



Labour Market Bulletin

Nova Scotia

May 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 went down by 22,200—or 4.8%—in May as the province endured a four-week lockdown aimed at containing a third wave of COVID-19 cases. The number of unemployed jobseekers only increased by about one-third of that amount, at 7,200, as the remainder of the change was counted as ‘not in the labour force’.¹ This served to limit the increase in the unemployment rate, which rose from 8.1% to 9.8%. A disproportionately large amount of the job loss happened among part-time workers.

Nova Scotia Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	May 2021	April 2021	May 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	818.7	818.0	812.6	0.7	0.1	6.1	0.8
Labour Force ('000)	492.1	507.2	462.8	-15.1	-3.0	29.3	6.3
Employment ('000)	443.7	465.9	400.4	-22.2	-4.8	43.3	10.8
Full-Time ('000)	367.0	379.7	332.6	-12.7	-3.3	34.4	10.3
Part-Time ('000)	76.7	86.3	67.7	-9.6	-11.1	9.0	13.3
Unemployment ('000)	48.4	41.2	62.4	7.2	17.5	-14.0	-22.4
Unemployment Rate (%)	9.8	8.1	13.5	1.7	-	-3.7	-
Participation Rate (%)	60.1	62.0	57.0	-1.9	-	3.1	-
Employment Rate (%)	54.2	57.0	49.3	-2.8	-	4.9	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

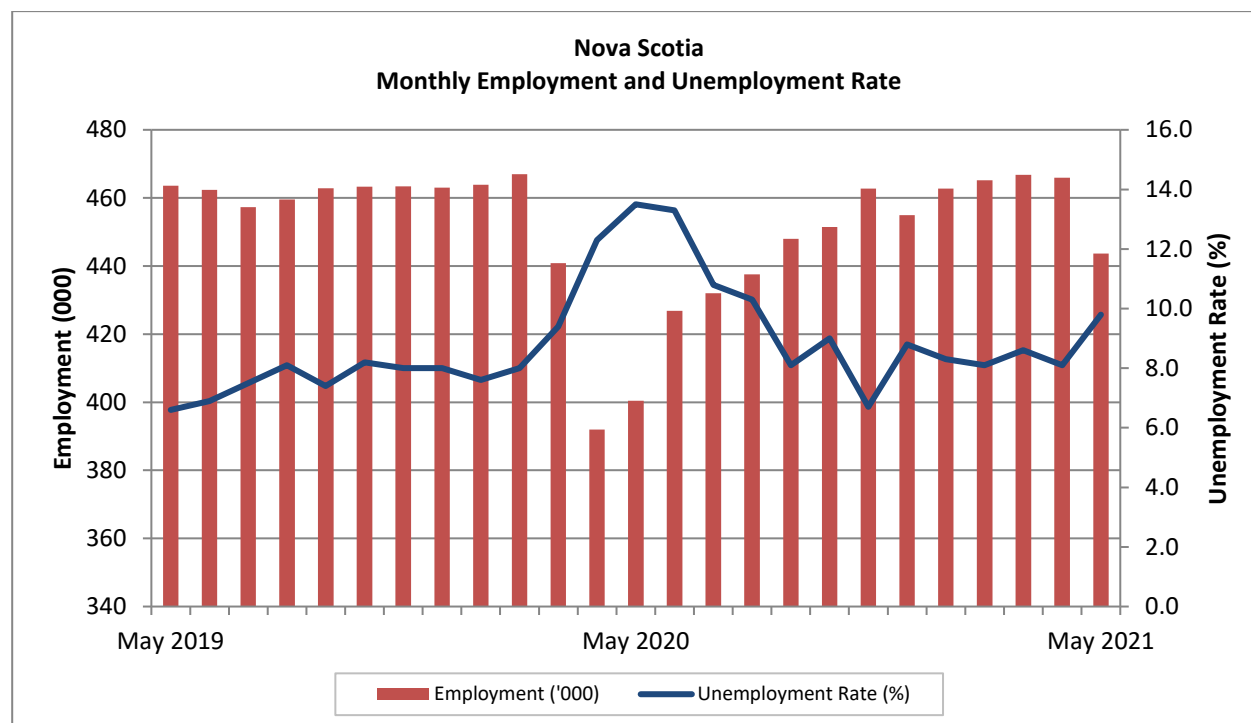
Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287

Despite the drop in employment this month, the number of workers was still substantially higher than one year earlier, in May 2020. The first wave containment measures, in place between March and June 2020, had a much

¹ For additional information on labour force status, please refer to Section 2 of the “[Guide to the Labour Force Survey](#).”

more severe effect on the labour market. As a result, the number of workers was 10.8% higher this month than 12 months prior. Employment fluctuated considerably during that period, rising continuously between May and November 2020 as the economy recovered, then stabilizing at pre-pandemic levels between January and April 2021, and finally dropping again in May 2021.

