

# Social Workers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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### 1. Working as a Social Worker

**[NOC 2021: 41300/ NOC 2016: 4152]**

#### *Job Description*

Social workers help individuals, families and communities with the resources and support they need to address personal and social issues.

As a **Social Worker** you will perform some or all of the following duties:

- Interview clients individually, in families, or in groups, to assess their situation and determine the types of services needed
- Provide counsel and therapy to assist clients in developing skills to deal with and resolve their social and personal challenges
- Plan programs to assist clients including referral to agencies that provide financial assistance, legal aid, housing, medical treatment and other services
- Meet with clients to track progress
- Provide referrals to other supportive social services
- You may specialize in fields of practice such as child welfare, family services, corrections, gerontology or addictions.

Source: NOC, <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>

## Industry Overview

Social work is changing and new job opportunities continue to emerge. Most job openings, however, will come from the need to replace retiring workers.

The aging population will create work in gerontology, including jobs with the many assisted living complexes catering to seniors. Also, with hospitals emphasizing an early discharge of patients, there will be a need for in-house social workers to coordinate plans for individual patients by making sure that necessary medical services and social supports are in place.

Generally, there is a growing demand for social workers with clinical specialities.

Part-time work and self-employment has been unusual in this occupation, but a rise in corporate employee assistance programs and training seminars are creating these types of positions.

## Job Outlook in BC

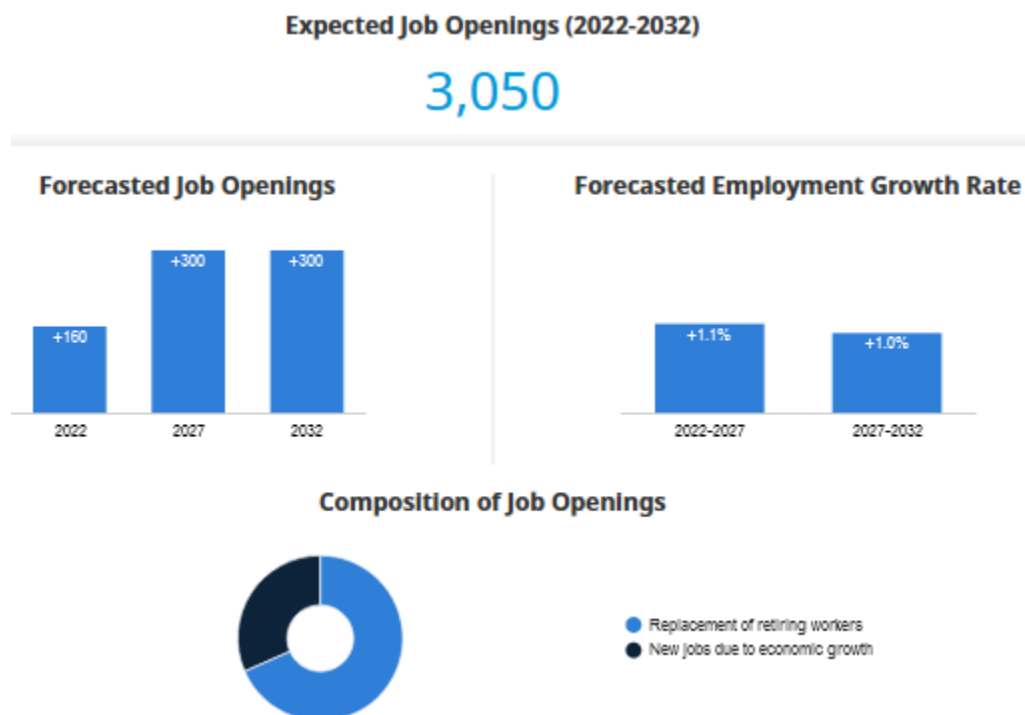


Chart from WorkBC

Last updated: March 23, 2023

WorkBC provides job openings in BC regions from 2022-2032

<b>Region</b>	<b>Employment in 2022</b>	<b>Average Annual Employment Growth</b>	<b>Expected Number of Job Openings</b>
Vancouver Island	1,600	1.0%	620
Lower Mainland / Southwest	4,530	1.3%	1,700
Thompson-Okanagan	1,370	1.1%	480
Kootenay	250	0.4%	90
Cariboo	470	0.4%	100
North Coast & Nechako	270	0.4%	90
Northeast	80	-1.3%	-10

You can learn more about working as a Social Worker in BC from:

- **WorkBC, Career Profiles – Social Workers**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers>
- **Career Cruising** [profile for Social Worker]  
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising/>

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

### ***Types of Employers***

The majority of social workers work in the health and social services industry or in public administration (government), including:

- Hospitals
- Mental health clinics
- Community health clinics
- Social Service agencies
- Schools
- Correctional facilities
- Employee Assistant programs
- Aboriginal Band Councils

You may also be self-employed, offering counselling, consultative and other services directly to the public or to workplaces, or contracting your services to organizations.

## Salary

The median annual salary of social workers in BC is \$77,167. Some senior-level workers earn \$94,000 or more a year. In general, social workers with a master's degree earn the higher-range salaries. Earnings for social workers in private practice depend on a number of factors including number of clients, clients' ability to pay, and availability of government funding.

Full-time social workers usually receive benefits, such as paid sick days and vacation time, and dental coverage. Those in private practice must provide their own benefits.

