

CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE INDUSTRY

BRITISH COLUMBIA

HIGHLIGHTS 2024 - 2033



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SUMMARY

Residential and non-residential construction activity in British Columbia charted differing courses in 2023. Investment levels in the residential sector contracted under the pressure of rising interest rates, while investment in non-residential construction was buoyed by strong activity in engineering construction and the construction of industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) buildings.

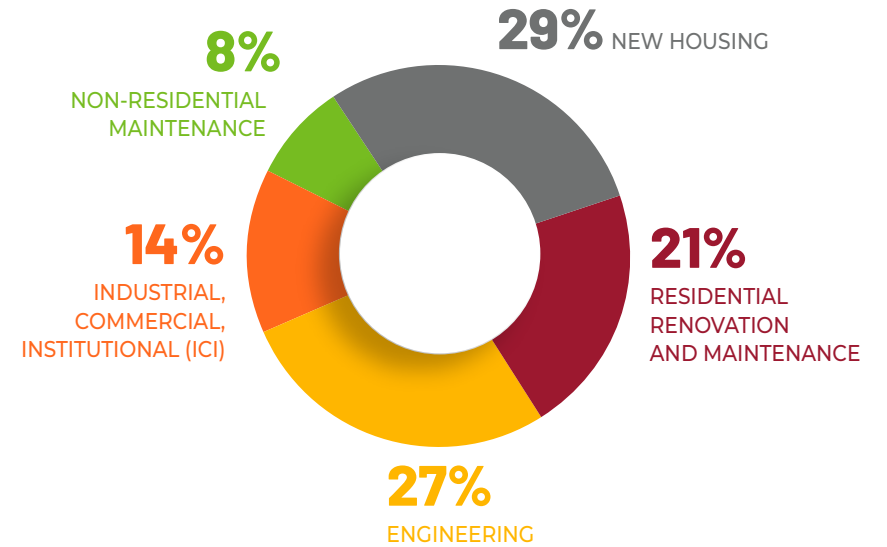
The short-term outlook calls for non-residential activity to step down as several major projects reach conclusion or pass peak activity levels. Investment is then sustained into 2026 before work begins on a number of major engineering-construction projects that carry through to 2029. Residential-sector investment, meanwhile, is expected to remain unchanged in 2024 and 2025 before the market sees a moderate up-cycle to 2029. Of note is strong growth in renovation investment, which is projected to increase by nearly 56% across the forecast period, and surpass new-housing construction as the key driver of residential demands.

Construction employment is projected to increase slightly across the forecast period. Both sectors are projected to reach peak employment in 2029, each adding just under 5% above 2023 levels at this point. Employment recedes to the end of the decade, with both sectors growing by 2% above 2023 levels by 2033.

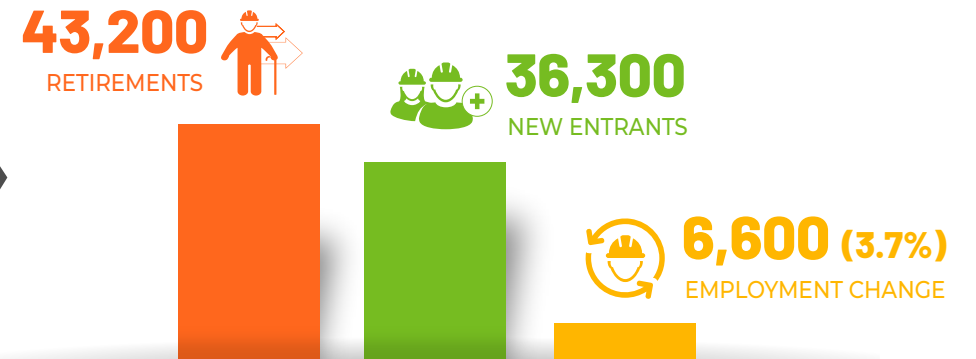
Labour market challenges will be sharpest in the near term, as employment demands increase. In the longer run, the industry will be challenged with the expected retirement of 43,200 workers, or 23% of the current labour force by 2033.

To keep pace with construction demands, the industry will need to recruit and train an estimated 54,000 workers throughout the forecast period.

Distribution of construction employment in 2023, British Columbia



10-Year Workforce Outlook for British Columbia



The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Both residential and non-residential employment levels are projected to rise to peaks in 2029, before declining slightly to the end of the forecast period.
- Housing starts are projected to contract almost continuously across the forecast period, while investment in renovations grows significantly.
- Residential investment levels are expected to chart moderate growth into 2030.
- Although non-residential construction investment will step down in 2024, it remains elevated by historical standards through to 2029.
- Many non-residential trades and occupations are expected to experience significant recruiting challenges in the short term before market conditions ease in 2026 and beyond.



BRITISH COLUMBIA CONSTRUCTION OUTLOOK

British Columbia has been one of the busiest construction markets in Canada for several years, with major non-residential projects stacked on top of a booming residential sector. The outlook for the 2024–2033 BuildForce Canada forecast period calls for that momentum to slow in the short term before rebounding and remaining elevated into at least 2029.

Underpinning these changes are projected fluctuations in the provincial economy. GDP growth surged to a post-pandemic level of 6.1% in 2021, supported by high levels of consumer spending and historically low interest rates. GDP growth dropped to 3.6% in 2022 and to 1.3% in 2023 as rising interest rates curtailed consumer expenditures and curbed residential-sector investment.

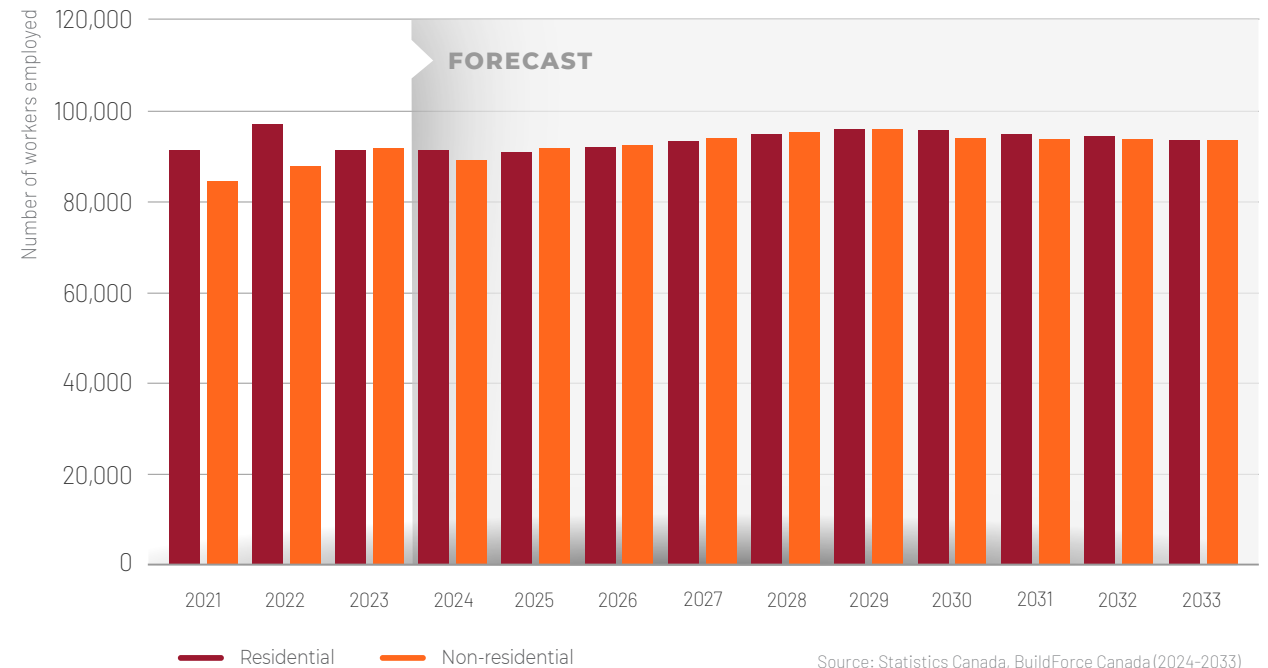
Growth is projected to slow further in 2024 before strengthening in 2025 as the global economy rebounds and as wages and incomes adjust to price increases. Higher levels of growth are projected to continue across the medium term, supported by elevated levels of construction activity and the expansion of liquefied natural gas production capacity in the province.

Both the residential and non-residential sectors are expected to see activity moderate in the near term. The outlook for the residential sector sees investment levels remain largely unchanged in 2024 and 2025 before a moderate up cycle carries into to 2029. Across the forecast period, declining levels of new-home construction are offset by increasing renovation activity.

Non-residential investment, meanwhile, is projected to contract into 2024 as several major projects either conclude or pass peak periods. Investment levels fluctuate into 2026 before rising again between 2027 and 2029 with the start of several new notable projects, including the Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, LNG Canada expansion and associated pipeline, and the Massey Tunnel Replacement Program.

As Figure 1 shows, these trends combine to increase both residential and non-residential employment by 5% above 2023 levels to a peak in 2029.

Figure 1: Construction employment growth outlook, British Columbia



Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2024-2033)

The industry will need to recruit 54,000 workers over the forecast period, driven largely by the expected retirement of 43,200 workers. While the recruiting of first-time new entrants from the local population is expected to partially offset the impact of retirements on the labour force, these new workers do not possess the skills and experience of retiring workers, which may compound potential skilled labour shortages locally.

