



New Brunswick Labour Force Trends March 2024



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Note: This report provides an overview of labour force related trends in New Brunswick up to 2023. For more up to date, but less detailed, analysis and data, visit the “Labour Force Statistics” tile on the “Labour Market Information” section of NBjobs.ca.

Overview¹

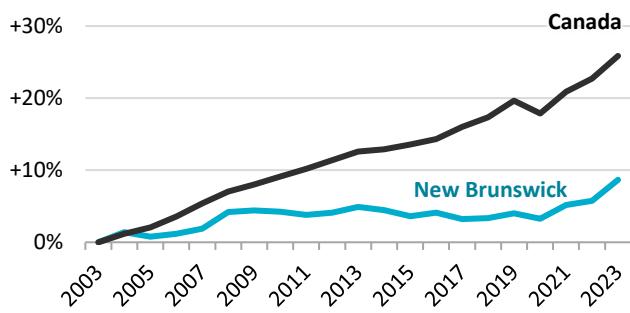
Labour Force Characteristics – New Brunswick (12-Month Averages)

	2023	2022	2019
Population Aged 15+	664,100	650,800	642,700
Not in Labour Force	269,800	261,600	246,800
Labour Force	413,600	402,500	395,900
Employment	386,500	373,500	363,600
Full-Time	330,600	320,700	307,700
Part-Time	55,900	52,800	55,900
Unemployment	27,100	29,000	32,300
Participation Rate	60.5%	60.6%	61.6%
Employment Rate	56.6%	56.2%	56.6%
Unemployment Rate	6.6%	7.2%	8.2%

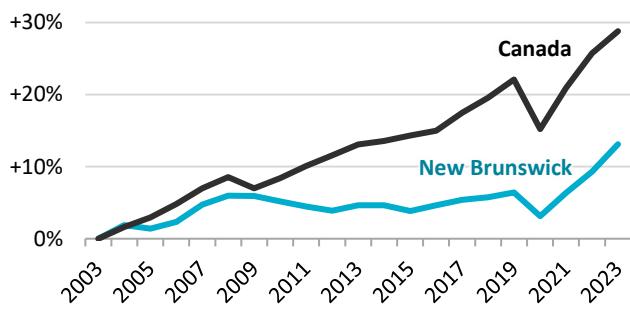
Recent trends in New Brunswick’s labour force have been largely shaped by the province’s aging population. Between 2003 and 2023, the number of individuals retiring each year in the province nearly doubled. This substantial increase in retirements has put significant downward pressure on labour force growth in the province. Up until recently, this had resulted in declining labour force and employment levels; however, since the mid-2010s, labour market conditions in the province have begun to show signs of improvement (despite the pandemic temporarily interrupting this trend throughout much of 2020 and 2021).

These improvements have in part been due to an increased focus on immigration and other international migration by both the federal and provincial governments. Both the total number of individuals participating in the province’s labour force (employed or looking for work), and the total number of employed individuals, hit record highs in 2023.

Labour Force Relative to 2003

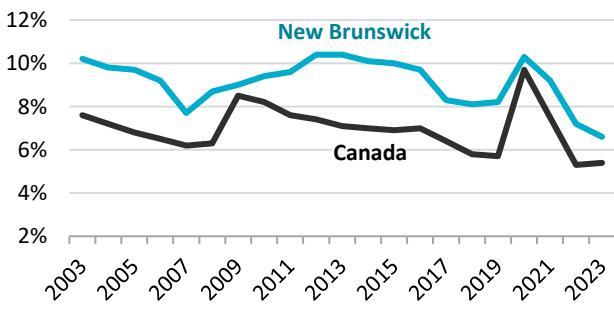


Employment Relative to 2003



Furthermore, while the province’s labour force and employment levels have trended upwards, unemployment has decreased significantly. Between 2013 and 2023, the province’s unemployment rate fell from 10.4% to a record low 6.6%. This downward trend in unemployment in the province has primarily been the result of increased employment opportunities arising from retirements.

Unemployment Rate



¹ Source(s): Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (Tables 14-10-0327 and 14-10-0287).

