

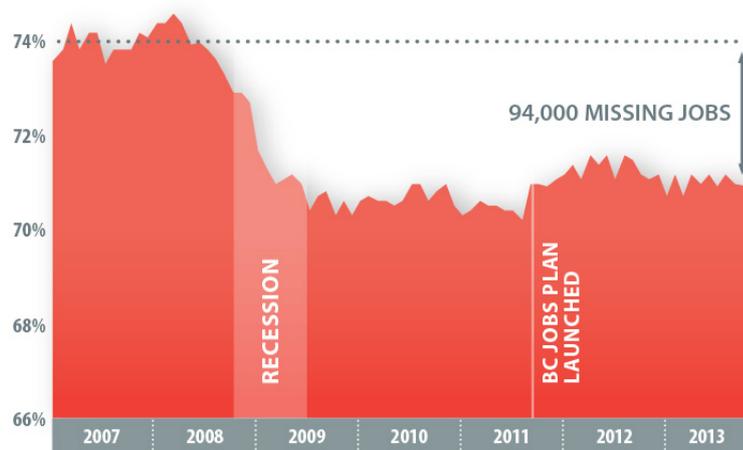
BC Is Actually "Missing" More Than 94,000 Jobs #SpinAlert

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, January 22, 2014

<http://politicsrespun.org/2014/01/bc-is-actually-missing-more-than-94000-jobs/>

BC JOBS PLAN FAILING TO DELIVER

Share of working-age British Columbians with a job



Source: Statistics Canada. Employment rate, ages 15-64.
policyalternatives.ca/bcjobsplan

It's not unusual to see unemployment rates of around 6-8% these days. But if you have always had the feeling that more than one in sixteen people is unemployed, you're right. The capitalist machine likes to use that low number to avoid the greater reality that almost 30% of British Columbians from 15-64 are not working.

Why is that? Optics. Here's how it works.

The graphic here is from a [CCPA report](#) this month showing that despite an optics-friendly jobs plan in BC, we have also had a jobless recovery since the crash in 2008, and more particularly, since the launch of the jobs plan in 2011. There are even 12,000 fewer private sector jobs in the first 10 months of 2013.

And BC's unemployment rate is still up at 6.7%, higher than the 4% from before the crash. So that's a failure too.

But when we look at a 6.7% unemployment rate, it should be surprising that the employment rate isn't 93.3%. It's 71%. What's the difference?

The 22.3% lists those not actively looking for work. "[The proportion of the working age population](#)

[counted as being in the labour force has declined every year since 2008, with the exception of 2012 when it flatlined.](#)" This includes teens and young adults in school, but it doesn't necessarily count those students who are underemployed. It also doesn't include those who have given up looking for work, those who fit the cliché of living in their parents' basement, those who are taking care of children, and other categories, many of which are hard to measure.

Certainly there are many who are not seeking work and quite happy with that, but they're also hard to find and measure. So out of the missing 22.3%, a certain percentage are fine with not work for pay in a job. And that's ok.

And despite a stated goal of the BC jobs plan to address the condition of vulnerable people in the labour market like immigrants and Aboriginal people, there has been no significant improvement there. In fact, with fewer new permanent jobs and more temporary foreign workers, there is more precariousness in BC's labour market than before.

Further, the CCPA study excluded seniors from the calculation to correct for any possible skewing in the job numbers by an increased participation by seniors: "[The employment rate of seniors aged 65 and over was 12 per cent in both BC and Canada in 2012, double the 2001 rates of 6 per cent for Canada and 4.9 per cent for BC. This is driven in part by inadequate pensions forcing more seniors to supplement their retirement income with paid work.](#)"

So, the flip side of this correcting out for seniors' data skewing the numbers is important. Seniors shouldn't be working. Sure, some may want to, but seniors deserve a retirement. But when twice as many seniors are working since 9/11, I can't believe that all those extra seniors are dying to work because they love it.

Sure, we hear about boomers who won't let go of their jobs, keeping younger generations from getting ahead. But how many seniors have such amazing jobs that they don't want to retire?

Inadequate pensions undermine economic security for seniors, so they end up as Walmart greeters, and those grinning McDonald's employees that show up in ads now and then. It's surreal. Seniors deserve a retirement.

So in society, I think we need to focus on the **employment** rate. We don't need to get it up to 100% because some are doing fine without paid work outside the home [at least for various stretches in their lives]. And then there's the idle rich among the 1%. But we can't be complacent about only 71% of people working. the 6.7% unemployment rate masks a much larger problem that capitalists find optically troublesome: that their system impoverishes far more than one in sixteen people.

People can't find work and give up. People turn to the underground economy. People are underemployed. People can't find permanent work. People can't find work in their field of training. People turn to the criminal economy. And most of these people, I would suggest, want good, stable, reliable employment that is rewarding, exciting and challenging.

That's what BC's jobs plan meant to do. And even though it was intentionally not measuring the full scope of the unemployment problem, it has still been a big failure.

And until we start paying much more attention to the **employment** rate, and demanding our political and economic leaders do too, we will be leaving people in the cracks.

They don't deserve that and neither would you if you were there too.