IMMIGRATION DRIVES POPULATION GROWTH

British Columbia is experiencing a shift in its population age structure.

Figure 2 shows that the share of people between 15 and 24 years of age and who are about to enter the province's labour force comprised 12% of the population in 2023. That figure is expected to contract to 11% by 2033. Over the same period however, the share of the population over 65 years of age and mainly retired is projected to grow from 20% to 23%. This trend will create challenges regarding future labour force recruitment. All industries will be competing for a relatively smaller pool of youth over the next 10 years.

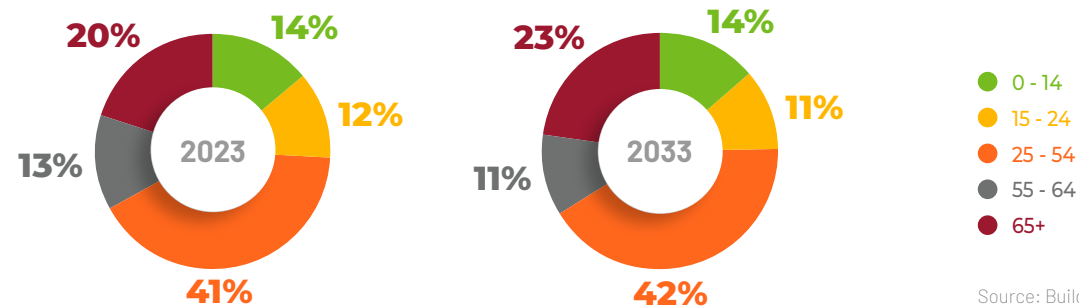
British Columbia's population is generally older than the national average. Although its natural rate of population growth* has been above zero in recent years, the rate has been declining, and dropped below zero in 2022.

The provincial population increased significantly in 2023 with an unexpected surge in the number of permanent and non-permanent residents. Many of the non-permanent residents are international students that may seek to obtain permanent residence status after graduation.

Although these levels are unlikely to be sustained, the province will benefit from the newly expanded federal Immigration Levels Plan through 2025. Moreover, with many of these immigrants coming to British Columbia in their prime child-bearing years, upward growth in the province's rate of natural population growth is forecast across much of the forecast period. They will also be essential to supporting growth in the province's core working-age group of 25 to 54 years of age, and may help to ease labour-market pressures over the decade should they decide to stay in the province.

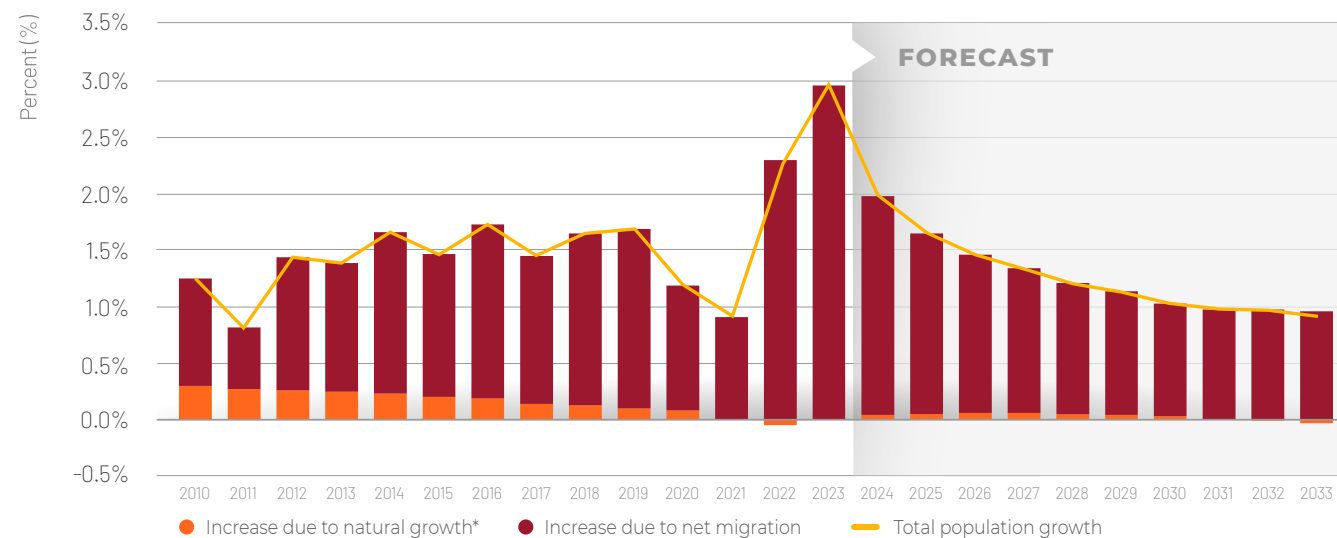
Figure 3 shows the components of population growth in British Columbia over the forecast period.

Figure 2: Population age distribution, British Columbia



Source: BuildForce Canada

Figure 3: Sources of population growth (%), British Columbia



* Natural rate of population growth refers to the growth in the population due to the number of births relative to the number of deaths, which leads to a positive or negative natural rate.

Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2024-2033)

SECTOR INSIGHTS

The following sections provide sector-specific insights into the provincial residential and non-residential labour markets. For British Columbia, rankings are reported for 27 residential and 33 non-residential trades and occupations.

PROVINCIAL RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

PROVINCIAL RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

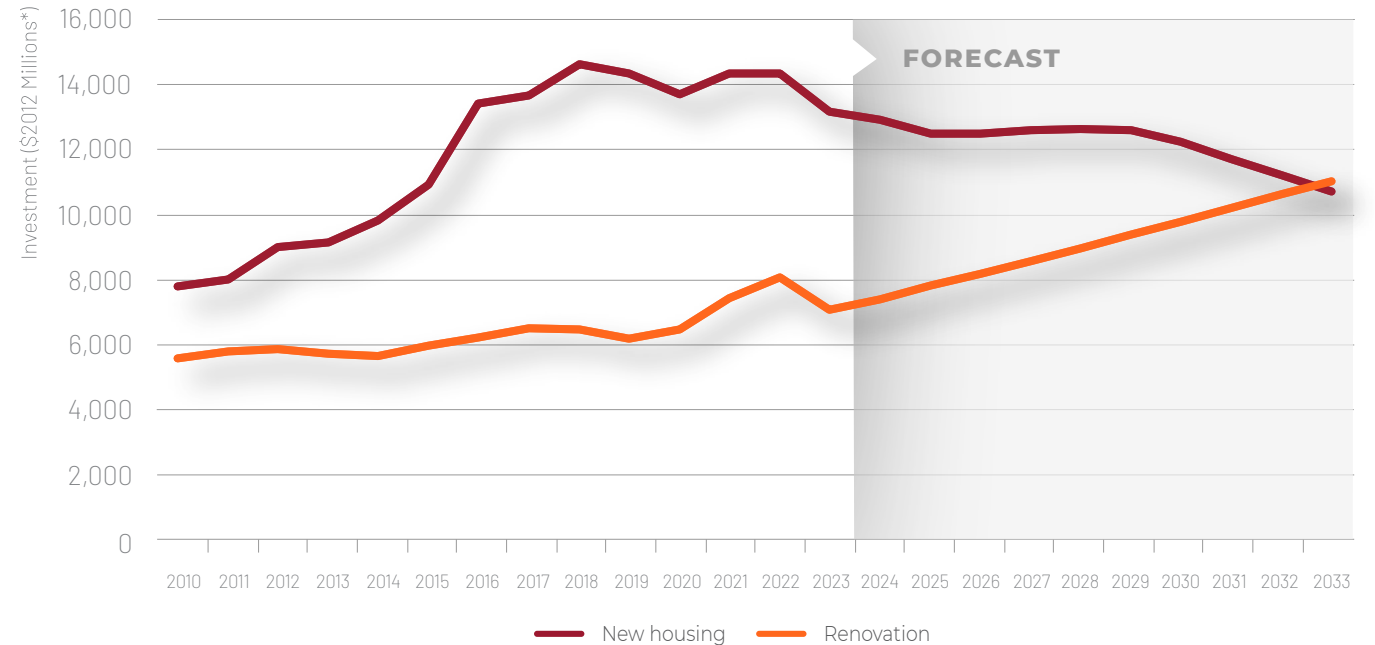
Housing starts have been elevated across British Columbia in recent years, driven by an influx of permanent and non-permanent residents to the province. Unlike most other regions of the country, in which demand was curtailed by rising interest rates, British Columbia reported an increase in the total number of housing starts in 2023. A significant increase in the number of apartment units under construction more than offset a decline in the number of single-family unit starts.

As Figure 4 shows, the various components of residential investment in British Columbia are expected to chart different trends across the forecast period.

New housing investment is projected to soften into 2024 and 2025 as interest-rate pressures cool demand for new housing. Levels plateau thereafter and through to 2029, after which new-home construction recedes as population growth slows. Investment levels contract by nearly 19% in 2033 compared to 2023 levels.

Renovation investment, on the other hand, has been trending up in recent years. After a setback in 2023, the segment is anticipated to record a steady series of strong increases through to 2033. Investment levels increase by 56% across the forecast period, ending the period higher than investment levels in new housing.