Labour Force Participation²

Trends in Participation

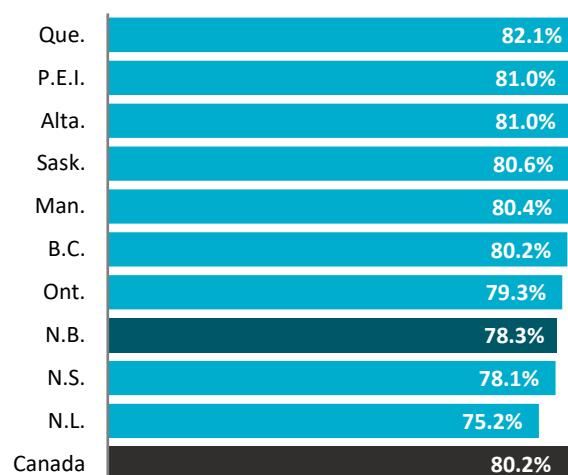
New Brunswick consistently has one of the lowest rates of labour force participation in Canada. Throughout 2023, an average of 413,600 New Brunswickers were participating in the labour force (386,500 employed and 27,100 unemployed), representing 60.5% of its population aged 15 years and over, compared to 65.6% nationally.

The main contributing factor to the gap in participation between New Brunswick and the rest of Canada was the province's relatively older population (since older individuals are less likely to be participating in the labour force). When age is accounted for, New Brunswick is much closer to being on par with the other provinces. In 2023, 78.3% of New Brunswickers aged 15 to 64 years were participating in the labour force, compared to 80.2% of individuals in this age group Canada-wide. Furthermore, examining trends in participation among this age group over time reveals that the gap between New Brunswick's rate and the national rate has closed significantly over time.

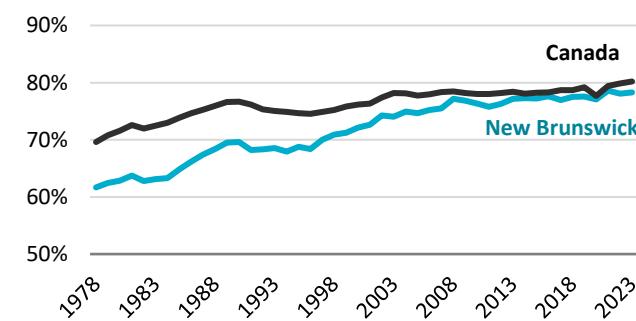
Beyond age, other factors that may be contributing to New Brunswick's relatively low participation rate include:

- The seasonal nature of many of the province's prominent industries
- Low educational attainment levels (particularly among older individuals)
- High prevalence of disabilities
- Lower wages than in most other Canadian jurisdictions (across most industries and occupations)

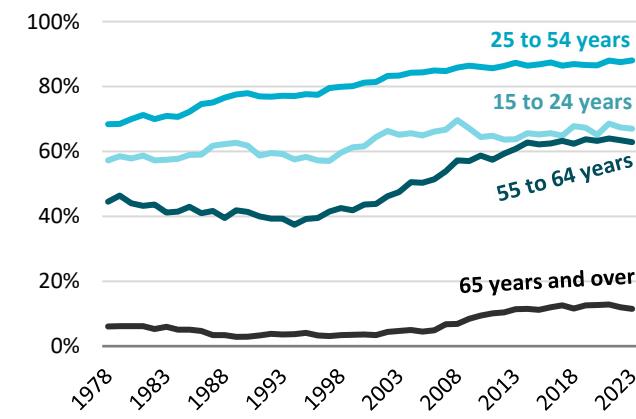
Participation Rate Among the Population Aged 15 to 64 Years – 2023



