

Commercial Fisher

Catch fish, crab or lobster for a living. High pay in a good season, and one of the most dangerous jobs in the country.

TYPICAL PAY

\$58,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$38k to \$125k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Fishing boats, wharves, open ocean, processing plants

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Helpful but not required on deck. Shop, math and any boat experience count for more.
- 2 Basic marine safety training** Days to weeks
Marine emergency duties and basic safety courses before you can legally go to sea as crew.
- 3 Register as a crew member** Weeks
Fish harvesters register with the provincial fish harvester body or directly with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, depending on the coast.
- 4 Work seasons as crew** 2 to 10 years
Learn the gear, the grounds and the species. Skippers hire people they have fished with.
- 5 Move up** Varies hugely
Earn a small vessel operator or fishing master certificate, run someone's boat, then buy a licence if you can finance it.

Pros and cons

- + Very good money in a strong season with no degree
- + Paid from your first trip
- + Months off between seasons
- Commercial fishing is one of Canada's deadliest jobs
- Income swings with quota, price and weather
- Buying a licence costs as much as a house

Good to know

Lobster is Canada's most valuable seafood export

Atlantic lobster out of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island brings in more export money than any other Canadian seafood, which is why lobster licences sell for so much.

The cod moratorium changed everything

In 1992 Canada shut down the northern cod fishery off Newfoundland. Tens of thousands of people lost their work in a single announcement, and the stock has still not fully recovered. Every quota rule since has...

Optional boosts

Small vessel operator proficiency. Fishing master certificates. Restricted operator certificate for marine radio. Marine emergency duties.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Fisherman/woman in Canada, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Fisheries and Oceans Canada: commercial fisheries

Transport Canada Marine Safety

Fish Safe BC: training for commercial harvesters

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/fisher>



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