



A SkillsPlus Socioeconomic Report:

Who Works in Victoria's Small Businesses?



This is the first in a series of four socio-economic reports prepared by SkillsPlus. The purpose of these reports is to provide relevant labour market information for small businesses in the **Retail/Wholesale/Grocery** and the **Tourism/Hospitality** industries.

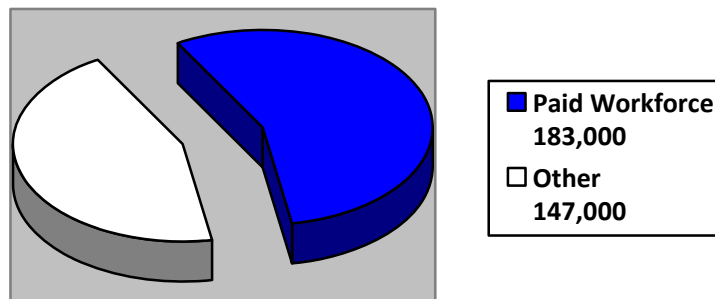
The information in this report is based on 2006 Census data. Because the Census data is presented in slightly different categories, this report uses the terms *Retail, Wholesale* and *Accommodation & Food*.

Using the Census data, we looked at employment information for all industries in Victoria in order to identify similarities and differences between employees in *Retail, Wholesale* and *Accommodation & Food* and those in the rest of the workforce.

The Paid Workforce

In 2006, more than half of the total population in the Victoria region – and two-thirds of people 15 years and older – was in the paid workforce.

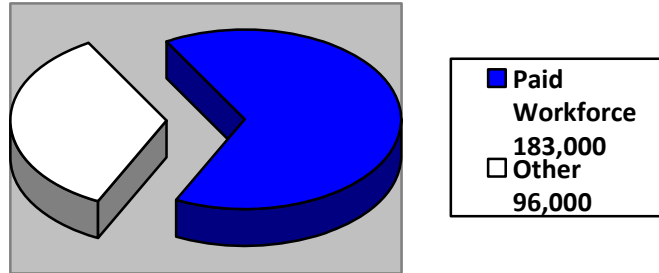
Total population (330,000)



We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development as provided by the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement.

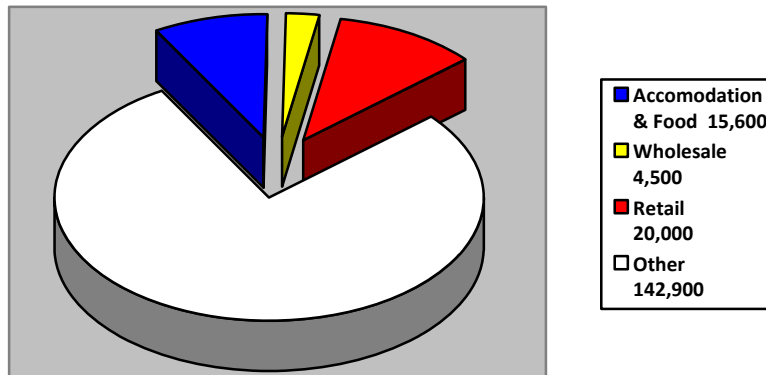


Population 15 years and over (279,000)



The Retail, Wholesale, and Accommodation & Food industries were important employers, employing more than a fifth – over 40,000 people – of the total workforce. More than half (20,000) of these were employed in Retail, while 15,600 worked in Accommodation & Food, and 4,500 worked in Wholesale.

Total paid workforce (183,000)