Participation Rate Among the Population Aged 15 to 64 Years



Participation Rate by Age Group – New Brunswick

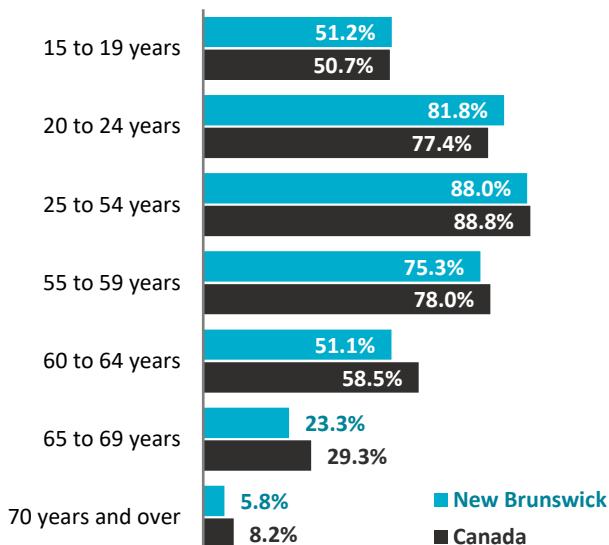


² Source(s): Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (Tables 14-10-0118 and 14-10-0327).

Compared to the rest of Canada, participation rates in New Brunswick were particularly low for the following groups:

- Individuals aged 55+ (both males and females, regardless of education level)
- Individuals aged 25 to 54 years with a high school diploma or less
- Students during the school year

Participation Rate by Age Group – 2023



Participation Rate by Age Group and Highest Level of Education – 2023

	New Brunswick	Canada
High School Diploma or Less		
15 to 24 years	59.7%	59.1%
25 to 54 years	76.9%	79.6%
55 to 64 years	56.8%	61.5%
65 years and over	9.6%	12.0%
Post-Secondary Graduate		
15 to 24 years	86.4%	82.8%
25 to 54 years	92.4%	91.7%
55 to 64 years	67.4%	71.5%
65 years and over	13.5%	17.6%

Participation Rate Among Population Aged 15 to 24 Years by School Status – 2023

	New Brunswick	Canada
During School Months (Jan-Apr, Sep-Jan)		
Students	41.2%	47.0%
Non-Students	89.1%	87.4%
During Summer Months (May-Aug)		
Students (on Break)	66.4%	62.7%
Non-Students	88.9%	87.3%

Participation Rate by Age Group and Sex – New Brunswick – 2023

	New Brunswick	Canada
Males		
15 to 24 years	66.0%	64.8%
25 to 54 years	90.5%	92.1%
55 to 64 years	66.7%	73.3%
65 years and over	14.7%	19.3%
Females		
15 to 24 years	67.8%	65.1%
25 to 54 years	85.6%	85.5%
55 to 64 years	59.0%	62.8%
65 years and over	8.5%	11.2%

Non-Participants

Between January and December of 2023, there were an average of 269,800 New Brunswickers aged 15 years and over who were not in the labour force. Of these individuals:

- 29,200 were aged 15 to 24
- 79,700 were aged 25 to 64
- 160,900 were aged 65 years and over

Since the majority of individuals aged 15 to 24 years are students, the number of them who were not in the labour force varied significantly throughout the year, from an average of 33,300 during the school year, to an average of 20,900 throughout the summer months.

At the other extreme, the vast majority of those aged 65 years and over who were not in the labour force were likely retired. Of the 160,900 individuals aged 65 years and over who were not in the labour force in 2023, only 7,500 had worked in the past year. These 7,500 individuals were a mix of seasonal workers, individuals who lost or left their jobs, and recent retirees.

Population Aged 65 Years and Over Not in the Labour Force by Duration of Joblessness – New Brunswick – 2023

	Total
1 to 12 Months	7,500
13 to 36 Months	11,800
37+ Months	134,100
Never Worked	7,600
Total	160,900

Beyond those aged 65 years and over, a significant portion of those aged 25 to 64 years who were not in the labour force could also be classified as likely being retired. Among the 79,700 individuals aged 25 to 64 years who were not in the labour force in 2023, more than half (44,500) were aged 55 to 64 years, with the vast majority having not working in the past year (37,200 of 44,500). Among those aged 25 to 54, reasons for not being in the labour force were quite varied, with this group consisting of students, parents, seasonal workers, persons with disabilities and more.

