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REPORT

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Surrey Board of Trade Surrey Labour Market Intelligence Report

June 2023 (including results of Statistics Canada's May 2023 Labour Force Survey)

The Surrey Board of Trade (SBOT) continues to provide the only Surrey-specific labour market data on a regular basis! This summary report compares employment changes in Surrey from during the COVID-19 pandemic (January 2021) and through to May 2023 to show the local employment impacts of the pandemic and other factors. This report is prepared by Human Capital Strategies in conjunction with the Surrey Board of Trade.

This is the third of six SBOT Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) Reports in 2023. Note that in these bi-monthly reports, "COVID-19" has been removed from headings as we are no longer comparing current employment with a pre-COVID baseline in February 2020. Surrey employment levels in January 2021 are now a new benchmark or baseline with which we are comparing current levels (see Footnote 5 at the end for Methodology).

In previous reports until the end of 2022, the Labour Force Data provided by Statistics Canada was based on population counts from the 2016 Census of Population. As of the February 2023 report, the estimates have been adjusted to reflect the population counts from the 2021 Census. As a result, you will see some minor changes in numbers from Labour Market Intelligence Reports published in 2023. All of the numbers for 2021 and beyond provided in this report have been updated based on the revised labour force data from Statistics Canada.

Highlights

Over the last 12 months, Surrey employment grew by an estimated more than 4,000 jobs or 1.2% since May 2022. While still significant, this growth was smaller than the growth in the previous 12 months (May 2021-May 2022) which was more than 12,000 jobs or 3.9% as part of the COVID-19 recovery since 2020. Surrey experienced employment growth in both goods-producing and service-producing sectors – those with the greatest job growth to May 2023 are estimated to be:

- Wholesale and retail trade employment rose over the last year with an increase of 6.9% or over 3,800 jobs in Surrey;
- The education sector grew by a further 13.7% or 2,356 jobs since last school year;
- Finance, insurance and real estate employment also increased a sizeable 10.0% or 1,500 jobs during this period;
- The construction sector increased by over 4.4% or 1,303 jobs since May 2022; and,
- While smaller in absolute growth in jobs (981), Surrey's resource sector expanded by almost 23.0% over the last 12 months.

The sectors with the most negative employment change in Surrey over the last 12 months are estimated to be: professional, scientific and technical services; manufacturing; transportation and warehousing; and business, building and other support services.

As of May 2023, the growth in employment by broad occupational category in Surrey since May 2022 also reflects a heavy service-producing emphasis:

- Management jobs grew by 25.0% or almost 4,164 jobs over the last 12 months;
- Sales and service jobs grew by 4.2% or almost 3,400 positions in Surrey;
- Education, law and social, community and government services contributed almost 2,000 new jobs for a 6.8% increase; and,
- Art, culture, recreation and sport employment jumped by 23.8% over the last 12 months, creating over 1,663 jobs.

While a relatively small growth of 484 jobs in Surrey since May 2022, employment in natural resources, including agriculture, experienced a significant 13.2% increase and is the 'star' for job growth in Surrey over the last 2 years, with growth of more than one-third (34.3% or 1,357) jobs.

Accommodation and food services (22.8% or 3,957 jobs), wholesale and retail trade (21.1% or 10,280) and educational services (18.2% or 3,007 jobs) also experienced significant two-year job growth in Surrey. The only sectors with significant employment decreases since May 2021 is business, building and other support services (-25.4% or -4,315); and utilities (-16.0% or -294 jobs).

The labour market in Surrey over the last few years is a tale of two themes. One of sustained growth in jobs among key goods-producing sectors in natural resources and in, lesser so, construction. The other of significant recoveries in service industries such as wholesale and retail, accommodation and food services and educational services. However, it is a bit concerning that job growth has leveled off in knowledge-based sectors like professional, scientific and technical services, information, culture and recreation, health care and social services and secondary manufacturing. These sectors will need to expand labour market demand to generate the future economy Surrey needs.

As indicated earlier this year, factors such as interest rates, housing costs and availability, talent shortages, supply chain issues, government regulation and other trends continue to combine to prevent a more robust recovery since the worst of the pandemic. Uncertainty, talent and bottlenecks will need to be addressed.

COVID-19 Employer, Labour Force and Workforce Impacts in May 2023

Surrey Employer Employment Impacts: Estimates extrapolated from Statistics Canada's 2016 Census and 2023 Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey (June 2023).

Surrey and Metro Vancouver Changes: Labour Force Per Census 2016 and 2021¹²

Over the last 12 months, Surrey employment grew by an estimated more than 4,000 jobs or 1.2% since May 2022. While still significant, this growth was smaller than the growth in the previous 12 months (May 2021-May 2022) which was more than 12,000 jobs or 3.9% as part of the COVID-19 recovery since 2020.

Surrey's recent labour market growth has been significant when compared to the broader Metro Vancouver Region (Regional District, which includes Surrey). Between 2016 and 2021, the Metro Vancouver area saw a labour force growth of 112,700 or 8.3% over this 5-year period.

