



Labour Market Bulletin

Nova Scotia

November 2020



This Labour Market Bulletin provides an analysis of Labour Force Survey results for the province of Nova Scotia, including the regions of Annapolis Valley, Cape Breton, Southern, Halifax and North Shore.

OVERVIEW

Employment in Nova Scotia rose for the seventh consecutive month in November. There were 10,000 more persons employed, representing an increase of 1,700 jobs compared with November of last year. Nova Scotia has regained nearly all of the jobs shed in March and April when the most severe restrictions connected to the pandemic were introduced. The majority of jobs gained in November were in full-time work.¹

Nova Scotia Monthly Labour Force Statistics

| Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data | Nov 2020 | Oct 2020 | Nov 2019 | Monthly Variation | | Yearly Variation | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | | | | Number | % | Number | % |
| Population 15 + ('000) | 820.0 | 819.4 | 811.6 | 0.6 | 0.1 | 8.4 | 1.0 |
| Labour Force ('000) | 500.7 | 502.4 | 506.6 | -1.7 | -0.3 | -5.9 | -1.2 |
| Employment ('000) | 468.5 | 458.5 | 466.8 | 10.0 | 2.2 | 1.7 | 0.4 |
| Full-Time ('000) | 383.2 | 374.4 | 381.5 | 8.8 | 2.4 | 1.7 | 0.4 |
| Part-Time ('000) | 85.3 | 84.1 | 85.3 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Unemployment ('000) | 32.2 | 43.8 | 39.8 | -11.6 | -26.5 | -7.6 | -19.1 |
| Unemployment Rate (%) | 6.4 | 8.7 | 7.9 | -2.3 | - | -1.5 | - |
| Participation Rate (%) | 61.1 | 61.3 | 62.4 | -0.2 | - | -1.3 | - |
| Employment Rate (%) | 57.1 | 56.0 | 57.5 | 1.1 | - | -0.4 | - |

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287

¹ It should be noted that employment statistics were collected the week of November 8-14 and do not include the more severe restrictions put in place at the end of November.

Among other broad age groups, the number of employed prime age workers (25-54 years of age) has surpassed levels from a year ago, with nearly 10,000 more people employed. The unemployment rate for prime age workers fell to 4.9% in November, the lowest on record. Employment among older workers (55 years of age and over) declined by 3,200, resulting in a rise in the unemployment rate to 7.9%, up from 6.2% last November.

| Seasonally Adjusted Data | Nov 2020 | Oct 2020 | Nov 2019 | Monthly Variation | Yearly Variation |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|------------------|
| | % | % | % | (% points) | (% points) |
| Total | 6.4 | 8.7 | 7.9 | -2.3 | -1.5 |
| 25 years and over | 5.7 | 7.9 | 6.9 | -2.2 | -1.2 |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Men - 25 years and over | 6.6 | 8.8 | 8.4 | -2.2 | -1.8 |
| Women - 25 years and over | 4.8 | 7.0 | 5.4 | -2.2 | -0.6 |
| 15 to 24 years | 10.7 | 13.9 | 13.0 | -3.2 | -2.3 |
| Men - 15 to 24 years | 15.3 | 19.1 | 15.7 | -3.8 | -0.4 |
| Women - 15 to 24 years | 5.9 | 8.3 | 10.3 | -2.4 | -4.4 |

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287

Compared with a year ago, labour market gains were similar among women and men in Nova Scotia. Employment increased among females and males in November and has returned to pre-pandemic levels. Though labour force participation rates had declined for both women and men over the past year, they declined by a similar amount: 1.3 points and 1.4 points, respectively.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Employment levels are higher in the **goods-producing** sector compared with November of last year and have returned to last year's levels in the **services-producing** sector. Among **goods-producing** industries, the **agriculture** industry experienced very strong employment growth in October and November. The industry has experienced positive developments in 2020 after a late spring frost affected crops in 2018 and Hurricane Dorian affected harvest in 2019. Exports of frozen fruit for example (namely blueberries), are up more than 10% so far this year.

