

Plumbers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



Contents

1. What Would I Do?.....	2
2. Am I Suited For This Job?	3
3. What Are The Wages And Benefits?	3
4. What Is The Job Outlook In BC?.....	4
5. How Do I Become a Plumber	6
6. How Do I Find A Job?	7
7. Applying for a Job.....	9
8. Where Can This Job Lead?.....	10
9. Where Can I Find More Information?	10

Plumbers [NOC 2021: 72300/ NOC 2016: 7251]

Plumbers may also be called:

- maintenance plumber
- plumber apprentice
- plumbing mechanic

1. What Would I Do?

Plumbers install, maintain, and repair pipes and plumbing systems used for water distribution and wastewater disposal in buildings of all types.

Your duties include:

- reading blueprints to identify layout of plumbing system and estimate what materials are needed
- cut opening in walls and floors to accommodate pipe and pipe fittings
- measure, cut, bend and thread pipes using hand and power tools or machines
- join water supply and drainage pipes
- install, repair and maintain fixtures such as toilets and faucets
- test pipes for leaks using air and water pressure gauges

More information:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Plumbers**

<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>

2. Am I Suited For This Job?

Plumbers should:

- *be physically fit*
- *be comfortable with heights*
- *be able to solve math problems quickly and accurately*
- *work well with your hands*
- *have good hand-eye coordination*

The working environment for plumbers can be cramped, dirty and noisy, depending on the job. You must be physically fit since you are required to carry heavy pipe and stand for much of the day.

Sources:

- *Career Cruising* database (Profile for Plumber).
Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page:
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>
- *CareersinConstruction.ca*:
<https://www.careersinconstruction.ca/en/career/plumber>

3. What Are The Wages And Benefits?

In British Columbia, the median annual salary for plumbers is \$58,397.

In BC's regions, you can expect to make:

Community/Area	Wages (\$/hour)		
	Low	Median	High
British Columbia	17.00	28.00	38.00
Cariboo Region	18.00	31.50	42.00
Kootenay Region	17.00	28.00	38.00
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	16.00	26.00	37.50
Thompson–Okanagan Region	16.00	31.00	38.46
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	23.00	34.00	45.00

Source: Job Bank Wage Report <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

Your earnings depend on your experience, employer, geographic location, and whether or not you are in a union. Most plumbers are paid an hourly wage, though you may receive an annual salary.

You may also receive benefits, such as dental insurance, pension plans, and paid vacation days. The wages and benefits of unionized plumbers are negotiated by union representatives.

Sources:

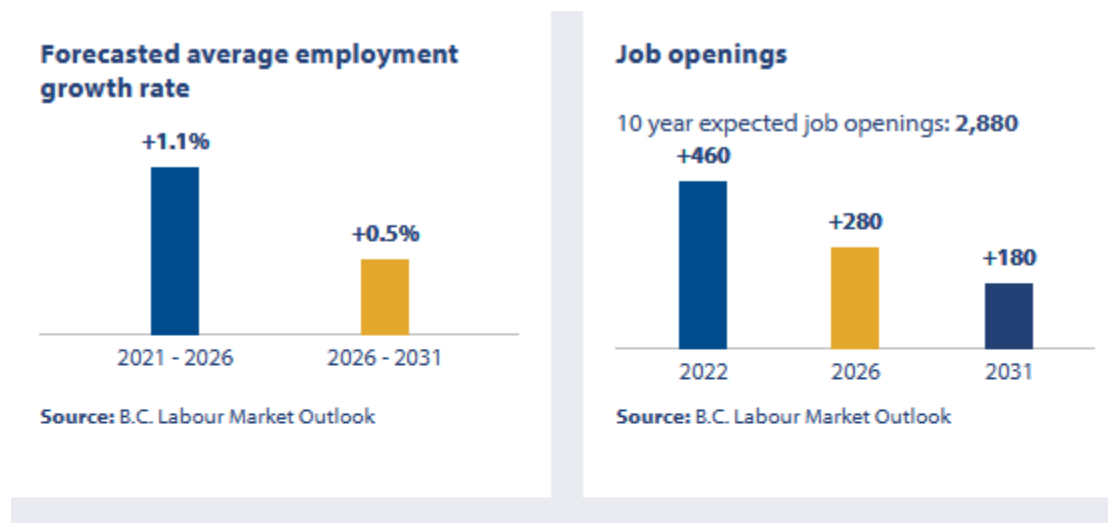
- WorkBC Career Profile and *Career Cruising* database (Profile for Plumber)

4. What Is The Job Outlook In BC?

Over the last few years, there has been a rapid increase in construction activity in B.C. Residential construction and renovations in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, southern Vancouver Island and Okanagan regions continue to be a source of plumbing work.

Commercial, institutional and industrial construction will also continue to be an important job supply for plumbers.

Employment Outlook, 2021-2031



Composition of job openings



Chart from WorkBC

Technological improvements and more efficient methods are increasing the productivity of plumbers. Improved output of workers will affect the number of new jobs created.

'Careers in Construction Canada' predicts that for the 2022 to 2027 projection period, employment will range from 'good' [employers are actively recruiting workers with needed skills and qualifications] to 'balanced' [new entrants and workers from outside the province must compete for available jobs].