Surrey's labour force grew by 308,190 or a healthy 12.2%, an almost 2.5% average annual growth. As a result, Surrey's labour force in 2021 as a percentage of Metro Vancouver's grew to 21.0% from just above 20.0% in 2016. Interestingly, Surrey's labour force as a proportion of Metro Vancouver's in 2021 was relatively higher in blue collar occupations such as 30.1% in trades, transport and equipment operators, 26.9% in natural resource occupations, and 34.2% in occupations in manufacturing and utilities. The Surrey labour force was proportionately lower than Metro Vancouver's in occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport (9.9%), in senior management positions (12.0%), in natural and applied sciences (13.9%), and in education, law, social, community and government services (16.8%).

¹ Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). *Census Profile*. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released February 8, 2023.

² Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0379-01.

Surrey Employment Impacts BY INDUSTRY – May 2021 to May 2023

Employment in Surrey in May 2023 was an estimated 1.2% or just over 4,000 more jobs above employment in May 2022; and over 16,000 or 5.2% more than in May 2021. The largest employment sectors in Surrey in May 2023 were:

1. Wholesale and retail trade (59,093 or 18.0% of total jobs in Surrey);
2. Health care and social assistance (40,513 or 12.3% of total jobs in Surrey);
3. Construction (30,989 or 9.4% of total jobs in Surrey);
4. Transportation and warehousing (30,084 or 9.2% of total jobs in Surrey); and,
5. Manufacturing (26,008 or 7.9% of total jobs in Surrey).

Table 1 shows employment for May 2021, May 2022 and May 2023 in Surrey, by industry.

Table 1: Estimated Employment by Industry in Surrey³ – May 2021 through May 2023
Adapted from Table 14-10-0379-01, Statistics Canada⁴

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	Employment May 2021	Employment May 2022	Employment May 2023	Change May 2022 to May 2023	
				Jobs	%
Total Employed (all industries)	312,522	324,618	328,650	4,032	1.2%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas	3,953	4,328	5,310	981	22.7%
Utilities	1,840	2,006	1,546	-460	-22.9%
Construction	29,898	29,686	30,989	1,303	4.4%
Manufacturing	28,555	28,413	26,008	-2,406	-8.5%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	48,813	55,269	59,093	3,824	6.9%
Transportation & Warehousing	30,154	31,968	30,084	-1,885	-5.9%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	15,768	15,004	16,503	1,499	10.0%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	24,248	26,030	23,554	-2,476	-9.5%
Business, Building & Other Support Services	17,002	13,207	12,687	-520	-3.9%
Educational Services	16,508	17,159	19,515	2,356	13.7%
Health Care & Social Assistance	41,130	40,385	40,513	128	0.3%
Information, Culture & Recreation	11,371	12,958	12,682	-276	-2.1%
Accommodation & Food Services	17,343	21,546	21,300	-246	-1.1%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	13,188	11,445	12,390	945	8.3%
Public Administration	11,131	12,056	12,766	709	5.9%

Reference: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0379-01

³ Estimates based on Surrey share of Metro Vancouver (Census Metropolitan Area) by Industry in 2021.

⁴ Employment by Industry, three month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality.

The sectors with the most negative employment change in Surrey over the last 12 months are estimated to be:

- Professional, scientific and technical services decreased by almost 10% or -2,476 jobs since May 2022;
- Manufacturing employment in Surrey dropped by 8.5% over the last 12 months (over -2,400 jobs);
- Surrey’s transportation and warehousing sector lost 5.9% of employment or almost -1,900 jobs; and,
- Employment in business, building and other support services declined by 3.9% or -520 jobs.

Over the last 12 months, Surrey experienced employment growth in both goods-producing and service-producing sectors – those with the greatest job growth to May 2023 are estimated to be:

- Wholesale and retail trade employment rose over the last year with an increase of 6.9% or over 3,800 jobs in Surrey;
- With more sustained attendance at school throughout the year, the Surrey education sector grew by a further 13.7% or 2,356 jobs since last school year;
- Employment in finance, insurance and real estate also increased a further sizeable 10.0% or 1,500 jobs;
- Surrey’s construction sector increased by over 4.4% or 1,303 jobs since May 2022; and,
- While smaller in absolute growth in jobs (981), Surrey’s resource sector expanded by almost 23.0%.

Surrey Employment Impacts BY OCCUPATION – May 2021 to May 2023

Table 2 shows employment trends by occupation in Surrey over the last 12 months. The four largest employment sectors by occupation in Surrey in May 2023 accounted for 217,422 jobs or almost two-thirds (66.2%) of the total complement:

- Sales and services (83,191);
- Trades, transport and equipment operators (55,444);
- Business, finance and administration (48,312); and,
- Education, law and social, community and government services (ELSCGS) (30,475).

