

April 2025

NEW BRUNSWICK Labour Force Trends



An analysis of the province's labour force, covering topics such as employment, unemployment, industry trends, education levels, and wages.

Data Sources:

- Statistics Canada – Labour Force Survey

New Brunswick Labour Force Trends

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Note: This report provides an overview of labour force related trends in New Brunswick up to 2024. 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.

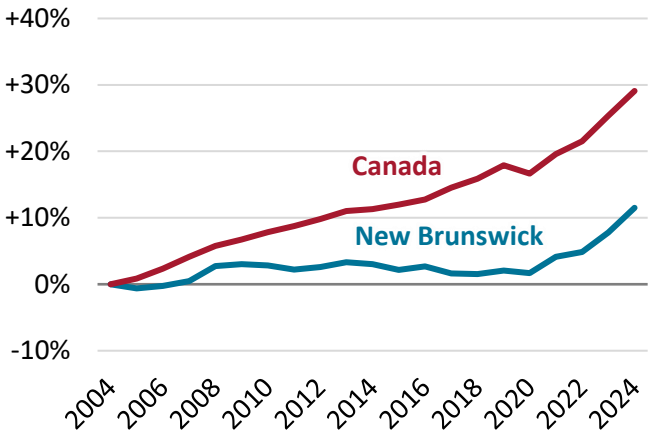
Overview¹

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

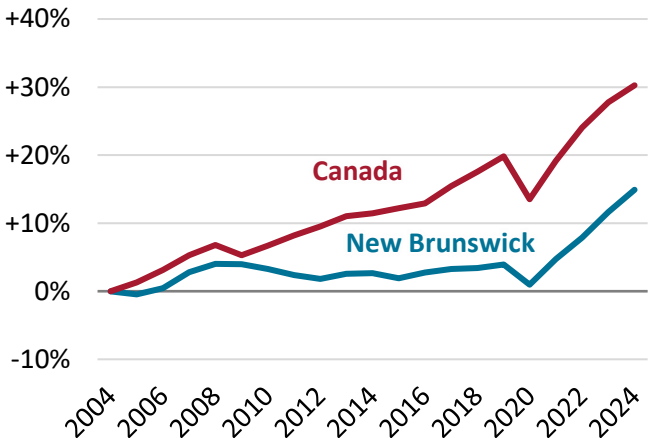
	2024	2023	2019
Population Aged 15+	710,200	688,700	641,800
Not in Labour Force	279,900	272,800	247,900
Labour Force	430,300	415,900	393,900
Employment	400,000	388,600	361,700
Full-Time	338,100	332,700	306,600
Part-Time	61,800	55,900	55,200
Unemployment	30,300	27,300	32,200
Participation Rate	60.6%	60.4%	61.4%
Employment Rate	56.3%	56.4%	56.4%
Unemployment Rate	7.0%	6.6%	8.2%

Recent trends in New Brunswick’s labour force have been largely shaped by the province’s aging population. Between 2004 and 2024, the number of individuals retiring each year in the province more than 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).

Cumulative Labour Force Growth Since 2004



Cumulative Employment Growth Since 2004

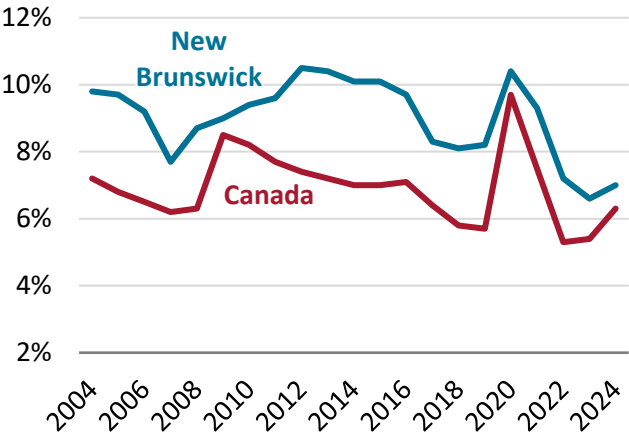


These improvements have in part been due to an increased focus on immigration and other international migration by both the federal and provincial governments. Both the total number of individuals participating in the province’s labour force (employed or looking for work), and the total number of employed individuals, hit record highs in 2024.