Employment declined in the **construction**, and **forestry, fishing, mining and quarrying** industries. Pandemic-related restrictions and project delays had a negative impact on the **construction** industry but large provincial infrastructure projects, including highway construction and a strong housing market, have sustained activity. Employment changes in the **forestry, fishing, mining and quarrying** industry reflect different trends among the subsectors this year. Employment in fishing, for example, has been affected by a large drop in foreign demand for lobster so far this year (-17%). On the other hand, demand for lumber and some mining products, like gold, have strengthened.

Nova Scotia Monthly Employed Labour Force, by Industry

| Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000) | Nov 2020 | Oct 2020 | Nov 2019 | Monthly Variation | | Yearly Variation | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|------|------------------|-------|
| | | | | Number | % | Number | % |
| Total employed, all industries | 468.5 | 458.5 | 466.8 | 10.0 | 2.2 | 1.7 | 0.4 |
| Goods-producing sector | 88.6 | 85.8 | 86.9 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 1.7 | 2.0 |
| Agriculture | 8.3 | 7.9 | 5.4 | 0.4 | 5.1 | 2.9 | 53.7 |
| Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas | 8.7 | 8.0 | 9.6 | 0.7 | 8.7 | -0.9 | -9.4 |
| Utilities | 4.3 | 4.2 | 3.5 | 0.1 | 2.4 | 0.8 | 22.9 |
| Construction | 34.5 | 33.7 | 36.0 | 0.8 | 2.4 | -1.5 | -4.2 |
| Manufacturing | 32.8 | 31.9 | 32.5 | 0.9 | 2.8 | 0.3 | 0.9 |
| Services-producing sector | 379.8 | 372.8 | 379.8 | 7.0 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Trade | 71.9 | 69.1 | 80.7 | 2.8 | 4.1 | -8.8 | -10.9 |
| Transportation and warehousing | 19.6 | 18.7 | 19.5 | 0.9 | 4.8 | 0.1 | 0.5 |
| Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing | 24.9 | 24.0 | 22.0 | 0.9 | 3.7 | 2.9 | 13.2 |
| Professional, scientific and technical services | 32.1 | 32.2 | 27.3 | -0.1 | -0.3 | 4.8 | 17.6 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Business, building and other support services | 17.7 | 17.3 | 18.5 | 0.4 | 2.3 | -0.8 | -4.3 |
| Educational services | 41.6 | 41.9 | 36.6 | -0.3 | -0.7 | 5.0 | 13.7 |
| Health care and social assistance | 74.8 | 72.2 | 75.5 | 2.6 | 3.6 | -0.7 | -0.9 |
| Information, culture and recreation | 16.1 | 15.9 | 17.8 | 0.2 | 1.3 | -1.7 | -9.6 |
| Accommodation and food services | 33.3 | 33.8 | 37.3 | -0.5 | -1.5 | -4.0 | -10.7 |
| Other services | 17.0 | 16.8 | 15.9 | 0.2 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 6.9 |
| Public administration | 30.9 | 30.6 | 28.7 | 0.3 | 1.0 | 2.2 | 7.7 |

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0355

Among **services-producing** sectors, employment changes over the past year have differed greatly. Employment in three industries remained well-below pre-pandemic levels: **wholesale and retail trade**; **accommodations and food services**; and **information, culture and recreation**. The number of persons employed in **wholesale and retail trade services** has declined by 8,800 compared with last November. September figures show retail sales are down 5.4% so far this year in Nova Scotia. A number of large retailers have announced multiple closures across Canada. Travel and social distancing restrictions also severely affected the provincial **accommodations and food services** industry. Room nights sold in the province in September were half their levels last year though figures suggest increased travel within the Atlantic Bubble through the summer. Sales at food services and drinking establishments so far this year are three quarters their level last year. Employment was also lower in the **information, culture and recreation** industry that has ties to hospitality and tourism sector and includes casinos, movie theatres and museums. On November 26th, the government of Nova Scotia announced new temporary local restrictions on social gathering and travel for the Halifax and Hants Counties. These measures include suspending in-person dining and recreational sports as well as the closure of museums, fitness centers and libraries.