Table 2: Estimated Employment by Occupation in Surrey – May 2021 through May 2023
Adapted from Table 14-10-0430-01, Statistics Canada

National Occupational Classification	Employment May 2021	Employment May 2022	Employment May 2023	Change May 2022 to May 2023	
				Jobs	%
Total Employed (all occupations)	312,522	324,618	328,650	4,032	1.2%
Management	15,708	16,656	20,820	4,164	25.0%
Business, Finance & Administration	45,216	48,312	48,312	0	0.0%
Natural & Applied Sciences	24,464	21,559	19,710	-1,849	-8.6%
Health	25,179	24,961	23,108	-1,853	-7.4%
Education, Law & Social, Community & Government Services	26,762	28,526	30,475	1,949	6.8%
Art, Culture, Recreation & Sport	5,980	6,989	8,653	1,663	23.8%
Sales & Services	76,139	79,801	83,191	3,390	4.2%
Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators	60,200	64,595	55,444	-9,150	-14.2%
Natural Resources Agriculture & Related Production	4,385	3,658	4,143	484	13.2%
Manufacturing & Utilities	14,296	16,211	13,270	-2,941	-18.1%

Reference: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0430-01

As of May 2023, the growth in employment by broad occupational category in Surrey since May 2022 reflects a heavy service-producing emphasis:

- Driven by Surrey's service-producing sectors, management jobs grew by 25.0% or almost 4,164 jobs over the last 12 months;
- Sales and service jobs grew by 4.2% or almost 3,400 positions in Surrey;
- ELSCGS contributed almost 2,000 new jobs for a 6.8% increase; and,
- Art, culture, recreation and sport employment jumped by 23.8% over the last 12 months, creating over 1,663 jobs.

While a relatively small growth of 484 jobs in Surrey since May 2022, employment in natural resources, including agriculture, experienced a significant 13.2% increase.

Most other occupational categories of positions in Surrey lost employment since May 2022, including the following:

- Health jobs in Surrey dropped by almost 14.0% or almost -3,500 positions in the last 12 months;
- Manufacturing and utilities saw a large decrease in employment over this period, declining by 18.1% or almost -3,000 jobs;
- While construction and industrial employment growth in Surrey continues, over the 12 months there was a 14.2% drop in jobs or over -9,150; and,
- Natural and applied sciences employment saw an 8.6% decrease or loss of over -1,849 jobs.

Over the last two years since May 2021, management (+5,112 or 32.5%), ELSCGS (+3,713 or 13.0%) and sales and service (+7,052 or 9.3%) positions experienced the highest growth in Surrey.

- Natural and applied sciences positions dropped by 19.4% or over -4,754 jobs;
- Health care employment declined by 8.2% or over -2,071 jobs; and,
- Employment in trades, transport and equipment operators declined by 7.9% or -4,756 jobs.

The 'star' for job growth in Surrey over the last two years is natural resources with growth of more than one-third (34.3%) or 1,357 jobs. Accommodation and food services (22.8% or 3,957 jobs), wholesale and retail trade (21.1% or 10,280) and educational services (18.2% or 3,007 jobs) also experienced significant two-year job growth in Surrey. The only sectors with significant employment decreases since May 2021 are business, building and other support services (-25.4% or -4,315); and utilities (-16.0% or -294 jobs).

Again, the labour market in Surrey over the last few years has been a tale of two themes.

- One of sustained growth in job among key goods-producing sectors in natural resources and in, lesser so, construction.
- The other of significant recoveries in service industries such as wholesale and retail, accommodation and food services and educational services.

However, it is a bit concerning that job growth has leveled off in knowledge-based sectors like professional, scientific and technical services, information, culture and recreation, health care and social services and secondary manufacturing. These sectors will need to expand labour market demand to generate the future economy Surrey needs.

As indicated earlier this year, factors such as interest rates, housing costs and availability, talent shortages, supply chain issues, government regulation and other trends continue to combine to prevent a more robust recovery since the worst of the pandemic. Uncertainty, talent and bottlenecks will need to be addressed.

Sources:⁵

Statistics Canada. [Table 14-10-0379-01 Employment by industry, three-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality \(x 1,000\)](#)

Statistics Canada. [Table 14-10-0381-01 Employment by occupation, three-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality \(x 1,000\)](#)

More Information:

BC Labour Force Survey Data, Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, May 2023 (Released June 9, 2023)

Source: BC Stats – Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, May 2023. Released, June 9, 2023. Retrieved from https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/employment-labour-market/lfs_data_tables.pdf

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⁵ Methodology: Census Profile data, using 2021 Census data, for both Surrey (Census Subdivision) and Vancouver (Census Metropolitan Area). The Census Profile for each geographic area, provides a count of the population for the labour force aged 15 years and over, by occupation (broad category) and by industry sectors. Then we take that data and calculate the percentage of the total Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area that Surrey (as Census subdivision) accounted for. In some cases, the Labour Force Survey data combines multiple industries when providing employment data (for example, counts for the Wholesale Trade industry and the Retail Trade industry in the Census Profile are separate, but employment is reported for "Wholesale and Retail Trade". In those cases, we calculate the count for the industries that were combined by geography and then compare the two to get the proportion for Surrey of the total of Vancouver.