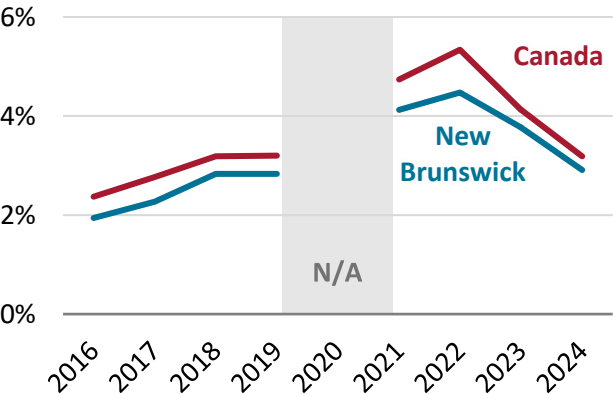
¹ Source(s): Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (Tables 14-10-0327 and 14-10-0287).

Furthermore, while the province’s labour force and employment levels have trended upwards, the province’s unemployment rate has fallen significantly over the past several years. This trend has primarily been the result of increased employment opportunities arising from retirements. However, after reaching a record low 6.6% in 2023, the province’s unemployment rate increased to 7.0% in 2024 – a sign that labour supply is likely growing at a faster rate than labour demand. This is supported by the fact that the province’s job vacancy rate saw a significant drop during this time.

Unemployment Rate



Job Vacancy Rate



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

Labour Force Participation²

Trends in Participation

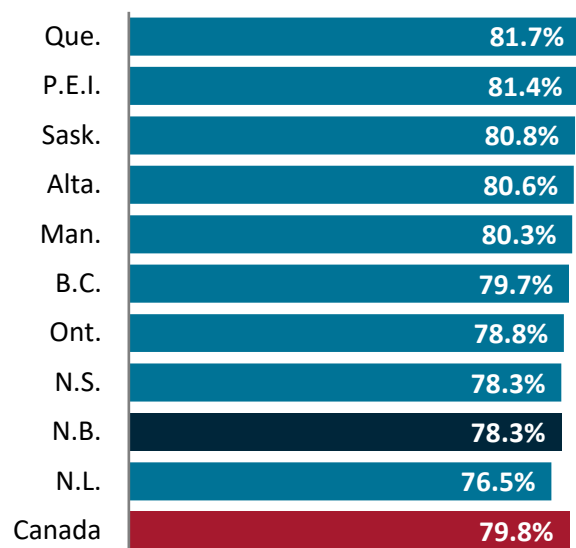
New Brunswick consistently has one of the lowest rates of labour force participation in Canada. Throughout 2024, an average of 430,300 New Brunswickers were participating in the labour force (400,000 employed and 30,300 unemployed), representing 60.6% of its population aged 15 years and over, compared to 65.5% nationally.

The main factor contributing 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 2024, 78.3% of New Brunswickers aged 15 to 64 years were participating in the labour force, compared to 79.8% 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.

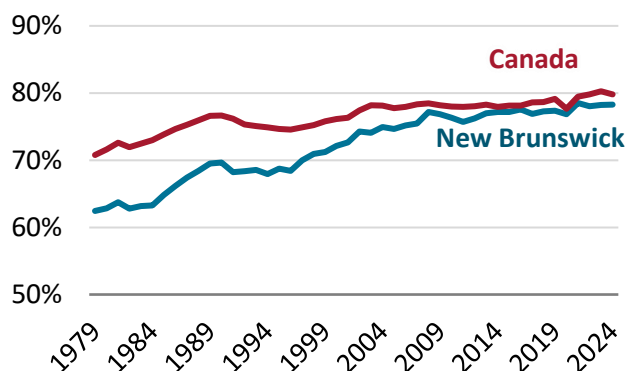
Beyond age, other factors that may be contributing to New Brunswick’s relatively low participation rate include:

- 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)

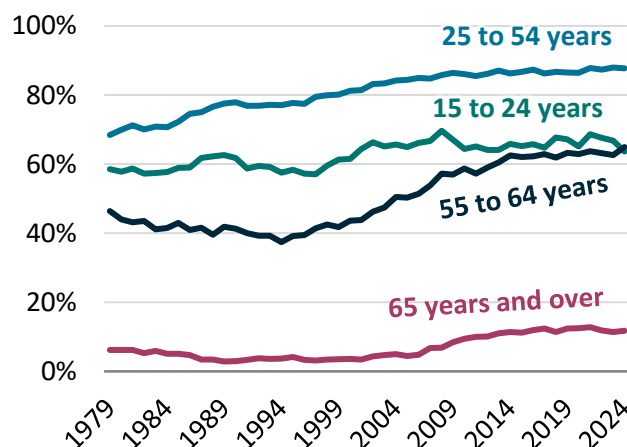
Participation Rate Among the Population Aged 15 to 64 Years – 2024