Figure 4: Residential construction investment, British Columbia



* \$2012 millions indicates that the investment values are in year 2012 dollars (base year), that is, adjusted for inflation. This is used to calculate the real physical year-to-year change of the value of construction, factoring out growth (increase in value) due to increases in prices.

Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2024-2033)

By 2033, total residential construction employment is projected to increase by 2% above 2023 levels. Employment reaches a peak of 5% above 2023 levels by 2029 before contracting in later years of the forecast period. Of note is the change in composition of residential employment across the period. A contraction of more than 26% in new-housing related employment is more than offset by growth of 41% in renovation employment, and 42% in maintenance employment. By 2033, the renovation component is the sector's largest employer.

Table 1 summarizes the estimated percent change in residential employment by sector across three periods: the short term (2024–2026), the medium term (2027–2029), and the long term (2030–2033).

This analysis presents a business-as-usual scenario. It does not take into account public-sector initiatives to address housing affordability challenges.

Table 1: Changes in residential employment by sector, British Columbia

SECTOR	% CHANGE 2024-2026	% CHANGE 2027-2029	% CHANGE 2030-2033
Total residential employment	1%	4%	-2%
New housing	-8%	-2%	-18%
Renovations	12%	11%	13%
Residential maintenance	13%	11%	12%

Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2024-2033)



Residential rankings, risks, and mobility

As Table 2 shows, several trades and occupations enter the forecast period under tight labour market conditions. These conditions are likely to prevail across a broader group of trades and occupations in 2024 as new home construction slows but renovation activity increases.

In 2025 and beyond, market conditions are expected to mostly return to balance with more moderate gains in new home construction and steady increases in renovation activity. No significant year-over-year increases are projected across the forecast period.

MARKET RANKINGS

1

Workers meeting employer qualifications are available in local markets to meet an increase in demand at the current offered rate of compensation and other current working conditions. Excess supply is apparent and there is a risk of losing workers to other markets.

2

Workers meeting employer qualifications are available in local markets to meet an increase in demand at the current offered rate of compensation and other working conditions.

3

The availability of workers meeting employer qualifications in the local market may be limited by large projects, plant shutdowns or other short-term increases in demand. Employers may need to complete to attract needed workers. Establish patterns of recruiting and mobility are sufficient to meet job requirements.

4

Workers meeting qualifications are generally not available in local markets to meet any increase. Employers will need to compete to attract additional workers. Recruiting and mobility may extend beyond traditional sources and practices.

5

Needed workers meeting employer qualifications are not available in local markets to meet current demand so that projects or production may be delayed or deferred. There is excess demand, competition is intense and recruiting reaches to remote markets.

Table 2: Residential market rankings, British Columbia

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Bricklayers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Carpenters	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Concrete finishers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction estimators	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction managers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Contractors and supervisors	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Crane operators	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Electricians	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Elevator constructors and mechanics	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Floor covering installers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Gas fitters	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Glaziers	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Heavy equipment operators(except crane)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Home building and renovation managers	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3
Insulators	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Ironworkers and structural metal fabricators	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plasterers, drywall installers and finishers, and lathers	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plumbers	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Residential and commercial installers and servicers	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Roofers and shinglers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Sheet metal workers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Tilesetters	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Trades helpers and labourers	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Truck drivers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Welders and related machine operators	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Source: BuildForce Canada

PROVINCIAL NON-RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

PROVINCIAL NON-RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

The province's non-residential sector enters the forecast period on a positive trend.

Investment levels have been elevated since 2018, driven by strong activity in engineering construction and the construction of industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) buildings.

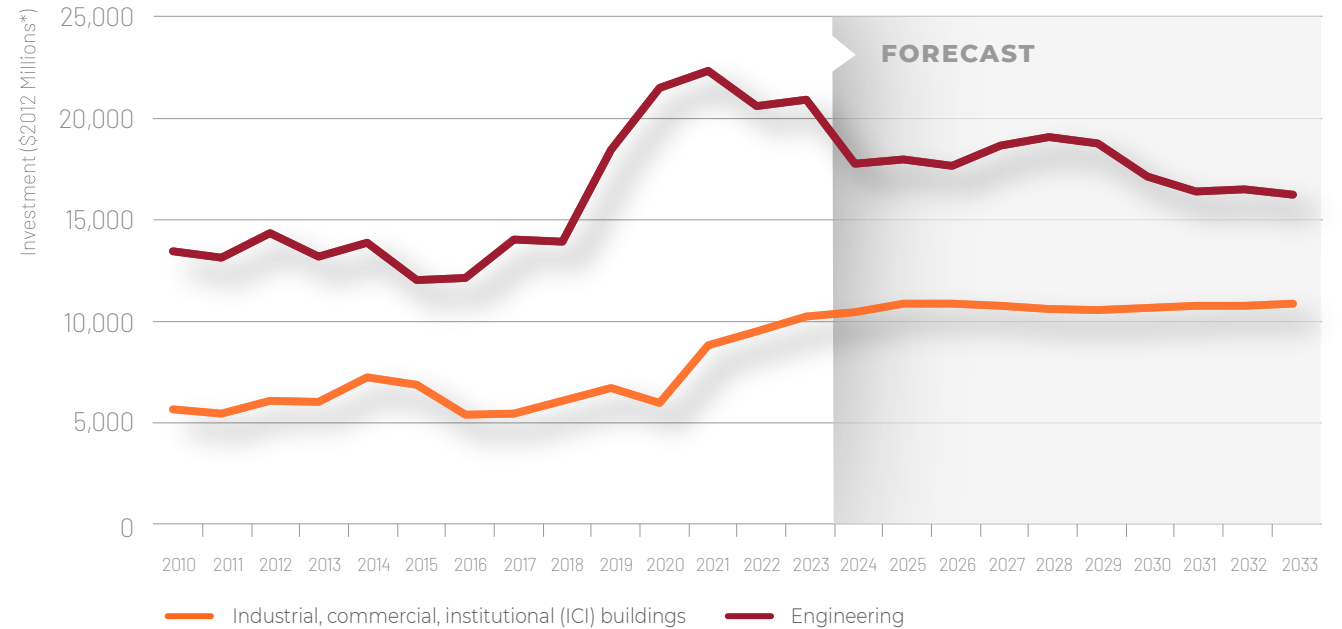
Major engineering-construction projects include liquefied natural gas developments, pipelines, port expansions, hydroelectric power, water and wastewater developments, as well as light rail expansion projects in Vancouver and Surrey. ICI-building investment levels, meanwhile, have been driven by a large volume of education and healthcare projects and increased commercial construction.

The outlook for the non-residential sector calls for investment levels to step down in 2024 as several of the major engineering projects currently underway reach conclusion or pass peak phases. Engineering-construction investment remains largely unchanged in 2025 and 2026 before returning to growth between 2027 and 2029 with the start of work on such major projects as the Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Massey Tunnel replacement project.

ICI buildings investment, meanwhile, is expected to trend up to 2025 before remaining largely unchanged to 2033 as the completion of major education and healthcare projects is offset by sustained growth in commercial- and industrial-building projects.

Figure 5 shows the investment outlook for the components of the non-residential sector in British Columbia across the forecast period.

Figure 5: Non-residential construction investment, British Columbia



* \$2012 millions indicates that the investment values are in year 2012 dollars (base year), that is, adjusted for inflation. This is used to calculate the real physical year-to-year change of the value of construction, factoring out growth (increase in value) due to increases in prices.

Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2024-2033)

These factors elevate non-residential employment to a peak in 2029, when it rises to 5% above 2023 levels. Employment contracts in later years to reach to 2% above 2023 levels by 2033. Growth is most notable in ICI buildings employment, which increases by 12% above 2023 levels, and in maintenance employment, which increases by 23% over the forecast period. Engineering construction employment, meanwhile, ebbs and flows with project activity, contracting by 10% by 2033.

Table 3 summarizes the estimated percent change in non-residential employment by sector across three periods: the short term (2024–2026), the medium term (2027–2029), and the long term (2030–2033).

“The outlook for the non-residential sector calls for investment levels to step down in 2024 as several of the major engineering projects currently underway reach conclusion or pass peak phases.”

Table 3: Changes in non-residential employment by sector, British Columbia

SECTOR	% CHANGE 2024-2026	% CHANGE 2027-2029	% CHANGE 2030-2033
Total non-residential employment	1%	4%	-3%
Industrial buildings	9%	10%	2%
Commercial and institutional buildings	6%	-1%	4%
Heavy industrial	22%	8%	-4%
Other engineering	-23%	2%	-9%
Roads, highways and bridges	-9%	-2%	-25%
Non-residential maintenance	10%	7%	5%

Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2024-2033)

Non-residential rankings, risks, and mobility

As Table 4 shows, labour market conditions in British Columbia were very tight in 2023. Almost every non-residential trade and occupation reported shortages and recruiting challenges.

Demands are forecast to ease somewhat into 2024 and again in 2025 as some major projects wind down, but tight conditions prevail among many trades and occupations. Markets are expected to return to balance by 2026. While employment levels remain elevated, the year-to-year changes slow, giving the industry more flexibility to adapt to labour demands.

