

# BC CHECK-UP 2021 WORK



# INDICATORS

CPABC's *BC Check-Up* uses the selected economic indicators to evaluate BC as a place to **WORK**.



**Overall Employment**  
Did BC's labour market expand or shrink?



**Unemployment Rate**  
What is the share of unemployed workers in BC's labour force?



**Type of Employment**  
How have part-time and full-time positions changed?



**Labour Compensation**  
How much does the average BC worker make?



**Industry Changes**  
How have the service and goods sector changed?

# PROVINCIAL SUMMARY

As of September 2021, employment in BC increased in nine of the past 12 months for a **net gain of more than 153,000 jobs**. As a result, BC's workforce **slightly exceeded pre-pandemic levels**, up 28,200 jobs compared to September 2019. However, the net gain in jobs **lags considerably behind population growth as the province added 107,000 working aged residents since September 2019**.

While part-time positions had the steepest job declines with nearly a third eliminated by June 2020, they have since led the recovery. In fact, part-time jobs were up by 9.1% compared to September 2019. **Full-time positions** have also seen consistent growth over the past year but **remain 1.1% below the September 2019 level**.

**BC's unemployment rate was 5.9% in September 2021**, down from 8.6% in September 2020, but above the 4.9% in September 2019. While the female unemployment rate of 6.0% is only slightly higher than the male rate of 5.9%, that gap does not capture the fact that some women have left the labour force.

**The female labour participation rate was 61.3% in September 2021**, down 0.4 percentage points from September 2019. This compares to 69.4% for men in BC, the same rate as in September 2019. Further, **full-time positions worked by females declined by 2.9% in September 2021 compared to September 2019**. In contrast, the number of full-time positions worked by men was up by 0.4% over the same period. The decrease in participation rate and hours worked by females in the province is one reason why businesses have faced a growing challenge to find employees in 2021.

The **service sector workforce grew by 7.3% to 2.2 million jobs** in September 2021 compared to September 2020. Employment expanded in all service industries over

the past year, but jobs in personal services and the hospitality industries remain 10.1% and 8.1% below September 2019 levels, respectively. Meanwhile, **employment in the goods sector was up by 0.6%** to 485,600 positions. The increase was partially offset by a decline in agriculture and utility employment, while employment gains in the manufacturing and natural resource industries boosted the goods sector workforce. Despite a small gain over the past year, BC's construction workforce declined 11.5% compared to September 2019.

The average weekly compensation for the service sector increased by 4.1% to \$1,083 as typically higher-paying jobs in industries like health care and professional services outgrew lower-paying jobs, such as those in hospitality. In the goods sector, growth in manufacturing and natural resource positions helped push weekly compensation up 4.0% to \$1,280.

To better understand the economic landscape, CPABC surveyed its members for their views. CPAs, who are on the front lines of business in BC and see the opportunities and challenges facing them firsthand, are optimistic about BC's economy. When asked about the **overall state of the provincial economy, 77% believe it was in "average" or "good" shape in 2021**, up by 21 percentage points from 2020. However, one growing area of concern identified once again is the shortage of labour in the province. **Nearly four-fifths (78%) identified the ability to attract and retain labour as a major challenge to business success in BC**.

Given these challenges, it will be important to ensure that there is an effort to increase skills training to help those individuals who are unable to find work, with a particular focus on industries facing the greatest scarcity of labour.

# PROVINCIAL SUMMARY



## OVERALL EMPLOYMENT

Employment in BC has grown in nine out of the past 12 months, an increase of more than 153,000 jobs. BC's workforce now exceeds prepandemic levels, but the 1.1% gain since September 2019 lags considerably behind the working age population growth of 2.5%.

**2.68 M** TOTAL JOBS **↑ 6.1%**

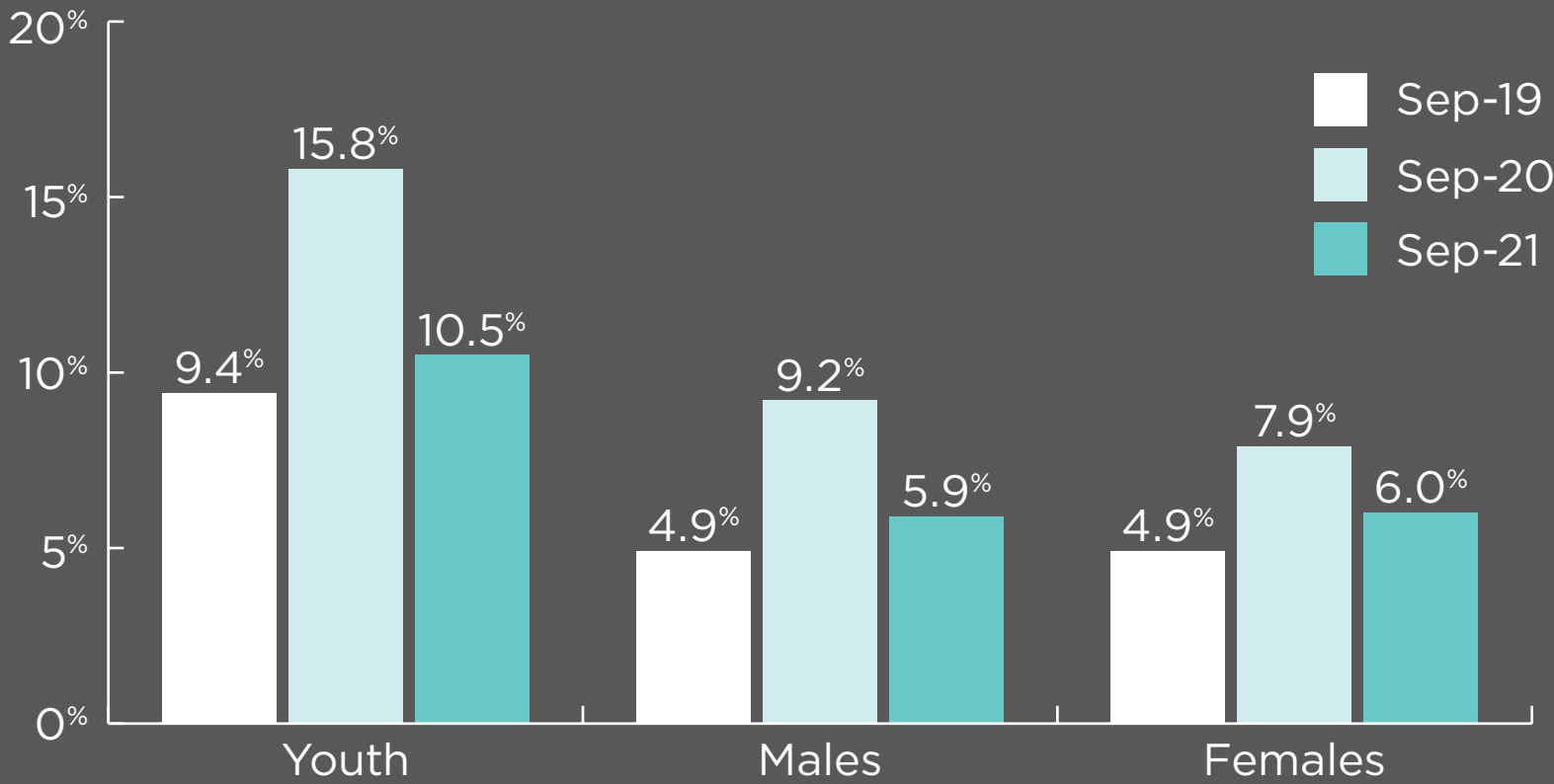
65.3% ♂ **↑ 3.8ppt** | 57.7% ♀ **↑ 1.8ppt**

