



Labour Market Bulletin

Nova Scotia

April 2021



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 edged down by 0.2% in April as the number of full-time workers declined. Part-time employment increased, but not enough to fully offset the loss of full-time work. Despite the lower employment level, the unemployment rate went down from 8.6% to 8.1% as 3,500 people exited the labour force.

Nova Scotia Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	April 2021	March 2021	April 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	818.0	817.7	812.2	0.3	0.0	5.8	0.7
Labour Force ('000)	507.2	510.7	447.1	-3.5	-0.7	60.1	13.4
Employment ('000)	465.9	466.8	392.0	-0.9	-0.2	73.9	18.9
Full-Time ('000)	379.7	382.1	330.9	-2.4	-0.6	48.8	14.7
Part-Time ('000)	86.3	84.6	61.2	1.7	2.0	25.1	41.0
Unemployment ('000)	41.2	43.9	55.1	-2.7	-6.2	-13.9	-25.2
Unemployment Rate (%)	8.1	8.6	12.3	-0.5	-	-4.2	-
Participation Rate (%)	62.0	62.5	55.0	-0.5	-	7.0	-
Employment Rate (%)	57.0	57.1	48.3	-0.1	-	8.7	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

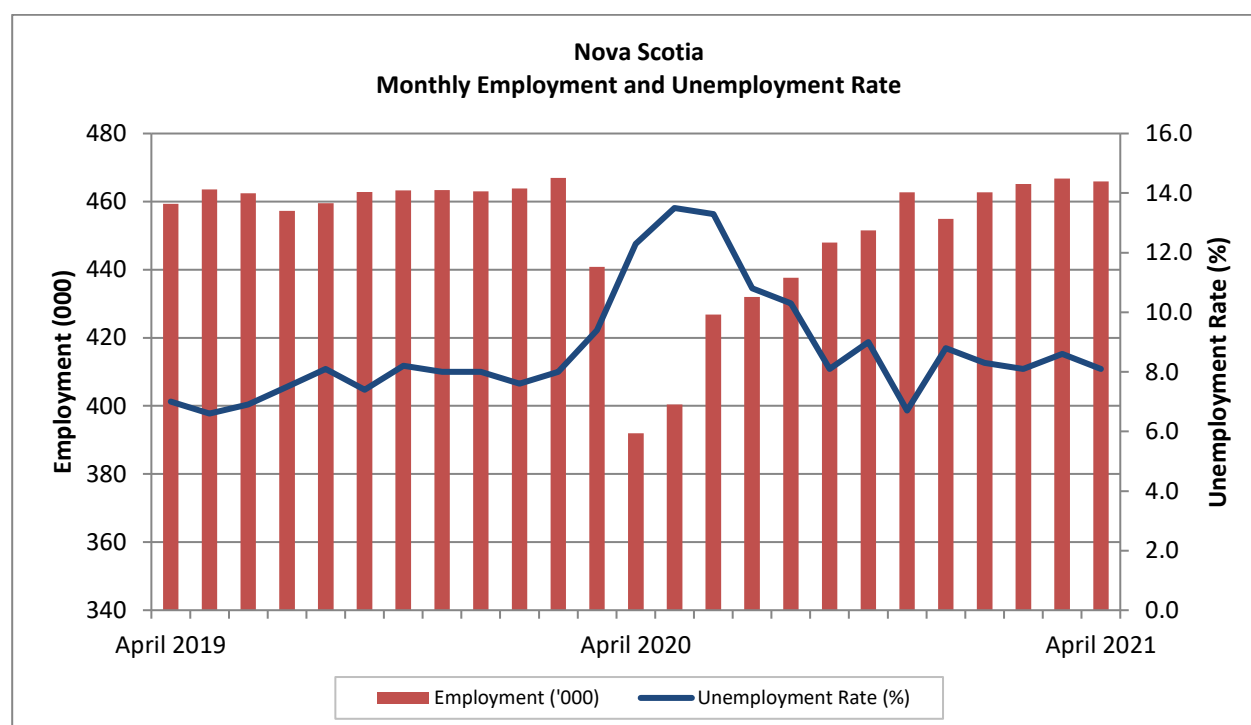
Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287

Despite the slight decline in April, employment levels in Nova Scotia remained high from a historical perspective, exceeding 465,000 for just the fourth time on record and leading the country in terms of recovery from the employment declines that occurred one year ago. However, in late April 2021, the provincial government introduced strict containment measures in response to a new COVID-19 outbreak. Most of these restrictions came

into effect after the April Labour Force Survey (LFS) was conducted, so their effects on the labour market will not be captured until the May survey.