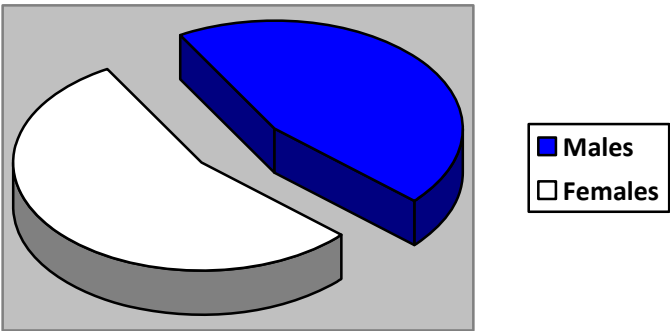
Characteristics of the paid workforce

Gender

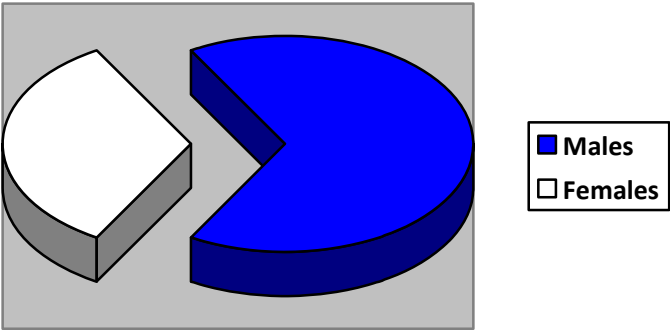
Victoria's overall workforce is divided equally between males and females.

However, the picture is quite different in Retail, Wholesale, and Accommodation & Food. Women make up more than half of the workforce in Retail and Accommodation & Food. Males represent two-thirds of the workforce in Wholesale.

Retail; Accommodation & Food



Wholesale

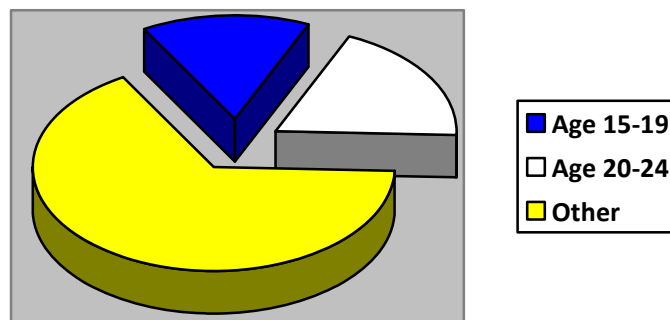


Age

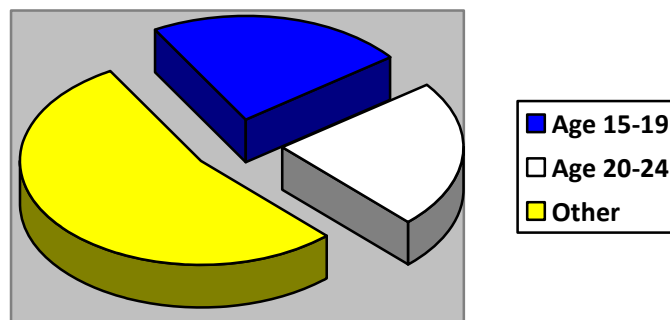
Together, the Retail, Wholesale, and Accommodation & Food employ more than a fifth of the total workforce, but almost two-thirds of young people aged 15–19 in the workforce – most in Retail and Accommodation & Food.

In Retail, the 15–19 age group accounts for almost a sixth of the workforce, and the 20–24 group accounts for almost a fifth. In Accommodation & Food, each of these age groups accounts for just under a quarter of the workforce.

Retail workforce



Accommodation & Food workforce



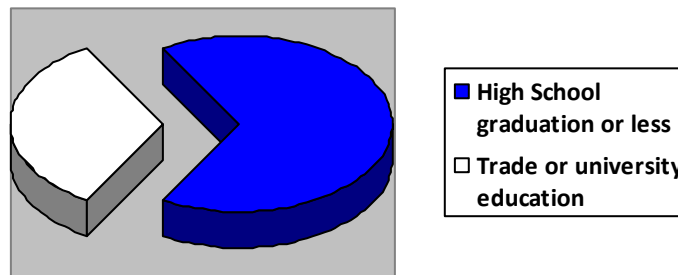
Education

Since the 15–19 age group accounts for such a large proportion of employees in the Retail and Accommodation & Food industries, it is not surprising that a sixth of Retail employees and a quarter of Accommodation & Food employees have less than high school graduation as their highest level of education. However, these numbers are much higher than for the total workforce, where a tenth of employees have less than high school graduation.