ARE CURRENTLY WORKING



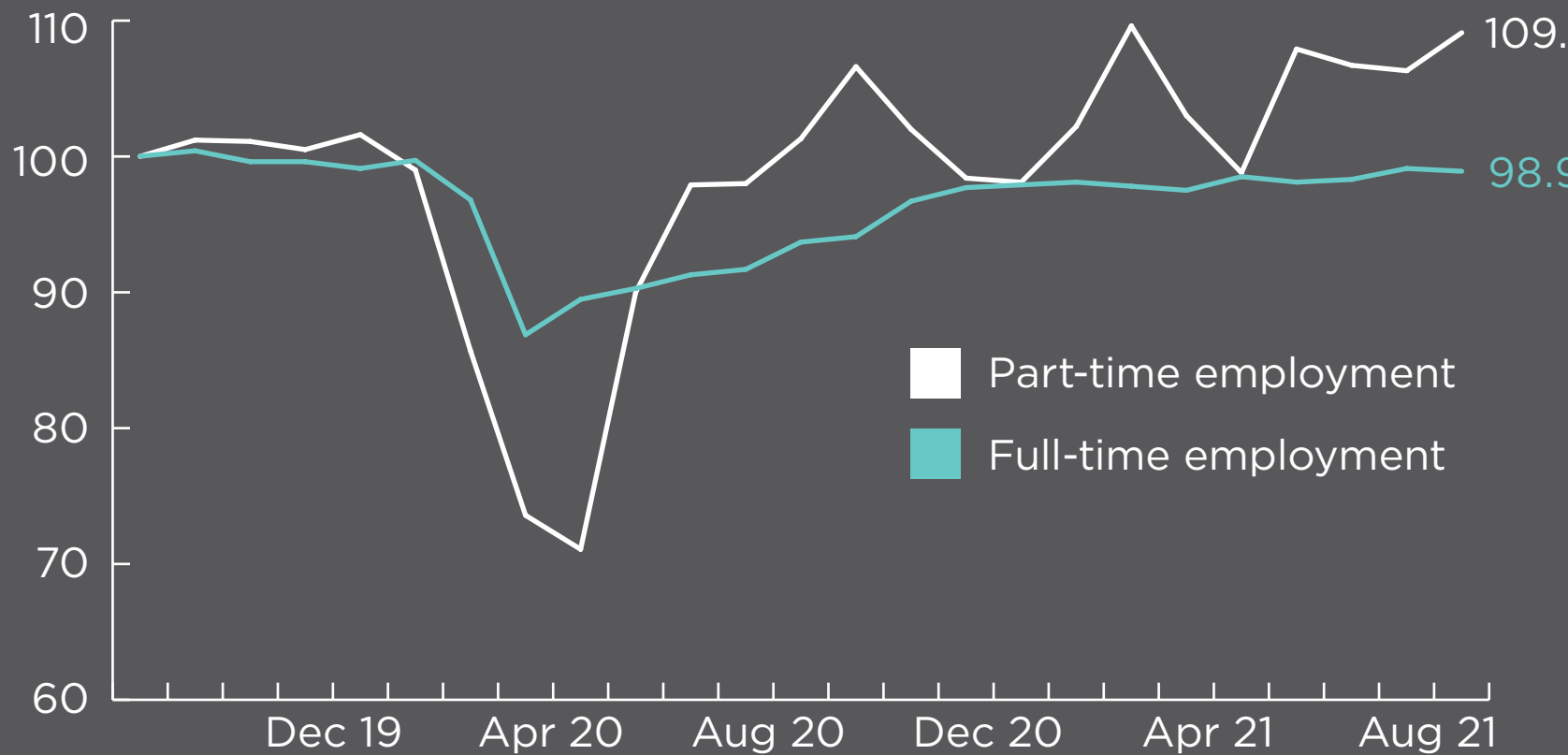
## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

The unemployment rates for all demographics declined since September 2020, but remain well above pre-pandemic levels. In addition, many women remain out of the labour force and work fewer hours on average.



## TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

After experiencing the brunt of the job loss early in the pandemic, part-time employment has surged over the past year and now exceeds pre-pandemic levels. While full-time positions have seen consistent growth since April 2020, they remain slightly below the level set in September 2019.



Note: All numbers are based on September 2021 data, and changes are relative to September 2020.

# PROVINCIAL SUMMARY



## INDUSTRY CHANGES\*

As the economy reopened over the past year and employment expanded, job gains were concentrated in the service sector.

### Goods Sector

Rising commodity prices and economic activity boosted employment in natural resources and manufacturing. Despite an increase over the past year, construction jobs remain down 11.5% compared to September 2019.

↑0.6% TO 485,600 jobs

	TOTAL JOBS (% CHANGED)	
CONSTRUCTION	216,300	(↑2.9%)
MANUFACTURING	182,400	(↑3.8%)
NATURAL RESOURCES	51,600	(↑20.3%)
AGRICULTURE	20,600	(↓36.8%)
UTILITIES	14,800	(↓30.5%)

### Service Sector

The five largest service industry workforces increased over the past year. Service sector employment is now above September 2019 levels, but employment in hospitality and personal services remain down by 8.1% and 10.1%, respectively.

↑7.3% TO 2.20 million jobs

	TOTAL JOBS (% CHANGED)	
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE	400,200	(↑6.6%)
HEALTH CARE	362,400	(↑10.7%)
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	255,400	(↑10.8%)
EDUCATION	194,300	(↑5.1%)
HOSPITALITY	182,600	(↑2.6%)



## LABOUR COMPENSATION

Average service and good sector compensation both increased, strengthened by typically higher-paying jobs (i.e. professional services, manufacturing) outgrowing lower-paying jobs (i.e. hospitality, agriculture).

### AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE



GOODS SECTOR  
\$1,280 (↑4.0%)



SERVICE SECTOR  
\$1,083 (↑4.1%)

\*Data is total employment and includes both full and part-time positions.  
Note: All numbers are based on September 2021 data, and changes are relative to September 2020.



# CARIBOO



## OVERALL EMPLOYMENT

As a result of three consecutive months of job losses leading into September 2021, the Cariboo's workforce was the same size as in September 2020.

