturing sectors are among the fastest growing sectors in Prince George. In addition, the city is experiencing increased expansion in the healthcare and education sectors.

<b>Top 10 industries</b>	<b>Job openings</b>	<b>Employment growth</b>
Construction	3,400	1.4%
Manufacturing	2,700	0.1%
Retail Trade	2,500	0.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	1,700	0.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,400	0.9%
Educational Services	1,400	-0.3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,400	0.8%
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	1,300	0.6%
Wholesale Trade	1,000	0.8%
Business, Building and Other Support Services	900	1.1%

Chart from WorkBC

Top 10 occupations	Job openings	Employment growth
Retail salespersons (NOC 6421)	570	0.4%
Retail and wholesale trade managers (NOC 0621)	550	0.5%
Transport truck drivers (NOC 7511)	550	-0.3%
Social and community service workers (NOC 4212)	510	1.2%
Janitors, caretakers and building superintendents (NOC 6733)	440	0.5%
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates (NOC 3413)	390	1.6%
Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses (NOC 3012)	390	1.0%
Light duty cleaners (NOC 6731)	340	0.8%
Administrative officers (NOC 1221)	330	0.3%
General office support workers (NOC 1411)	320	0.6%

Chart from WorkBC

Sources:

- WorkBC Regional Profiles <https://www.workbc.ca/research-labour-market/bc-and-regional-profiles>
- MoveUp Prince George <https://moveupprincegeorge.ca/about/industries-employers/>
- Trade and Invest British Columbia <https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/about-british-columbia-canada/regions/cariboo/>

### 3. Kootenay Region

#### ***Region Overview***

The Kootenay region is located in the southeast corner of British Columbia. The total population is 146,264.

The Kootenay region is a leading destination for outdoor activities including hiking, skiing, and fishing. It is also known for its wonderfully restored heritage towns, thriving arts communities and many cultural events.

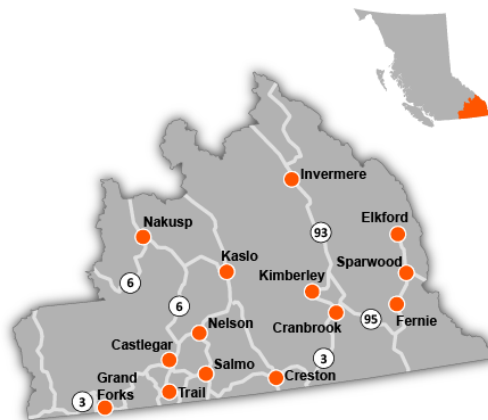
Cranbrook is the largest city in Kootenay, with approximately 19,259 people. It is the center for commercial and government services.

There are two public colleges in the region, College of the Rockies with its main campus in Cranbrook and Selkirk College with its main campus in Castlegar.

#### **Kootenay Region**

Community	Total Population ▾
Cranbrook Area	25,037
Trail Area	19,223
Nelson Area	17,987
Castlegar Area	13,382
Creston Area	11,255
Grand Forks Area	8,563
Kimberley Area	8,286
Fernie	4,448
Sparwood	3,667
Invermere	2,955
Elkford	2,523
Nakusp	1,569
Salmo	1,139
Kaslo	1,026

Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2011.



**ImagineKootenay** provides further information about working and living in the Kootenay region.

- **Imagine Kootenay**

<https://imaginekootenay.com>

## **Industries**

Coal production and mining are important industries in this area. Several hydroelectric dams are located in the region, creating employment in the Utilities industry.

Tourism also contributes to the economy.

