Census 2021 Alberta Labour Highlights Report 1

Labour Force Statistics, Employment Income, Retired and Older Workers Highlights

Alberta

This report is the first in a series of reports on the Census 2021. The
following reports are scheduled to be released in 2023.

Report 2: Indigenous, Immigrant, and Visible Minority Workers Highlights

Report 3: Skills Highlights

Report 4: Remote Work Highlights

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Highlights

Employment in Alberta declined by 3.1% to 2,030,730 persons employed for an employment rate of 60.2%. The decrease in employment was seen in all regions of Alberta with younger workers experiencing the greatest drops from 54.4% to 46.0%.

The number of unemployed people grew by 28% in Alberta. With 264,650 people unemployed, the unemployment rate stood at 11.5% in 2021. The unemployment rate for women and men was 11.7% and 11.4% respectively with women seeing a greater increase (3.9 percentage points) than men (1.4 percentage points).

The number of people participating in the labour force fell across Alberta by 0.3% to 2,295,385 people in 2021. Men across all ages saw labour force participation drop, especially among 15 to 24 year olds and 55 to 74 year olds.

Median employment income fell by 9.6% in Alberta from $46,000 in 2015 to $41,600 in 2020 with all areas in the province experiencing this drop. Men drove this trend with a drop of $7,200 in median employment income.

Across ages, gender, and geography, Alberta saw an increase in the percentage of retirees between 2016 and 2021 with large increases for men in the 55 to 64 and 64 to 75 age groups.

Background

Once every five years, the Census of Population provides a detailed and comprehensive statistical portrait of Canada that is vital to our country. The census is the only data source that consistently provides high-quality statistical information for both small geographic areas and small population groups across Canada. It collects information on the demographic, social and economic situation of people across Canada, as well as on the dwellings they lived in.

Census data are collected using the short-form and long-form. The short-form questionnaire is used to enumerate all usual residents of all private dwellings, collective dwellings, and Canadian residents who are temporarily abroad (e.g. Canadian government employees and their families). The long-form questionnaire complements the short-form questionnaire and is designed to provide more detailed information on people in Canada according to their demographic, social and economic characteristics. In 2021, a random sample of 25% of Canadian households received a long-form questionnaire while 75% received the short form questionnaire. Most of the data in this report is from the long-form questionnaire.

The total non-response rate for the short-form questionnaire was 3.1% for Canada and 3.6% for Alberta. The total non-response rate for the long-form questionnaire was 4.3% for Canada and 5.6% for Alberta. Some census questions may have a higher non-response rate than the total non-response rate.

The reference week for labour force information was May 2, 2021 to May 8, 2021. As such, the data reflects labour market conditions in May 2021 and data from the Labour Force Survey indicates that the labour market has rebounded since then.

Definitions

Employment Income: All income received as wages, salaries and commissions from paid employment and net self-employment income from farm or non-farm unincorporated business and/or professional practice during the reference period. This does not include income from investments or government transfers. All income is reported in 2020 dollars and the census asks about income in the year prior.

Median: The value that half the observations are above and that half the observations are below. Zero values are not included in the calculation of medians for income.

Men+: Includes men (and/or boys), as well as some non-binary persons. For more information, visit **Filling the gaps: Information on gender in the 2021 Census**.

Retired person: An individual over the age of 55 who is not participating in the labour force.[1]

Women+: Includes women (and/or girls), as well as some non-binary persons. For more information, visit **Filling the gaps: Information on gender in the 2021 Census**.

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[1] Statistics Canada defines retirement as referring to a person who is aged 55 and over, is not in the labour force and receives 50% or more of his or her total income from retirement-like sources. Unfortunately, Statistics Canada does not release tables on the number of retirees according to its definition.
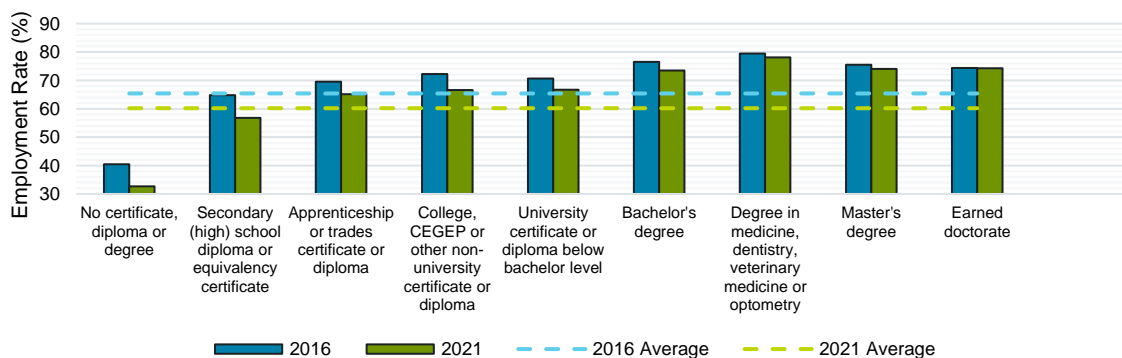
Classification: Public

Employment

The number of employed people in Alberta decreased between 2016 and 2021 falling from 2,096,105 to 2,030,730, a decrease of 3.1%. As Alberta's population grew over this time, the employment rate fell from 65.4% to 60.2%. In comparison, Canada's employment increased by 0.5%, growing from 17,230,350 to 17,321,700 people employed. The national employment rate also fell from 60.2% to 57.1%. Although the employment rate fell in Alberta, it remained the highest among all provinces.

Education

In general, the higher the educational attainment, the higher the employment rate. People with no certificate, diploma, or degree had the lowest employment rates at 40.5% in 2016 and 32.7% in 2021. Among 25 to 64 year olds, this figure rises to 60.7% and 52.9% respectively. In contrast, the employment rate was highest for those with a degree in medicine dentistry, veterinarian medicine or optometry, which was 79.5% in 2016 and 78.1% in 2021.