Note that the widespread conversion of ICI buildings to the greater use of electricity for heating and cooling is excluded from this report, as these efforts are still in their early phases and have had only minor impacts on overall construction labour markets. As these efforts accelerate, they will be added to future BuildForce Canada outlook reports.

Table 4: Non-residential market rankings, British Columbia

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — NON-RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Boilermakers	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Bricklayers	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Carpenters	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Concrete finishers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction estimators	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction managers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics	5	4	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Contractors and supervisors	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Crane operators	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Drillers and blasters	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Electrical power line and cable workers	5	4	5	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3
Electricians	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Elevator constructors and mechanics	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Floor covering installers	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Gas fitters	5	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Glaziers	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Heavy equipment operators(except crane)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — NON-RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Industrial instrument technicians and mechanics	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3
Insulators	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3
Ironworkers and structural metal fabricators	4	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
Painters and decorators(except interior decorators)	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plasterers, drywall installers and finishers, and lathers	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plumbers	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Residential and commercial installers and servicers	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Roofers and shinglers	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Sheet metal workers	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3
Tilesetters	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Trades helpers and labourers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Truck drivers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Welders and related machine operators	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Source: BuildForce Canada

LOWER MAINLAND CONSTRUCTION FORECAST

LOWER MAINLAND CONSTRUCTION FORECAST

The Lower Mainland¹ construction market, which accounts for 60% of the province's construction employment, reported another year of growth in 2023 as a slight contraction in residential investment was offset by another gain in non-residential construction.

Residential investment levels have been elevated in the region, driven by strong levels of household formation and elevated numbers of permanent and non-permanent residents. These trends brought housing starts to a peak in 2023. Activity in the non-residential sector, meanwhile, has been driven by the construction of a number of education, healthcare, and commercial-building projects as well as sustained activity in engineering construction.

The outlook calls for investment levels in both sectors to rise in 2024. Thereafter, they chart differing courses. Activity in the residential sector is projected to slow to 2027 as a projected decline in new-housing construction more than offsets growth in renovation activity. Later years see investment levels stabilize. Non-residential investment levels are projected to rise through 2027 on the strength of new wastewater, public transit, and roads, highways, and bridges projects, and continued growth in industrial, commercial, and institutional buildings projects. Later years see growth decline as projects conclude, but overall investment levels are expected to remain well above historical levels.

Following these investment trends, residential and non-residential employment track diverging courses over the forecast period. By 2033, a projected gain in non-residential employment of 8% above 2023 levels is more than offset by a loss of more than 13% in the residential sector.

Over the same period, the industry will need to replace 22,500 workers that are expected to retire. While the recruiting of first-time new entrants from the local population is expected to partially offset the impact of retirements on the labour force, these new workers do not possess the skills and experience of retiring workers, which may compound potential skilled labour shortages locally.

LOWER MAINLAND RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

Since 2021, an influx of permanent and non-permanent residents brought household formation to a peak in the Lower Mainland region in 2023. This trend, combined with low interest rates, elevated housing starts to a peak of 36% above 2020 levels in 2023. Much of this demand, however, was created in the form of starts for multi-family units, and apartment units in particular. This, combined with a contraction in the number of single-family unit starts, accounts for the fact that residential investment levels also decreased in the same period.

Indeed, in 2023, multi-unit homes accounted for 87% of the new housing under construction in the Lower Mainland region.

New housing and renovation investment levels are expected to both record slight increases in 2024, after which they follow diverging paths. New housing investment is projected to contract through to the end of the forecast period, in line with slowing population growth and fewer housing starts. The latter is particularly affected by the region's relatively high cost of living. Renovation investment, meanwhile, is projected to record a steady series of strong increases to 2033 as homeowners choose to upgrade their homes over buying new properties, and as the region's housing stock ages.

¹The Lower Mainland region is defined by the economic regions of Greater Vancouver, Fraser Valley, Sunshine Coast, Squamish, and Lillooet.

As a result of these factors, residential employment in the Lower Mainland is projected to contract almost continuously after 2024. By the end of the forecast period, it is projected to be 13% lower than 2023 levels, with employment in the new-housing component contracting by 37%. In contrast, renovation (+31%) and maintenance (+12%) employment levels are both projected to increase over 2023 levels, and account for more than half of total residential employment by the end of the period.

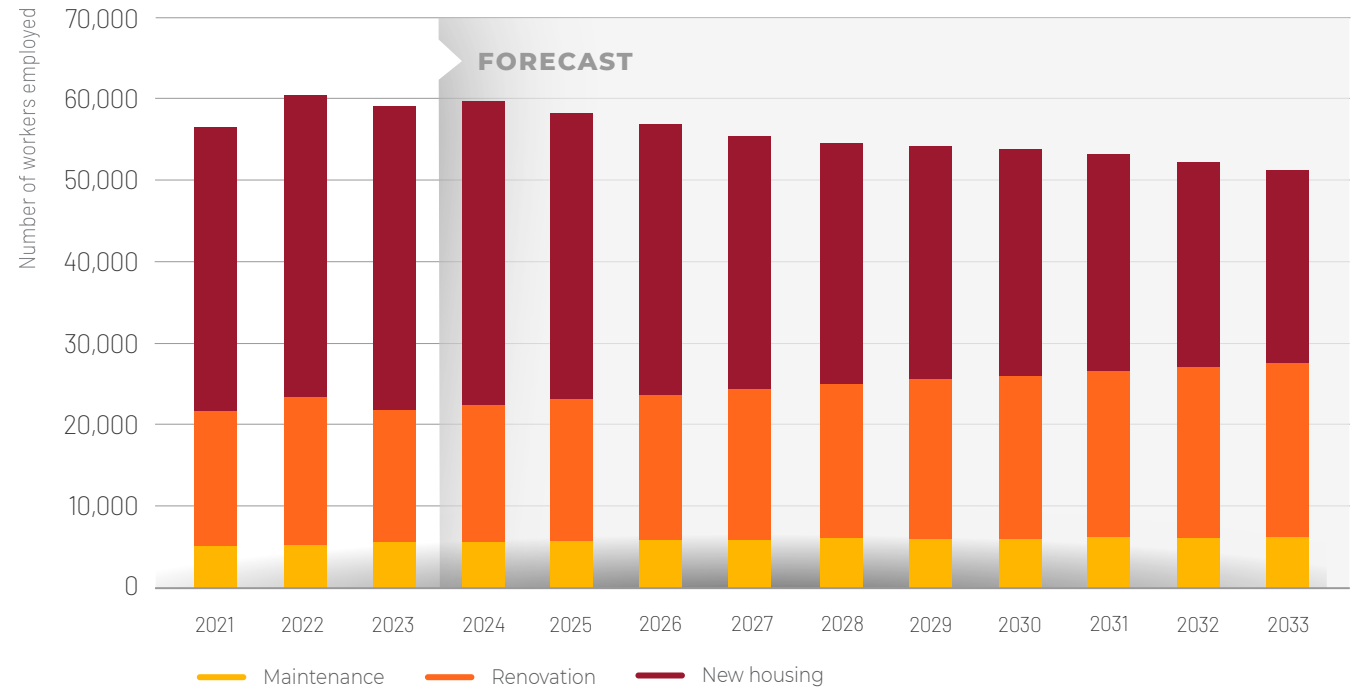
Figure 6 shows anticipated employment trends by sector for residential construction across the forecast.

This analysis presents a business-as-usual scenario. It does not take into account public-sector initiatives to address housing affordability challenges.

The available labour force

Reduced construction demands are projected to contract the region's residential sector by 6,400 workers by 2033. The retirement of 12,700 workers during this period will bring hiring requirements to 6,300 workers. Meanwhile, the industry is expected to add as many as 8,700 new-entrant workers from the local population under the age of 30. Given these factors, the industry may face a surplus of as many as 2,400 workers by 2033.

Figure 6: Residential construction employment growth outlook, Lower Mainland, British Columbia



Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2024-2033)

Residential rankings, risks, and mobility

Table 5 shows that demands were elevated among most residential trades and occupations leading into the forecast period.

With a resurgence in renovation activity in 2024, and as builders catch up to demands created in the previous two years, many trades and occupations could continue to report market tightness. This is

particularly the case among those more involved in the construction of high-rise apartment buildings.

Market conditions are projected to return to balance after 2024 and, as demand for new housing subsides, many may opt to work in the region's growing renovation sector.

Table 5: Residential market rankings, Lower Mainland, British Columbia

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Bricklayers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Carpenters	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Concrete finishers	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction estimators	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction managers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Contractors and supervisors	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Crane operators	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Electricians	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Elevator constructors and mechanics	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Floor covering installers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Gas fitters	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Glaziers	4	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
Heavy equipment operators (except crane)	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Home building and renovation managers	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Insulators	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Ironworkers and structural metal fabricators	4	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plasterers, drywall installers and finishers, and lathers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plumbers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Residential and commercial installers and servicers	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Roofers and shinglers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Sheet metal workers	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Tilesetters	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Trades helpers and labourers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Truck drivers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Welders and related machine operators	4	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3

Source: BuildForce Canada

LOWER MAINLAND NON-RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

Non-residential construction investment levels have been rising in the Lower Mainland region since 2016, supported by projects across a wide variety of market segments, including education, healthcare, transit, and roads, highways, and bridges projects. Levels are projected to rise continuously through 2027. Investment steps down and then fluctuates through to the end of the forecast period, but remains elevated by historical standards.