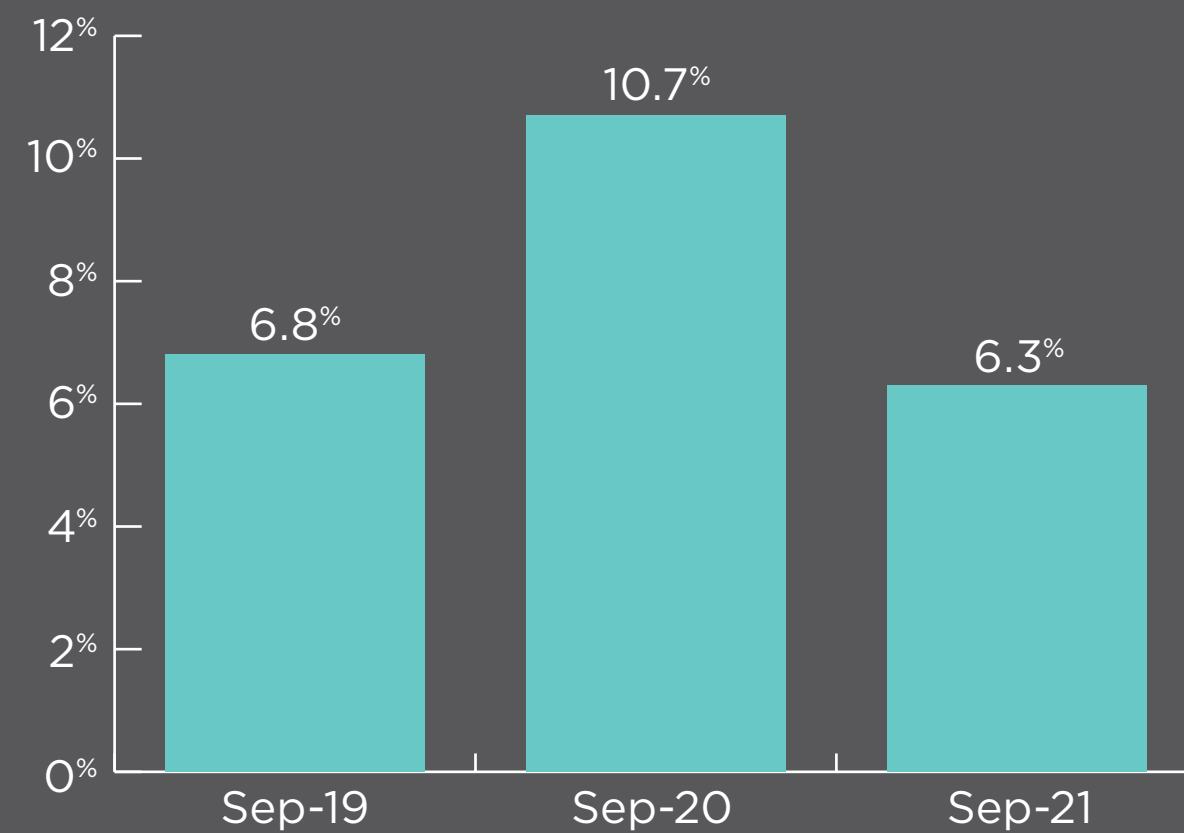
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT  
↑0.1% to 85,900 jobs

EMPLOYMENT TYPE  
↑100 PART-TIME  
0 FULL-TIME



## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Unemployment declined considerably over the past year and is now below the September 2019 rate. However, that is a result of a significant decline in the number of residents seeking work.



## SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT

**Service Sector** employment was down as growth in public administration and hospitality was offset by declines in other service industries.

SERVICE SECTOR*	61,900	(↓3.3%)
HEALTH CARE	13,900	(0.0%)
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE	13,700	(↓3.5%)
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	6,000	(↑42.9%)

**Goods Sector** employment gains in the Cariboo were led by growing manufacturing and natural resources workforces.

GOODS SECTOR*	24,000	(↑9.6%)
MANUFACTURING	10,300	(↑19.8%)
NATURAL RESOURCES	6,300	(↑37.0%)
CONSTRUCTION	5,900	(↓23.4%)

\*Industries listed are the top three largest by total employment.  
Note: All numbers are based on September 2021 data, which reflects a three-month moving average (July-September). Changes are compared to the same period last year.



# KOOTENAY



## EMPLOYMENT

The decrease in employment was due to part-time positions falling by a quarter in September 2021 compared to September 2020, led by job losses in hospitality. Conversely, full-time positions were up by 6.4%, strengthened by the goods sector.

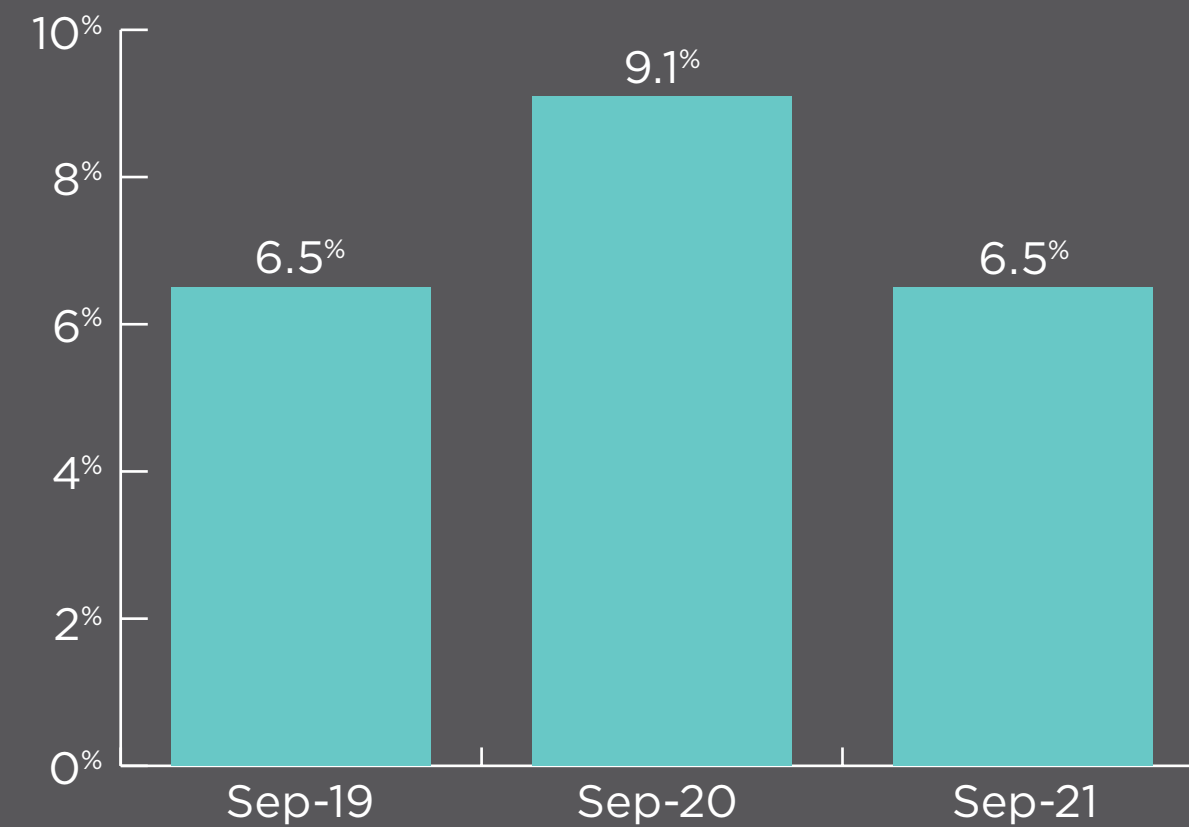
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT  
↓2.0% to 79,500 jobs

EMPLOYMENT TYPE  
↓5,400 PART-TIME  
↑3,900 FULL-TIME



## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

The decline in the region's unemployment rate is due to 4,200 residents leaving the labour force over the past year rather than improvements in employment conditions.



## SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT

**Service Sector** employment declined by 4,800 positions, primarily led by declines in the hospitality and public sector workforces.

SERVICE SECTOR*	53,700	(↓8.2%)
HEALTH CARE	11,300	(↓2.6%)
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE	10,900	(↓9.2%)
HOSPITALITY	5,800	(↓18.3%)

**Goods Sector** employment in the Kootenays was up by nearly a seventh as the construction industry workforce more than doubled in size.

GOODS SECTOR*	25,800	(↑14.2%)
CONSTRUCTION	9,600	(↑159.5%)
NATURAL RESOURCES	8,600	(0.0%)
MANUFACTURING	5,400	(↓41.3%)

\*Industries listed are the top three largest by total employment.  
Note: All numbers are based on September 2021 data, which reflects a three-month moving average (July-September). Changes are compared to the same period last year.



# NORTHEAST BC



## EMPLOYMENT

Northeast BC experienced a decline in both part-time and full-time positions due to a drop in the region's service sector workforce, while gains in the goods sector helped offset greater job loss.

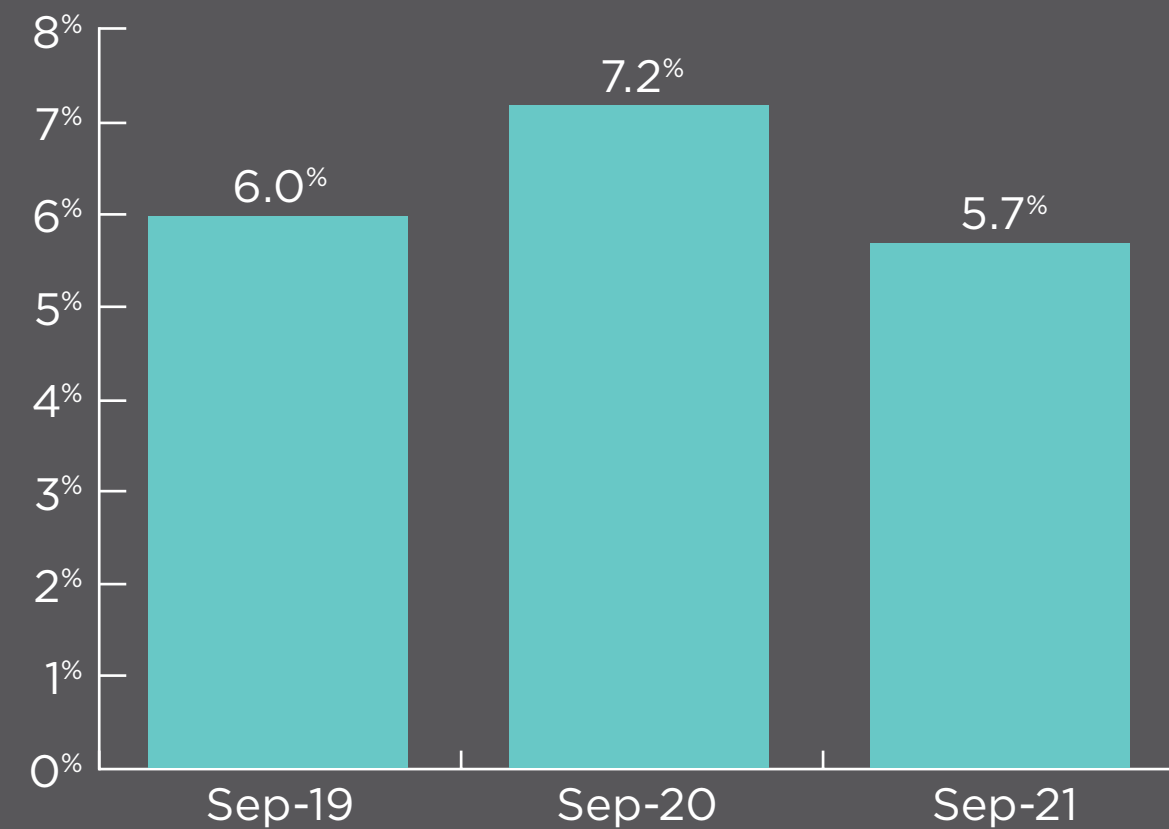
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT  
↓6.2% to 36,200 jobs

EMPLOYMENT TYPE  
↓1,600 PART-TIME  
↓800 FULL-TIME



## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

The decrease in the unemployment rate was due to a decline in the number of people seeking employment. In fact, the region's summer labour participation rate was the lowest level in at least 20 years.



## SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT

**Service Sector** employment declined by 4,100 positions, as many of the region's service industries experienced a decline. This was partially offset by growth in personal services.

SERVICE SECTOR*	24,200	(↓14.5%)
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE	5,200	(↓14.8%)
HEALTH CARE	3,600	(↓16.3%)
OTHER SERVICES (EXCEPT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	2,800	(↑27.3%)

**Goods Sector** employment in Northeast BC was up by nearly a fifth, entirely due to an increase in construction jobs which almost doubled year-over-year.

GOODS SECTOR*	12,000	(↑16.5%)
CONSTRUCTION	5,600	(↑93.1%)
NATURAL RESOURCES	3,100	(↓26.2%)

\*Industries listed are the top three largest by total employment.  
Note: All numbers are based on September 2021 data, which reflects a three-month moving average (July-September). Changes are compared to the same period last year.





# NORTHWEST BC



## EMPLOYMENT

Northwest BC's workforce increased as the region saw a gain in full-time positions, while part-time positions declined. The overall gain was due to additions in the service sector workforce.

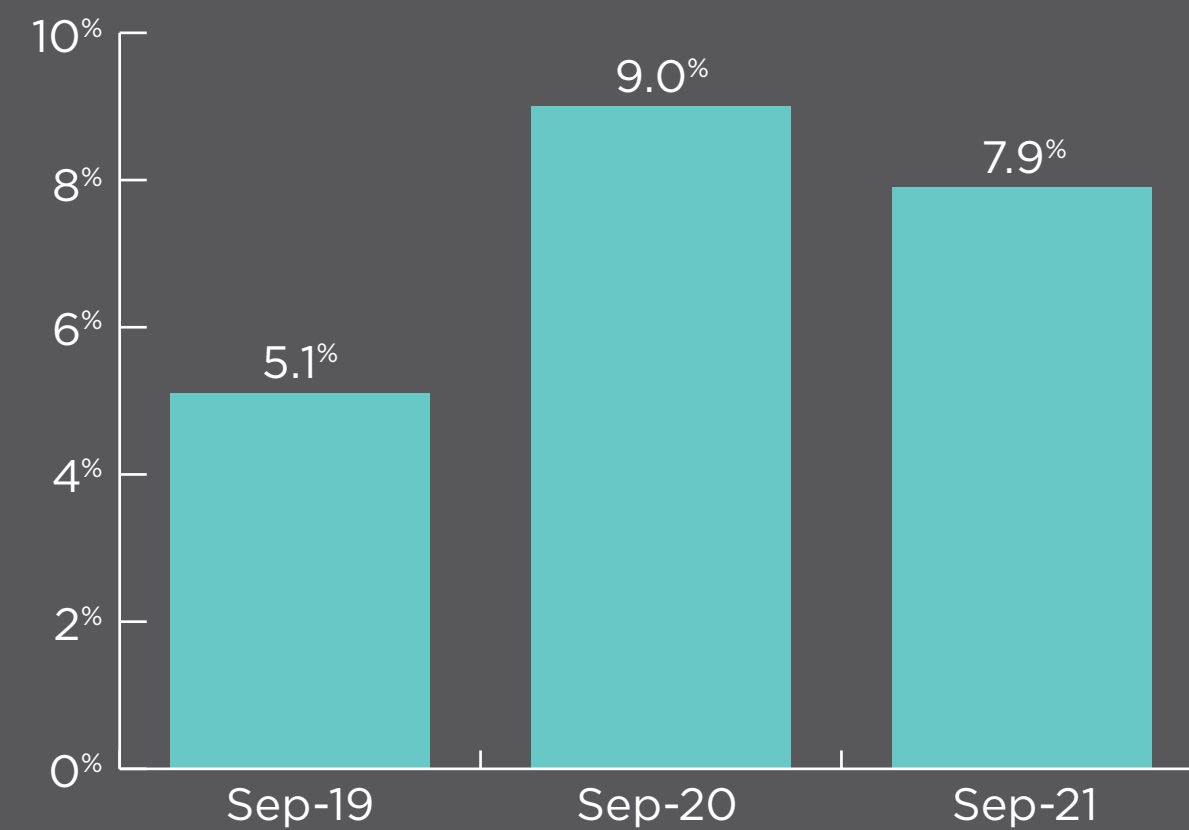
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT  
↑1.0% to 42,100 jobs