The employment rate fell for all education levels with people who only have a secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate having the largest fall in employment (8.0 percentage point decrease). People with no certificate, diploma or degree also had a large decrease (7.8 percentage points). Those with a doctorate saw the smallest decrease in employment with a 0.1 percentage point decrease.
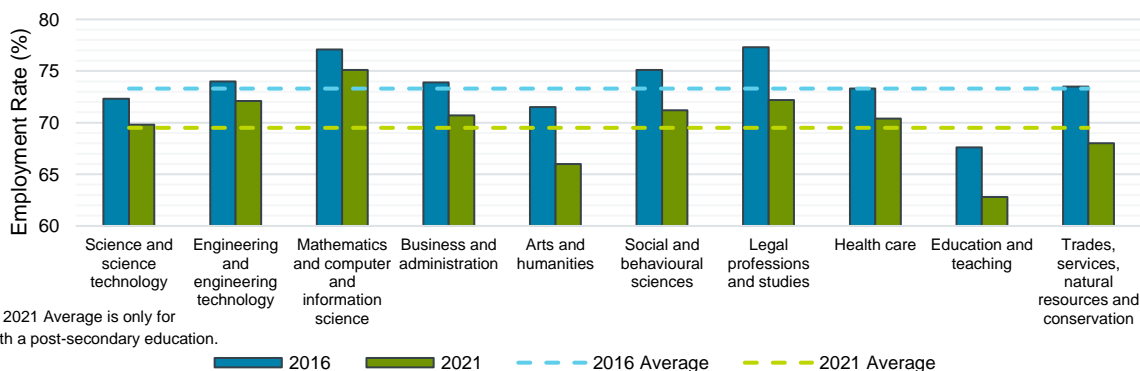
Employment Rate
by Education and Year

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016267 & Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0451-01 Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

Among people who have a post-secondary education, the average employment rate was 73.3% in 2016 and 69.5% in 2021. Those who studied legal professions had the highest employment rate (77.3%) in 2016. However, in 2021, those who studied mathematics had the highest employment rate (77.1%). Education had consistently posted the lowest employment rates in 2021 (62.8%) and 2016 (67.6%). No field of study had an increase in their employment rate over the two census periods. Mathematics had the smallest decrease at 2.0 percentage points while arts and humanities were tied with trades, services, natural resources and conservation for the largest decrease (-5.5 percentage points).

Employment Rate
by Field of Study and Year

2016 and 2021 Average is only for people with a post-secondary education.

Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016263 & Labour force status by visible minority, highest level of education, major field of study (STEM and BHASE, summary) and immigrant status

Age

People aged 25 to 54 years old had the highest employment rates at 85% in 2016 and 78.5% in 2021. Seniors had the lowest employment rates, followed by younger workers. Between 2016 and 2021, the employment rate fell for most age groups with those aged 15 to 24 years old seeing the largest decrease with an 8.4 percentage point drop. 75+ year olds saw the smallest decrease with a 0.3 percentage point decrease in the employment rate. Younger workers are more likely to work in sales and service occupations which were significantly impacted by COVID-19 related business closures. On the other hand, working seniors tended to have higher education levels and work in occupations that saw an increased availability of remote work. Remote work may have enabled seniors to postpone retirement for longer than they would have otherwise.

Employment Rate by Age, Gender, and Year

Legend: ■ 2016 Men+ ■ 2016 Women+ ■ 2021 Men+ ■ 2021 Women+

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016267 & Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0451-01 Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

Education decreased the gaps in the employment rate across age. Younger and older workers with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to be employed and closer to the overall average than their less educated peers. Young workers with education are more likely to have skills that make them employable than less educated youth. On the other hand, older workers with higher educational attainment have a higher opportunity cost of not working than their lower educated peers as they have a higher earning potential.

Gender

Across ages and in both years, men+ have higher employment rates than women+ with the exception of 15 to 24 year olds in 2016. Women+ reached their peak employment rate at 45 to 54 years old, which may be due to childcare responsibilities or career decisions made as a household. Men+ reached their peak employment rate earlier at 35 to 44 years old, but still have higher employment rates than women+ at 45 to 54 years old.
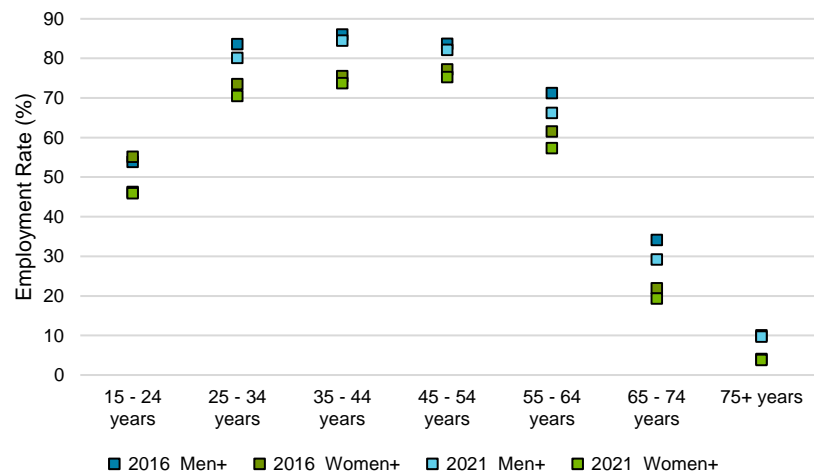
For all education levels, men+ had higher employment rates than women+ except for earned doctorates where women+ (75.4%) were 1.6 percentage points higher than men+ (73.8%) in 2016 and 5.3 percentage points higher in 2021 (72.1% for men+ and 77.4% for women+). The difference in the employment rate between men+ and women+ narrowed from 8.3 percentage points to 8.2 percentage points between 2016 and 2021.

Geography

In 2016, most areas in Alberta had a higher employment rate than the national average. The highest employment rate was in Wood Buffalo at 72% while the lowest was in Camrose at 59.1%.

The gap between Canada's and Alberta's employment rate narrowed to a 2.9 percentage point difference. All areas below Canada's employment rate in 2016 remained below it in 2021 with Lacombe's employment rate also falling below the national figure. Wood Buffalo continued to have the highest employment rate (69.8%) with Wetaskiwin having the lowest at 52.4%. Accordingly, Wetaskiwin had the largest drop in the employment rate at 7.0 percentage points and Wood Buffalo had the smallest at 2.2 percentage points. The difference between the highest and lowest employment rates increased to 17.4 percentage points.