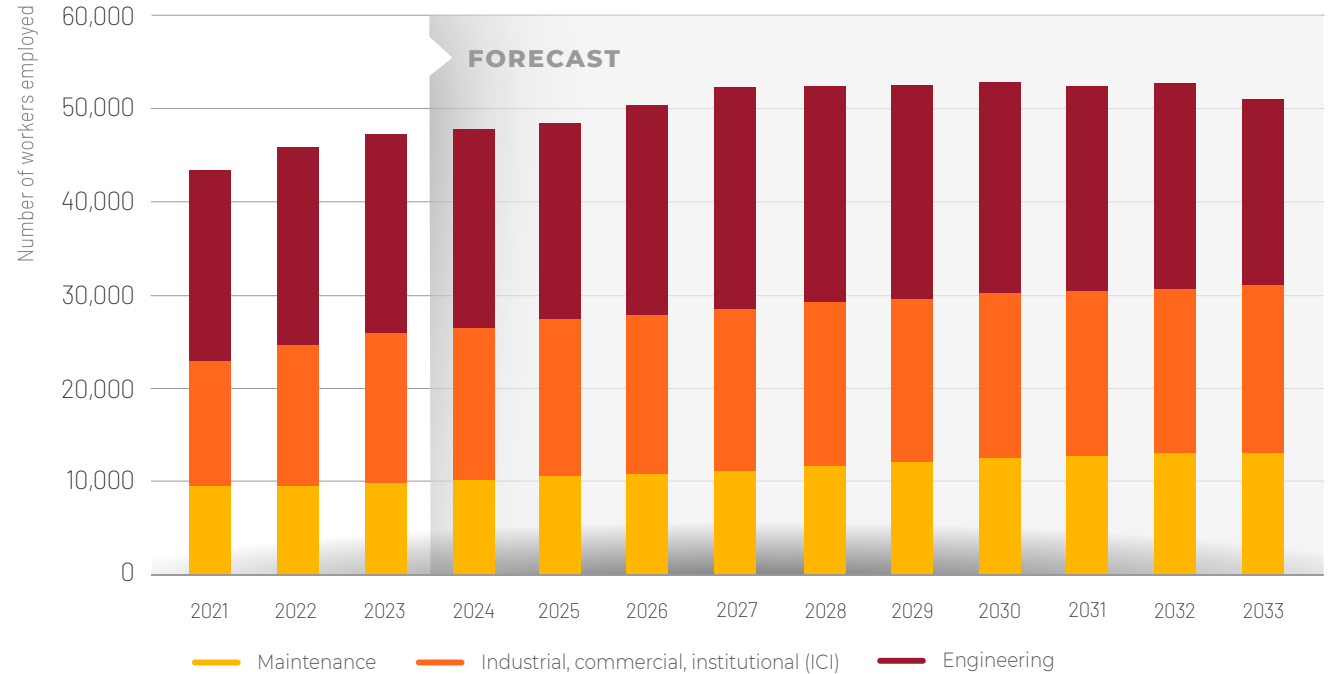
Engineering-construction investment is expected to remain largely unchanged in 2024 and 2025. It then sees a significant upcycle in 2026 and 2027 with the start of major transit, liquefied natural gas, and roads, highways, and bridges projects. Investment recedes to the end of the forecast period as these projects pass peak activity and eventually conclude.

Investment related to the construction of industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) buildings is anticipated to increase to a peak in 2025, after which it remains largely unchanged to the end of the forecast period. Driving this spike in activity are strong levels of investment in education and healthcare projects. Growth in industrial building construction helps keep overall ICI building investment elevated into 2028. Later years are supported by strong activity in the commercial building segment.

Employment is projected to rise to a peak of 12% above 2023 levels by 2030, after which it remains mostly unchanged until 2032. Engineering-related employment in particular cycles with the ebbs and flows of major projects. It rises by 11% to 2027, but contracts significantly in later years as projects conclude. By 2033, engineering-related employment declines by 7% compared to 2023 levels. ICI building employment increases by 12% by 2033, and maintenance employment grows by 33%.

Figure 7 shows anticipated employment trends by sector for non-residential construction across the forecast.

Figure 7: Non-residential construction employment growth outlook, Lower Mainland, British Columbia



Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2024-2033)

The available labour force

The rise in non-residential employment demands will require the non-residential labour force to grow by 5,100 workers by 2033. The retirement of 9,700 workers during this period will increase the overall hiring requirement to approximately 14,800 workers. The addition of approximately 9,300 local new-entrant workers under the age of 30 will help to moderate labour force pressures, but even at these levels, a projected deficit of almost 5,500 workers may emerge by 2033 unless recruitment is increased.

Non-residential rankings, risks, and mobility

As Table 6 shows, labour market demands were strained among key trades and occupations in 2023. Conditions were driven by strong levels of activity in both the construction of industrial, commercial, and institutional buildings and in engineering construction.

Market conditions ebb and flow in line with the timing of major projects. Employment peaks in 2027, with more balanced markets expected across the remainder of the period as the year-to-year

changes in employment are more moderate.

Note that the widespread conversion of ICI buildings to the greater use of electricity for heating and cooling is excluded from this report, as these efforts are still in their early phases and have had only minor impacts on overall construction labour markets. As these efforts accelerate, they will be added to future BuildForce Canada outlook reports.

Table 6: Non-residential market rankings, Lower Mainland, British Columbia

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — NON-RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Bricklayers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Carpenters	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Concrete finishers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Construction estimators	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction managers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Contractors and supervisors	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Crane operators	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Drillers and blasters	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Electrical power line and cable workers	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Electricians	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Elevator constructors and mechanics	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Floor covering installers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Gas fitters	5	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
Glaziers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Heavy equipment operators (except crane)	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	2

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — NON-RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	2
Insulators	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Ironworkers and structural metal fabricators	4	3	4	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plasterers, drywall installers and finishers, and lathers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plumbers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Residential and commercial installers and servicers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Roofers and shinglers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Sheet metal workers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Tilesetters	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Trades helpers and labourers	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Truck drivers	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	2
Welders and related machine operators	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2

Source: BuildForce Canada

VANCOUVER ISLAND CONSTRUCTION OUTLOOK

VANCOUVER ISLAND CONSTRUCTION OUTLOOK

Construction in the Vancouver Island region² has been driven by a strong residential sector in recent years. Housing starts surged by almost 40% in 2021. Although rising interest rates have seen these levels step down since, they remain elevated by historical standards. Non-residential investment levels have generally trended up since 2016, and grew again in 2023, supported by strong activity in institutional building construction and engineering construction.

The outlook calls for both the residential and non-residential sectors to grow to 2033, with levels cycling across the forecast period. Residential investment levels are projected to decline sharply in the short term as interest rate increases curb new-home construction. Levels then rise to the end of the forecast period as growth in renovation activity offsets declines in new housing. Non-residential construction investment cycles with the timing of major projects, including the John Hart Dam seismic upgrades, but generally trends up across the forecast period.

Employment is projected to grow modestly across the forecast period, as a gain of just under 6% in non-residential employment offsets a contraction of less than 2% in the residential sector.

Over the same period, the industry will need to replace a total of 9,500 workers, including 7,700 workers that are expected to retire. An estimated 6,200 new-entrant workers under the age of 30 from the local population may join the industry during this period, but unless recruitment is

increased, a potential recruitment gap of almost 3,300 workers may need to be recruited from outside the local construction industry to meet future labour force needs.

VANCOUVER ISLAND RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

The region's residential sector saw a surge in housing starts in 2021 that was driven in part by record low interest rates. Housing starts, and residential investment levels, have stepped down since. The former in particular is expected to see a series of declines across the forecast period, with a sharp contraction in 2024 followed by a more moderate series of decreases toward 2033. Interest rate increases and affordability issues have curtailed demand for single-family homes.

Market preferences are increasingly shifting toward less expensive multi-family units. Later years see demand renewed for single-family homes, but this occurs as demand for multi-unit properties decreases.

Renovation activity, meanwhile, has increased steadily in the region since 2019. Renovation investment is anticipated to rise across the outlook period, driven by an aging housing stock and a population that chooses to age in place in their older years.

² The Vancouver Island & Coast Economic Region includes a number of regional districts, including the Capital Region, Cowichan Valley, Nanaimo, Alberni-Clayoquot, Strathcona, Comox Valley, Powell River, Mount Waddington, and Central Coast.

These factors combine to elevate overall residential investment levels after 2025.