<b>Top 10 industries</b>	<b>Job openings</b>	<b>Employment growth</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance	4,500	1.8%
Manufacturing	2,600	0.4%
Retail Trade	2,500	0.7%
Construction	1,800	0.5%
Public Administration	1,600	0.5%
Educational Services	1,500	0.4%
Business, Building and Other Support Services	1,400	1.1%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,300	0.6%
Transportation and Warehousing	1,300	0.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,200	1.4%

Chart from WorkBC



Top 10 occupations	Job openings	Employment growth
Retail and wholesale trade managers (NOC 0621)	790	0.7%
Transport truck drivers (NOC 7511)	730	0.7%
Retail salespersons (NOC 6421)	690	0.6%
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates (NOC 3413)	520	2.1%
Administrative officers (NOC 1221)	500	0.8%
Janitors, caretakers and building superintendents (NOC 6733)	500	0.8%
Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses (NOC 3012)	480	1.6%
Heavy equipment operators (except crane) (NOC 7521)	460	-0.2%
Light duty cleaners (NOC 6731)	400	1.3%
Social and community service workers (NOC 4212)	350	1.1%

Chart from WorkBC

Sources:

- WorkBC Regional Profiles <https://www.workbc.a/research-labour-market/bc-and-regional-profiles>
- ImagineKootenay <https://imaginekootenay.com>
- Trade and Invest British Columbia <https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/about-british-columbia-canada/regions/kootenay/>

## 4. Mainland / Southwest

### *Region overview*

More than 60% of BC's population, approximately 2.7 million people, live in the Lower Mainland / Southwest region. Vancouver is the largest city in the region and in the province. It is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in Canada.

People are attracted to the Mainland Southwest region because of the metropolitan atmosphere, diversity of job opportunities, multiculturalism, educational institutions, warm climate and recreation activities.

### Mainland / Southwest

Community	Total Population ▾
Greater Vancouver	2,313,328
Vancouver	603,502
Surrey	468,251
Burnaby	223,218
Richmond	190,473
Abbotsford-Mission Area	170,191
Abbotsford	133,497
Coquitlam	126,456
Langley Township	104,177
Chilliwack Area	92,308
Maple Ridge	76,052
New Westminster	65,976
North Vancouver City	48,196
Mission	36,426
Langley City	25,081
Pitt Meadows	17,736
Squamish Area	17,479
Whistler Area	15,705
Sechelt Area	12,763

Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2011.



## **Industries**

The service economy is very important in the Mainland/Southwest region, with approximately 83% of jobs in the service sector.

Major industry sectors include trade and financial services, transportation, education, secondary manufacturing and tourism. The eastern part of this region, the Fraser Valley, has a strong agricultural economy.

<b>Top 10 industries</b>	<b>Job openings</b>	<b>Employment growth</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance	95,900	2.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	89,400	2.4%
Retail Trade	55,100	0.6%
Information, Culture and Recreation	47,800	1.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	46,100	1.5%
Construction	43,900	0.3%
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	43,300	1.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	38,700	1.6%
Manufacturing	36,500	0.2%
Educational Services	35,700	0.7%

Chart from WorkBC

Top 10 occupations	Job openings	Employment growth
Retail salespersons (NOC 6421)	15,040	0.7%
Retail and wholesale trade managers (NOC 0621)	12,250	0.7%
Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses (NOC 3012)	11,730	1.6%
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates (NOC 3413)	11,060	2.7%
Administrative officers (NOC 1221)	10,550	1.2%
Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations (NOC 6711)	9,470	1.7%
General office support workers (NOC 1411)	9,390	1.2%
Transport truck drivers (NOC 7511)	9,170	1.4%
Financial auditors and accountants (NOC 1111)	8,420	1.5%
Janitors, caretakers and building superintendents (NOC 6733)	7,950	1.1%

Chart from WorkBC

Sources:

- WorkBC Regional Profiles <https://www.workbc.ca/research-labour-market/bc-and-regional-profiles>
- Trade and Invest British Columbia <https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/about-british-columbia-canada/regions/lower-mainland-southwest/>

## 5. North Coast and Nechako

### Region overview

The North Coast / Nechako are separate economic regions but government reporting statistics often combine them because they both have small populations.

Prince Rupert, Terrace and Kitimat are the largest cities in the region. Residents and tourists are attracted to the area because of the lifestyle and many recreational activities. Full-time wages are comparable to provincial averages, but housing (for both renters and homeowners) costs about 30 percent less.

