Analysis in Brief

Workforce Insights: Demographics in the publishing industries subsector, 2015 to 2023

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by **Megan McMaster**

Businesses in the publishing industries are often influenced by external factors, such as changing economic conditions and household discretionary income. These directly affect their employment levels, in particular during periods of financial uncertainty, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

This paper, the final of a three-study series,[1] seeks to explore the demographic differences among employees in the publishing industries subsector. This includes businesses operating in the newspaper, periodical, and book publishers industries. These industries are heavily influenced by consumer demand and discretionary spending on leisure. Furthermore, the publishing industries have faced many economic challenges in recent years, including declining operating revenues, restructuring efforts, and significant amalgamations and mergers. Inflationary pressures have also affected operational activities and employment in these industries.

The paper leverages administrative data to examine the distribution of the workforce by gender,[2] age category and full-time work status.[3] Results in this paper are based solely on employees who received a T4 slip by employers and on self-employed individuals, excluding other employment types such as contract workers.

Publishing industries

Over the study period, Canadian businesses operating in the publishing industries have faced pressures to downsize because of declining revenues, changing consumer preferences, falling advertising income and the shift toward digital platforms. This trend was particularly evident in the newspaper publishing and periodical publishing industries, where reliance on declining advertising revenues had pushed industry operating revenues to fall significantly, reaching historically low values (Statistics Canada, November 2023; Statistics Canada, January 2023). By contrast, book publishers saw a revival in consumer reading activity in 2022, reporting the largest increase in operating revenues since comparable data became available in 2014. This resurgence in reading activity has been largely attributed to the influence of social media, with online influencers playing a key role (Statistics Canada, 2024).

Given the sustained trend of falling revenues in the publishing industries subsector, employment declined steadily from 2015 to 2023. The number of employees in the publishing industries subsector fell by almost half (-48.6%) over this nine-year period (Statistics Canada, n.d.) likely because of restructuring and workforce adjustment strategies that were put in place across these industries.

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1 The first paper on the entertainment and recreation industries, released November 28, 2024, can be found here. The second paper on the film, video, and sound recording industries, released December 18, 2024 can be found here.

2 The number of individuals identifying as non-binary has been steadily rising since 2019. However, the proportion of non-binary employees in 2023 remains too low to report.

3 Based on the definition of full-time work status, the employees were classified into full-time or part-time work status. Using the average hourly wage by industry from the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours, a proxy value was established to represent a full-time salary. This is the same approach used in Statistics Canada's AgZero modernization project, which studied agricultural employees.

Gender of employees

The publishing industries employ a slightly higher proportion of female employees compared with male employees, with 57.0% of the workforce being female in 2023. Over the study period, this distribution remained relatively stable, increasing slightly from a proportion of 53.9% female employees in 2015.

Chart 1
**Proportion of men and women employed in the publishing industries, 2015 to 2023**

percent
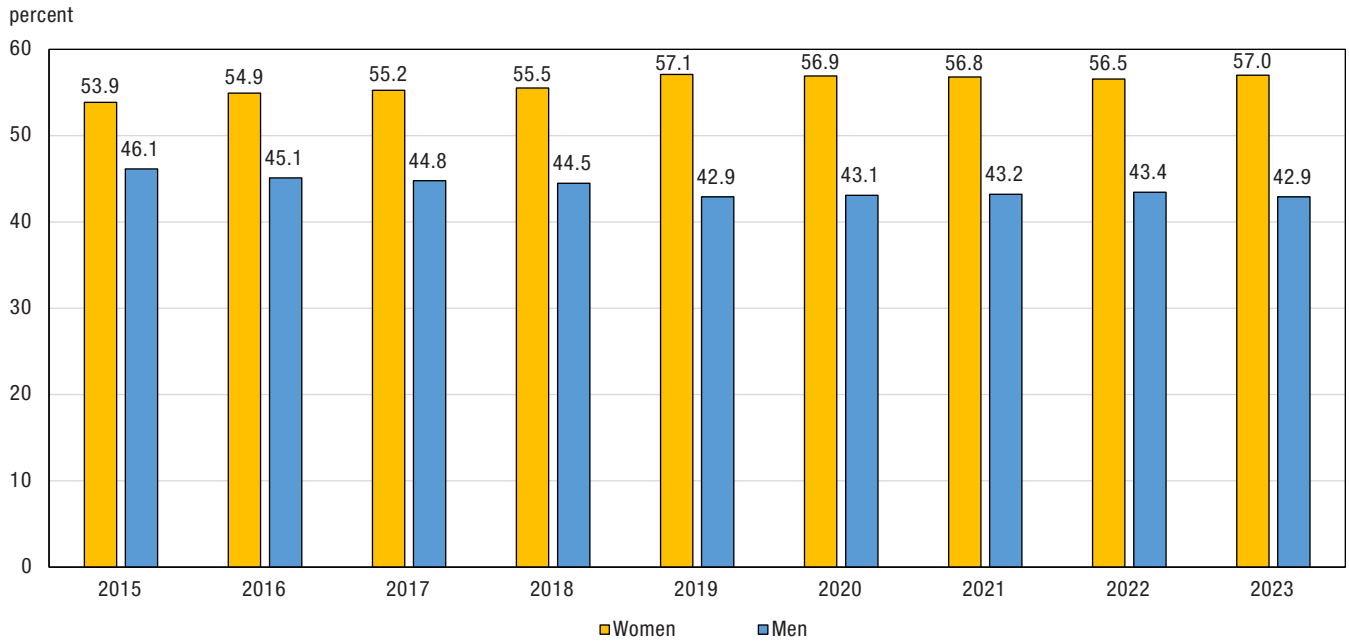
Note: Categories do not sum to 100%, as the non-binary category was removed because of size.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