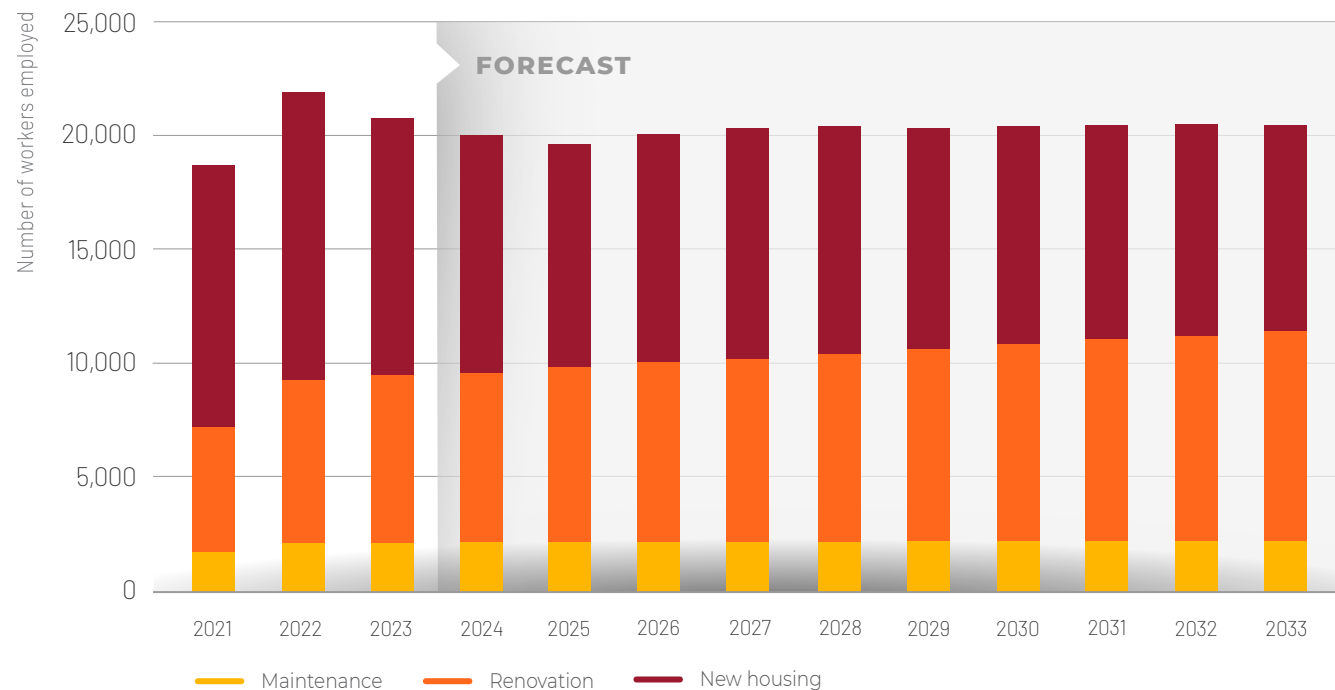
As Figure 8 shows, residential employment reached a peak in 2022. It contracted in 2023, and is projected to step down in 2024 and 2025 as new-home construction declines. After slight gains in 2026 and 2027, employment remains largely unchanged to the end of the forecast period. By 2033, it is projected to have contracted by 2% compared to 2023 levels. A loss of 20% in new-housing employment offsets gains of 25% in renovation employment and 4% in maintenance-related employment.

This analysis presents a business-as-usual scenario. It does not take into account public-sector initiatives to address housing affordability challenges.

The available labour force

Although residential employment is projected to contract over the forecast period, the sector's labour force is projected to grow by 700 workers by 2033. The expected retirement of 4,300 workers during this period translates into a hiring requirement of 5,000 workers. Meanwhile, the industry is expected to add as many as 3,400 new-entrant workers from the local population under the age of 30. Given these factors, the industry may need to recruit as many as 1,600 workers from outside the local construction labour force by 2033.

Figure 8: Residential construction employment growth outlook, Vancouver Island, British Columbia



Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2024-2033)

Residential rankings, risks, and mobility

As Table 7 shows, recent contractions in new housing construction brought labour markets for most trades and occupations back to balanced conditions in 2023. Further contractions are projected for 2024.

Labour market conditions remain balanced for trades and occupations concentrated in low-rise single-family builds, but recruiting challenges may persist for trades and occupations more involved in the construction of high-rise apartment buildings. These isolated market challenges may not be reflected in

the rankings table, which captures overall residential demands across all segments.

Markets also tighten in the short term for those trades and occupations associated with renovation and maintenance work. Meanwhile, demand for more experienced workers, such as home building and renovation managers, persists across the forecast period.

Table 7: Residential market rankings, Vancouver Island, British Columbia

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Bricklayers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Carpenters	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction estimators	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction managers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Contractors and supervisors	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Electricians	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Floor covering installers	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Heavy equipment operators (except crane)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Home building and renovation managers	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Plasterers, drywall installers and finishers, and lathers	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plumbers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Residential and commercial installers and servicers	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Roofers and shinglers	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Sheet metal workers	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Tilesetters	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Trades helpers and labourers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Truck drivers	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Source: BuildForce Canada

VANCOUVER ISLAND NON-RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

Non-residential construction investment levels have been rising in the region since 2016, supported by a wide variety of projects in both the engineering construction sector and in the construction of industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) buildings.

Investment levels are projected to cycle up and down across the forecast period, and in line with the timing of major projects. By 2033, investment is projected to increase by just over 3% compared with 2023 levels.

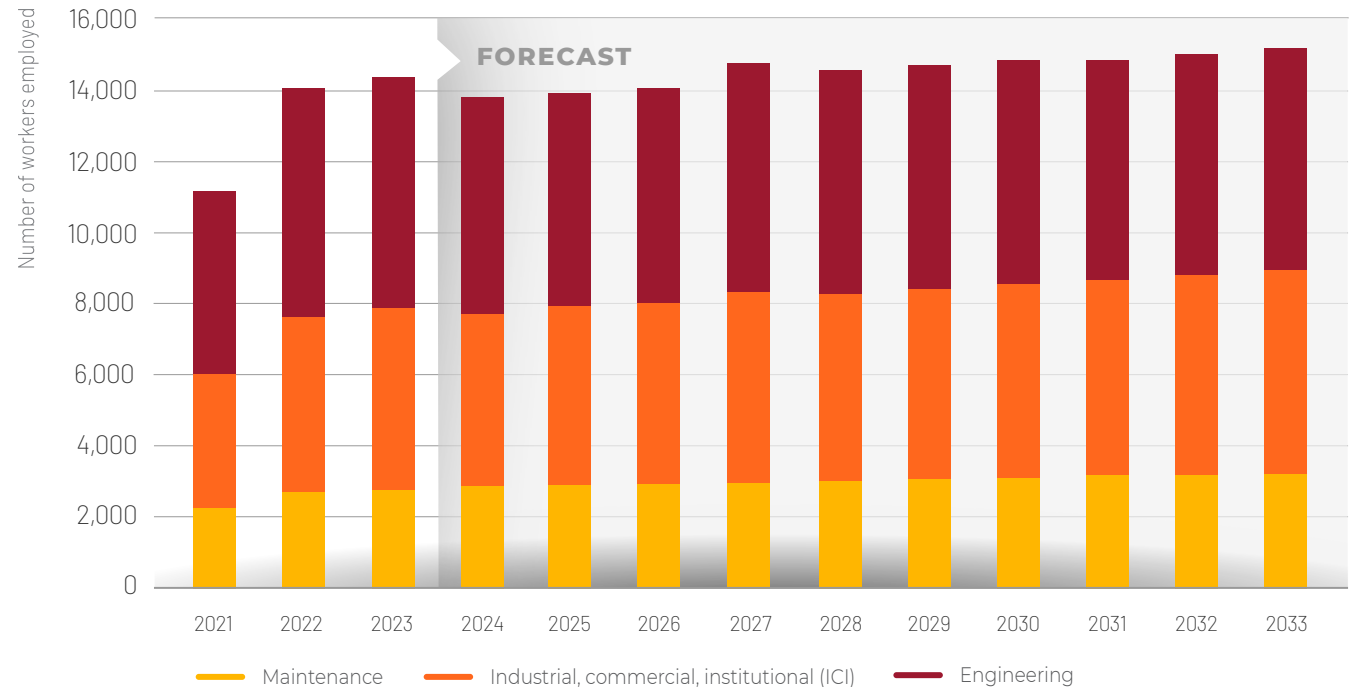
Engineering construction investment cycles down in 2024 and 2025 with the completion of major utilities and manufacturing projects. Growth resumes in 2026 and beyond, supported by projects such as the John Hart Dam seismic upgrades and growth in line with population-driven investments in public utilities and infrastructure.

ICI buildings investment is also projected to cycle down in the near term with the anticipated completion of work on projects at the Royal BC Museum and the University of Victoria. It then rises to a peak of 5% above 2023 levels in 2027, driven by a long list of institutional and government building projects, and new projects that support population growth in later years.

By 2033, total non-residential employment is projected to increase by 6% above 2023 levels. A slight decline (-4%) in employment relating to engineering construction is offset by growth of 12% in ICI buildings construction employment and of 17% in maintenance employment.

Figure 9 shows the anticipated employment trends by sector for non-residential construction across the forecast period.

Figure 9: Non-residential construction employment growth outlook, Vancouver Island, British Columbia



Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2024-2033)

The available labour force

The rise in overall employment will require the industry to recruit an additional 1,100 workers over the forecast period. The retirement of 3,400 workers during this period will increase the overall regional hiring requirement to 4,500 workers. The addition of 2,800 new-entrant workers under the age of 30 from local recruitment efforts will help to moderate labour force pressures, but unless recruitment is increased, a potential deficit of 1,700 workers may emerge by 2033.

Non-residential rankings, risks, and mobility

The rankings in Table 8 show that labour demands were elevated across most non-residential trades and occupations in 2023. Both the engineering construction sector and the construction of industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) buildings reported growth.