There are many major projects under construction or in the planning stages in the North Coast region including the expansion of Rio Tinto's aluminum smelter in Kitimat, a copper/gold project, hydroelectric projects and the terminal expansion at Prince Rupert. Proposed future projects include liquefied natural gas facilities and gas pipeline projects. These projects are bringing jobs and new opportunities to the area.

### North Coast

Community	Total Population
Terrace Area	15,569
Prince Rupert Area	13,052
Kitimat	8,335

Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2011.



### Nechako

Community	Total Population
Smithers Area	10,800
Vanderhoof	4,480
Houston	3,147
Burns Lake	2,029
Fort St. James	1,691
Telkwa	1,350
Fraser Lake	1,167

Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2011.



More information about living and working in the region can be found here:

- **Prince Rupert Economic Development**  
<https://princerupert.ecdev.org/>
- **City of Terrace Economic Development**  
<https://www.terrace.ca/business-development/economic-development>

## **Industries**

Natural resources, particularly mining, forestry, and fishing, have always played a critical role in the area's economy. In recent years, the economy has shifted, with many significant investments in infrastructure, transportation and mining.

There is increasing possibilities that the North Coast and Nechako regions may participate in the oil and gas industry from Alberta and the Northeast region of BC.

<b>Top 10 industries</b>	<b>Job openings</b>	<b>Employment growth</b>
Construction	2,800	-0.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,300	2.2%
Retail Trade	2,300	1.3%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,100	1.3%
Manufacturing	1,100	0.6%
Public Administration	1,100	0.9%
Repair, Personal and Non-Profit Services	1,100	1.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	1,100	1.0%
Educational Services	700	-0.2%
Information, Culture and Recreation	700	2.2%

Chart from WorkBC

Top 10 occupations	Job openings	Employment growth
Transport truck drivers (NOC 7511)	430	0.8%
Retail salespersons (NOC 6421)	420	1.3%
Retail and wholesale trade managers (NOC 0621)	410	1.2%
Janitors, caretakers and building superintendents (NOC 6733)	290	0.8%
Heavy equipment operators (except crane) (NOC 7521)	250	0.8%
Cooks (NOC 6322)	230	1.6%
Cashiers (NOC 6611)	230	1.4%
Social and community service workers (NOC 4212)	230	1.2%
General office support workers (NOC 1411)	210	0.9%
Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics (NOC 7311)	200	0.5%

Chart from WorkBC

#### Sources

- WorkBC Regional Profiles <https://www.workbc.ca/region-profile/north-coast-and-nechako>
- Trade and Invest British Columbia  
<https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/about-british-columbia-canada/regions/north-coast/>  
<https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/about-british-columbia-canada/regions/nechako/>

## 6. Northeast

### ***Region Overview***

The Northeast is one of the fastest-growing regions in BC thanks to the rapid development of the energy sector. The Northeast region boasts the province's lowest unemployment rate and there is a high demand for workers.

This is one of the least-populated regions of the province, home to just over 68,300 people. Fort St. John is the largest urban center in the region, with a population of approximately 20,000.

The Northeast Region boasts some of the highest annual salaries in the province. Housing is also affordable, and there are tax incentives for northern residents.

### **Northeast Region**

Community	Total Population ▾
Fort St John Area	26,380
Dawson Creek Area	11,583
Northern Rockies Area	5,578
Tumbler Ridge	2,710
Chetwynd	2,635
Hudson's Hope	970

Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2011.



More information on working and living in the Northeast can be found here:

- **Fort St John Economic Development**

<https://www.fortstjohn.ca/EN/main/business/economic-development.html>



## **Industries**

The Northeast region of BC has a thriving economy. The region's economy is based on natural resources, particularly natural gas production and coal mining. Another important industry is utilities. There are many power-generating projects in the planning stages. Other industries include logging, wood products manufacturing and agriculture.