April marks one year since the labour market bore the full effect of containment measures implemented during the first wave of COVID-19. Against that baseline, employment has increased by 18.9% year-over-year, while the labour force has expanded by 13.4%. The unemployment rate in April 2020 was 12.3% and has declined by 4.2 percentage points (pp) over the past 12 months.

Long-term unemployment remains a challenge for some residents of Nova Scotia. The number of jobseekers unemployed for 27 weeks or more was 11,500 in April, approximately twice the pre-pandemic level observed in February 2020. This suggests that while total employment has essentially returned to normal, some previously employed individuals have been persistently excluded from the recovery.



The three broad age groups have experienced the labour market recovery over the past year differently. In the months leading up to the pandemic, youth employment (15 to 24 years of age) had risen to historically high levels. This age group was hardest-hit by employment declines during the first wave, due in part to their overrepresentation in the retail and food service industries. Since then, 86% of youth employment shed between February and April 2020 has been recovered. The present youth employment level—65,900—is comparable to levels observed during the first half of 2019, but well short of the higher levels noted during late 2019 and early 2020.

For prime working age individuals (25-54 years of age) and older workers (55 years of age and older), the recovery from COVID-19 has been more complete. While prime working age employment levels fell by 35,600 during March and April 2020, it has risen by 36,000 in the 12 months since, with a slight shift toward more full-time work. Employment among older workers has grown even faster, surpassing the threshold for a full recovery by 2,100 workers— or approximately 16%.

The pandemic has affected male and female labour market outcomes differently. From March through August 2020, for example, females experienced more extensive job loss and a larger increase in unemployment rates. Though overall female employment levels have since recovered, other labour market gaps could persist, particularly those which are difficult to measure like labour force attachment.

Nova Scotia Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	April 2021 %	March 2021 %	April 2020 %	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	8.1	8.6	12.3	-0.5	-4.2
25 years and over	7.4	7.7	10.0	-0.3	-2.6
Men - 25 years and over	8.6	8.9	9.8	-0.3	-1.2
Women - 25 years and over	6.1	6.4	10.1	-0.3	-4.0
15 to 24 years	12.5	13.8	27.5	-1.3	-15.0
Men - 15 to 24 years	14.4	15.2	29.3	-0.8	-14.9
Women - 15 to 24 years	10.4	12.4	25.4	-2.0	-15.0

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

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Over the past year, the effect of the pandemic has varied significantly by industry. The table in this section indicates impressive year-over-year employment growth in most industries. However, this is relative to unusually low job levels in April 2020.

In April 2021, four out of five **goods-producing industries** had higher employment levels than in February 2020, before the pandemic. The **Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas** industry did not experience the same plunge in employment between February and April 2020 that most other industries did. Despite a drop in fishing exports and the closure of the Northern Pulp mill, this industry added 900 positions over the past 12 months. The 27% year-over-year employment increase in the **construction** industry reflects a net gain over pre-pandemic levels. Demand for workers in construction is expected to be strong in the medium term as the province experiences an unprecedented level of dwelling construction and a number of major highway, school, and hospital projects. The **manufacturing** industry has not recovered all of the employment shed between February and April 2020, but remains relatively high from a historical perspective.

Services-producing industries have experienced a wide range of outcomes during the past year. Despite recovering 10,400 jobs since April 2020, the **accommodation and food services** industry employs several thousand fewer workers than prior to the pandemic. Recently introduced containment measures may result in further employment declines in this industry, while the extent of seasonal tourism activity possible this summer remains highly uncertain. Other industries that have been hit hard by containment measures include the **information, culture, and recreation** and **wholesale and retail trade** industries. A bright spot throughout the past year has been the **professional, scientific, and technical services** industry, due in part to consistently strong growth in the province's IT sector. The **finance, insurance, real estate and leasing** industry has also experienced moderate growth since February 2020, while employment has been relatively stable in the **educational services, health care and social assistance**, and **public administration** industries.