Market pressures are projected to moderate into 2024 as some major projects wind down before tightening again in 2025 and 2027 for some trades and occupations with growth in ICI building activity.

Across the period, the annual changes in employment are more moderate. This allows industry time to adapt to hiring needs.

Note that the widespread conversion of ICI buildings to the greater use of electricity for heating and cooling is excluded from this report, as these efforts are still in their early phases and have had only minor impacts on overall construction labour markets. As these efforts accelerate, they will be added to future BuildForce Canada outlook reports.

Table 8: Non-residential market rankings, Vancouver Island, British Columbia

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — NON-RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Carpenters	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Concrete finishers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction estimators	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction managers	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	4
Contractors and supervisors	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Crane operators	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Drillers and blasters	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Electricians	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Floor covering installers	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Glaziers	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Heavy equipment operators (except crane)	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS — NON-RESIDENTIAL	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Insulators	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plasterers, drywall installers and finishers, and lathers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plumbers	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Residential and commercial installers and servicers	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Sheet metal workers	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Trades helpers and labourers	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Truck drivers	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Welders and related machine operators	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Source: BuildForce Canada

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE LABOUR FORCE

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE LABOUR FORCE

The available labour force

British Columbia’s construction industry will need to recruit about 54,000 additional workers over the forecast period to keep pace with labour force growth and replace approximately 43,200 retiring workers, or 23% of the current labour force.

Many of these hiring requirements may be met by an estimated 36,300 first-time new entrants under the age of 30 from the local population, leaving a gap of about 17,700 workers that will need to be recruited from outside the local construction labour force.

Keeping pace with recruitment and training will require a combination of strategies, including maintaining local recruitment and training efforts, particularly from groups traditionally under-represented in the construction labour force, the hiring of workers from other industries with the required skills sets, and the recruitment of immigrants to Canada with skilled trades training and/or construction experience.

Figure 10 provides a summary of the estimated changes in the construction labour force across the forecast period.

Figure 10: Changes in the construction labour force, British Columbia



* **Net mobility** refers to the number of workers needed to be brought into the industry from other industries or other provinces to meet rising demands or the number of workers that exit the industry in downturns. Positive net mobility means that industry must attract workers, while negative net mobility arises from an excess supply of workers in the local construction labour force.

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to the totals indicated.

Source: BuildForce Canada

Labour Force Diversification

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a key source of labour for the construction industry. New registrations in the 25 largest construction trade programs in British Columbia have fluctuated in recent years but have remained below the peak levels observed in 2013. (See Figure 11.) New registrations fell by 9% between 2013 and 2019, while employment increased by 12% over the same period. In 2022, the province saw a substantial recovery in new registrations, returning to the pre-pandemic level. Program completions have been slower to recover, however, remaining below the pre-COVID level in 2022.

Select trades, namely boilermaker, heavy equipment operator, instrumentation and control technician, powerline technician, welder, and steamfitter/pipefitter, have seen notable declines in new registrations over the past decade. The decline in new registrations in these trades may pose a risk of an insufficient number of newly certified journeypersons to sustain workforce requirements.

Figure 11: New apprentice registrations, completions, and trade employment, British Columbia



Table 9 provides a trade-by-trade breakdown of the anticipated certification requirements to meet the construction industry’s share of employment and replacement demand over the scenario period. Based on projected new registrations, several trades are at risk of undersupplying the number of new journeypersons required by 2033. Trades within this group include gasfitter, painter and decorator, bricklayer, lather, glazier, boilermaker, welder, roofer, insulator, powerline technician, heavy equipment operator, carpenter, and instrumentation and control technician.

“New registrations in the 25 largest construction trade programs in British Columbia have fluctuated in recent years but have remained below the peak levels observed in 2013.”

Table 9: Estimated construction certification demand and projected target of new entrants by trade, British Columbia, 2024 to 2033³

TRADE	Target certification demand — construction	Target new registrants — construction	Apprentice certification supply risk — all industries	TRADE	Target certification demand — construction	Target new registrants — construction	Apprentice certification supply risk — all industries
Gasfitter	291	89	●	Mobile Crane Operator	112	121	●
Painter and Decorator	776	134	●	Ironworker (Generalist)	80	103	●
Bricklayer	301	57	●	Steamfitter/Pipefitter	144	199	●
Lather (Interior Systems Mechanic)	392	89	●	Metal Fabricator (Fitter)	176	277	●
Glazier	284	90	●	Construction Electrician	4,278	7,745	●
Boilermaker	298	117	●	Heavy-Duty Equipment Technician	222	426	●
Welder	350	139	●	Sheet Metal Worker	511	990	●
Roofer	510	227	●	Plumber	2,199	4,655	●
Insulator (Heat and Frost)	213	100	●	Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic	746	2,184	●
Powerline Technician	181	98	●	Sprinkler Fitter	114	367	●
Heavy Equipment Operator	327	186	●	Industrial Electrician	147	556	●
Carpenter	5,101	3,186	●				
Instrumentation and Control Technician	39	27	●				
Industrial Mechanic (Millwright)	248	245	●				

- Certifications required exceed projected completions
- Certifications required in line with projected completions
- Projected completions exceed certifications required

Source: BuildForce Canada

³ This analysis does not account for an existing skills mismatch at the 2023 starting point.

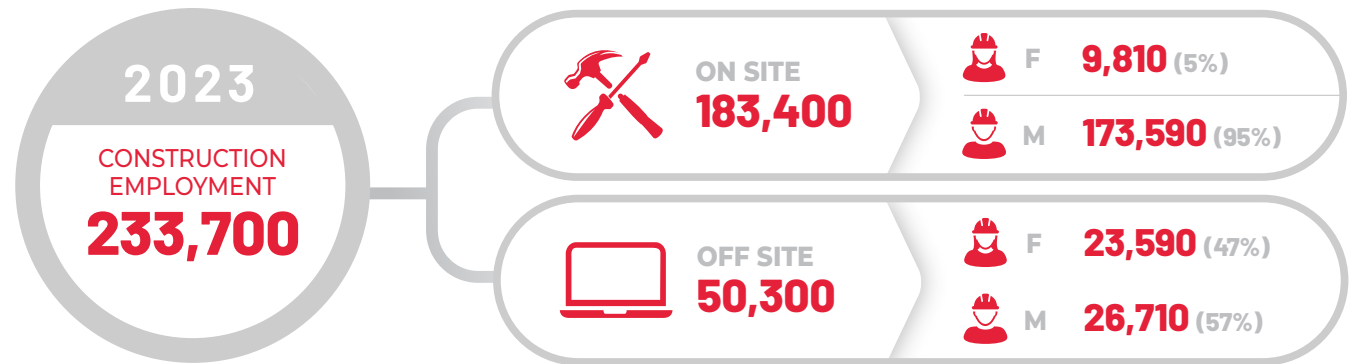
Under-represented groups of workers

Due in part to lower fertility rates and smaller family sizes in Canada for more than three decades, the share of younger Canadians available to enter the labour force has been in decline for several years. As the baby boomer generation of workers commences retirement over the next decade, the competition for younger workers will be intense. To help mitigate the impact of this shift in demographics, the construction industry must diversify its recruitment. In order to succeed, the industry must increase recruitment of individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in the current construction labour force, including women, Indigenous People, and newcomers.

In 2023, there were approximately 33,400 women employed in British Columbia's construction industry, of which 29% worked on site, directly on construction projects, while the remaining 71% worked off site, primarily in administrative and management-related occupations. Of the 183,400 tradespeople employed in the industry, women made up 5% (see Figure 12).

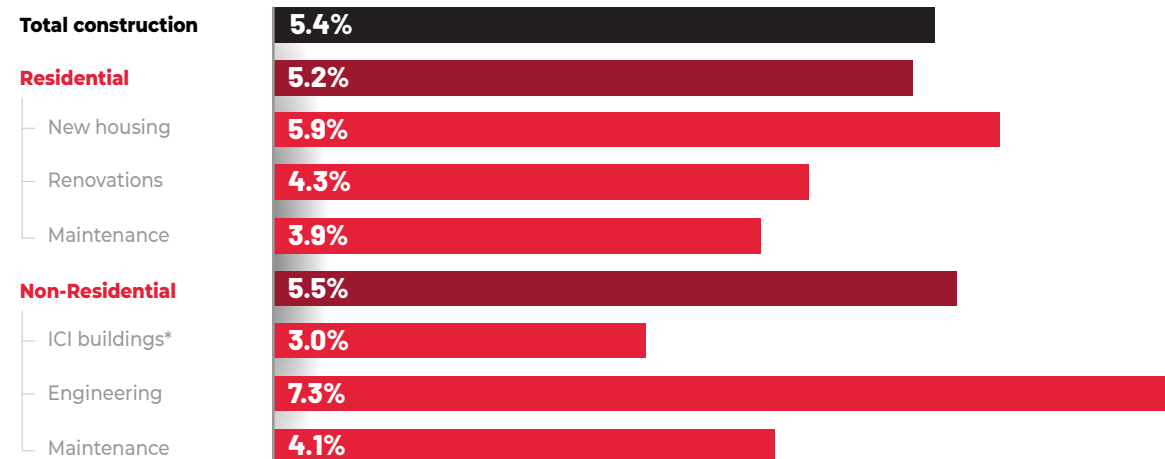
The estimated 9,810 tradeswomen in British Columbia are represented across all sectors of construction. Women account for a relatively equal share of total tradespeople in the residential (5.2%) and non-residential (5.5%) construction sectors. Across sectors, engineering construction has the highest representation of women, accounting for slightly more than 7% of the workforce (see Figure 13). The top five trades and occupations in which women tend to be employed are trade helpers and labourers (23% of all tradeswomen), construction managers (17%), contractors and supervisors (11%), painters and decorators (7%), and carpenters (7%).