Employment Rate (%) by Geography and Year		
	2016	2021
Canada	60.2	57.1
Alberta	65.4	60.2
Medicine Hat	59.6	55.7
Brooks	66.3	62.5
Lethbridge	64.6	59.9
Okotoks	67.8	61.8
High River	59.2	54.3
Calgary	66.5	60.8
Strathmore	64.4	58.6
Canmore	71.2	65.0
Red Deer	65.2	58.8
Sylvan Lake	64.7	59.7
Lacombe	61.7	57.0
Camrose	59.1	53.8
Edmonton	65.8	60.0
Lloydminster (Alberta part)	67.3	63.7
Grande Prairie	70.9	65.6
Wood Buffalo	72.0	69.8
Wetaskiwin	59.4	52.4

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016176 & Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0451-01 Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts
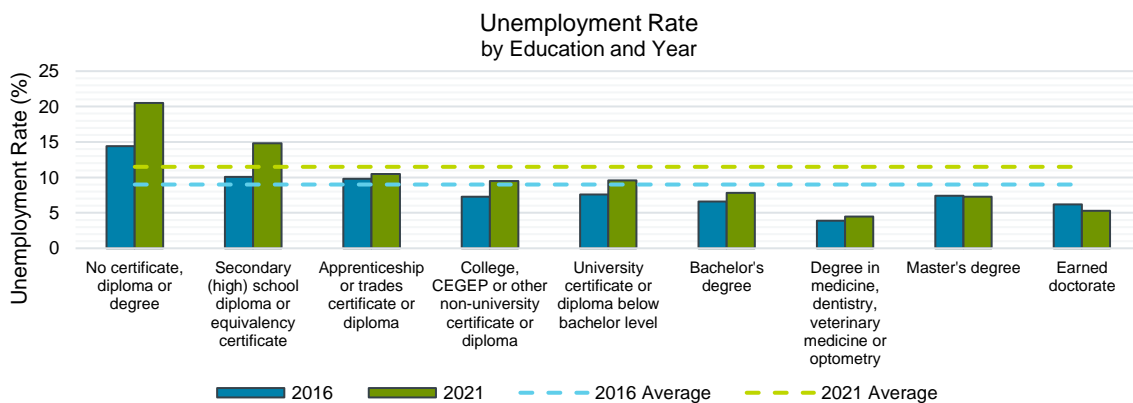
Classification: Public

Unemployment

The number of unemployed people in Alberta increased between 2016 and 2021 rising from 206,835 to 264,650, an increase of 28.0%. As a result, the unemployment rate rose from 9% to 11.5%. In comparison, the number of unemployed people in Canada increased by 37.9%, growing from 1,442,430 to 1,988,645 people unemployed. The national unemployment rate rose from 7.7% to 10.3%. Even though the unemployment rate fell in Alberta, it remained above the national average. Only Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador had an unemployment rate higher than Alberta in 2021.
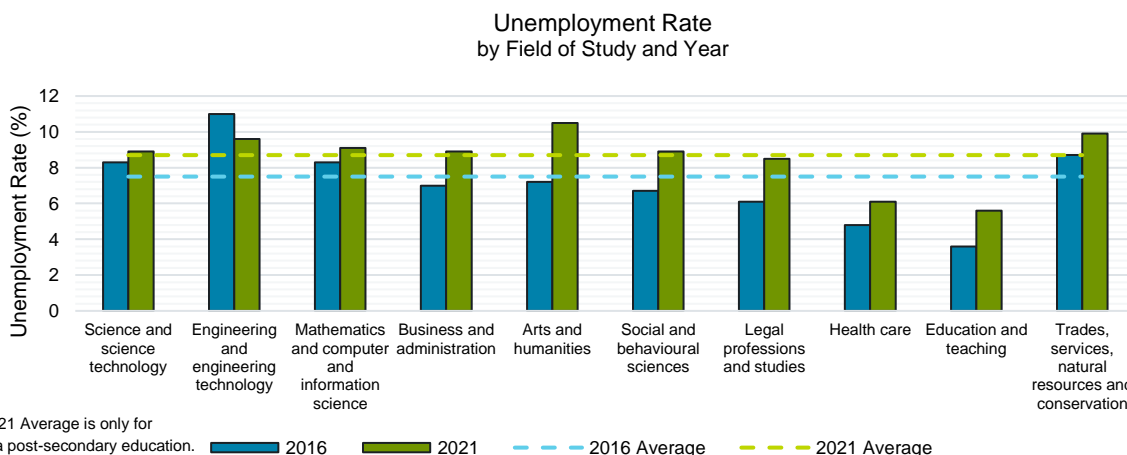
Education

People with a higher educational attainment generally had lower rates of unemployment. Those with no certificate, diploma or degree, had the highest unemployment rate at 14.4% in 2016. For 25 to 64 year olds, the unemployment rate was lower at 13.0%. People with no certificate, diploma or degree continued to have the highest unemployment rate in 2021 at 20.5% (17.9% for 25 to 64 year olds).

Most education levels saw their unemployment rate rise with lower levels of education seeing greater increases. Only those with a doctorate or a master's degree saw the unemployment rate decrease. Holders of a degree in medicine dentistry, veterinarian medicine or optometry had the lowest unemployment rate at 3.9% in 2016 and 4.5% in 2021.

Unemployment Rate
by Education and Year

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016267 & Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0451-01 Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

The average unemployment rate was 7.5% in 2016 and 8.7% in 2021 for people with a post-secondary education. People who studied education and health care had the lowest unemployment rates. The labour participation rate for people who studied education is lower than other fields of study, so there are less people wanting to work but those who do can readily find employment. People who graduate from these fields of study tend to be employed by the provincial government and are less subject to the business cycle. Engineering and trades had the highest unemployment rates in 2016 but engineering was the only field of study to see a decrease in the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate for arts and humanities increased by 3.3 percentage points to 10.5%, the highest for all fields of study in 2021.
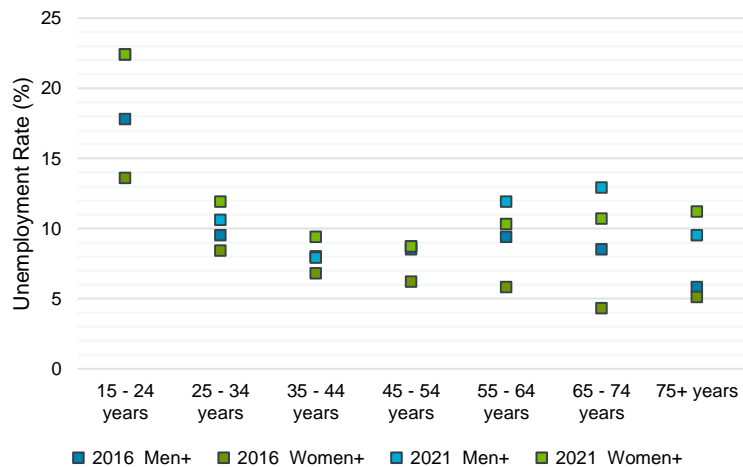
Unemployment Rate
by Field of Study and Year