<b>Top 10 industries</b>	<b>Job openings</b>	<b>Employment growth</b>
Construction	3,200	2.2%
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	1,800	1.0%
Retail Trade	1,600	1.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	1,200	1.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,100	1.0%
Agriculture and Fishing	1,100	1.0%
Educational Services	900	0.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	900	1.7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	900	2.1%
Information, Culture and Recreation	600	2.2%

Chart from WorkBC

Top 10 occupations	Job openings	Employment growth
Transport truck drivers (NOC 7511)	630	1.0%
Retail salespersons (NOC 6421)	390	1.4%
Retail and wholesale trade managers (NOC 0621)	370	1.3%
Accounting technicians and bookkeepers (NOC 1311)	340	1.7%
Heavy equipment operators (except crane) (NOC 7521)	310	1.7%
Janitors, caretakers and building superintendents (NOC 6733)	300	1.0%
Administrative officers (NOC 1221)	280	1.3%
Carpenters (NOC 7271)	270	2.0%
Construction trades helpers and labourers (NOC 7611)	260	1.9%
General office support workers (NOC 1411)	250	1.4%

Chart from WorkBC

#### Sources

- WorkBC Regional Profiles <https://www.workbc.ca/region-profile/northeast>
- Trade and Invest British Columbia <https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/about-british-columbia-canada/regions/northeast/>

## 7. Thompson-Okanagan

### *Region Overview*

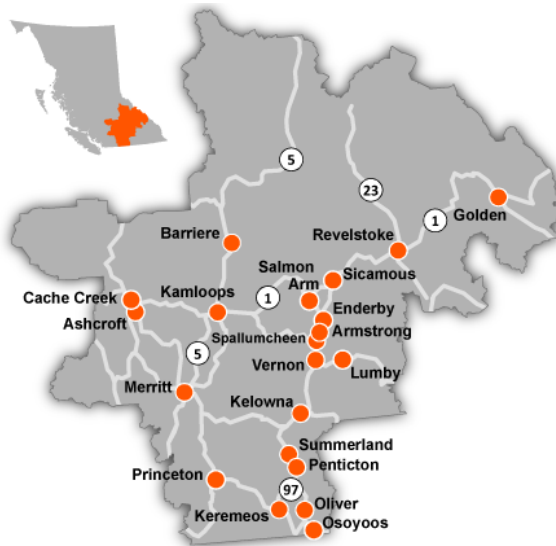
Located in the interior of B.C., Thompson-Okanagan is a popular tourist destination. Its diverse economy is based on agriculture, tourism, the service sector, logging and manufacturing.

The pleasant climate and the many recreational activities have been credited for the region's increasing population growth. Kelowna is the largest city in the region and the third largest city in the province. About three-quarters of the people in this region live in urban centres and one-quarter live in rural areas.

### Thompson-Okanagan Region

Community	Total Population ▾
Kelowna Area	179,839
Kamloops Area	98,754
Vernon Area	58,584
Penticton Area	42,361
West Kelowna	30,892
Salmon Arm Area	17,683
Lake Country	11,708
Summerland	11,280
Merritt Area	11,171
Oliver Area	8,297
Revelstoke Area	7,691
Merritt	7,113
Golden Area	6,766
Okanagan Falls	6,005
Spallumcheen	5,055
Clearwater	4,960
Osoyoos	4,845
Armstrong	4,815
Enderby	2,932
Princeton	2,724

Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2011.



More information about the region can be found at:

- **Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission**  
<https://www.investkelowna.com/>

## **Industries**

Agriculture, tourism, forestry and manufacturing are important industries in this region.

With its many orchards, vineyards and cattle ranches, the agricultural sector is a major contributor to the region's economy. As a popular tourist destination, the region has a higher-than-average share of jobs in accommodation and food services. Many people are also employed in the healthcare industry.