Work status

A greater proportion of employees in the publishing industries were employed part time rather than full time from 2015 to 2023. The proportion of full-time employees declined from 47.0% in 2015 to 37.6% in 2023. These findings likely reflect the falling revenues and shrinking workforce in the industries and highlight the industries' shift toward lower labour costs.
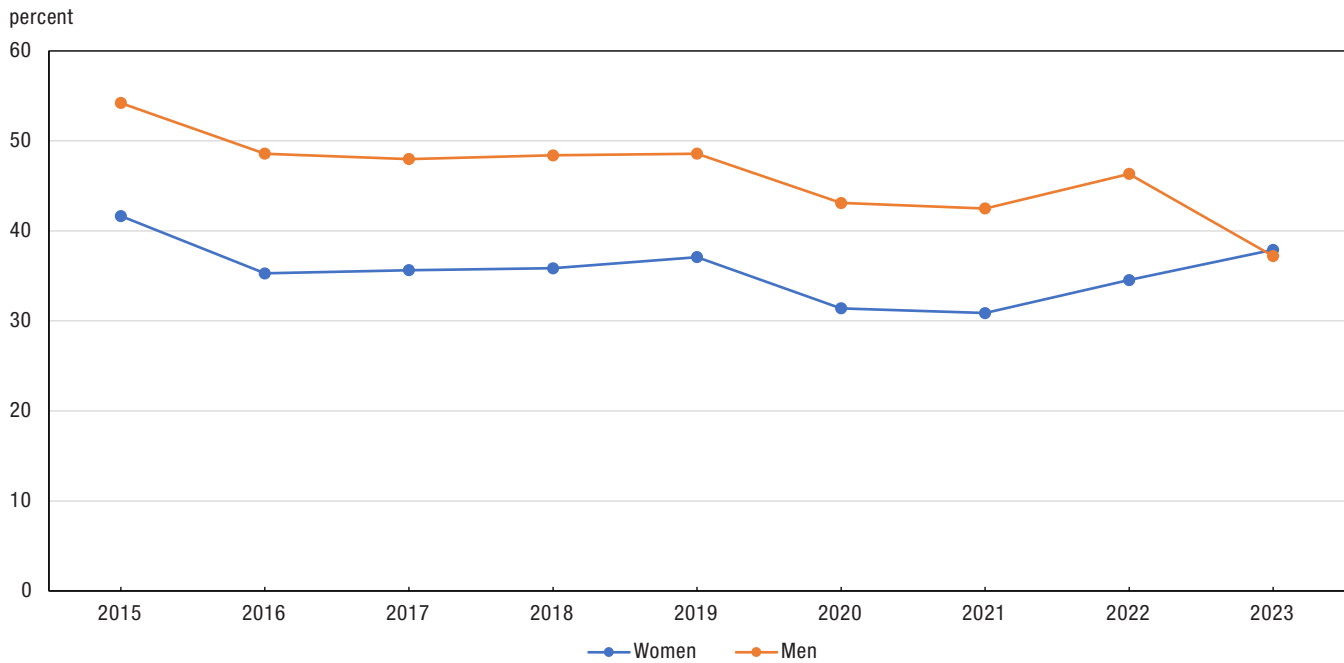
Chart 2
Proportion of workers in full-time and part-time positions in the publishing industries, 2015 to 2023
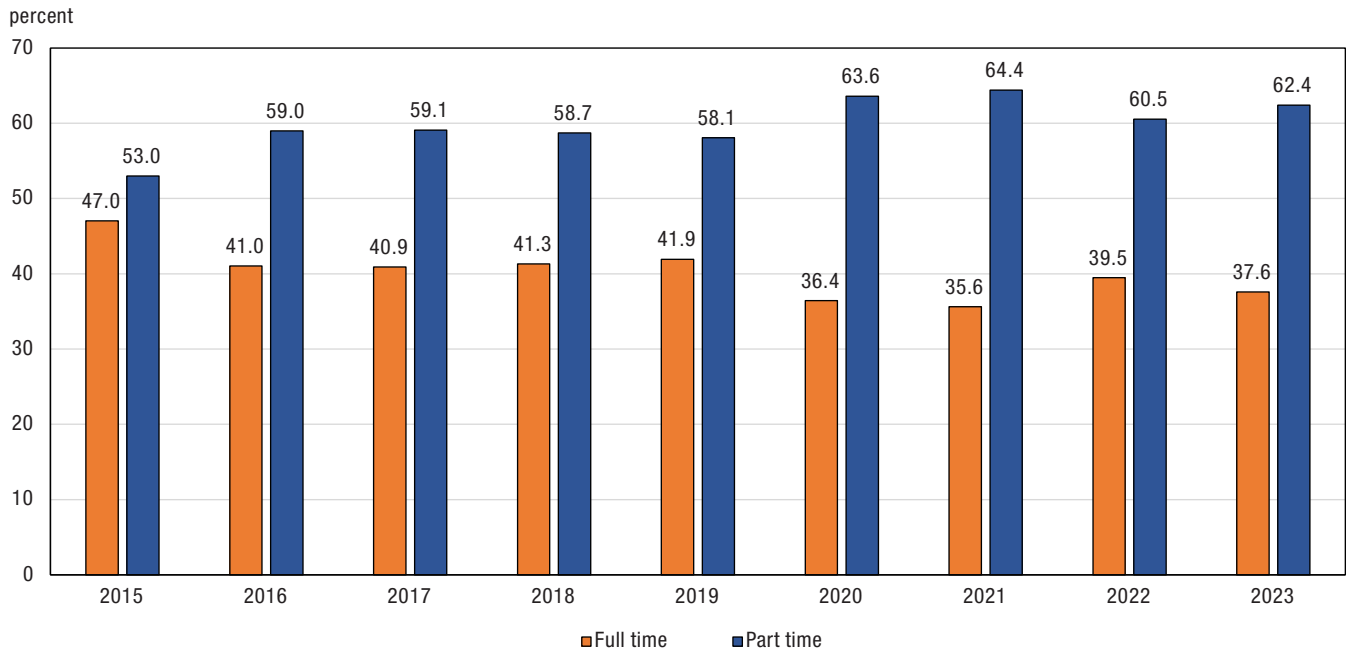
percent

Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

A notable difference was found in the work status between genders. While more female staff were employed in the publishing industries from 2015 to 2023, a greater proportion of these staff were classified as part time rather than full time compared with their male counterparts, throughout most of the period. The proportion of male, full-time employees steadily declined from 54.2% in 2015 to 37.7% in 2023, a similar proportion to female, full-time employees (37.9%). Less than 40% of women were employed full time throughout most of the study period, with the proportion increasing slightly in 2022 and 2023. This change was caused by a decrease in the number of women employed part time, which resulted in a growing share of full-time employment. By contrast, for men, most employment adjustments stemmed from full-time staff, resulting in the shrinking proportion of full-time employment for men in 2023.

Chart 3
Proportion of women and men employed full time in the publishing industries, 2015 to 2023

Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

Age distribution of employees

Employees in the publishing industries have a relatively older age demographic compared with the other culture industries. The distribution of employees by age remained relatively stable in the industry group over the years examined. The most notable change was a shift toward an aging workforce, with the proportion of employees over the age of 65 increasing from 4.6% in 2015 to 9.8% in 2023. From 2015 to 2018, the largest proportion of employees were between the ages of 45 to 54. However, from 2019 to 2023, this shifted to the 55 to 64 age group. Compared with the other arts, entertainment and recreation industries, this trend is unique to the publishing industries where older employees appeared to stay working in their positions while young adults were less likely to enter or remain in this field of work. This could be caused, in part, by the fact that older, more experienced employees have retained their positions throughout workforce adjustments as well as declining interest among younger employees to seek employment in the publishing industries.