2016 and 2021 Average is only for people with a post-secondary education.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016263 & Labour force status by visible minority, highest level of education, major field of study (STEM and BHASE, summary) and immigrant status

Classification: Public

Age

Between 2016 and 2021, the unemployment rate increased for all age groups. In 2016, the older the age group, the lower the unemployment rate was. However, people 55+ years old experienced a larger than average increase in their unemployment rate. Only youth aged 15 to 24 years old had a larger increase (6.6 percentage points) between 2016 and 2021. In 2021, people between the ages of 15 to 24 years continued to have the highest unemployment rate at 24.4%. 65 to 74 year olds went from having the second lowest (6.8%) to the second highest unemployment rate (12.0%) between 2016 and 2021. The lowest unemployment rates in 2021 were for 35 to 44 year olds (8.6%) and 45 to 55 year olds (8.7%) who both experienced the lowest increases in the unemployment rate.

Unemployment Rate
by Age, Gender, and Year

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016267 & Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0451-01 Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

Gender

The unemployment rate increased by 3.9 percentage points for women+ and by 1.4 percentage points for men+ between 2016 and 2021. In 2016, women+ had a lower unemployment rate (7.8%) than men+ (10.0%), but in 2021, men+ had a lower unemployment rate (11.4%) than women+ (11.7%). Across all age groups, women+ had lower unemployment rates than men+ in 2016, but in 2021, only women+ between the ages of 55 to 74 years old had a lower unemployment rate than men+ of the same age category.

The gap between men+ and women+ was the widest for 15 to 24 year olds and narrowest for 75+ years in 2016. In 2021, the gap reversed (in favour of men+) for many aged groups, and closed entirely for 15 to 24 year olds (and for 45 to 54 year olds) while being widest for 65 to 74 year olds.

In 2016, the older the age category, the lower the unemployment rate was for women+. On the other had, the unemployment rate for men+ was lowest at 35 to 44 years old. In 2021, the unemployment rate for women+ followed the men+'s pattern, being lowest for 45 to 54 year olds. Men+ followed their prior pattern with respect to age, albeit at higher unemployment rates.

Geography

Canada (7.7%) experienced a lower unemployment rate than Alberta (9.0%) in 2016. Only Canmore (5.5%) and Wood Buffalo (7.2%) had an unemployment rate lower than Canada. The unemployment rate was highest in Sylvan Lake at 13.5%. The difference between the highest and lowest unemployment rates was 8.0 percentage points.

Alberta's unemployment rate (11.5%) was also higher than Canada's (10.3%) in 2021 though the gap decreased by 0.1 percentage points. Additionally, a number of areas in Alberta had an unemployment rate below the national figure. Sylvan lake continued to have the highest unemployment rate at 14.6% while Brooks and Lethbridge were tied for the lowest at 8.8%. The difference between the highest and lowest unemployment rates increased to 8.8 percentage points Lloydminster and Brooks both saw a decrease in their unemployment rate by 0.2 percentage points but all other areas saw an increase with Edmonton having the largest increase at 3.4 percentage points.

Unemployment Rate (%) by Geography and Year		
	2016	2021
Canada	7.7	10.3
Alberta	9.0	11.5
Medicine Hat	9.8	11.4
Brooks	9.0	8.8
Lethbridge	6.2	8.8
Okotoks	7.7	9.2
High River	8.2	9.9
Calgary	9.3	12.3
Strathmore	8.7	9.8
Canmore	5.5	9.6
Red Deer	10.2	12.3
Sylvan Lake	13.5	14.6
Lacombe	9.5	12.3
Camrose	9.4	12.6
Edmonton	8.5	11.9
Lloydminster (Alberta part)	10.9	10.7
Grande Prairie	9.7	11.9
Wood Buffalo	7.2	9.0
Wetaskiwin	9.4	12.0

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016176 & Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0451-01 Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts
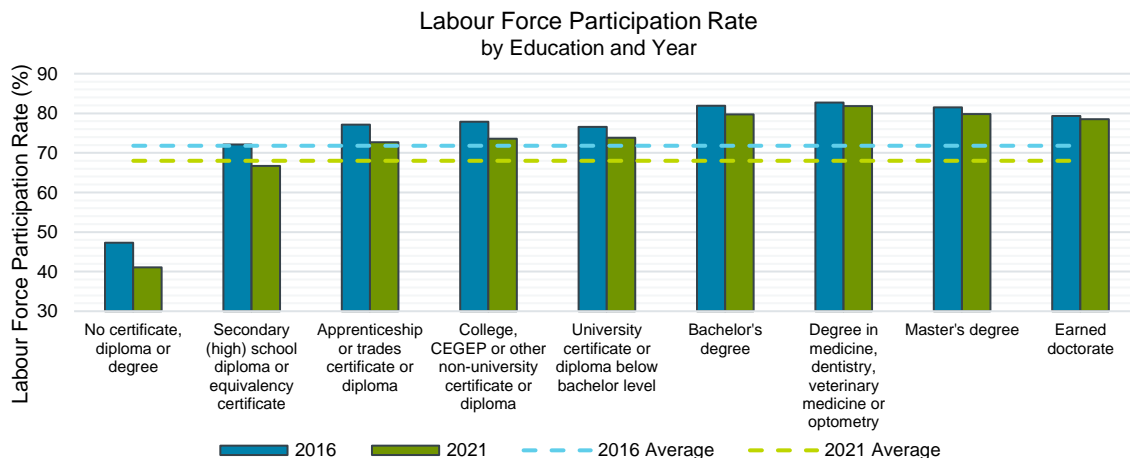
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Labour Force Participation

