

SUMMARY OF YUKON FEDERATION OF LABOUR AND LABOUR SAFETY TRENDS

January 30, 2024

Evolution of Labour in Yukon

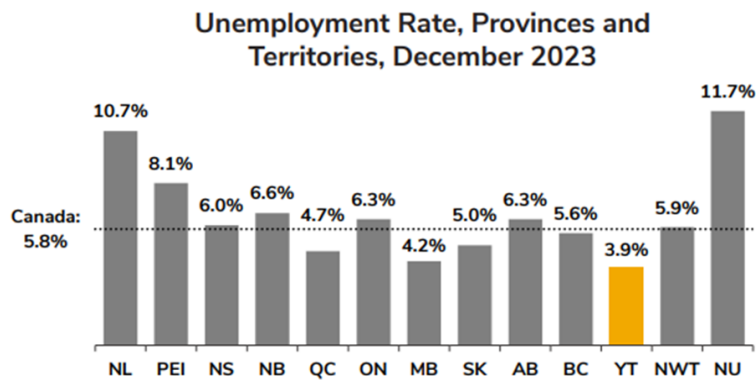
The Yukon Federation of Labour (YFL) is an umbrella organization that was chartered in 1980 by the Canadian Labour Congress, and consists of several affiliated unions and locals across Yukon. The YFL represents all Yukon workers, regardless of union affiliation. The organization works for the advancement of all Yukon workers' rights and currently has 7 unions affiliated with it, representing over 7,000 workers. The YFL also provides resources, news updates, and educational events for workers.



In the past year alone, the labour force has increased by 1500, when there was only a 400 increase between 2021-2022. Yukon has the lowest unemployment rate across Canada and the highest participation rate (*The participation rate measures the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over, working or actively looking for work.*)

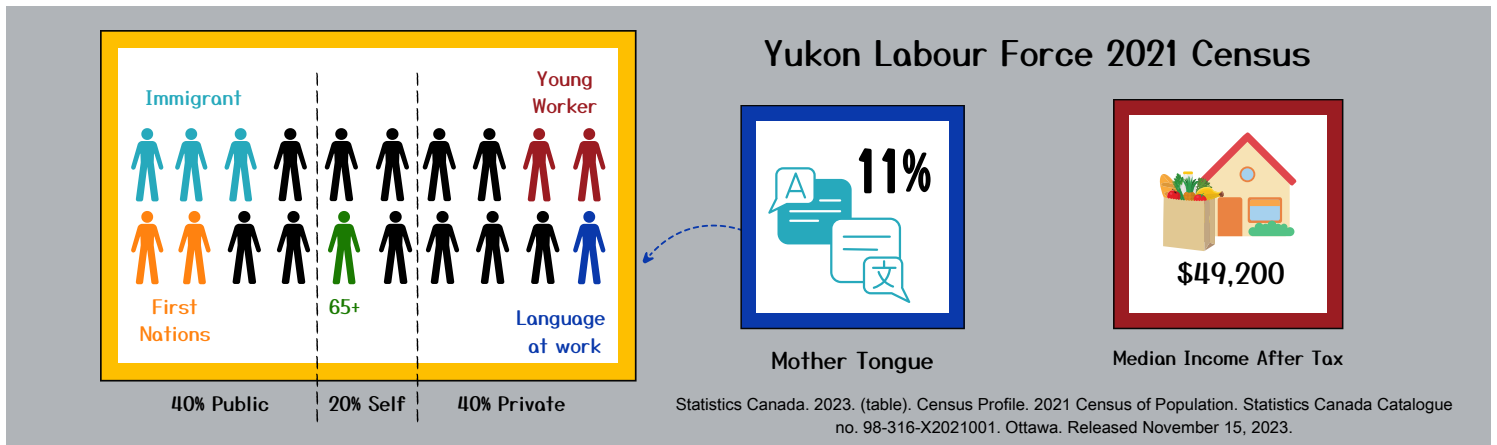
According to STATS Canada 2021 Census, the median income after tax in Yukon was \$49,200. Considering the current cost of living, this means many workers can be in precarious positions, carrying stress with them into the workplace. The Yukon labour force has also seen increasing immigration and expanding markets.

<https://yukon.ca/en/find-statistics-yukons-labour-market>



**December 2023
Yukon Employment at a Glance:**

Labour Force.....	25,500
Employed.....	24,500
Unemployed.....	1,000
Unemployment Rate....	3.9%
Employment Rate.....	71.4%



Considering workplace safety, the YFL considers commitment to labour, job market reporting, economic growth, and safety training (eg. NSNY) among strengths. Opportunities include collaboration on policy and regulation updates, improved distribution and access to policies, and targeting safety training for labour market shortages and at-risk workers. Weaknesses include responses to rapid technology changes, lack of mental health support, and weak employment standards or collaboration between government agencies. Threats include compounding basic living concerns, risks to worker rights and representation in rapidly changing workplaces, and a reported increase in adversarial approaches to workers.