Changes in all labour market indicators on a year-over-year basis were positive. The working age population increased by 0.8% as migration to Nova Scotia continued throughout the pandemic, and the labour force expanded by 6.3% as tens of thousands of individuals returned to work or began to seek employment. The increase in employment was divided proportionally between full- and part-time positions.



By broad age group, youth (15 to 24 years of age) experienced a more extensive employment loss this month than older age groups, an occurrence that has been observed during previous outbreaks. Youth are overrepresented in industries that are more affected by containment measures, such as retail trade and food services. Employment in this age group went down by 13.4%, driving the youth unemployment rate up from 12.5% to 16.4%. In comparison, employment among prime working age (25 to 54 years of age) and older (55 years and up) workers fell by 3.5% and 2.9% respectively, while the unemployment rates for both of these groups remained in the single digits.

By sex, females experienced a larger decline in employment this month than males. This discrepancy was most pronounced among older workers, and among full-time prime working age workers. The disproportionate effect of containment measures on female labour force outcomes has been noted across the country throughout the pandemic.

Nova Scotia Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	May 2021	April 2021	May 2020	Monthly Variation	Yearly Variation
	%	%	%	(% points)	(% points)
Total	9.8	8.1	13.5	1.7	-3.7
25 years and over	8.8	7.4	12.1	1.4	-3.3
Men - 25 years and over	9.8	8.6	11.3	1.2	-1.5
Women - 25 years and over	7.7	6.1	12.9	1.6	-5.2
15 to 24 years	16.4	12.5	22.5	3.9	-6.1
Men - 15 to 24 years	17.7	14.4	15.8	3.3	1.9
Women - 15 to 24 years	15.1	10.4	29.6	4.7	-14.5

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

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

The **goods-producing sector** was not hit as hard by the recent containment measures, with employment down just 1.0% in May 2021 compared to the previous month. Year-over-year growth was 16.3%, as there was a severe dip in manufacturing employment during the baseline period of May 2020. The goods-producing sector employs several thousand more workers than before the pandemic, despite the moderate loss of jobs this month.

Most industries within this sector have also fared well. Employment in the **forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas** industry has remained relatively stable, as seafood exports have been recovering and demand and prices for lumber have been at historical highs. The **construction** industry added 4,500 workers over the past year, and has sustained a level of employment above pre-pandemic values amid strong residential construction activity and a number of major provincial highway and hospital capital projects. While the **manufacturing** industry experienced notable job loss during the first wave of COVID-19 cases one year ago, employment has since recovered and remained stable throughout the recent outbreak.

The **services-producing sector** bore the brunt of this month's employment decline, shedding 21,200 jobs. Much of the loss occurred in industries that were vulnerable to the effects of containment measures, which had not fully recovered from previous outbreaks. In the **wholesale and retail trade** industry—in which employment was already one-tenth lower than before the pandemic—6,700 fewer people were working as non-essential retail was ordered to close. Conditions were similar in the **accommodation and food services** industry, as restaurants were restricted to take-out or delivery only; employment in this industry was already one-quarter below pre-pandemic levels, and declined an additional 12.1% this month.

Conditions varied widely among other services-producing industries. All but **public administration** posted positive year-over-year growth, though in most cases this was due in part to the low baseline values of May 2020. Relative to pre-pandemic levels, the **professional, scientific and technical services** industry experienced the largest job gains. Throughout the pandemic, several technology employers opened in Halifax or increased their staffing, contributing to growth in this industry. Another bright spot was the **transportation and warehousing** industry, which has added nearly 3,000 workers since before the pandemic.