The number of people participating in the labour force in Alberta decreased between 2016 and 2021 falling from 2,302,940 to 2,295,385, a decrease of 0.3%. However, as the population grew by 4.8%, the labour force participation rate fell from 71.8% to 68%. In comparison, the number of people in Canada's labour force increased by 3.4%, growing from 18,672,470 to 19,310,345 people. The national labour force participation rate decreased from 65.2% to 63.7% as population growth in Canada also outstripped growth in the labour force. Even though the labour force participation rate fell in Alberta, it was still the highest in Canada.
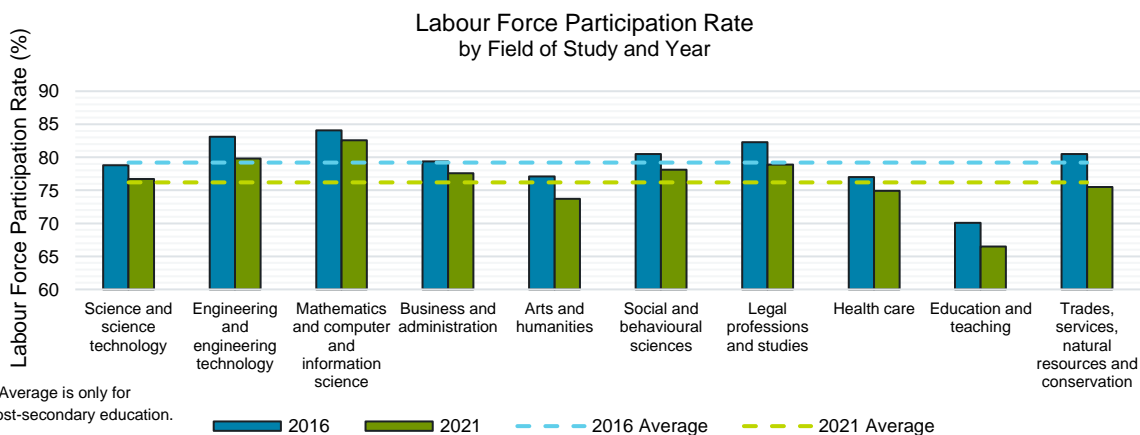
Education

Labour force participation tends to go up for higher educational levels with master's and doctorate degree holders having a slight decrease compared to bachelor's degree holders. People with no certificate, diploma or degree had the lowest participation rate with 47.3% participating in 2016 and 41.1% in 2021 (rising to 69.7% in 2016 and 64.5% in 2021 when looking at 25 to 64 year olds).

Participation rates fell across educational levels. The lower the educational attainment, the more labour participation fell between 2016 and 2021 with the largest drop being for those with no certificate, diploma or degree (-6.2%). However, among 25 to 64 year olds, labour participation rose for those with education above a bachelor's degree.

Labour Force Participation Rate
by Education and Year

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016267 & Table 98-10-0451-01
Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

For both 2021 and 2016, education was the field of study with the lowest labour force participation rate while mathematics had the highest labour force participation rate. The low labour participation rate for education was driven by 55 to 64 year olds leaving the labour force at a higher rate than other fields of study. This is also likely why employment rates are also so low for education. Younger people who studied education had similar labour participation rates as other fields of study. Every field of study saw a decrease in the participation rate. Trades, services, natural resources and conservation and the largest decrease followed by education. Mathematics had the smallest decrease.

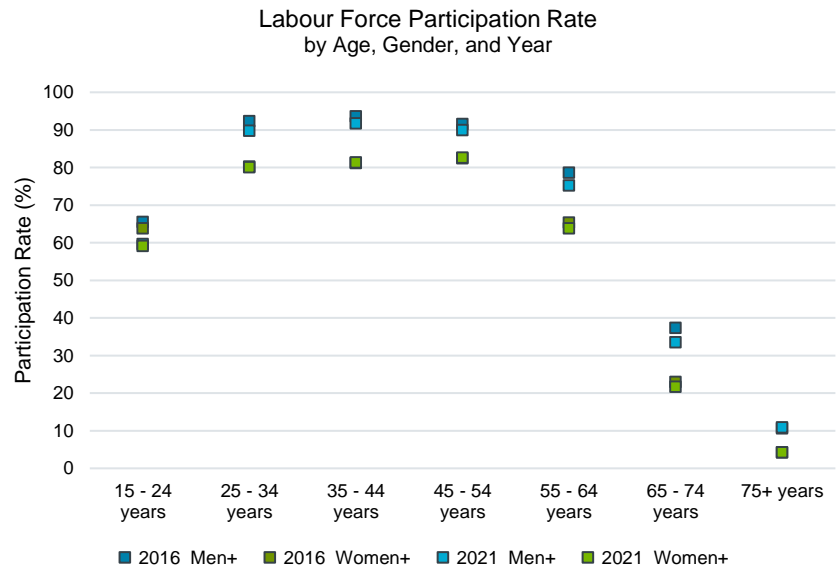Labour Force Participation Rate
by Field of Study and Year

2016 and 2021 Average is only for people with a post-secondary education.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016263 & Labour force status by visible minority, highest level of education, major field of study (STEM and BHASE, summary) and immigrant status

Classification: Public

Age

Labour force participation dropped across all ages except for 75+ years old where there was no change. This bucked the national trend as labour force participation increased for those 55+ years old. The largest decrease in labour force participation was for 15 to 24 year olds who saw a 3.8 percentage point decrease, followed by 65 to 74 year olds.

Labour force participation was highest for people aged 25 to 55 years old, and lowest for those older than 65 years. In 2016, 38.8% of people between 15 to 24 years old with no certificate, diploma, or degree (who are mostly high school students) were participating in the labour force. Only 29.8% of people between 15 to 24 years old with no certificate, diploma, or degree participated in the labour force in 2021. Seniors with higher levels of education were more likely to participate in the labour force for both years.