Figure 12: Detailed construction employment by gender, British Columbia, 2023



Source: BuildForce Canada calculations based on Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) and 2016 Census of the Population.

Figure 13: Women's share of total direct trades and occupations (on site), British Columbia



*Industrial, commercial, institutional

Source: BuildForce Canada calculations based on Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) and 2016 Census of the Population.

The Indigenous population is the fastest growing population in Canada and therefore presents recruitment opportunities for British Columbia's construction industry. In 2021, Indigenous People accounted for 6.2% of the province's construction labour force, which is a slight increase from the share of 6.1% observed in 2016.⁴ The construction share is notably higher than the share of Indigenous People represented in the overall labour force (see Table 10). As the Indigenous population continues to expand, recruitment efforts will need to be dedicated to increasing the industry's share of the population into the labour force.

British Columbia's construction industry may also leverage newcomers (immigrants) to Canada over the forecast period to meet labour requirements. Due to the declining natural rates of population growth, immigrants are the primary source of labour force growth in the province. Immigrants have played an increasingly important role in replenishing the workforce, with the share of immigrants in the workforce increasing from 28% in 2012 to 32% in 2022. The province has attracted and integrated a higher rate of immigrants into the labour force compared to other provinces; however, immigrants remain underrepresented in the provincial construction industry. The construction labour force share of immigrants was 25% in 2022, which is notably lower than the share in the overall provincial labour force. (See Figure 14).⁵

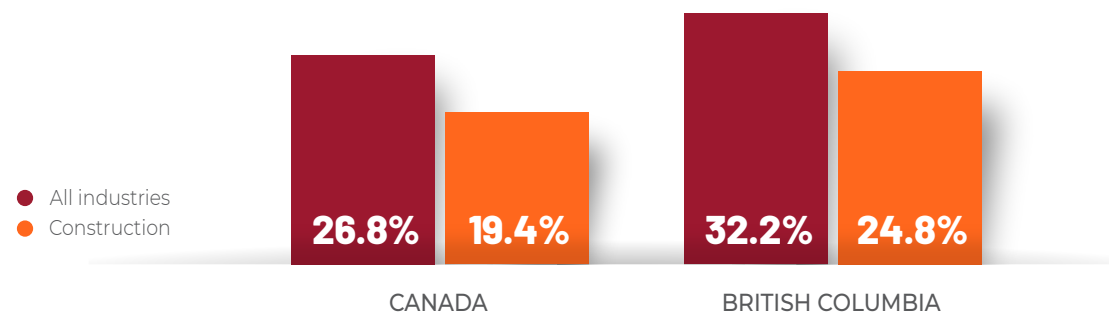
Based on historical settlement patterns, the province is expected to welcome more than 718,000 permanent and non-permanent residents between 2024 and 2033. As these individuals will make up an increasing share of the province's core working-age population, additional recruitment efforts will be required to ensure the construction industry recruits its share of newcomers into the labour force.

Table 10: Representation of Indigenous population in British Columbia's construction workforce

SECTOR	YEAR	INDIGENOUS	NON-INDIGENOUS	TOTAL	INDIGENOUS SHARE OF TOTAL WORKFORCE, %
Construction	2016	12,290	187,695	199,985	6.1%
	2021	14,575	219,750	234,360	6.2%
All Industries	2016	122,615	2,305,245	2,427,860	5.1%
	2021	132,165	2,470,945	2,603,110	5.1%

Source: BuildForce Canada calculations based on Statistics Canada's 2021 and 2016 Census of the Population

Figure 14: Share (%) of immigrants in the construction labour force, 2022, British Columbia



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0083-01 Labour force characteristics by immigrant status, annual

⁴ Statistics Canada, 2021 Census. Custom Data Request.

⁵ Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Custom Data Request 2022.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

British Columbia has been one of the busiest construction markets in Canada for several years, with major non-residential projects stacked on top of a booming residential sector. The *2024–2033 Construction and Maintenance Looking Forward* scenario sees the province’s construction sectors slow in the short term before rebounding across the end of the forecast period.

Activity in the residential sector is being constrained by high interest rates and consumer concerns over affordability in the early part of the forecast period. Housing starts, and construction of single-family homes in particular, are most affected in the immediate term. New home construction is projected to experience a moderate up-cycle between 2026 and 2029, but the principal driver of growth in the residential sector is renovation activity. Levels there grow continuously after 2024 and to the end of the forecast period.

Growth in non-residential construction investment, meanwhile, has been on the rise for the last several years, driven by a long list of major heavy industrial, public transit, education, healthcare, and roads, highways, and bridges projects. Activity peaked in 2023, and is expected to step down in the short term as some projects pass peak periods or conclude.

Investment is projected to fluctuate through the medium term, in line with the timing of major projects such as the Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, LNG Canada expansion and associated pipeline, Robert Banks Terminal and the Massey Tunnel Replacement Program,

and strong growth in institutional and government building projects. By 2033, investment is projected to grow by 3% above 2023’s peak.

To build new capacity and replace retiring workers, British Columbia’s construction industry must attract, train and retain 54,000 workers between the 2024 to 2033 period.

Meeting labour force demand requirements will require a combination of industry strategies that include increased local recruitment and training, attracting newcomers to the industry as well as recruiting workers displaced from other industries, and, during periods of peak demands, bringing in construction workers from other provinces.

The industry scenario-based approach developed by BuildForce Canada to assess future labour market conditions provides a powerful planning tool for industry, government, and other stakeholders to better track labour market conditions and identify potential pressure points. The assumed timing of proposed major projects in the outlook underpins the market conditions anticipated. Any changes to these assumptions present risks and potentially alter anticipated labour market conditions.

ABOUT THE BUILDFORCE CANADA LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEM

BuildForce Canada's labour market information (LMI) system uses the most advanced and detailed industry model available in Canada to produce a forecast scenario that reflects current and future labour demand and supply information for the residential and non-residential construction sectors, by province.

Updated annually, the system is calibrated to the latest information on global, national, and provincial economic conditions derived from various data sources including Statistics Canada, Canadian financial institutions, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and federal and provincial budget plans. Key factors driving the outlook scenario include: economic environment measures such as real GDP growth, inflation, interest rates, exchange rates, commodity prices, and international trading partner trends, and population growth and demographic trends.

Unique to the BuildForce system is the integration of a major projects inventory. This is developed in partnership with provincial LMI committees – networks of industry stakeholders that include labour groups, construction associations, owners, and federal/provincial government departments – and identifies key projects that may distort construction investment trends and market conditions.

Information on economics, demographics, and major projects are combined into a dynamic, multi-sector and multi-factor macroeconomic model to generate a 10-year labour market outlook scenario for the residential and non-residential construction sectors in each Canadian province.

The system incorporates coefficients derived from Statistics Canada's input-output tables to determine industry demands and proprietary coefficients developed by BuildForce Canada to translate residential and non-residential investment data into labour demands for the 34 most common on-site trades and occupations in the construction sector. These account for 75% of the total construction labour force.

For labour supply, the system utilizes Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population as a starting point. That data is adjusted to reflect current public-policy and demand factors, and is further refined through consultation with the provincial LMI committees to produce measures of provincial economic and population growth, employment growth, retirements, new entrants to the labour force, and interprovincial and international migration patterns.

Provincial residential and non-residential labour market conditions, by trade and occupation, are assessed based on changes in supply and demand and summarized in the form of tables. For each year, conditions are ranked from a low of 1 (in which excess labour supply is apparent, and there is a risk of losing workers to other markets) to a high of 5 (in which there is excess demand, competition is intense, and recruiting extends beyond local labour markets). Ranks are calculated based on annual employment growth, natural or normal unemployment rates, and changes in supply (i.e., retirements, new entrants, and mobility requirements to meet demands).

Rankings for some trades or occupations may be suppressed in some provinces and regions due to the small size of the workforce (i.e., fewer than 100 workers) and limited statistical reliability when assessing labour market conditions at the sector level. Some trades are also excluded because they typically do not work in the sector being assessed (e.g., boilermakers and millwrights typically do not work in residential construction, nor do homebuilding and renovation managers work in non-residential construction).

Finally, to further improve the robustness of the system, BuildForce Canada's outlook scenario is validated by provincial LMI committees.

For the most detailed & comprehensive construction labour market data in Canada, visit

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Customizable tables and graphs available for:

- ➔ Data on more than 30 construction trades and occupations by province looking ahead 10 years
- ➔ Key economic indicators, construction investment and labour market conditions by province and/or sector
- ➔ Macroeconomic and investment data



Timely construction forecast data is available online at [constructionforecasts.ca](https://www.constructionforecasts.ca). Create customized reports on a broad range of selected categories within sector, trade or province covering up to 10 years.

For more information, contact:



Phone 613.569.5552
info@buildforce.ca

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