A HISTORY OF COLLABORATION

DAY OF MOURNING is a significant annual event hosted by the Yukon Federation of Labour and one of the key partnerships between WSCB and the YFL. Day of Mourning observes the importance of safety priorities and achievements, honouring the legacy of safety movements and advocacy for worker well-being as well as honouring workers injured on the job.

The YFL would like to enhance the legacy and impact of the Worker's Memorial with additional artwork to tell the stories of Yukon workers. Recognition and appreciation could be elevated by artistic expressions for the Workers Memorial that celebrate the labour force, safety culture, and workers' contributions.

Ensuring Worker Safety & Well-Being

Who is your customer? The YFL would argue that because it's the "Workers' Safety and Compensation Board", the worker is your customer. Employers who pay into the compensation fund are sponsors. "Customer service 101" is taking care of your customers. We can do this by making sure workers stay safe in their jobs, that they feel safe to bring up safety concerns, and that they are supported when they raise a concern or are injured at work. Think of workers as the main customers, questioning whether decisions put their well-being first. Do your choices prioritize their safety?

The Act sets the rules to keep workers safe. Employers must follow these rules to create a safe work environment. The Act can be used to foster a culture of safety within workplaces. WSCB should be leveraging the Act's enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with safety standards, providing workers with access to fair compensation and support in the event of workplace injuries. The YFL would like to see ongoing improvements in Regulations, safety practices, adaptation, and enhancement of safety measures.

NAVIGATING WORKER SAFETY & SUPPORT

In general, workers are not experts in interpreting legislation or legal representation. There is a shared responsibility for ensuring a safe and healthy work environment by the employer, workers and various agencies, including the WSCB and safety officers, in place to assist and enforce these regulations.

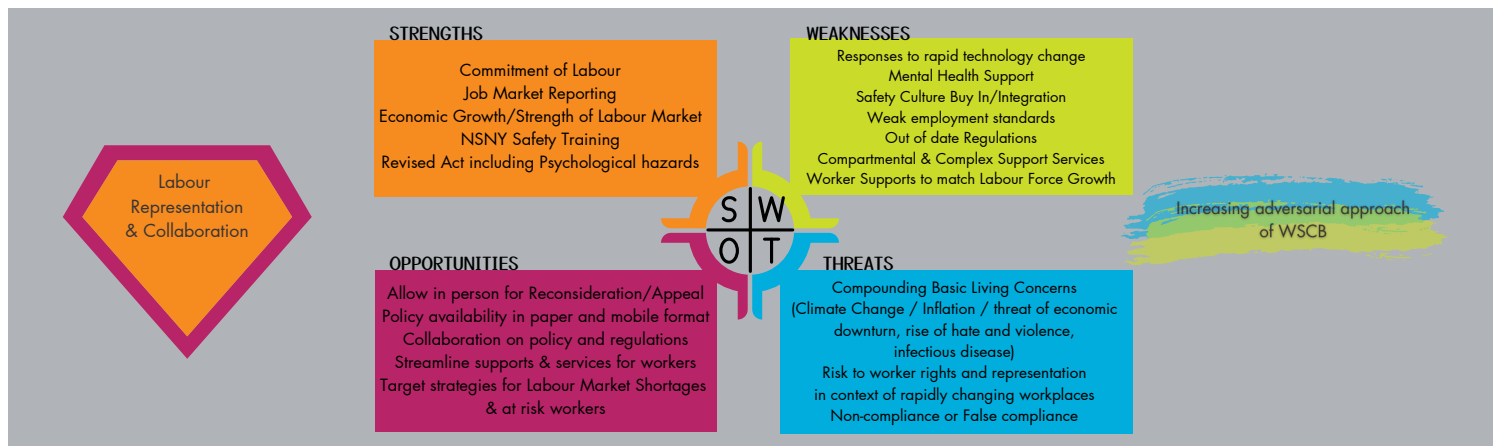
Workers rely on the support of the WSCB, safety officers, and other relevant agencies when there are safety concerns or issues in the workplace. There is already an imbalanced relationship between workers and employers who hold control over hiring and firing. The employer has more resources than employees. It used to be perceived that WSCB brought some balance and protection to this relationship. However, recent reports* raise concerns:

- workers laid off or fired for bringing up safety requirements at work
- workers are encouraged not to report injuries so employers can avoid increased fees
- forged paperwork to meet compliance without practice
- WSCB medical advisers offering extensive opinions to disprove a work injury
- Workers Advocate declining cases verbally and not in writing
- workers asked to prove their claim under the act before receiving support.
- WSCB increasing reliance on third-party consultants and out-of-territory lawyers to argue against legitimate claims or try to direct the Tribunal.

*gathered from cases referred to YFL, reports from Yukon Building Trades, and reports from the YWSC Appeal Tribunal. In most cases, workers are too afraid of reprisal to pursue any action against an employer, even after losing their job.

Fair compensation and support for workers who get hurt on the job become vital in reinforcing the Act's commitment to protecting workers. Though it may be difficult, the YFL would ask the WSCB to consider both the perception and reality of an increasingly adversarial approach of the Board towards workers, as both can have a devastating impact.

The main takeaway is the need to be aware of both what people think and what's happening, especially when workers express feeling unsafe – a sentiment that can have big consequences for their well-being.