Participation Rate Among the Population Aged 15 to 64 Years



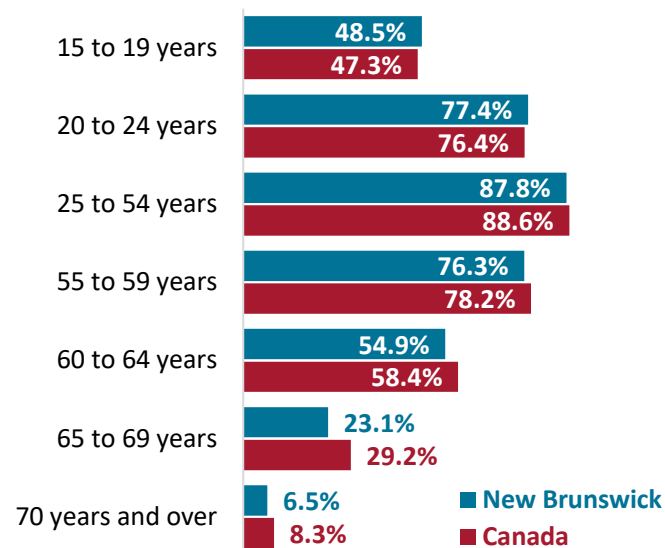
Participation Rate by Age Group – New Brunswick



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

- Individuals aged 55+ (both men and women)
- Students during the school year

Participation Rate by Age Group – 2024



Participation Rate by Age Group and Gender – New Brunswick – 2024

	New Brunswick	Canada
Men		
15 to 24 years	62.4%	62.9%
25 to 54 years	89.8%	92.0%
55 to 64 years	70.1%	73.8%
65 years and over	15.4%	19.2%
Women		
15 to 24 years	64.7%	63.2%
25 to 54 years	85.8%	85.1%
55 to 64 years	59.7%	62.1%
65 years and over	8.6%	11.3%

Participation Rate by Age Group and Highest Level of Education – 2024

	New Brunswick	Canada
No Post-Secondary Credentials		
15 to 24 years	55.9%	56.6%
25 to 54 years	77.2%	78.8%
55 to 64 years	62.0%	61.4%
65 years and over	10.3%	12.1%
Post-Secondary Graduate		
15 to 24 years	84.7%	82.3%
25 to 54 years	91.5%	91.5%
55 to 64 years	67.0%	71.3%
65 years and over	13.3%	17.5%

Participation Rate Among Population Aged 15 to 24 Years by School Status – 2024

	New Brunswick	Canada
During School Months (Jan-Apr, Sep-Jan)		
Students	38.2%	44.7%
Non-Students	86.8%	87.0%
During Summer Months (May-Aug)		
Students (on Break)	62.0%	59.7%
Non-Students	86.1%	86.2%

Non-Participants

Between January and December of 2024, there were an average of 279,900 New Brunswickers aged 15 years and over who were not in the labour force. Of these individuals:

- 33,300 were aged 15 to 24
- 79,900 were aged 25 to 64
- 166,700 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 37,200 during the school year, to an average of 25,700 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 166,700 individuals aged 65 years and over who were not in the labour force in 2024, only 7,000 had worked in the past year. These 7,000 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 – 2024

	Total
1 to 12 Months	7,000
13 to 36 Months	13,500
37+ Months	137,800
Never Worked	8,300
Total	166,700

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 79,900 individuals aged 25 to 64 years who were not in the labour force in 2024, more than half (42,000) were aged 55 to 64 years, with the vast majority having not working in the past year (35,800 of 42,000). 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 – 2024

	Total	Duration of Joblessness			
		1 to 12 Months	13 to 36 Months	37+ Months	Never Worked
25 to 54 Years	37,900	9,700	5,400	16,600	6,300
Parent of Child Aged 0 to 12	11,400	3,200	1,900	4,800	1,500
Other	26,500	6,500	3,500	11,800	4,700
55 to 64 Years	42,000	6,200	8,300	24,200	3,300
Total	79,900	15,900	13,700	40,800	9,600