<b>Top 10 industries</b>	<b>Job openings</b>	<b>Employment growth</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance	20,000	1.9%
Retail Trade	11,300	0.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	11,100	1.4%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	8,900	1.6%
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	6,300	1.2%
Educational Services	6,200	0.6%
Manufacturing	6,200	0.2%
Repair, Personal and Non-Profit Services	5,800	1.4%
Information, Culture and Recreation	4,900	1.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	4,900	1.0%

Chart from WorkBC

Top 10 occupations	Job openings	Employment growth
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates (NOC 3413)	2,820	2.1%
Retail salespersons (NOC 6421)	2,800	0.5%
Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses (NOC 3012)	2,320	1.6%
Retail and wholesale trade managers (NOC 0621)	2,280	0.5%
Administrative officers (NOC 1221)	2,000	0.8%
Transport truck drivers (NOC 7511)	1,830	0.6%
Light duty cleaners (NOC 6731)	1,750	1.3%
Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations (NOC 6711)	1,710	1.4%
Janitors, caretakers and building superintendents (NOC 6733)	1,660	1.0%
Accounting technicians and bookkeepers (NOC 1311)	1,520	0.7%

Chart from WorkBC

Sources:

- WorkBC Regional Profiles <https://www.workbc.ca/region-profile/thompson-okanagan>
- Trade and Invest British Columbia <https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/about-british-columbia-canada/regions/thompson-okanagan/>

## 8. Vancouver Island / Coast

### *Region Overview*

Vancouver Island / Coast region is the second most populated region in BC, with almost 800,000 people. This region is known for its temperate climate, unspoiled wilderness and beautiful coastlines.

Victoria, the capital city of the province, is the largest city in this region and the oldest city in Western Canada. The region also includes several medium-sized cities and many smaller ocean-side communities.

### Vancouver Island / Coast Region

Community	Total Population ▼
Greater Victoria	344,615
Nanaimo Area	98,021
Comox Valley Area	55,213
Cowichan Area	43,252
Campbell River Area	36,096
Parksville-Qualicum Area	27,822
Port Alberni Area	25,465
Powell River Area	16,689
Ladysmith	7,921
Port Hardy	4,008
Lake Cowichan	2,974
Port McNeill	2,505
Tofino	1,876
Ucluelet	1,627
Gold River	1,267
Port Alice	805
Sayward	317

Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2011.



## **Industries**

The service sector plays a major role in the region’s economy. Many people have jobs in health care, public administration, and accommodation and tourism. Other important industries include logging and fishing.

<b>Top 10 industries</b>	<b>Job openings</b>	<b>Employment growth</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance	34,100	2.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	17,700	1.7%
Retail Trade	17,200	0.9%
Public Administration	13,900	1.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	11,500	1.5%
Educational Services	11,100	0.7%
Repair, Personal and Non-Profit Services	10,100	2.5%
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	8,700	1.0%
Information, Culture and Recreation	8,400	2.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	8,300	1.4%

Chart from WorkBC

Top 10 occupations	Job openings	Employment growth
Retail salespersons (NOC 6421)	4,700	0.9%
Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses (NOC 3012)	4,290	1.6%
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates (NOC 3413)	4,090	2.2%
Retail and wholesale trade managers (NOC 0621)	3,910	1.0%
Administrative officers (NOC 1221)	3,280	1.1%
Social and community service workers (NOC 4212)	2,880	2.0%
Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations (NOC 6711)	2,640	1.6%
Janitors, caretakers and building superintendents (NOC 6733)	2,510	1.1%
General office support workers (NOC 1411)	2,440	1.1%
Light duty cleaners (NOC 6731)	2,290	1.3%

Chart from WorkBC

Sources:

- WorkBC Regional Profiles <https://www.workbc.ca/region-profile/vancouver-islandcoast>
- Trade and Invest British Columbia <https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/about-british-columbia-canada/regions/vancouver-island-coast/>



## 9. Additional Resources

- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/learn-more-about-working-in-bc-and-canada>

### Industry Profiles

Visit the **Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre** for the following guides on the fastest growing industries in BC: <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guides/industry-profiles>

- **Agrifoods**
- **Aviation & Aerospace**
- **BioTechnology & Life Sciences**
- **Construction**
- **Digital Entertainment / Interactive Media**
- **Film & Television**
- **Green Economy**
- **Health Care**
- **Supply Chain**
- **Tech**
- **Tourism**
- **Transportation**
- **Other industry profiles are also available**

**Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Branch,  
Vancouver Public 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://www.vpl.ca/siic>*