Workers should feel comfortable reaching out to these agencies for assistance, and they should not be expected to navigate complex legislative details on their own or present their case (while injured) against employers, lawyers, doctors and consultants of WSCB. The goal is to ensure a collaborative approach to creating and maintaining a safe working environment for all workers but also safe reporting and safe recovery when injured. After all, this is the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act and Board.

Planning for a Safe Future

At the 2022 YFL Convention, resolutions were passed on inclusive language, national pharmacare, training and wage benefits for healthcare staff, medicare in the north, affordable housing for workers, and investigating a Worker Action Centre for the Yukon. A number of these have a bearing on the future of safe workplaces and the recovery of injured workers.

A Worker Action Centre could assist with labour rights advocacy, community engagement on safety awareness and support, and educational initiatives to address labour market needs. A needs analysis indicates that new to Yukon, new to Canada, and young workers are at higher risk and would benefit most from support and education in workplace safety.

In shaping future strategies for workers' safety and compensation in Yukon, a comprehensive approach is suggested under four key pillars:

Sustainable Growth, Responsive Advocacy, Educational Initiatives, and Ethical Leadership.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

- Commitment to foster growth, resilience, and impact in advancing not only workplace safety but also labour rights and social justice.
- Prioritising the next generation by engaging and empowering youth as the future of the workforce.
- Reconciliation and partnerships with First Nations for respectful collaborations.
- Emphasis on resources for high vacancy jobs including skilled trades and implementation alongside immigration strategy to support newcomers in the Yukon labour market.

RESPONSIVE ADVOCACY

- Legislative advocacy championing workers' rights under the Workers Safety and Compensation Act.
- Prioritise psychological well-being in the workplace, recognising stress and fatigue as critical concerns. Adaptive safety protocols to address non-standard work arrangements and emerging challenges, such as the effects of climate change.
- Implementation of comprehensive safety measures, aligning with industry and national Occupational Health and Safety standards.

EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

- Mentorship, skill development, and safety protocols are recommended to bridge the generational gap in the workforce.
- Provide comprehensive safety training and educational resources with clear and safe pathways for reporting, linked to expert support that begins as soon as a worker inquires about a safety-related concern at work.
- Targeted training programs focusing on practical skills and knowledge with easily accessible resources for specific work environments with heightened risks.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

- ethical decision-making takes centre stage in safety advocacy for worker well-being and rights.
- Inclusive safety leadership must be modelled and encouraged to engage the voices of marginalised workers, with a reward system for proactive safety cultures within organisations.
- Seamless support transitions for the worker to assist with navigating claims, reporting, reprisals, and appeals.

It's a Bright Future Together

It is no easy feat bringing a diverse collective audience together for a common goal. The YFL's goal in coalition building for safety priorities focuses on collaborative efforts to amplify worker voices and advocate for safety rights. Perhaps we can do more to recognise the contributions of workers and safety advocates in the promotion of safety priorities, fostering a culture of appreciation and respect for safety efforts.

A banner for 'Northern Health Care Matters' featuring a dark blue background with a pattern of small white stars. On the left, the 'YUKON FEDERATION OF LABOUR' logo is displayed in white and green. To its right is a stylized map of the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut in blue and yellow. A yellow button with the text 'northernhealthcarematters.ca' is at the top left. On the right, a light blue box contains the title 'Northern Health Care Matters', a paragraph of text, and a yellow 'View Action' button.

northernhealthcarematters.ca

YUKON FEDERATION OF LABOUR

Northern Health Care Matters

Health care in the north is in crisis, and northerners are demanding that territorial and federal governments work together to...

View Action

A banner for 'Good Jobs for a Sustainable Tomorrow' featuring a green and orange background. On the left is a photo of a woman in a blue work shirt and yellow hard hat. The center has a green section with the title 'GOOD JOBS FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW' and the tagline 'A FUTURE THAT WORKS'. To the right is an orange section with a circular logo containing a fist and the words 'take action'. On the far right, a light blue box contains the title 'Support Foreign Workers in Yukon', a paragraph of text, and a yellow 'Add Your Voice' button.

GOOD JOBS FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW

A FUTURE THAT WORKS

take action

Support Foreign Workers in Yukon

Add Your Voice. Take our Survey. As the number of foreign workers in the territory increase, the Yukon Federation of...

Add Your Voice

The YFL would like to thank WSCB for their encouragement to link labour organisations, employers, and regulatory bodies when it comes to safety and compensation. Beyond the Board, every stakeholder has community connections that can leverage support for workers' safety and ensure diversity and inclusion in the occupational safety culture. This holistic approach is well suited to address the multifaceted aspects of worker safety and compensation, ensuring a resilient and supportive framework for the Yukon workforce.

RESOURCE LINKS

1. <https://futurethatworks.ca/>
2. <https://pharmacare.canadianlabour.ca/why-pharmacare/>
3. <https://canadianlabour.ca/notpartofthejob/>
4. <https://www.pembina.org/pub/sustainable-jobs-blueprint> (part 1 and 2)
5. <https://www.yukonfed.com>