Industry Trends³

Employment in the following sectors is proportionally much more common in New Brunswick compared to the country as a whole:

- Forestry and logging
- Fishing, hunting and trapping
- Utilities

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
- Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing

Between 2019 and 2024, the following industries saw the greatest employment growth:

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

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

- Fishing, hunting and trapping
- Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction
- Manufacturing

Employment Statistics by Sector – New Brunswick – 2024

Sector	Employment (2024)	5-Year Change	Location Quotient ⁴
Agriculture	6,200	+1.6%	1.39
Forestry and logging	3,200	-8.6%	3.95
Fishing, hunting and trapping	1,100	-56.0%	3.70
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	3,600	-16.3%	0.63
Utilities	5,400	+74.2%	1.83
Construction	33,800	+30.0%	1.09
Manufacturing	27,700	-12.3%	0.78
Wholesale trade	10,200	+9.7%	0.74
Retail trade	47,200	+8.3%	1.10
Transportation and warehousing	21,600	+14.9%	1.03
Finance, Insurance, real estate and leasing	20,300	+14.7%	0.74
Professional, scientific and technical services	24,700	+40.3%	0.65
Educational services	30,900	+13.6%	1.02
Health care and social assistance	63,900	+8.7%	1.17
Information, culture and recreation	12,100	-8.3%	0.74
Accommodation and food services	22,300	-4.3%	1.01
Public administration	36,900	+48.2%	1.56
Other	28,900	-4.3%	0.99
Total	400,000	+10.6%	N/A

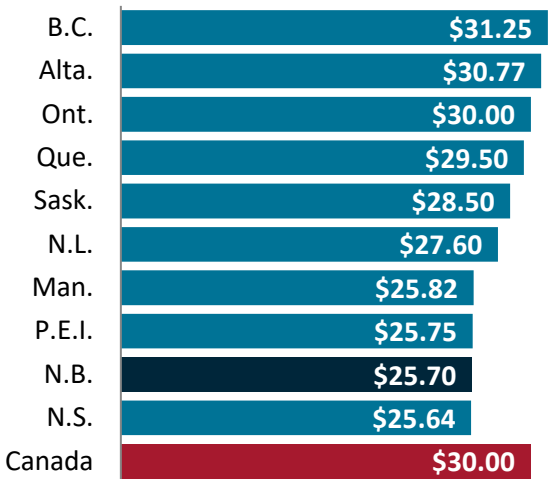
³ Source(s): Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (Table 14-10-0023).

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 1.55% of total employment in New Brunswick, and 1.12% of total employment Canada-wide, the location quotient would be $1.55/1.12 = 1.39$.

Wages⁵

In 2024, the median hourly wage rate among employees in New Brunswick was \$25.70. This represented the second lowest median among the provinces and was well below the national median of \$30.00.

Median Hourly Wage Rate – 2024



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 2024, the median hourly wage rate in New Brunswick grew by an average of 5.1% annually. This represented the second greatest growth rate among the provinces and was well above the average annual rate of inflation of 3.4% during this time.

Median Hourly Wage Rate Among Employees by Highest Level of Education – 2024

	N.B.	Canada
No Post-Secondary Credentials	\$20.19	\$22.00
Post-Secondary Certificate or Diploma	\$27.00	\$30.00
University Degree	\$37.00	\$40.00

Both within the province and nationally, men earn noticeably more than women. In 2024, the median hourly wage rate among New Brunswick men was \$26.50, compared to \$25.00 among women. At a national level this gap was even larger, with these rates sitting at \$32.00 and \$28.00 respectively. This gap is most prominent among those with lower levels of educational attainment.

Median Hourly Wage Rate Among Employees by Gender and Highest Level of Education – New Brunswick – 2024

	Men	Women
No Post-Secondary Credentials	\$22.00	\$19.35
Post-Secondary Certificate or Diploma	\$28.85	\$25.43
University Degree	\$38.00	\$36.26

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.

Between 2014 and 2024, Greater Moncton, Greater Fredericton, and Greater Saint John saw employment growth of 28.0%, 22.1% and 8.7% respectively. On the other hand, the rest of the province saw employment increase by 2.6% during this time.