EMPLOYMENT TYPE  
↓200 PART-TIME  
↑500 FULL-TIME



## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Northwest BC's unemployment rate remains well above the rates seen in 2019 and the region has a ways to go to return to pre-pandemic employment levels.



## SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT

**Service Sector** employment increased by 3,800, primarily due to gains in retail/wholesale trade and public administration workforces.

SERVICE SECTOR*	32,100	(↑13.4%)
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE	6,800	(↑19.3%)
HEALTH CARE	5,900	(↑9.3%)
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	4,200	(↑55.6%)

**Goods Sector** employment losses were concentrated in manufacturing and construction workforces, which had set record levels over the previous two years.

GOODS SECTOR*	10,000	(↓25.4%)
MANUFACTURING	3,000	(↓43.4%)
NATURAL RESOURCES	2,900	(↑61.1%)
CONSTRUCTION	2,800	(↓47.2%)

\*Industries listed are the top three largest by total employment.

Note: All numbers are based on September 2021 data, which reflects a three-month moving average (July-September). Changes are compared to the same period last year. Northwest B.C. includes North Coast & Nechako



# SOUTHWEST BC



## EMPLOYMENT

Southwest BC's workforce grew by 10.9% over the past year, the largest increase of any region in the province. The gains were in both full and part-time jobs and were concentrated in the service industry.

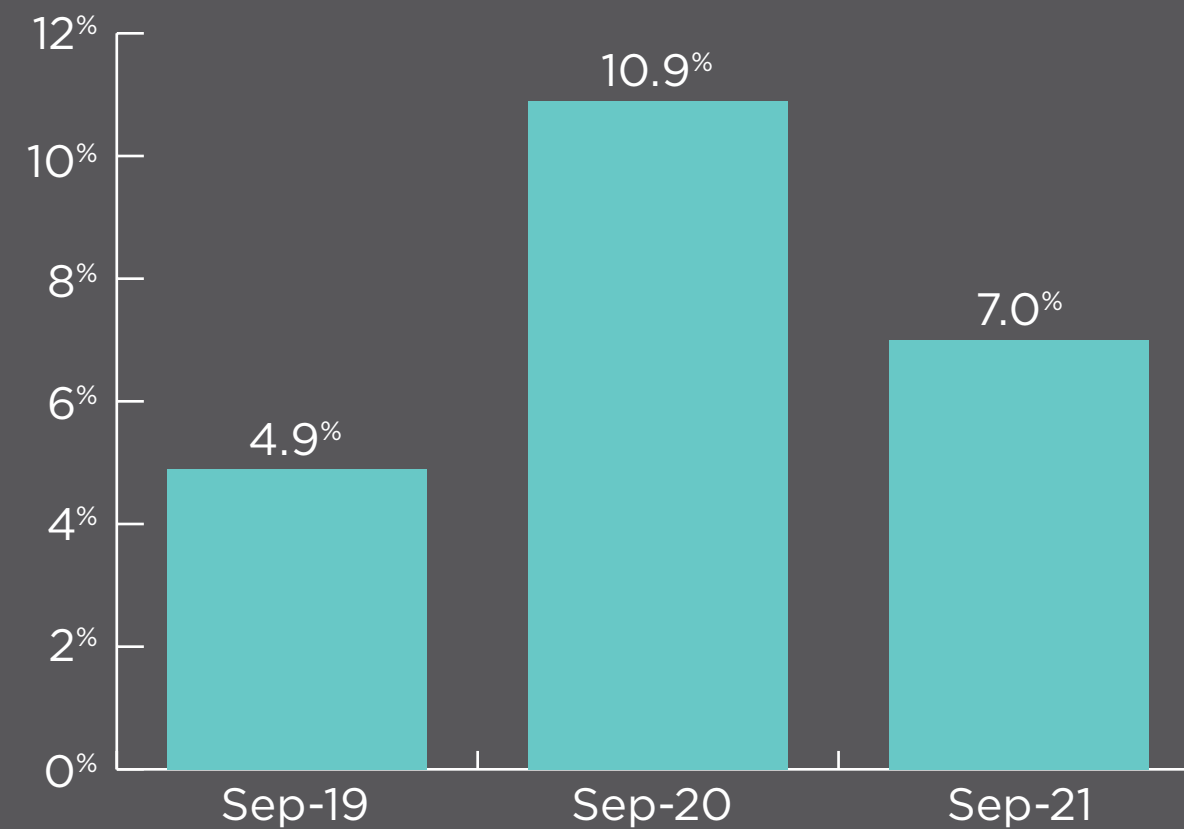
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT  
↑10.9% to 1.73 MILLION jobs

EMPLOYMENT TYPE  
↑44,200 PART-TIME  
↑125,000 FULL-TIME



## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

While the region's unemployment rate fell to 7.0%, it remains well above pre-pandemic levels. That gap is due in part to the population growing by 62,700 compared to an employment increase of 24,700.



## SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT

**Service Sector** employment in Southwest BC was up by nearly 170,000 positions with increases in every industry except hospitality.

SERVICE SECTOR*	1,443,700	(↑13.3%)
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE	274,100	(↑15.1%)
HEALTH CARE	217,600	(↑21.4%)
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	190,900	(↑12.7%)

**Goods Sector** employment saw a small decrease, with a decline in construction activity accounting for the majority of the job losses.

GOODS SECTOR*	281,300	(↓0.1%)
CONSTRUCTION	128,700	(↓6.6%)
MANUFACTURING	120,500	(↑11.2%)
NATURAL RESOURCES	12,000	(↑90.5%)

\*Industries listed are the top three largest by total employment.  
Note: All numbers are based on September 2021 data, which reflects a three-month moving average (July-September). Changes are compared to the same period last year.



# THOMPSON-OKANAGAN



## EMPLOYMENT

The nearly 13,000 jobs added in the Thompson-Okanagan over the past year were all full-time positions. The region was the only one in BC to see increases in both the service and goods sector.

