

FACT SHEET 1.6

Labour Shortage or Skills

Shortage:

What's Happening in our

Sector?

Is There a Labour Shortage or a Skills Shortage in the Community Social Services Sector?

A labour shortage occurs when the demand for labour is greater than the actual supply of workers.

- *Provincial population forecasts show an overall growth in the supply of the working-age cohort, ages 15-64 years, throughout a twenty-year period. Over time, this cohort will increasingly rely on **immigration** and BC's fastest growing population group, **Aboriginal peoples**.*
- *However, not all people in the working-age cohort are considered by employers as potential workers: In 2006, there were over 650,000 people who were not in the labour market, many of whom faced barriers to employment. "**Barriered groups**" are considered to be women, older workers, youth at risk, Aboriginal peoples, persons with (dis)abilities, and immigrants.*

A **skills shortage** occurs when the people with the education, experience, and competencies required by employers, are not available.

- *There are widespread reports from across the province of skills shortages in the community social services sector.*

In our sector we appear to be experiencing **both phenomenon**. We hear a lot about a 'labour shortage' as there is a genuine shortage of workers in some areas of the province.

However, in other areas there may be a perceived labour shortage, as there could be people of working-age that are not currently in the labour force but may be suitable for work in our sector – if we can address the barriers that have thus far precluded their participation.

This takes us to the skills shortage: this is the greatest challenge we face in the sector. As the working-age population grows in BC are these individuals able to or choosing to acquire the education, experience and skills to prepare them to work in our sector? If they are, are they staying with us?

Who makes up the current workforce in the Community Social Services Sector?

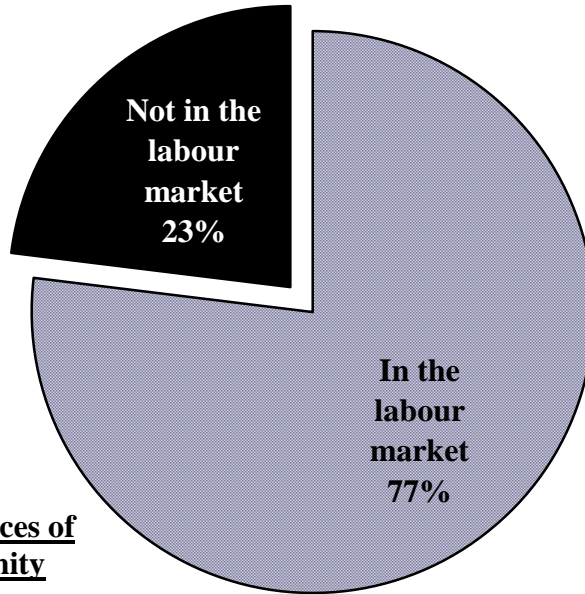
High-level, aggregate data on population growth and decline, age cohorts, number of people in the labour force and where they are working is useful but does not tell us the story of who makes up the workforce in BC's community social services

sector. Dynamic details are needed on what drew people into to the work, what path they took to be in the sector, what keeps them in the sector or what challenges their commitment to continue working within the field. While we have found some research about the sector's workforce, we need to generate a greater understanding about the current sector workforce in BC in order to inform action planning. We also know very little about what the barriers are for people who are not currently in the labour market, and if this group of people could be a potential resource for the community social service sector's workforce. These questions are now driving the Federation's inquiry.

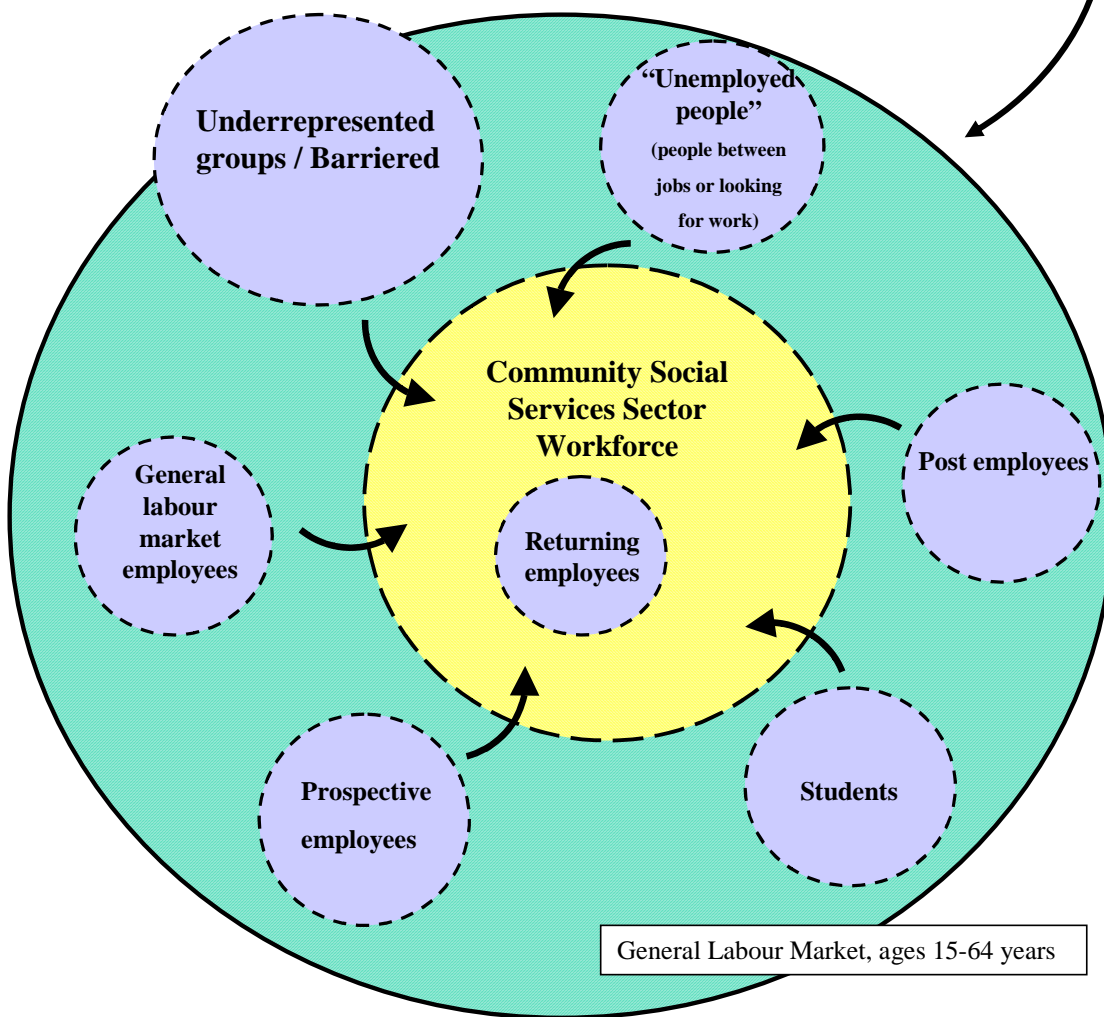
Labour Market Participation:
15-64 year olds - 2006
 (Stats Can)

Overall Considerations for the Community Social Services Sector Workforce

- Overall low wages in the sector
- Devaluing of the work
- Complex nature of the work
- Effects of turnover



Current and Potential Sources of Workers for the Community Social Services Sector:



Ways of Going About Collecting Data

- Short form quantitative survey of all Federation member agencies to capture demographic data in the sector workforce
- Focus groups with people in the sector workforce, prospective employees, students, employees who have left the sector, and underrepresented groups in the general labour market
- Long form qualitative / quantitative survey to understand in-depth dynamic data in the sector workforce (demographics, characteristics, attitudes, opinions, etc)