While there has been limited growth outside of the province's urban centres, 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. Over the last 10 years, all regions of the province have seen significant drops in their unemployment rates.

Labour Force Statistics – Selected Regions

	2014	2023	2024
Greater Moncton			
Employment	76,200	92,200	97,500
Participation rate	67.7%	66.0%	65.8%
Unemployment rate	6.8%	5.5%	5.4%
Greater Saint John			
Employment	65,400	67,800	71,100
Participation rate	66.3%	61.9%	63.9%
Unemployment rate	7.8%	5.3%	6.3%
Greater Fredericton			
Employment	51,600	59,800	63,000
Participation rate	66.3%	61.9%	63.9%
Unemployment rate	7.8%	5.3%	6.3%
Other Southern N.B.⁷			
Employment	64,700	66,900	69,500
Participation rate	62.5%	57.5%	58.3%
Unemployment rate	10.3%	7.1%	6.8%
Northeast N.B.			
Employment	62,600	65,400	61,900
Participation rate	56.8%	54.0%	51.0%
Unemployment rate	17.4%	11.0%	12.0%
Northwest N.B.			
Employment	36,900	36,500	36,900
Participation rate	62.5%	58.3%	58.5%
Unemployment rate	9.8%	5.4%	6.3%

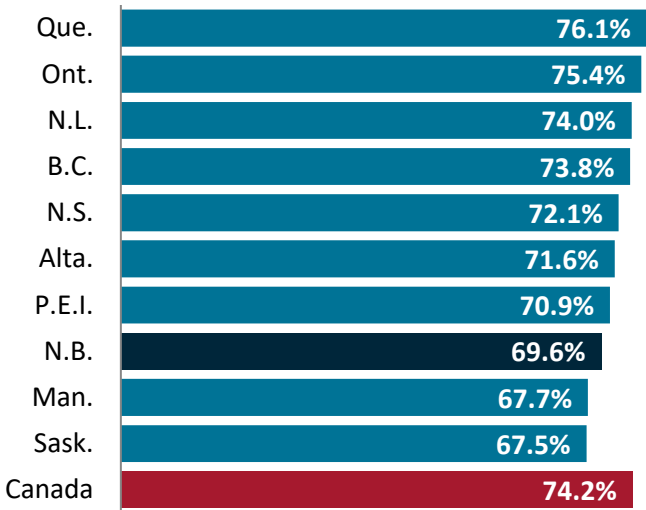
⁶ Source(s): Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (Tables 14-10-0461 and 14-10-0464).

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.

Education⁸

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 – 2024



As of 2024, just under 70% (69.6%) of New Brunswickers between the ages of 25 and 64 had some form of post-secondary credential, compared to 74.2% 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.

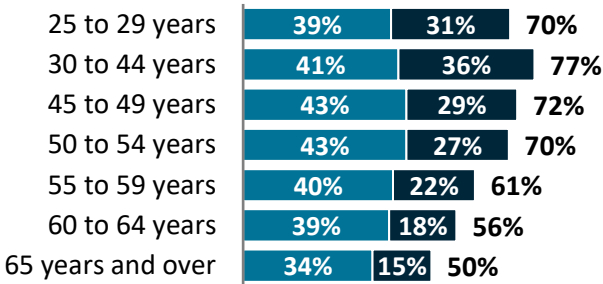
Educational Attainment Among the Population Aged 25 to 64 Years by Gender – 2024

	Men	Women	Total
New Brunswick			
No Post-Secondary Credentials	35%	26%	30%
Postsecondary Certificate or Diploma	41%	41%	41%
University Degree	24%	33%	29%
Canada			
No Post-Secondary Credentials	29%	23%	26%
Postsecondary Certificate or Diploma	35%	35%	35%
University Degree	36%	42%	39%

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

- Gender:** Only 64.8% of New Brunswick men aged 25 to 64 years had completed some form of post-secondary education, compared to 74.3% of women in this age range.
- Age:** Only 56.3% of New Brunswickers aged 60 to 64 years had completed some form of post-secondary education, compared to 76.8% of individuals aged 30 to 44 years.

Percentage of the Population with Post-Secondary Credentials by Age Group – New Brunswick – 2024



■ Post-Secondary Certificate/Diploma ■ Degree

⁸ 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.