Population Aged 25 to 64 Years Not in the Labour Force by Duration of Joblessness – New Brunswick – 2023

	Total	Duration of Joblessness			
		1 to 12 Months	13 to 36 Months	37+ Months	Never Worked
25 to 54 Years	35,200	9,200	5,100	14,900	5,900
Parent of Child Aged 0 to 12	11,600	2,800	1,800	5,200	1,800
Other	23,700	6,400	3,300	9,800	4,100
55 to 64 Years	44,500	7,300	7,700	26,100	3,400
Total	79,700	16,600	12,800	41,000	9,300

Industry Trends³

Employment in the following industries was proportionally much more common in New Brunswick compared to the country as a whole in 2023:

- Fishing, hunting and trapping
- Forestry and logging and support activities
- Utilities
- Public administration

On the other hand, employment in the following industries was proportionally much less common in New Brunswick compared to the country as a whole:

- Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction
- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Information, culture and recreation
- Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing

Between 2018 and 2023, the following industries saw the greatest employment growth:

- Utilities
- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Public administration

During this same time, the following industries saw the greatest declines in employment levels:

- Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction
- Forestry and logging and support activities
- Accommodation and food services

Employment Statistics by Sector – New Brunswick – 2023

Sector	Employment (2023)	5-Year Change	Location Quotient ⁴
Agriculture	5,500	-4.9%	1.13
Forestry and logging	2,600	-20.0%	3.61
Fishing, hunting and trapping	2,300	+26.9%	7.81
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2,800	-36.1%	0.52
Utilities	4,800	+63.3%	1.62
Construction	30,900	+26.0%	1.02
Manufacturing	28,200	-10.8%	0.81
Wholesale trade	10,600	+28.8%	0.80
Retail trade	46,700	-0.2%	1.07
Transportation and warehousing	18,800	+3.0%	0.96
Finance, Insurance, real estate and leasing	20,100	+12.0%	0.76
Professional, scientific and technical services	23,800	+42.3%	0.66
Educational services	30,600	+13.4%	1.07
Health care and social assistance	62,100	+5.9%	1.21
Information, culture and recreation	11,600	-0.1%	0.72
Accommodation and food services	21,200	-14.7%	0.98
Public administration	35,900	+40.0%	1.59
Other	28,000	-11.1%	1.00
Total	386,500	+6.9%	N/A

³ Source(s): Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (Public Use Microdata File)

⁴ The location quotient is a measure of the concentration of employment in a given sector in a region relative to the level of employment in that sector at the national level. For example, if the agriculture sector accounted for 1.43% of total employment in New Brunswick, and 1.27% of total employment Canada-wide, the location quotient would be $1.43/1.27 = 1.13$.

Wages⁵

In 2023, the median hourly wage rate among employees in New Brunswick was \$25.00. This represented the third lowest median among the provinces (tied with Manitoba) and was well below the national median of \$28.75.

Median Hourly Wage Rate – 2023

Alta.	\$30.00
B.C.	\$30.00
Ont.	\$29.00
Que.	\$28.00
Sask.	\$27.40
N.L.	\$26.67
N.B.	\$25.00
Man.	\$25.00
P.E.I.	\$24.83
N.S.	\$24.62
Canada	\$28.75

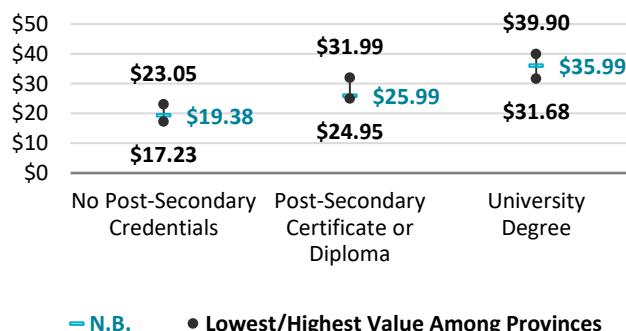
Both within the province and nationally, males earn noticeably more than females. In 2023, the median hourly wage rate among New Brunswick males was \$25.50, compared to \$24.04 among females. At a national level this gap was even larger, with these rates sitting at \$30.77 and \$26.44 respectively. This gap is most prominent among those with lower levels of educational attainment.