### TOTAL EMPLOYMENT

↑4.4% to 305,400 jobs

### EMPLOYMENT TYPE

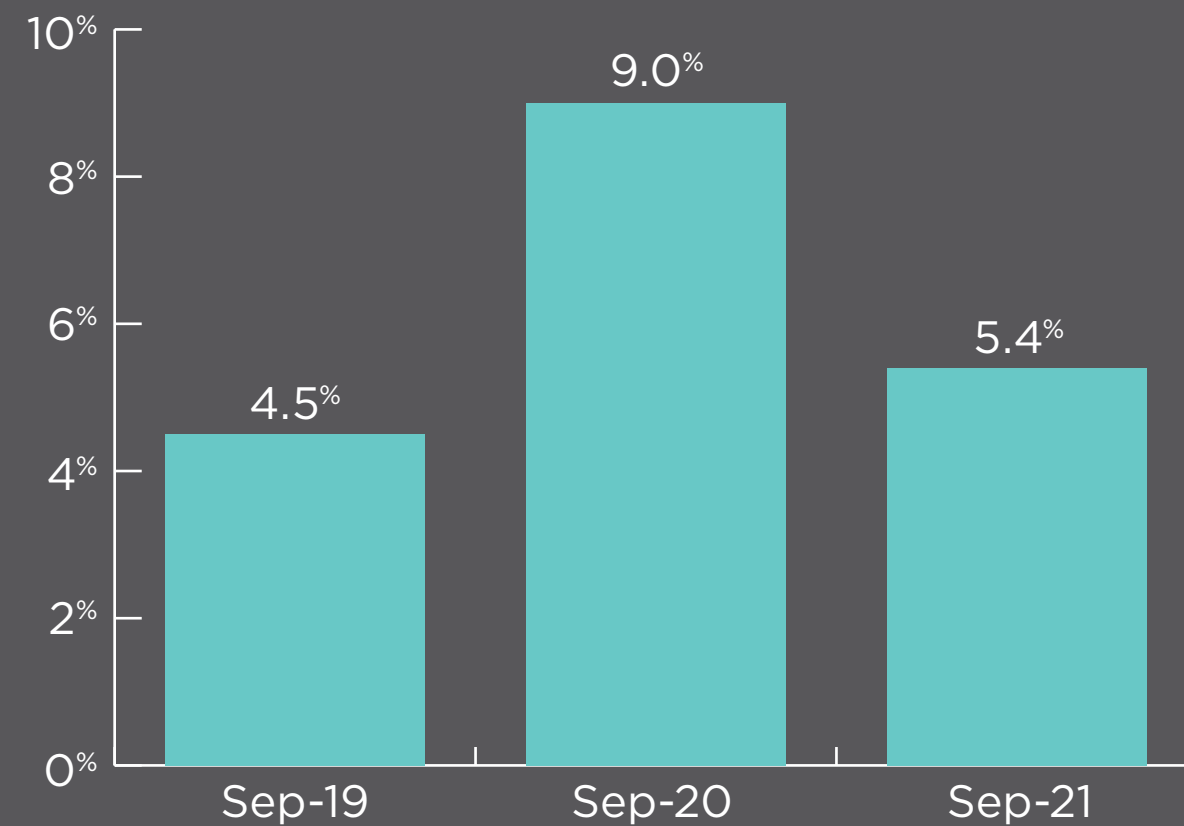
↓200 PART-TIME

↑13,000 FULL-TIME



## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Thompson-Okanagan's unemployment rate of 5.4% is down by 40% compared to September 2020. Still, the region's labour participation and unemployment rate remain weaker than in August 2019.



## SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT

**Service Sector** gains were led by increases in the size of the financial services and healthcare workforces. The hospitality industry continued to struggle.

SERVICE SECTOR*	237,000	(↑5.5%)
HEALTH CARE	52,200	(↑7.9%)
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE	39,500	(↓12.6%)
FINANCIAL SERVICES	20,700	(↑19.7%)

**Goods Sector** employment was buoyed by increasing construction activity, with the industry's workforce up by nearly a quarter.

GOODS SECTOR*	68,400	(↑0.7%)
CONSTRUCTION	34,300	(↑23.4%)
MANUFACTURING	18,600	(↓3.6%)
NATURAL RESOURCES	8,300	(↑1.2%)

\*Industries listed are the top three largest by total employment.  
Note: All numbers are based on September 2021 data, which reflects a three-month moving average (July-September). Changes are compared to the same period last year.



# VANCOUVER ISLAND/COAST



## EMPLOYMENT

Vancouver Island/Coast's employment increased by 8,100, the majority of which were part-time positions. The number of full-time positions have yet to recover and remained 3.5% lower than in September 2019.

### TOTAL EMPLOYMENT

↑2.0% to 418,000 jobs

### EMPLOYMENT TYPE

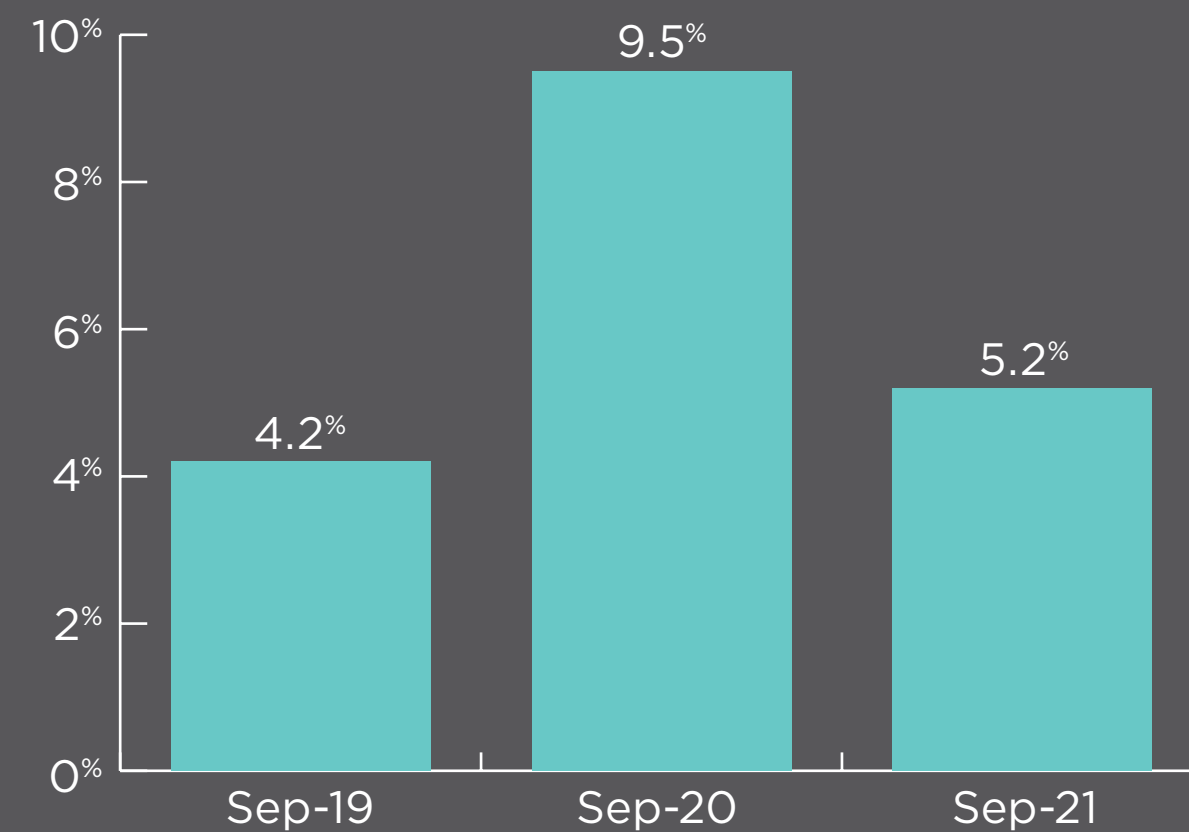
↑6,300 PART-TIME

↑1,800 FULL-TIME



## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

The unemployment rate was nearly half of the rate seen in September 2020, highlighting the region's robust recovery. However, it remains above pre-pandemic levels and the labour participation rate is down considerably.



## SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT

**Service Sector** employment gains were primarily due to increases in healthcare, hospitality, education and business services.

SERVICE SECTOR*	350,300	(↑3.9%)
HEALTH CARE	64,400	(↑4.9%)
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE	54,400	(↓8.3%)
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	38,400	(↓4.5%)

**Goods Sector** employment loss was due to declines in construction, natural resources, and agriculture. Gains in manufacturing employment offset the overall decline.

GOODS SECTOR*	67,700	(↓6.9%)
CONSTRUCTION	33,600	(↓4.8%)
MANUFACTURING	20,000	(↑9.9%)
NATURAL RESOURCES	9,000	(↓15.9%)

\*Industries listed are the top three largest by total employment.  
Note: All numbers are based on September 2021 data, which reflects a three-month moving average (July-September). Changes are compared to the same period last year.

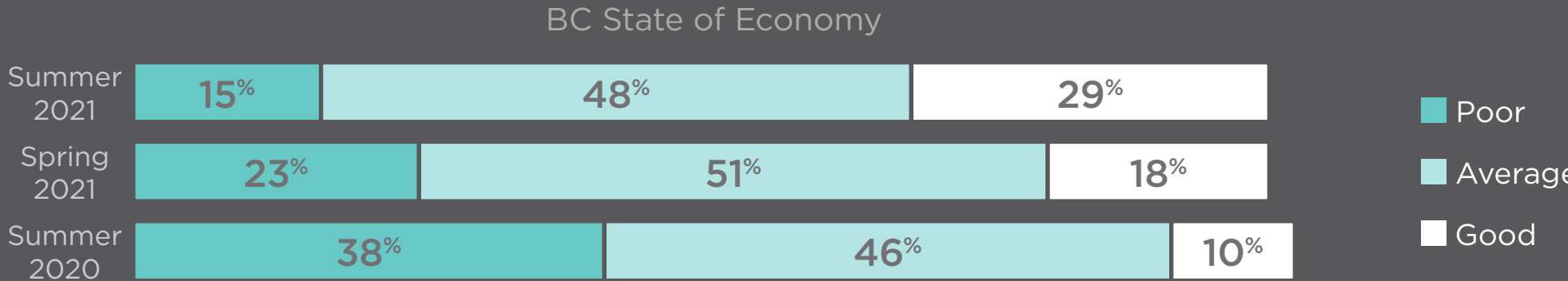
# SURVEY RESULTS

## On BC's Economic Landscape in 2021

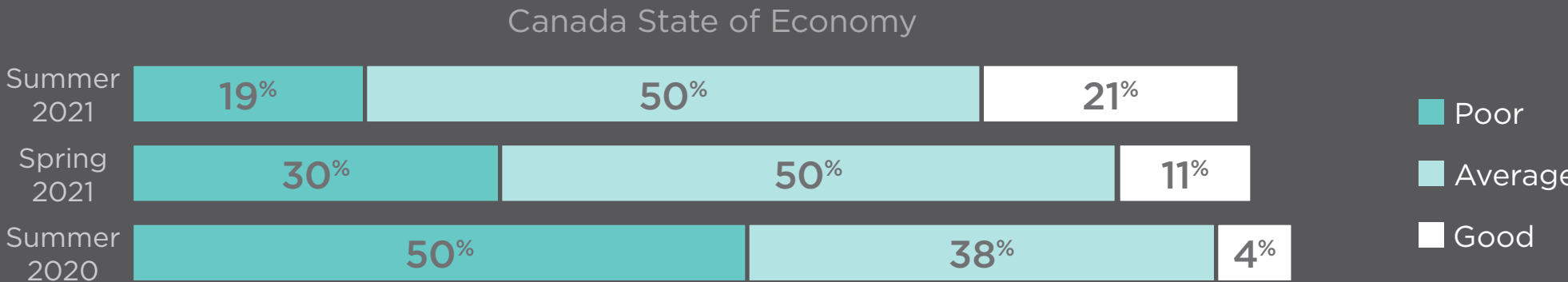
Based on results from the *BC Check-Up: Work survey*, BC CPAs indicate that...



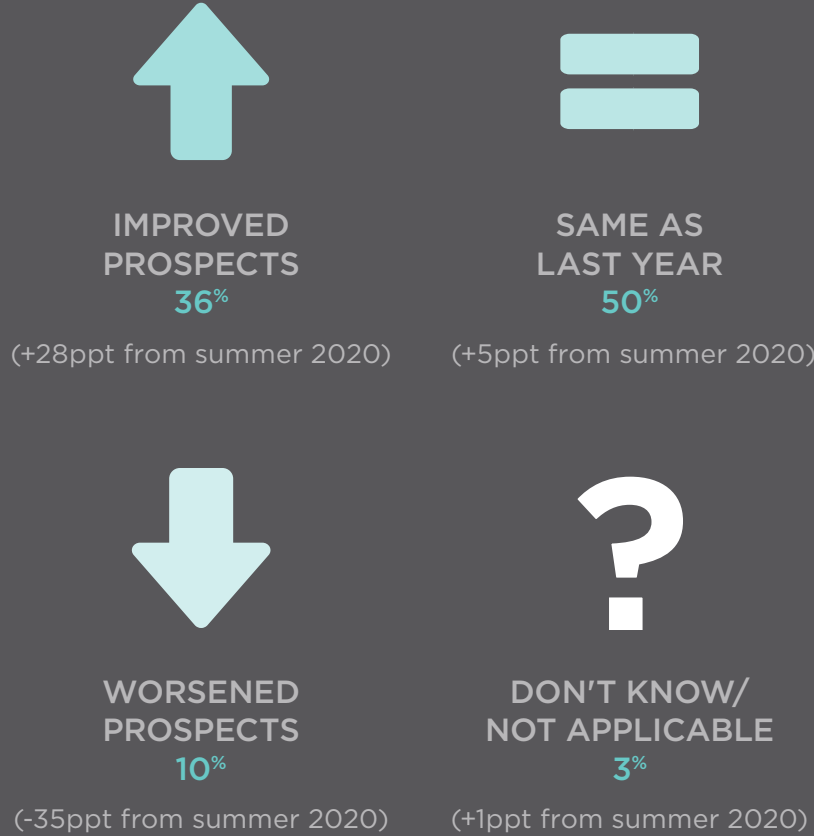
Sentiment towards British Columbia's economic outlook continued to improve, **with over three-quarters of BC CPAs ranking BC's economy as average or good.**



Canada's economic outlook has also improved, though CPAs expect **Canada's recovery to lag somewhat behind BC's.**



**Over a third (36%) of CPAs expect their organization's prospects to improve this year**, a 28 percentage point improvement from last year.



