

December 2023

SURREY LABOUR MARKET REPORT

The only Surrey-focused labour market report

SURREY BOARD OF TRADE



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Surrey Board of Trade Surrey Labour Market Intelligence Report

November 2023 (including results of Statistics Canada's December 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 middle of the COVID-19 pandemic (November 2021) and through to November 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 last 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 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

Employment in Surrey in November 2023 was an estimated 3.7% or almost 12,000 more jobs above employment in November 2022; and almost 18,400 or 5.8% more than in November 2021.

Sectors

The largest industry employment sectors in Surrey in November 2023 were mainly traditional staple sectors:

1. Wholesale and retail trade (54,752 or 16.2% of total jobs in Surrey);
2. Health care and social assistance (40,534 or 12.0% of total jobs in Surrey);
3. Construction (32,399 or 9.6% of total jobs in Surrey); and,
4. Transportation and warehousing (31,934 or 9.4% of total jobs in Surrey).

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

1. Employment in business, building and other support services¹ declined by a huge 19.3% or -2,964 jobs.
2. Manufacturing employment in Surrey dropped by 2.6% over the last 12 months (or -736 jobs).
3. Surrey's information, culture and recreation sector employment fell -428 jobs or 3.2%.

Over the last 12 months, except for slight growth in resources and construction, Surrey experienced employment growth totally in service-producing sectors. Those with the greatest job growth to November 2023 are estimated to be:

1. Professional, scientific and technical services employment led the way with an increase of almost 12.5% or over 3,000 jobs;
2. Transportation and warehousing grew by almost 2,800 jobs or 9.6% over this period;
3. The "other services" sector grew by over 2,200 jobs for a 18.9% increase; and,
4. Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing increased by almost 2,000 positions or 13.0% since November 2022.

¹ Examples: Administrative facilities and call centres; janitorial, landscaping and carpentry services for buildings; and waste and remediation services, such as garbage collection and recycling.

Occupations

The five largest employment sectors by occupation in Surrey in November 2023 accounted for 250,612 jobs or almost three-quarters (74.1%) of the total employed:

- Sales and services (87,033 or 25.7%);
- Trades, transport and equipment operators (58,996 or 17.4%);
- Business, finance and administration (45,810 or 13.5%);
- Education, law and social, community and government services (ELSCGS) (31,937 or 9.4%); and,
- Health care (26,836 or 7.9%).

As of November 2023, the growth in employment by broad occupational category in Surrey since November 2022 again reflects strong growth in service-producing sectors, except for management positions which are also in goods sectors:

- While only growing 7.9% since November 2022, sales and services added 6,373 jobs in Surrey.
- The ELSCGS sector added 4,234 new jobs for a healthy 15.3% increase.
- Management jobs grew by 14.0% or 2,676 jobs over the last 12 months.
- Healthcare occupations represented over 2,289 new positions for a 9.3% increase.

While a relatively small growth of 915 jobs since November 2022, employment in natural resources, including agriculture, in Surrey experienced a robust 28.8% increase in the last 12 months.

Three other occupational categories of positions in Surrey lost significant employment since November 2022:

- Trades, transport and equipment operator positions in Surrey decreased by over -5,100 or 8.0%;
- Manufacturing and utilities positions experienced another large decrease in employment over this period, declining by 17.0% or over -2,500 jobs; and,
- Tech-related natural and applied sciences jobs experienced a decrease in employment of 8.9% for a loss of -2,029 jobs in Surrey over the last 12 months.

Synopsis

Over the last 12 months, Surrey employment has grown 3.7% or almost 12,000 jobs, up from 2.0% and 6,426 jobs in the previous 12 months. This was driven by key service sectors and mixed growth in goods-producing sectors. Perhaps due to real estate and continuing remote work, the biggest job loser in Surrey has been business, building and other support services (-19.3% or almost -3,000 jobs), combined with lagging manufacturing growth.

While Surrey had higher employment growth over the last 12 months (3.7%) than Canada (2.5%) and BC (2.3%), uncertainty and factors such as inflation concerns including wages, interest rates, housing costs and availability, talent shortages, supply chain issues, government regulation (particularly related to resource sectors) and other trends continue to combine to prevent a more robust recovery since the worst of the pandemic. These will need to be addressed by governments, sectors, communities, and businesses in order for Surrey, the Lower Mainland and BC to realize more significant economic growth.

As we move towards the winter of 2023/24, so far there are no strong signs of the flu season, the highly contagious RSV virus and new strains of COVID-19 significantly impacting businesses and workforces. Perhaps recent experience builds stronger resilience in the labour market.

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

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

Surrey and Metro Vancouver Changes: Labour Force Per Census 2016 and 2021²³

Over the last 12 months, Surrey employment grew by an estimated 11,970 jobs or 3.7% since November 2022. This is significant (and more than BC's growth of 2.3%), and higher than the growth in the previous 12 months (November 2021- November 2022) which was more than 6,400 jobs or 2.0% as part of the COVID-19 recovery since 2021.

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%).

Surrey Employment Impacts BY INDUSTRY – November 2021 to November 2023

Employment in Surrey in November 2023 was an estimated 3.7% or almost 12,000 jobs above employment in November 2022; and almost 18,400 or 5.8% more than in November 2021. The largest industry employment sectors in Surrey in November 2023 were mainly traditional staple sectors:

1. Wholesale and retail trade (54,752 or 16.2% of total jobs in Surrey);
2. Health care and social assistance (40,534 or 12.0% of total jobs in Surrey);
3. Construction (32,399 or 9.6% of total jobs in Surrey); and,
4. Transportation and warehousing (31,934 or 9.4% of total jobs in Surrey).

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

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

1. Employment in business, building and other support services⁴ declined by a huge 19.3% or -2,964 jobs.
2. Manufacturing employment in Surrey dropped by 2.6% over the last 12 months (or -736 jobs).
3. Surrey's information, culture and recreation sector employment fell -428 jobs or 3.2%.

² Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). *Census Profile*. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released February 8, 2023.

³ Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0379-01.

⁴ Examples: Administrative facilities and call centres; janitorial, landscaping and carpentry services for buildings; and waste and remediation services, such as garbage collection and recycling.

Table 1: Estimated Employment by Industry in Surrey⁵ – November 2021 through November 2023
Adapted from Table 14-10-0379-01, Statistics Canada⁶

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	Employment November 2021	Employment November 2022	Employment November 2023	Change November 2022 to November 2023	
				Jobs	%
Total Employed (all industries)	319,809	326,235	338,205	11,970	3.7%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas	3,694	3,722	3,809	87	2.3%
Utilities	1,122	1,877	1,693	-184	-9.8%
Construction	26,706	32,213	32,399	186	0.6%
Manufacturing	31,413	28,583	27,847	-736	-2.6%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	58,283	52,975	54,752	1,777	3.4%
Transportation & Warehousing	31,061	29,142	31,934	2,792	9.6%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	16,093	15,047	16,998	1,952	13.0%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	22,558	24,471	27,523	3,052	12.5%
Business, Building & Other Support Services	11,621	15,364	12,401	-2,964	-19.3%
Educational Services	16,368	19,763	20,150	388	2.0%
Health Care & Social Assistance	40,811	39,746	40,534	788	2.0%
Information, Culture & Recreation	12,517	13,248	12,820	-428	-3.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	20,254	21,218	21,423	205	1.0%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	11,592	11,697	13,902	2,205	18.9%
Public Administration	14,164	13,337	14,007	670	5.0%

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

Over the last 12 months, except for slight growth in resources and construction, Surrey experienced employment growth totally in service-producing sectors. Those with the greatest job growth to November 2023 are estimated to be:

1. Professional, scientific and technical services employment led the way with an increase of almost 12.5% or over 3,000 jobs;
2. Transportation and warehousing grew by almost 2,800 jobs or 9.6% over this period;
3. The “other services” sector grew by over 2,200 jobs for a 18.9% increase; and,
4. Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing increased by almost 2,000 positions or 13.0% since November 2022.

⁵ Estimates based on Surrey share of Metro Vancouver (Census Metropolitan Area) by Industry in 2021.

⁶ Employment by Industry, three month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality.

Surrey Employment Impacts BY OCCUPATION – November 2021 to November 2023

Table 2 shows employment trends by occupation in Surrey over the last 12 months. The five largest employment sectors by occupation in Surrey in November 2023 accounted for 250,612 jobs or almost three-quarters (74.1%) of the total employed:

1. Sales and services (87,033 or 25.7%);
2. Trades, transport and equipment operators (58,996 or 17.4%);
3. Business, finance and administration (45,810 or 13.5%);
4. Education, law and social, community and government services (ELSCGS) (31,937 or 9.4%); and,
5. Health care (26,836 or 7.9%).

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

National Occupational Classification	Employment November 2021	Employment November 2022	Employment November 2023	Change November 2022 to November 2023	
				Jobs	%
Total Employed (all occupations)	319,809	326,235	338,205	11,970	3.7%
Management	15,600	19,152	21,828	2,676	14.0%
Business, Finance & Administration	50,310	45,270	45,810	540	1.2%
Natural & Applied Sciences	21,211	22,782	20,753	-2,029	-8.9%
Health	26,509	24,547	26,836	2,289	9.3%
Education, Law & Social, Community & Government Services	27,619	27,703	31,937	4,234	15.3%
Art, Culture, Recreation & Sport	6,089	7,494	7,841	347	4.6%
Sales & Services	82,535	80,659	87,033	6,373	7.9%
Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators	56,949	64,143	58,996	-5,147	-8.0%
Natural Resources Agriculture & Related Production	3,793	3,174	4,089	915	28.8%
Manufacturing & Utilities	15,322	14,877	12,346	-2,531	-17.0%

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

As of November 2023, the growth in employment by broad occupational category in Surrey since November 2022 again reflects strong growth in service-producing sectors, except for management positions which are also in goods sectors:

1. While only growing 7.9% since November 2022, sales and services added 6,373 jobs in Surrey.
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3. Tech-related natural and applied sciences jobs experienced a decrease in employment of 8.9% for a loss of -2,029 jobs in Surrey over the last 12 months.

Over the last two years since November 2021, sectors that led the way in Surrey's job growth were (in descending order) construction, professional/technical/scientific services, educational services and transportation and warehousing– contributing almost 14,000 new jobs over this period.

Also contributing almost 14,000 new jobs over the last two years were the occupational categories of (in descending order) management, sales and service, ELSCGS and arts/culture/recreation/sport jobs.

Over the same two-year period, the biggest decreases in employment by sector were in manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade – both over -3,500 jobs each. The biggest decreases in jobs by occupational category over the same period in Surrey were business, finance and administration (-4,500) and manufacturing and utilities (-2,976).

Over the last 12 months, Surrey employment has grown 3.7% or almost 12,000 jobs, up from 2.0% and 6,426 jobs in the previous 12 months. This was driven by key service sectors and mixed growth in goods-producing sectors. Perhaps due to real estate and continuing remote work, the biggest job loser in Surrey has been business, building and other support services (-19.3% or almost -3,000 jobs), combined with lagging manufacturing growth.

While Surrey had higher employment growth over the last 12 months (3.7%) than Canada (2.5%) and BC (2.3%), uncertainty and factors such as inflation concerns including wages, interest rates, housing costs and availability, talent shortages, supply chain issues, government regulation (particularly related to resource sectors) and other trends continue to combine to prevent a more robust recovery since the worst of the pandemic. These will need to be addressed by governments, sectors, communities and businesses in order for Surrey, the Lower Mainland and BC to realize more significant economic growth.

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Sources:⁷

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, November 2023 (Released December 1, 2023)

Source: BC Stats – Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, November 2023. Released, December 1, 2023.

Retrieved from https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/employment-labour-market/lfs_data_tables.pdf

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⁷ 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.