Sources:

- WorkBC Career Profiles
- CareersinConstruction.ca <https://www.careersinconstruction.ca/en/career/plumber>

5. How Do I Become a Plumber

To work as a plumber in BC you require:

- Completion of secondary school (including courses in mathematics, physics and science and technology) is usually required
- Trade certification (Certificate of Qualification, Gas B License and/or Interprovincial Red Seal Endorsement)

OR

- apprentice status

Most employers prefer to hire applicants who have completed a four year apprenticeship program and gained certification through BC's Industry Training Authority (<https://www.itabc.ca>).

Apprenticeship involves both classroom studies and on-the-job training under the supervision of a certified tradesperson.

To obtain a Certificate of Qualification as a plumber, you also write the Interprovincial Exam to qualify for the Interprovincial Standards' Red Seal. With a Red Seal, you can work in this trade anywhere in Canada.

If you have significant work experience in the trade but have never been certified in Canada, you may apply to **challenge** the certification. Being approved to challenge means that if you meet the criteria for your trade, you will not be required to go through the full program. Instead, you are allowed to become certified by writing and passing the final exam(s).

For more information about apprenticeship programs and certification see:

- **Industry Training Authority BC**
<https://www.itabc.ca/program/plumber>
- **Careers in Construction**
<https://www.careersinconstruction.ca/en/career/plumber>

- **Red Seal Program**

<https://www.red-seal.ca/>

6. How Do I Find A Job?

Where would I work?

Plumbers work in a variety of settings including:

- *construction companies*
- *plumbing contractors*
- *general contractors*
- *maintenance departments of factories, plants and similar establishments*
- *renovating companies*
- *may also be self-employed*

Finding Advertised Jobs

Jobs are advertised in a variety of sources including newspapers, magazines and online job sites.

Local Newspapers

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* & *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily, the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and, in *The Province* on Sundays.

Online Job Postings

- **Construction Job Centre**
<https://www.constructionjobcentre.ca/>
- **Indeed.com**
https://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search
- **Canadian Institute of Plumbing & Heating Job Board**
<https://ciph.talentnest.com/en/jobs>
- **BC JobConnect**
<https://www.bcjobconnect.ca> **must have permanent resident number**

Finding “Hidden Jobs”

Many job vacancies are not advertised. The resources below will help you with finding jobs in this “hidden” job market.

Using Directories to Create a List of Potential Employers

You can use company directories to produce lists of employers who employ plumbers in Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Contact them directly to find out if they’re hiring.

- **British Columbia Construction Association Directories**
<https://bccasn.com/about-bcca/regional-associations/>
- **Homebuilders Association Vancouver Member Directory**
<https://members.havan.ca/directory>
- **Mechanical Contractors’ Association of BC**
<https://www.mcabc.org/list-of-mcabc-members/>
- **Reference Canada**
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>

Click on “Start Search” beside Canadian Businesses, then select the “Advanced Search” button. Select both “Keyword/SIC/NAICS” under Business Type and “City” under Geography. In the top search box enter “plumbers” ** and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the “View Results” button.

**You can also try entering “plumbing” to find more company names such as plumbing contractors.

Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page.

NOTE: *You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database.*

Networking, Volunteering and Temporary Agencies

Many positions are filled by people who have been recommended by someone they know. Networking, working as a volunteer or registering with a temporary employment agency are good ways of helping you find jobs and meet people in your industry.

Networking and the Hidden Job Market:

When looking for work, be sure to talk to friends, relatives and neighbours. They may know someone who is hiring! Working as a volunteer, attending events, and joining clubs and associations are good ways to gain "Canadian experience." They are also good ways to meet people to learn about the local job market.

Volunteer opportunities**▪ Habitat for Humanity**

Volunteer at Habitat ReStores or Habitat Construction Sites

<https://www.habitatgv.ca/applytovolunteer/>

▪ Volunteer BC

<https://volunteerbc.bc.ca/>

▪ GoVolunteer.ca

<http://govolunteer.ca/>

For additional tips see:

▪ Networking for Employment

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment>

▪ Getting Canadian Work Experience

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience>

7. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your experience. Use the library catalogue, <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

For more information see:

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/writing-resumes-and-cover-letters>

8. Where Can This Job Lead?

Experienced plumbers may be promoted to a supervisory position. With additional education some plumbers may become certified plumbing inspectors.

With more experience you may also choose to work as an independent contractor and start your own plumbing company.

9. Where Can I Find More Information?

- **STEP BC – Skilled Trades Employment Program**

<https://www.stepbc.ca/>

Free employment program that helps newcomers get jobs in the construction industry

- **FAST BC – Facilitating Access to Skilled Talent – Skilled Trades**

<https://fastbc.org/skilled-trades>

- **Canadian Institute of Plumbing & Heating**

<https://www.ciph.com>

- **Careers in Construction**

<https://www.careersinconstruction.ca/en>

- **BC Construction Association Integrating Newcomers Program**

<https://bccasn.com/skilled-workforce/bcca-integrating-newcomers/>

- **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>

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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://www.vpl.ca/siic/>.