Table 1
Proportion of employees in the publishing industries by age group, 2015 to 2023

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	percent								
17 and under	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3
18 to 24	8.9	9.2	9.1	8.6	9.0	7.3	7.8	8.1	8.0
25 to 34	21.2	21.9	21.4	21.4	20.7	19.6	20.5	21.2	20.5
35 to 44	21.0	21.3	21.1	21.1	20.6	21.1	21.2	20.7	20.6
45 to 54	24.1	23.0	22.4	21.6	21.2	21.1	20.6	19.8	19.9
55 to 64	19.8	19.3	20.3	21.0	21.7	22.9	21.9	21.1	21.0
65 to 74	4.1	4.4	4.8	5.2	5.6	6.4	6.3	7.1	7.8
75 to 84	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	1.1	1.1	1.4	1.8
85 to 94	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2

Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

A higher proportion of full-time employees was seen in the middle age categories (from 35 to 65) than across the rest of the age groups. The age group with the highest proportion of full-time employment was the 45-to-54 cohort, which had a proportion of 55.7% full-time employees in 2023. The oldest (1.8%) and youngest (2.8%) age categories had the smallest proportions of full-time staff.

Chart 4
Proportion of full-time work status by age group, publishing industries 2023
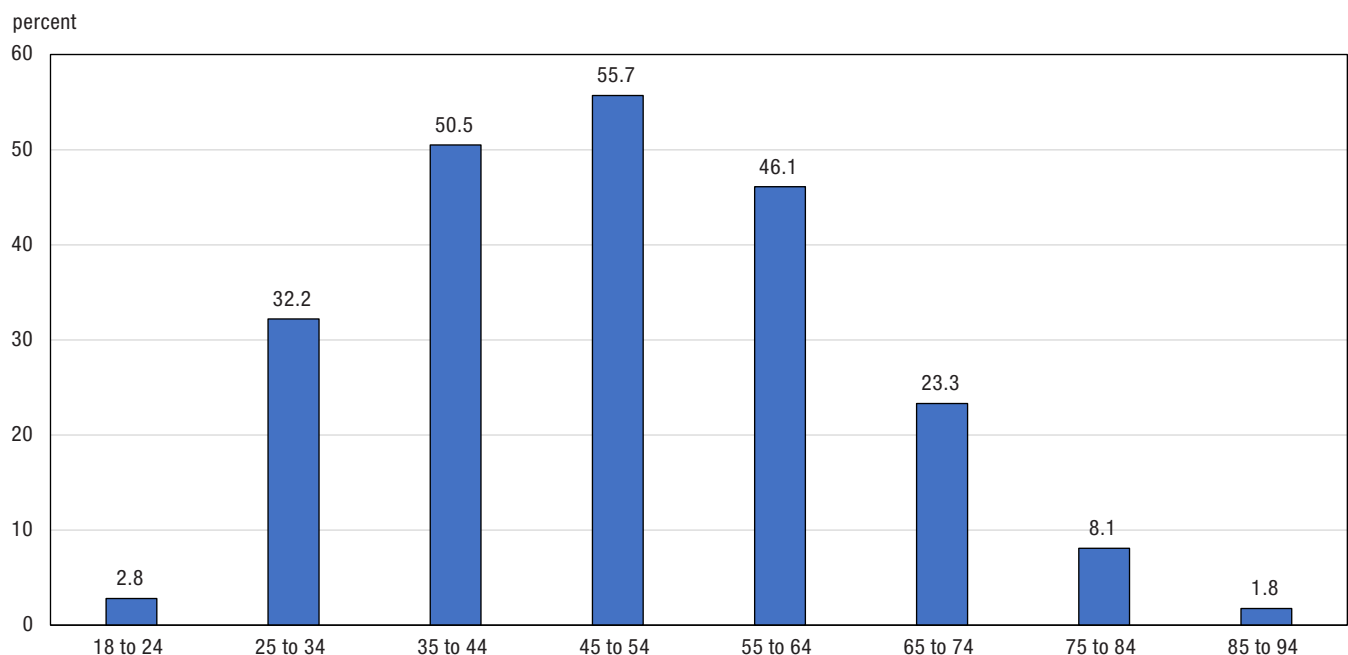
Sources: Statistics Canada, Business Register and administrative data, custom tabulations.

Conclusion

Despite the downsizing of the workforce in the publishing industries subsector and structural changes in recent years, the demographic composition has remained relatively stable, with higher proportions of female staff, part-time employees and employees in older age cohorts. As the workforce in this industry continues to age, the composition of this industry group could continue to shift, potentially bringing about new challenges and opportunities.

The landscape of the publishing industries continues to evolve rapidly, influenced by the impacts of digital transformation, evolving consumer preferences and technological advancements such as generative AI. The exposure to AI-related job transformation is high for employees in information and cultural industries, compared with most other industries (Mehdi and Morissette, 2024). The potential for further changes in the publishing industries subsector will continue to influence future workforce trends in the industry.

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