A number of **services-producing** industries have experienced higher levels of employment compared with last year including **professional, scientific and technical services**; **education services**; and **finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing**. These industries tend to have a higher capacity for work from home. Employment in **education services** has also been impacted by a need for additional staff to meet new public health requirements. Employment in **public administration** and **other services**, which includes personal care services such as hair salons, was also higher.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

The **Halifax** economic region was the only economic region to experience higher employment levels compared with November 2019. In the **Cape Breton** economic region, there were 2,100 fewer persons employed compared with last November. The decline in employment was all in full-time work. A large number of persons left the labour force and with fewer persons searching for work the unemployment rate declined to 11.4%. Among industries, the largest employment decline was in **accommodation and food services**. The **Halifax** and **Cape Breton** regions experienced the greatest decline in tourism because of the pandemic.

In the **North Shore** economic region, the number of persons employed fell by 2,800 compared with last November. Much of the decline was in full-time work. A large number of persons also left the labour force over this period and, as a result of fewer people looking for work, the unemployment rate declined to 5.9%. Among industries, the largest employment decline occurred in **wholesale and retail trade**.

The **Annapolis Valley** economic region experienced the largest decline in employment among economic regions with 3,500 fewer persons employed compared with last November. A large number of persons also left the labour force over this period and, as a result of fewer people looking for work, the unemployment rate declined to 5.1%. The drop in employment was concentrated in the **wholesale and retail trade** industry though the **construction** and **accommodation and food services** industries also experienced large declines. Employment was higher by 700 in the **agriculture** industry. The region has a large share of workers in this industry and has benefitted from relatively good weather and strong demand for some agricultural products this season.

Employment levels remained stable in the **Southern** economic region compared with last November though some people left the labour force. As a result of fewer persons looking for work, the unemployment rate declined to 9.6%, down from 10.3% last November. Among industries, the largest employment decline occurred in **manufacturing**, which includes seafood processors. Low demand for seafood products has negatively affected seafood processors.

Employment in the **Halifax** economic region has continued to improve since June 2020, with 1,600 more persons employed compared with last November. With more people working, the region's unemployment rate declined to 6.4%, just slightly above the rate of 6.2% last November. **Halifax** was the only economic region to see significant population and labour force growth over the past year. The **professional, scientific and technical services**, **education services**, and **other services** industries have experienced the largest employment growth over the year though a number of sectors have experienced declines including **wholesale and retail trade** and **health care and social assistance**. The **health care and social assistance** industry experienced large employment increases in the second half of 2019 though the industry continues to be challenged by budget constraints and shortages of some health professionals.

Nova Scotia Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

| 3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data | Employment | | | Unemployment Rate | | |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| | Nov 2020 ('000) | Nov 2019 ('000) | Yearly Variation (%) | Nov 2020 (%) | Nov 2019 (%) | Yearly Variation (%) |
| Nova Scotia | 462.8 | 469.7 | -1.5 | 7.1 | 7.3 | -0.2 |
| Economic Regions | | | | | | |
| Cape Breton | 49.0 | 51.1 | -4.1 | 11.4 | 11.9 | -0.5 |
| North Shore | 66.9 | 69.7 | -4.0 | 5.9 | 7.1 | -1.2 |
| Annapolis Valley | 56.1 | 59.6 | -5.9 | 5.1 | 5.1 | 0.0 |
| Southern | 47.0 | 47.0 | 0.0 | 9.6 | 10.3 | -0.7 |
| Halifax | 243.9 | 242.3 | 0.7 | 6.4 | 6.2 | 0.2 |

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0293

Note: In preparing this document, the authors have taken care to provide clients with labour market information that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since this document was published. Users are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect official policies of Employment and Social Development Canada.

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