Labour Force Participation Rate
by Age, Gender, and Year

Legend: ■ 2016 Men+   ■ 2016 Women+   ■ 2021 Men+   ■ 2021 Women+

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016267 & Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0451-01 Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

Gender

Men+ had higher labour force participation and employment rates than women+ in both 2016 and 2021. However, the gap between men+ and women+ decreased by 1.8 percentage points. This is because labour participation for men+ fell more than for women+. Men+ experienced a 4.6 percentage point drop in labour force participation drop while women+ experienced a 2.9 percentage point drop. Most of the drop in labour force participation for women+ was among women+ aged 15 to 24 years.

For both 2016 and 2021, labour force participation and employment rates peaked for women+ between the ages of 45 to 54 years old. For men+, labour force participation and employment rates peaked earlier at 35 to 44 years old. 15 to 24 year olds had the lowest gap in labour force participation between men+ and women+. The gap between men+ and women+ was largest for 65 to 74 year olds.

Geography

Labour force participation fell for all regions of Alberta. Wetaskiwin had the largest fall in the participation rate with a 6.0 percentage point decrease. The smallest decrease occurred in Wood Buffalo where labour force participation fell by 0.9 percentage points.

Except for High River (64.5%), all areas of Alberta had a higher participation rate than Canada (65.2%) in 2016. In contrast, four regions in Alberta had a lower participation rate than Canada for 2021. The area with the highest labour force participation in 2016 was Grande Prairie at 78.5% and the lowest was High River. Wood Buffalo had the highest participation rate at 76.7% in 2021 while Wetaskiwin had the lowest at 59.6%.

There was a 16.1 percentage point gap between the highest and lowest labour participation rates in Alberta for 2016. This gap increased to 17.1 percentage points in 2021.

Participation Rate (%) by Geography and Year		
	2016	2021
Canada	65.2	63.7
Alberta	71.8	68
Medicine Hat	66.2	62.9
Brooks	72.8	68.6
Lethbridge	68.9	65.7
Okotoks	73.4	68.1
High River	64.5	60.3
Calgary	73.3	69.3
Strathmore	70.5	65
Canmore	75.4	72
Red Deer	72.6	67
Sylvan Lake	74.8	69.9
Lacombe	68.2	65
Camrose	65.2	61.6
Edmonton	71.9	68.1
Lloydminster (Alberta part)	75.5	71.3
Grande Prairie	78.5	74.4
Wood Buffalo	77.6	76.7
Wetaskiwin	65.6	59.6

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016176 & Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0451-01 Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

Classification: Public

Employment Income

Adjusting for inflation, median employment income fell by 9.6% in Alberta between 2015 and 2020. This drop was driven by men+ where median income fell by $7,200 (-12.2%) meanwhile median income fell for women+, although to a lesser degree, by $2,000 (-5.6%). The drop in median employment income occurred during a period of lower oil prices and the COVID-19 pandemic, both of which impacted Alberta's labour market.

Across all age groups, median employment income fell with the largest decrease seen by workers aged 55 – 64 years old. The smallest drops were seen by workers aged 75+ and 15 – 24 years old, but they experienced the largest percentage drops because of their already lower incomes.

Median employment income fell largely due to the labour force changing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. People worked less hours and were laid off either temporarily or permanently, all of which reduced employment income in 2020. Over the 2020, full-time employment fell and part-time employment rose for men+, while part-time and full-time employment fell for women+, albeit the combined fall was smaller then the fall in full-time employment for men+. There were 39,080 fewer men+ and 7,690 fewer women+ earning employment income in 2020 compared to 2015, even as the number of people of working age (15 years and older) grew in Alberta by 73,270 men+ and 95,790 women+.

Median Employment Income		
2020 Dollars		
	2020	2015
Total	41,600	46,000
15 - 24 years	11,500	13,400
25 - 34 years	43,600	49,600
35 - 44 years	56,800	60,800
45 - 54 years	59,600	63,200
55 - 64 years	49,200	54,400
65 - 74 years	16,200	19,800
75+ years	2,320	2,720

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0066-01 Employment income groups by age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations

Median Employment Income		
2020 Dollars		
	2020	2015
Canada	37,200	36,400
Alberta	41,600	46,000
Brooks (CA)	42,400	44,000
Calgary (CMA)	42,800	47,600
Camrose (CA)	36,400	41,200
Canmore (CA)	38,400	41,600
Edmonton (CMA)	44,000	48,400
Grande Prairie (CA)	46,400	52,400
High River (CA)	35,600	39,600
Lacombe (CA)	40,000	44,800
Lethbridge (CMA)	38,000	39,200
Lloydminster (Alberta part) (CA)	43,200	48,800
Medicine Hat (CA)	36,000	38,000
Okotoks (CA)	44,800	48,400
Red Deer (CMA)	38,800	43,200
Strathmore (CA)	41,600	43,200
Sylvan Lake (CA)	39,200	46,800
Wetaskiwin (CA)	36,400	40,000
Wood Buffalo (CA)	79,500	91,000

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0066-01 Employment income groups by age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations

As such, the drops in median income between 2015 and 2020 are seen across the employment income distribution. There are less men+ in each income bracket for brackets over $60,000, especially for men earning over $100,000. Correspondingly, there were more men+ in the brackets below $25,000 (the number for the brackets in between were relatively the same). Women+ also saw the drop in earners over $100,000 and an increase of people earning less than $15,000. The number earning $20,000 - $50,000 decreased while higher earners stayed roughly the same with exception of the $90,000 to $99,999 bracket. The increase in this bracket is likely due to an influx of women+ from the over $100,000 bracket.

Median Employment Income		
2020 Dollars		
	2020	2015
Total	41,600	46,000
Men+	51,600	58,800
Women+	33,600	35,600

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0066-01 Employment income groups by age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations

The youngest and the oldest workers were more likely to work in the lowest income brackets in 2020. Respectively, workers aged 25 to 54 years old dominated the higher income brackets. At the same time, both groups are also more likely to be seeking part-time work which would also reduce their employment income.

All ages saw an increase in the number of people without employment income between 2015 and 2020, causing the percentage with employment income to drop by 5.3 percentage points. This trend was strongest in the youngest and oldest workers and occurred in both men+ and women+.