\*Survey results may not sum to 100% due to exclusion of Don't Know/No Opinion responses and/or rounding. Summer 2021 results: August 2021, n=889; Spring 2021 results: March and April 2021, n= 757. Summer 2020 results: July 2020, n = 563.

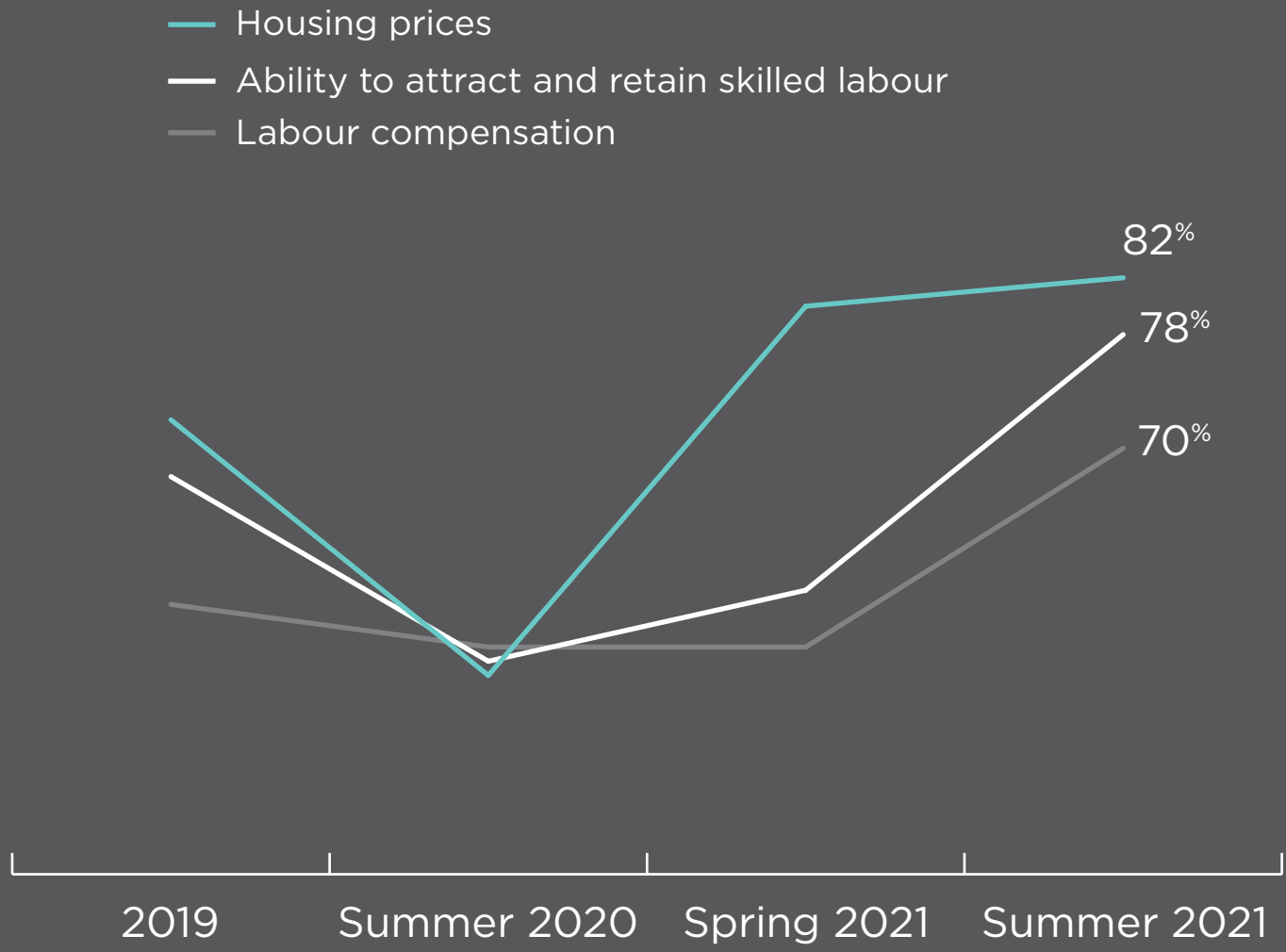
# SURVEY RESULTS

## On BC's Employment Trends in 2021

Based on results from the *BC Check-Up: Work survey*, BC CPAs indicate that...



Since falling to a low point in 2020, **housing prices, lack of skilled labour, and labour compensation** are now the top three challenges for business success.



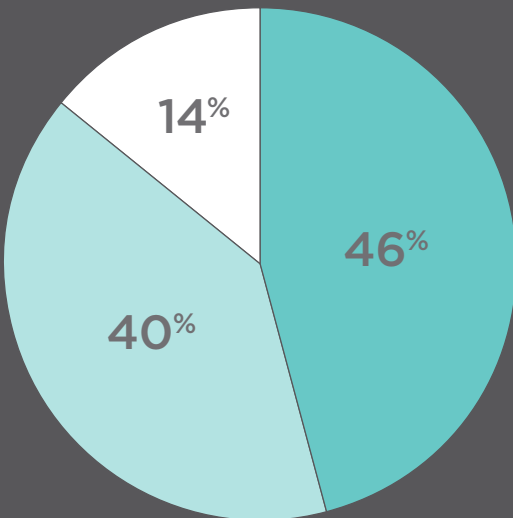
Over half (52%) of senior CPAs expect their organization's **workforce to expand over the next year**, while just 6% expect it to contract.

INCREASE 52%    STAY THE SAME 42%    DECREASE 6%



Organizations are increasingly hiring remote employees, with **nearly a third planning to hire workers located outside where their offices are located**.

- Do not intend to hire remote workers
- Intend to hire remote workers
- Don't know/not sure



\*Survey results may not sum to 100% due to exclusion of Don't Know/No Opinion responses and/or rounding. Summer 2021 results: August 2021, n=889; Spring 2021 results: March and April 2021, n= 757. Summer 2020 results: July 2020, n = 563.

# BC CHECK-UP 2021 **WORK**

As leaders in analyzing and validating information, CPAs are often called upon to provide independent, fair, and objective information to assist in decision-making. It is our hope that *BC Check-Up* will make a positive public policy contribution to the province by stimulating discussion about how to make BC a better place in which to **WORK**, **INVEST**, and **LIVE**.

*BC Check-Up* is available online at [bccheckup.com](https://bccheckup.com).

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

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The report is prepared by the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia. Opinions expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect those of individual chartered professional accountants.

Data is derived from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey and CPABC calculations. Sectoral definitions: Natural resources includes forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas. Health includes health care and social assistance. Professional services includes professional, scientific and technical services. Hospitality includes accommodation and food services. Financial services includes finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing.

## **SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS Who are they?** 889 CPABC members

**Where are they from?** Mainland/Southwest BC 69% Vancouver Island/Coast 18% Thompson-Okanagan 9% Other 4%

CPABC commission Leger to conduct a web-based survey of CPA members regarding their impressions on the economic and employment outlook.

A total of 889 surveys were completed between July 27 and August 17, 2021, representing an overall response rate of 16%.