Nova Scotia Monthly Employed Labour Force, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	May 2021	April 2021	May 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	443.7	465.9	400.4	-22.2	-4.8	43.3	10.8
Goods-producing sector	92.7	93.6	79.7	-0.9	-1.0	13.0	16.3
Agriculture	7.4	7.2	5.0	0.2	2.8	2.4	48.0
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	10.7	11.6	10.2	-0.9	-7.8	0.5	4.9
Utilities	4.3	4.4	3.3	-0.1	-2.3	1.0	30.3
Construction	36.6	36.7	32.1	-0.1	-0.3	4.5	14.0
Manufacturing	33.7	33.7	29.1	0.0	0.0	4.6	15.8
Services-producing sector	351.1	372.3	320.7	-21.2	-5.7	30.4	9.5
Trade	64.7	71.4	64.2	-6.7	-9.4	0.5	0.8
Transportation and warehousing	22.5	22.3	16.3	0.2	0.9	6.2	38.0
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	22.8	23.6	20.9	-0.8	-3.4	1.9	9.1
Professional, scientific and technical services	33.9	33.6	28.2	0.3	0.9	5.7	20.2
Business, building and other support services	17.5	17.6	16.0	-0.1	-0.6	1.5	9.4
Educational services	33.5	40.2	31.9	-6.7	-16.7	1.6	5.0
Health care and social assistance	71.9	73.8	66.2	-1.9	-2.6	5.7	8.6
Information, culture and recreation	12.8	15.2	12.6	-2.4	-15.8	0.2	1.6
Accommodation and food services	24.6	28.0	19.7	-3.4	-12.1	4.9	24.9
Other services	15.8	15.9	11.8	-0.1	-0.6	4.0	33.9
Public administration	31.0	30.7	32.7	0.3	1.0	-1.7	-5.2

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Year-over-year labour market changes in the **Cape Breton** economic region were mostly negative. Employment declined by 1.1%, all of which was part-time in nature. Despite the job loss, the unemployment rate went down by 2.7 percentage points (pp) as 2,500 individuals left the labour force. These developments yielded the lowest participation rate and highest unemployment rate in the province, at 48.1% and 15.5%, respectively. While most industries posted at least moderate job growth, these were offset by a large decline in employment in the **wholesale and retail trade** industry.

The number of workers in the **North Shore** economic region went up by 13.1% over the past year, recovering a large amount of the employment lost during March and April 2020. The labour force also expanded, but at a slower rate than employment, causing the unemployment rate to fall from 12.0% to 7.9%. Job growth was driven by a partial recovery in employment in the **wholesale and retail trade** industry. Notable gains also occurred in the following industries: **manufacturing**; **other services**; and **professional, scientific, and technical services**.

The **Annapolis Valley** economic region has also regained a large amount of employment during the past 12 months, during which the number of workers increased by 17.9%. The unemployment rate fell from 12.4% to 9.1%

over the same period. The job growth was accompanied by an influx of labour market entrants, which pushed the participation rate to the highest level outside of the Halifax region. While a many industries experienced positive employment growth, the greatest increases occurred in **health care and social assistance** and **wholesale and retail trade**.

Employment in the **Southern** economic region went up by 14.3% between May 2020 and May 2021. As in some other regions, thousands of individuals entered the labour force during the same period, boosting the participation rate to 56.9%. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate declined by 5.9pp to 7.3%. The largest job gains during the past year occurred in the **accommodation and food services**, **educational services**, and **construction** industries.

The **Halifax** economic region added 25,100 workers year-over-year (+12.0%) which were split proportionally between full- and part-time employment. Despite the scale of this increase, the unemployment rate only declined by 1.6pp to 9.1%, well above its pre-pandemic level, because of a large increase in the size of the labour force. The working age population of Halifax increased by 1.8% during the past year, in large part due to migration, which may have contributed to the influx of labour force participants. Only one industry experienced an employment decline since last May: **business, building and other support services**. Among the other industries, large increases occurred in **construction** and **accommodation and food services**—representing a partial recovery from job losses in March and April 2020—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		
	May 2021 ('000)	May 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	May 2021 (%)	May 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (%)
Nova Scotia	454.7	407.3	11.6	9.4	12.3	-2.9
Economic Regions						
Cape Breton	44.4	44.9	-1.1	15.5	18.2	-2.7
North Shore	67.4	59.6	13.1	7.9	12.0	-4.1
Annapolis Valley	56.6	48.0	17.9	9.1	12.4	-3.3
Southern	51.8	45.3	14.3	7.3	13.2	-5.9
Halifax	234.6	209.5	12.0	9.1	10.7	-1.6

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.

Prepared by: Labour Market Analysis Directorate, Service Canada, Atlantic Region

For further information, please contact the LMI team at:

http://www.esdc.gc.ca/cgi-bin/contact/edsc-esdc/eng/contact_us.aspx?section=lmi

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

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