The drop in people with employment income was occurring before the COVID-19 pandemic: the labour force survey was recording lower labour force participation rates since 2016. Furthermore, if a person worked in January and/or February of 2020 but stopped working because of the pandemic, they would still have employment income to report for 2020 (just in a lower income bracket then if the pandemic did not occur). However, there may be people who did not work prior to the pandemic but would have started working if the pandemic did not occur. This may be a driver of the drop for those aged 15 to 24 years old as younger people are more likely to not have worked before the pandemic.

All areas of Alberta experienced the drop in employment income: median employment income did not increase for any CMA or CA. Wood Buffalo saw the greatest decrease in median income from 2015, but remains the highest in the province.

Classification: Public

Lethbridge saw the smallest decrease in dollar and percentage amounts with median income shrinking by $1,200 or 3.1%. The largest decrease in percentage terms was Sylvan Lake at 16.2%.
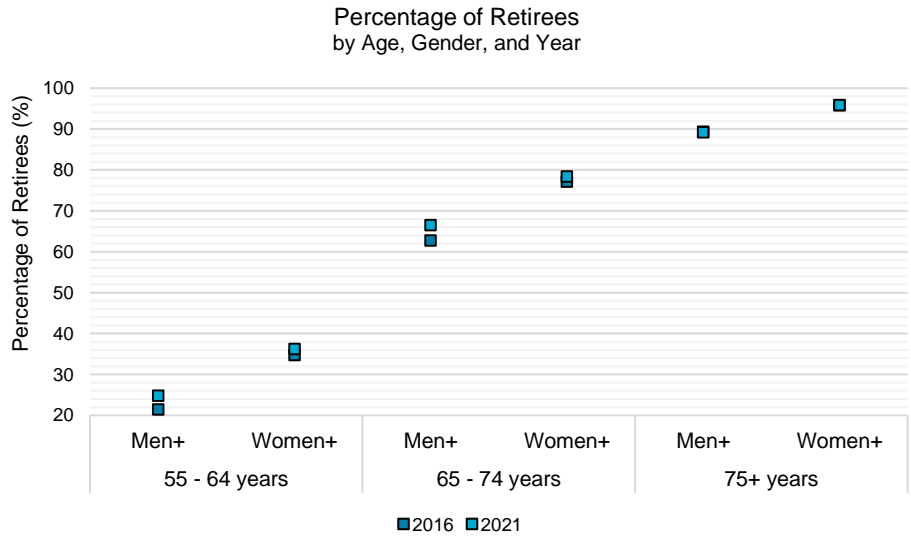
Nationally, median employment income rose by $800 or 2.2%. All areas were above the national median employment income in 2015, but in 2020 Wetaskiwin and Medicine Hat fell below. The gap in median employment income between Alberta and Canada shrunk from $9,600 in 2015 to $4,400 in 2020.

Percentage with Employment Income by Age (%)		
	2020	**2015**
Total	71.9	77.2
15 - 24 years	62.9	73.3
25 - 34 years	86.3	88.7
35 - 44 years	86.3	87.9
45 - 54 years	86	87.6
55 - 64 years	75.4	79.4
65 - 74 years	41.4	46.5
75+ years	18.5	19.5

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0066-01 Employment income groups by age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations

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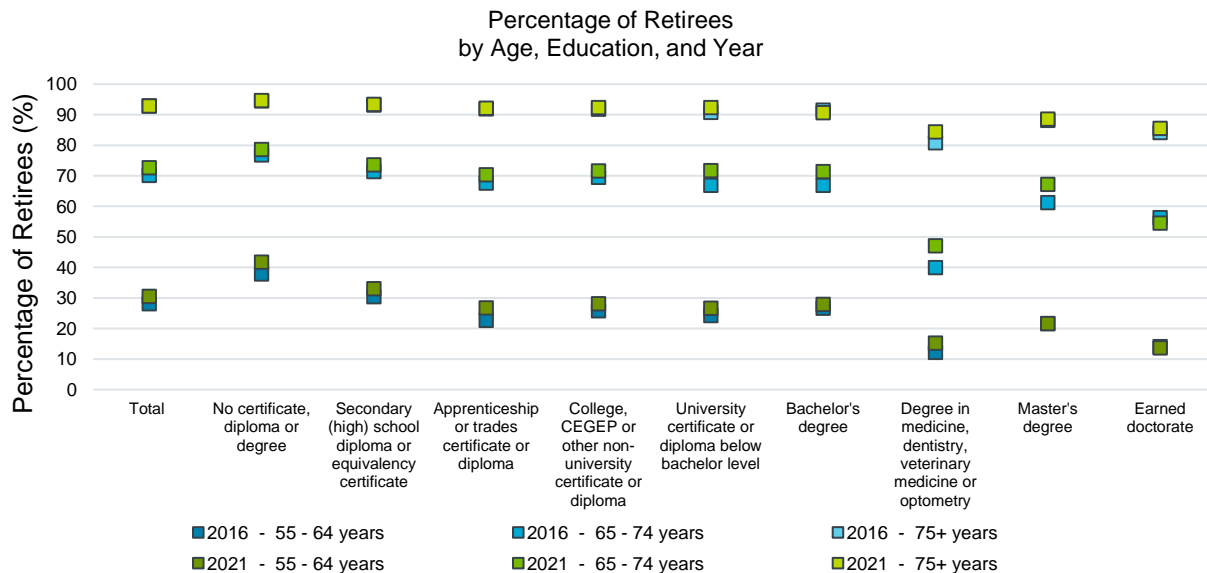
Retired and Older Workers

Across ages, gender, and geography, Alberta saw an increase in the percentage of retirees between 2016 and 2021. The increase was most notable in men+ between the ages of 65 to 74 years old with a 3.8 percentage point increase. There were also a large increase in retirees for men+ aged 55 to 64 years old at 3.4 percentage points. Over 20% of both men+ and women+ aged 55 to 64 years old were retired in 2016, but this figure has increased to almost 25% of men+ and over 36% of women+ in 2021. Additionally, 2021 saw the percentage of retirees increase for 65 to 74 years old. Women+ aged 75+ years had the same percentage of retirees in 2021 and 2016 while men+ of the same age saw a 0.1 percentage point decrease. Women+ were also more likely to be retired than men+ of the same age group and education for both 2021 and 2016.