Sources: WorkBC & Career Cruising

In BC regions you can expect to make:

Community/Area	Low (\$/hour)	Median (\$/hour)	High (\$/hour)
<a href="#">British Columbia</a>	26.42	40.00	45.79
<a href="#">Cariboo Region</a>	23.76	38.46	43.96
<a href="#">Kootenay Region</a>	26.42	40.00	45.79
<a href="#">Lower Mainland–Southwest Region</a>	27.00	40.00	45.79
<a href="#">North Coast Region</a>	26.42	40.00	45.79
<a href="#">Thompson–Okanagan Region</a>	22.87	39.28	50.00
<a href="#">Vancouver Island and Coast Region</a>	26.44	38.00	45.00

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

## Working Hours

Most social workers have a standard 40 hour work week but you may be required to work some evenings and weekends to meet with clients or attend public meetings affecting the community. As well, emergencies may also occur outside of regular office hours and sometimes demand immediate action.

## 2. Skills, Education and Experience

### **Skills**

- respect for diversity
- emotional maturity
- interest in helping others
- good with people
- problem-solving skills and decision making
- strong written and oral communication skills

### **Education and Experience**

A university degree in social work from a school accredited by the Canadian Association for Social Work Education is mandatory in to work in this profession in British Columbia. Increasingly, a master's degree is required for many social work positions. Additional training may be required to work in specialized areas of social work. Qualified applicants with degrees from related fields such as Youth and Child Care may also be considered for employment in this area but will not have the 'Social Worker' designation.

There are eight schools of social work in British Columbia. There are also distance education programs available. A complete listing of accredited Schools of Social Work in Canada can be found on the website of The Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work.

- **Canadian Association For Social Work Education**  
<https://caswe-acfts.ca/members/accredited-universities/>

Sources: WorkBC & BC Association of Social Workers <https://www.bcasw.org>

## **Qualifications**

### ***This occupation is regulated in British Columbia***

It is mandatory to be registered with the **British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW)** in order to work in as a Social Worker in British Columbia, unless you are employed by one the exempt employers listed in the Social Workers Regulation (see below).

More information:

- **Applicants - The British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW)**  
<https://bccsw.ca/application-information/>
- **Exempt Persons – Social Workers Regulation**  
[https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/10\\_323\\_2008](https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/10_323_2008)

**All applicants** to the College are **required** to successfully complete a licensure exam to become registered.

- **British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW)**  
<https://bccsw.ca/application-information/welcome-to-the-examination-information-page/>
- **Association of Social Work Boards Examination**  
<https://www.aswb.org/exam/>

## **Internationally Trained Social Workers**

Graduates of social work programs outside of Canada or the US must have your educational credentials assessed through the *International Credential Evaluation Service*.

For more details see:

- **Applicants with Degrees from Outside of Canada or the US**  
<https://bccsw.ca/applicants-with-degrees-from-outside-of-canada-or-the-usa/>
- **Applicants with Degrees from the USA**  
<https://bccsw.ca/applicants-with-degrees-from-the-usa/>

### 3. Finding Jobs

You'll find job advertisements in local newspapers, trade journals, and electronic sources, as well as through professional associations' publications.

#### ***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***

- **BC Government Job Postings**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr>

Employment opportunities within the British Columbia public services

- **CharityVillage.com**

<https://charityvillage.com/search/>

Job postings within the Canadian non-profit sector

- **Indeed.com**

<https://ca.indeed.com>

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

- **BC's Provincial Health Authorities**

BC's health authorities provide community programs in all BC regions (acute care hospitals, mental health, public health, addictions, and home and community care services)

- **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority**

<https://careers.vch.ca/>

- **Fraser Health Authority**

<https://careers-fraserhealth.icims.com>

- **Interior Health Authority**

<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/careers>

- **Northern Health Authority**

<https://careers.northernhealth.ca/>



- **Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA)**  
<http://www.phsa.ca/careers>
- **Island Health Authority**  
<https://www.islandhealth.ca/careers>
- **Providence Health Care**  
<https://careers.providencehealthcare.org/>

Providence Health Care is a health care community operating four hospitals in the Metro Vancouver region

### ***Professional Associations' Career Resources***

- **BC Association of Social Workers**  
<https://www.bcasw.org/careers>
- **Canadian Association of Social Workers**  
<https://www.casw-acts.ca/en/job-listings>

### ***Identifying the Right Position***

When you browse job advertisements, you'll find a range of different job titles that are relevant.

For social workers, look for these related job titles (from NOC and the Board of Registration for Social Workers in BC):

- Registered Social Worker
- Addiction Social Worker
- Case Management Consultant – Social Work
- Caseworker – Social Work
- Child Welfare Social Worker
- Clinical Social Worker
- Family Social Worker
- Mental Health Worker/Counselor
- Geriatric Social Worker
- School Social Worker
- Social Casework Consultant

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

You can use directories to produce lists of employers who work in the social work sector in Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **BC211**

Directory of social service providers in the Lower Mainland

Available Online at <https://bc.211.ca/>

- **Federation of Community Social Services of BC Member Directory**

<https://fcssbc.ca/about/our-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 "social worker" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.

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. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).*

## **4. Applying for a Job**

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume or curriculum vitae and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following guides which are available in print at the Central Library or online at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/>.

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

## 5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

### *Industry Associations*

Associations for social workers in BC and Canada provide information and assistance. Registration and fees are required for membership.

- **British Columbia Association of Social Workers (BCASW)**  
<https://www.bcasw.org/>
- **Canadian Association of Social Workers**  
<https://www.casw-acts.ca/>
- **British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW)**  
<https://bccsw.ca/>  
The regulatory body for the practice of social work in British Columbia
- **Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE)**  
<https://caswe-acfts.ca/>  
A national association of university faculties, schools and departments offering professional education in social work

### **Industry Journals**

Search the Vancouver Public Library catalogue for journals related to your profession. Examples at the Central Library:

- **Perspectives** / British Columbia Association of Social Workers  
Available at VPL Central, 361.9711S67

**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/>