Nova Scotia Monthly Employed Labour Force, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	April 2021	March 2021	April 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	465.9	466.8	392.0	-0.9	-0.2	73.9	18.9
Goods-producing sector	93.6	95.2	77.7	-1.6	-1.7	15.9	20.5
Agriculture	7.2	8.2	5.0	-1.0	-12.2	2.2	44.0
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	11.6	10.4	10.7	1.2	11.5	0.9	8.4
Utilities	4.4	4.5	3.3	-0.1	-2.2	1.1	33.3
Construction	36.7	38.6	28.9	-1.9	-4.9	7.8	27.0
Manufacturing	33.7	33.5	29.7	0.2	0.6	4.0	13.5
Services-producing sector	372.3	371.6	314.3	0.7	0.2	58.0	18.5
Trade	71.4	73.1	58.9	-1.7	-2.3	12.5	21.2
Transportation and warehousing	22.3	22.6	17.4	-0.3	-1.3	4.9	28.2
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	23.6	23.9	21.9	-0.3	-1.3	1.7	7.8
Professional, scientific and technical services	33.6	34.2	27.7	-0.6	-1.8	5.9	21.3
Business, building and other support services	17.6	15.9	16.1	1.7	10.7	1.5	9.3
Educational services	40.2	38.7	32.8	1.5	3.9	7.4	22.6
Health care and social assistance	73.8	72.5	68.3	1.3	1.8	5.5	8.1
Information, culture and recreation	15.2	14.8	11.5	0.4	2.7	3.7	32.2
Accommodation and food services	28.0	28.8	17.6	-0.8	-2.8	10.4	59.1
Other services	15.9	16.7	12.0	-0.8	-4.8	3.9	32.5
Public administration	30.7	30.4	30.2	0.3	1.0	0.5	1.7

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Cape Breton was the sole economic region to experience year-over-year employment declines, falling by 6.6% since April 2020. The **wholesale and retail trade** industry accounted for the majority of the loss, with most of the change occurring among part-time workers. On the upside, some other services-producing industries such as **professional, scientific, and technical services** employ more workers than before the pandemic. Despite the overall decrease in employment since April 2020, the unemployment rate fell from 16.7% to 14.4% as 5,000 individuals left the labour force. This also pushed the labour force participation rate down to 47.2%, the lowest in the province.

Employment in the **North Shore** economic region increased by 8.3% over the past year. Most key indicators have nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels, including the unemployment rate, at 9.0% and the labour force participation rate, at 57.7%. There has been a shift from full- to part-time work, however. The **wholesale and retail trade** industry in this region has fared better than elsewhere, while **manufacturing** and **professional, scientific, and technical services** employ more workers than in February 2020, prior to the pandemic. Substantial year-over-year declines occurred in the **construction** and **accommodation and food services** industries.

The number of workers in the **Annapolis Valley** economic region appears to have largely rebounded from the low employment level observed in April 2020, albeit with a slight shift toward more part-time employment. The unemployment rate has declined since last April, but remains somewhat elevated at 9.5%, while the labour force participation rate is the highest in the province among economic regions outside of Halifax, at 58.9%. Employment has increased in the majority of industries year-over-year, with the exception of **manufacturing, accommodation and food services, and public administration**.

The number of workers in the **Southern** economic region reached 50,000 in April, marking a major recovery from the lower levels of employment observed one year prior. As in some other regions, there has been a shift toward a larger share of part-time employment, however. The unemployment rate has declined below pre-pandemic levels, at 7.7%. Most industries have gained workers year-over-year in this region. Exceptions were **wholesale and retail trade, professional, scientific and technical services and agriculture**, which all experienced a moderate decline.

Labour market conditions have been the most positive in the **Halifax economic** region. Job growth since April 2020 has exceeded the threshold for recovery by several thousand workers, and, unlike other economic regions, the job gains have been in full-time work. Despite declining since last April, the unemployment rate remains somewhat above pre-pandemic levels. This is due to a quickly expanding labour force, which has driven the labour force participation rate up to 68.8%, the highest in the province. Employment has expanded in most industries since April 2020, led by **construction and professional, scientific, and technical services**.

Nova Scotia Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	April 2021 ('000)	April 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	April 2021 (%)	April 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (%)
Nova Scotia	455.4	422.7	7.7	9.1	10.7	-1.6
Economic Regions						
Cape Breton	44.0	47.1	-6.6	14.4	16.7	-2.3
North Shore	66.8	61.7	8.3	9.0	10.4	-1.4
Annapolis Valley	56.5	50.5	11.9	9.5	10.9	-1.4
Southern	50.0	46.5	7.5	7.7	11.1	-3.4
Halifax	238.0	216.9	9.7	8.3	9.3	-1.0

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0387

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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For information on the Labour Force Survey, please visit the Statistics Canada Web site at: www.statcan.gc.ca

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