Percentage of Retirees
by Age, Gender, and Year

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016266 & Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0451-01 Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

In total, there were 500,215 seniors (65+ years) in Alberta in 2016 and 629,225 seniors in 2021, a 25.8% increase. Alberta also saw a 7.5% increase in the number of 55 to 64 year olds with 539,390 people in this age group in 2021. The total population in Alberta increased by 4.8% to 4,262,635 which is lower than the growth in the older population. As such, the median age increased from 36.8 to 38.4 years old between 2016 and 2021. However, Alberta's population is one of the youngest in the country as Canada's median age was 41.6 in 2021 and only the Northwest Territories and Nunavut had a lower median age (Manitoba's was also 38.4).
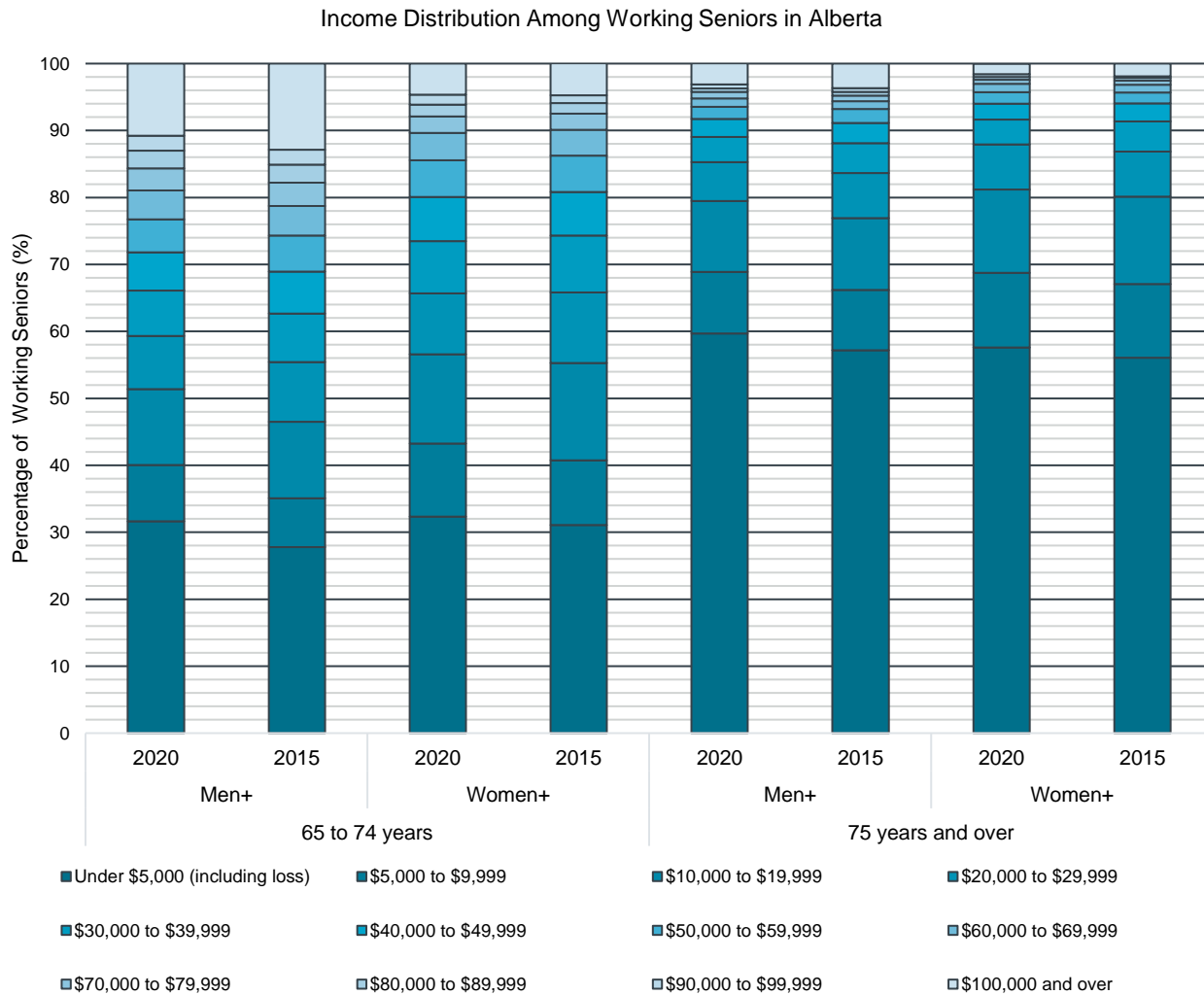
Generally across age and gender, the less educated a person was, the more likely they were to be retired. People holding a degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry were the least likely to be retired across age and gender. They were followed by people holding a doctorate, master's, or bachelor's degree. The percentage of retirees increased for all ages and education levels with the exception of doctorate holders aged 65+ years and bachelor degree holders aged 75+. The rise in remote work may have enabled these more educated workers to stay in the workforce for longer.

Percentage of Retirees
by Age, Education, and Year

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016266 & Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0451-01 Labour force status by highest level of education, Indigenous identity, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

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The effect of education on retirements was more pronounced for Indigenous people. Indigenous people with low levels of educational attainment were more likely to be retired than non-Indigenous people. However, the gap closes as educational attainment increases and then reverses for all levels of university education. This trend holds across age groups and in both 2016 and 2021.

Among seniors who work, an increasing share make less than $10,000. In 2020, over 40% of seniors aged 65 to 74 and almost 60% of those over 75 years old made less than $10,000. Correspondingly, the share of seniors who made over $100,000 dropped from 2015 to 2020. This drop was especially pronounced in men+ aged 65 to 74 years old, but was seen across all groups. In short, Albertan seniors are less likely to work and those that do work earn less money.

Income Distribution Among Working Seniors in Alberta

Legend:
- Under $5,000 (including loss)
- $5,000 to $9,999
- $10,000 to $19,999
- $20,000 to $29,999
- $30,000 to $39,999
- $40,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $59,999
- $60,000 to $69,999
- $70,000 to $79,999
- $80,000 to $89,999
- $90,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 and over

Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0066-01 Employment income groups by age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

Classification: Public