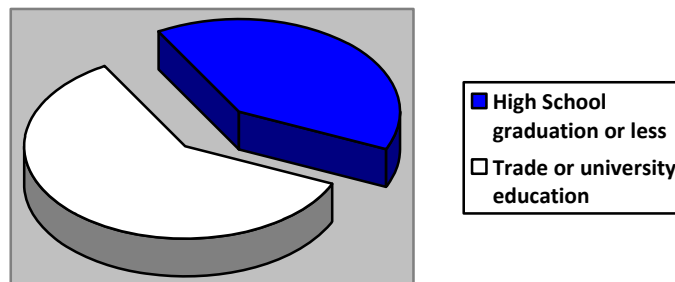
In addition, while almost a third of the total paid workforce in Victoria has high school graduation as the highest level of education, almost half of employees in Retail, Wholesale, and Accommodation & Food have high school as their highest level of education.

We can also say that two out of three employees in Retail, Wholesale, and Accommodation & Food have high school graduation or less, and one in three has a trade or university education. However, for the total paid workforce, two out of five employees have a high school graduation or less and three out of five have a trade or university education.

Retail, Wholesale, and Accommodation & Food



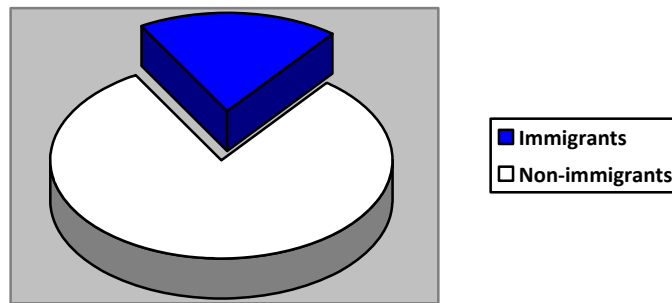
Total paid workforce



Immigration

There are a relatively small proportion of immigrants in the workforce. *Non*-immigrants account for more than four-fifths of employees in both the total paid workforce and the Retail, Wholesale, and Accommodation & Food sectors.

Total paid workforce



Of employees who are immigrants (less than a fifth of the total paid workforce), two-thirds immigrated to Canada before 1991. These employees account for almost the same proportion of the Retail workforce as they do for the total paid workforce; however, they are under-represented in Wholesale and over-represented in Accommodation & Food.

What does all this mean?

There are important differences between employees in the Retail, Wholesale, and Accommodation & Food industries in Victoria:

- Employees in the Retail and Accommodation & Food industries are predominantly female and under age 25.

Employers in Retail and Accommodation & Food who are considering investing in workplace learning need to design learning methods to meet the learning needs and preferences of young people. Female workers also may have learning preferences that employers need to take into account when designing their training plans.

- The Retail, Wholesale, and Accommodation & Food industries rely on employees who have lower levels of education than those in the total paid workforce.

If the level of education affects the knowledge and skill levels of employees, employees in these industries tend to bring less knowledge and skill to their work. Employers who want to benefit fully from the abilities of their workers should be attentive to knowledge and skill areas in which their employees have not received education or training (for example, essential skills such as reading, writing, numeracy, and problem-solving).

- The Accommodation & Food industry employs more immigrants than other industries do.

More recent immigrants may not have had the time or opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills relevant to their employment and to the Canadian work culture. Employers who want to benefit fully from the abilities of their employees should be attentive to the need for some of these employees to acquire additional education and training.

How training can help your business

Research shows that addressing Essential Skills (including reading, writing, using documents, numeracy, oral communication, and problem-solving) in the workforce benefits both employees and employers. Essential Skills training:

- helps retain and promote employees
- encourages employee loyalty
- improves safety
- increases productivity
- reduces errors and waste.

Canadian businesses that have addressed the need for workplace learning say employees are:

- confident
- willing to participate in ongoing training and adapt to change
- have better team-building and problem-solving skills
- believe they are valued by their workplaces.

For more information about the findings in this report, or to find out more about what they mean for your business, please contact info@communitycouncil.ca.

SkillsPlus provides essential skills training for businesses in the Retail/Wholesale/Grocery and the Tourism/Hospitality sectors in the Victoria region. SkillsPlus is offered by the Victoria READ Society and the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, with funding through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement.