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LABOUR MARKET UPDATE – APRIL/MAY 2026

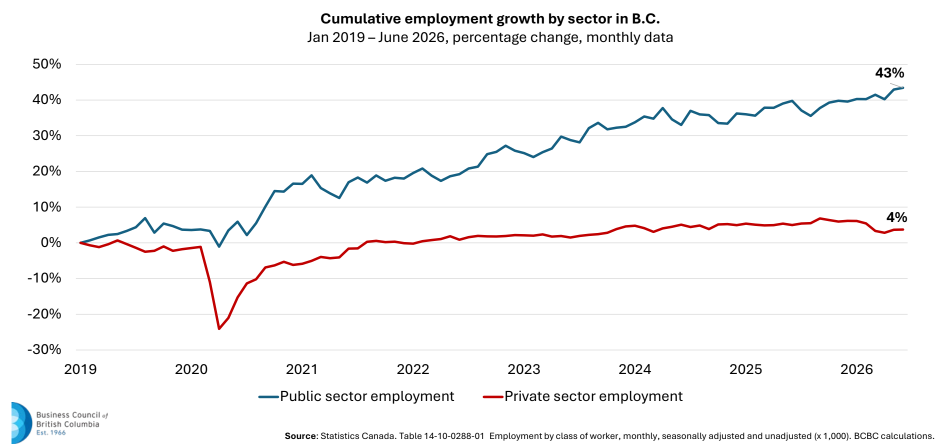
B.C.'s labour market showed some improvement in April and May following the sharp employment declines recorded earlier in the year. Total employment increased by roughly 21,000 between March and May, recovering just over half of the nearly 40,000 jobs lost during February and March. The improvement is encouraging, but it does not yet represent a full recovery. As of May, employment remained approximately 19,000 below its January level. The latest figures are more consistent with stabilisation after a significant decline than with the beginning of a strong labour market rebound.

The longer-term composition of employment growth remains a concern. Between January 2019 and May 2026, public sector employment in B.C. increased by 43%, while private sector employment grew by just 4% (**Figure 1**). Even after the modest improvement this spring, private sector employment remains only slightly above where it stood more than seven years ago. This persistent divergence points to continued weakness in the part of the economy responsible for much of the province's investment, productivity growth, and tax base.

Job vacancy data reinforce the picture of a softer labour market. In April, there were approximately four job vacancies for every 10 unemployed workers in B.C (**Figure 2**). This was well below the pre-pandemic average of 6.1 and far below the peak of 12.3 reached in 2022. The ratio has changed little since late 2024. For collective bargaining, this represents a markedly different backdrop from the unusually tight labour market of 2021 and 2022 as the broader provincial market is no longer characterized by widespread excess demand for workers.

The spring data provide tentative evidence that the sharp deterioration seen in February and March has eased. However, private sector hiring remains weak. Sustained improvement will ultimately depend on stronger private sector investment, productivity and competitiveness.

Private sector employment growth largely flat since 2019



Labour market slack continues in 2026