Median Hourly Wage Rate Among Employees by Sex and Highest Level of Education – New Brunswick – 2023

	Males	Females
No Post-Secondary Credentials	\$20.82	\$17.49
Post-Secondary Certificate or Diploma	\$27.99	\$24.05
University Degree	\$36.05	\$35.79

While wages in New Brunswick continue to trail those seen in most other provinces, they have seen significant growth in recent years. Between 2019 and 2023, the median hourly wage rate in New Brunswick grew by 24.8% (5.7% annually), the greatest growth among the provinces during this time and above the 15.6% rate of inflation (3.7% annually) seen during this same time.

Median Hourly Wage Rate Among Employees by Highest Level of Education - 2023



⁵ Source(s): Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (Public Use Microdata File and Tables 14-10-0301 and 14-10-0340).

Sub-Provincial⁶

Labour market conditions in New Brunswick vary significantly by geographic location. While the province's three major centres – Moncton, Saint John and Fredericton – all have relatively low unemployment rates and relatively high participation rates, more rural parts of the province, especially in the Northeast, generally have low rates of labour force participation and high rates of unemployment. This is in large part a reflection of the fact that employment opportunities in New Brunswick are largely concentrated in or around its three largest cities.

In recent years, labour force growth has been particularly concentrated in and around the cities of Moncton and Fredericton. While certain other areas of the province, such as the Greater Miramichi and Greater Saint John regions, have also seen noticeable growth, the majority of the province has seen labour force and employment levels remain largely unchanged, or in many cases, decline. Between 2013 and 2023, Greater Moncton and Greater Fredericton saw employment growth of 20.6% and 17.3% respectively. On the other hand, the rest of the province saw employment increase by 1.8% during this same period.

While there has been limited growth outside the Moncton and Fredericton regions, retirements resulting from population aging have resulted in a significant number of job opportunities throughout all regions of the province. This trend is reflected by the decreasing unemployment rates seen across the province. Between 2013 and 2023, all regions of the province saw drops in unemployment.

Labour Force Statistics – Selected Regions

	2013	2022	2023
Greater Moncton			
Employment	74,900	87,100	90,300
Participation rate	67.5%	66.0%	66.2%
Unemployment rate	7.2%	4.7%	5.6%
Greater Saint John			
Employment	64,500	65,700	67,800
Participation rate	66.2%	62.6%	61.9%
Unemployment rate	9.2%	6.9%	5.4%
Greater Fredericton			
Employment	53,300	61,700	62,500
Participation rate	66.2%	62.6%	61.9%
Unemployment rate	9.2%	6.9%	5.4%
Other Southern N.B.⁷			
Employment	63,200	60,500	64,900
Participation rate	61.7%	56.4%	57.8%
Unemployment rate	10.5%	8.9%	6.9%
Greater Bathurst			
Employment	14,700	13,600	13,900
Participation rate	62.0%	52.9%	55.5%
Unemployment rate	14.1%	7.5%	11.5%
Greater Miramichi			
Employment	9,800	12,300	13,900
Participation rate	61.1%	59.3%	58.0%
Unemployment rate	12.4%	10.2%	8.6%
Greater Edmundston			
Employment	11,700	10,900	11,900
Participation rate	63.4%	54.3%	53.8%
Unemployment rate	8.6%	4.4%	5.6%
Other Northern N.B.⁸			
Employment	65,500	61,700	61,300
Participation rate	59.4%	55.1%	55.2%
Unemployment rate	17.2%	10.4%	9.3%

⁶ Source(s): Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (Tables 14-10-0378, 14-10-0385, 14-10-0387 and 14-10-0393).

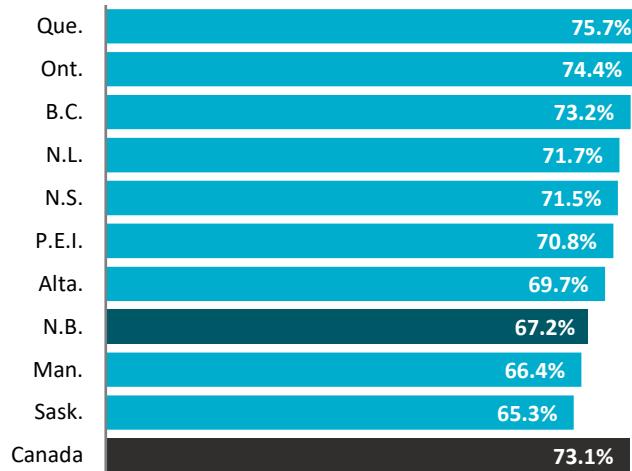
⁷ For the purposes of this document, "Other Southern N.B." refers to New Brunswick's Southeast, Southwest and Central Economic Regions excluding the cities and surrounding areas of Moncton, Saint John and Fredericton.

⁸ For the purposes of this document, "Other Northern N.B." refers to New Brunswick's Northeast and Northwest Economic Regions excluding the cities and surrounding areas of Bathurst, Miramichi and Edmundston.

Education⁹

The educational attainment of New Brunswick's population is in part a reflection of the skills demanded by the province's employers, or more broadly, its labour market. In general, compared to the country as a whole, there is somewhat less demand for workers with post-secondary credentials in New Brunswick. This is likely a contributing factor for New Brunswick's educational attainment levels being among the lowest in the country.

Percentage of the Population Aged 25 to 64 Years with Post-Secondary Credentials – 2023



As of 2023, roughly two-thirds (67.2%) of New Brunswickers between the ages of 25 and 64 had some form of post-secondary credential, compared to 73.1% at a national level.

Compared to the general Canadian population, New Brunswickers were much less likely to have a university degree, but somewhat more likely to have a post-secondary certificate or diploma.

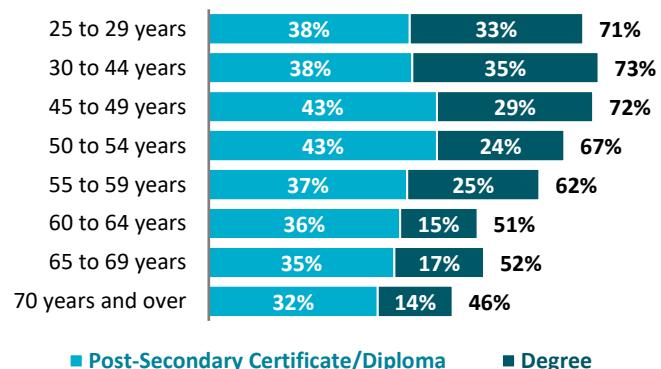
Educational Attainment Among the Population Aged 25 to 64 Years by Sex – 2023

	Males	Females	Total
New Brunswick			
No Post-Secondary Credentials	37%	28%	33%
Postsecondary Certificate or Diploma	39%	39%	39%
University Degree	23%	33%	28%
Canada			
No Post-Secondary Credentials	30%	24%	27%
Postsecondary Certificate or Diploma	36%	36%	36%
University Degree	34%	40%	37%

Post-secondary educational attainment levels in New Brunswick varied significantly by a number of factors, including:

- Sex:** Only 62.7% of male New Brunswickers aged 25 to 64 years had completed some form of post-secondary education, compared to 71.7% of females in this age range. This gap was even larger among younger age groups.
- Age:** Only 50.7% of New Brunswickers aged 60 to 64 years had completed some form of post-secondary education, compared to 73.4% of individuals aged 30 to 44 years.

Percentage of the Population with Post-Secondary Credentials by Age Group – New Brunswick – 2023



⁹ Source(s): Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (Public Use Microdata File).

Appendix: Glossary

Labour Force: refers to the working age population (15+) that is employed or unemployed.

Employment: refers to people who, during the reference week, did any work at all at a job or business; or had a job but were not at work due to factors such as illness, personal, family responsibilities or labour disputes.

Full-Time Employment: refers to people who usually work thirty or more hours per week.

Part-Time Employment: refers to people who usually work less than thirty hours per week.

Unemployment: refers to people who during the reference week were without work but had actively looked for work in the past four weeks and were available for work; or were on temporary layoff during the reference week with an expectation of recall and were available for work.

Unemployment Rate: represents the number of unemployed as a percentage of the labour force.

Participation Rate: represents the labour force as a percentage of the working age population.

Employment Rate: represents the employed as a percentage of the working age population.

Industry/Sector: The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is a comprehensive system encompassing all economic activities. Establishments (businesses) are grouped according to similarity in the production processes used to produce goods and services.