

2011 National Household Survey: Portrait of Canada's labour force

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New data from the National Household Survey (NHS) show that Canada had almost 18 million labour force participants aged 15 years and over in 2011, of which 16.6 million were employed. The employment rate was 60.9%.

In comparison, at the time of the 2006 Census, the employment rate was 62.6%.

Highest employment rates in the North and West

In 2011, Yukon and Alberta had the highest employment rates in Canada at 69.7% and 69.0% respectively. Employment rates were also above the national average in the Northwest Territories (66.8%), Saskatchewan (65.1%) and Manitoba (63.1%).

The lowest employment rates were observed in Newfoundland and Labrador (50.7%) and in Nunavut (52.1%).

Among all census metropolitan areas (CMA), Calgary had the highest employment rate at 70.0%, followed by Regina (69.1%) and Edmonton (69.0%). The lowest employment rates were in Windsor (53.3%), Peterborough (55.8%) and Trois-Rivières (55.9%).

Retail trade sector had the highest share of total employment

The three industrial sectors with the largest employment shares in 2011 were retail trade, health and social assistance and manufacturing.

In 2011, the retail trade sector ranked first among all sectors in terms of its share of total employment with 11.5%. This was followed closely by health care and social assistance with 11.4%. The manufacturing sector had the third highest share with 9.2% of total employment.

Most common occupations for women and men

In 2011, women comprised just under half of the employed labour force (48.0%).

Among the 500 detailed occupations within the NHS, the most common occupation for women was 'retail salesperson,' accounting for 4.7% of all employed women. This was followed by 'administrative assistant' (4.0%), 'registered nurse and registered psychiatric nurse' (3.4%), 'cashier' (3.3%) and 'elementary school and kindergarten teacher' (2.9%).

For men, the most common occupation was 'retail salesperson,' accounting for 3.3% of all employed men, followed by 'transport truck driver' (2.9%), 'retail trade manager' (2.5%), 'carpenter' (1.7%) and 'janitor, caretaker and building superintendent' (1.7%).

Employment rate increases with education level

In 2011, the employment rate for the population aged 25 to 64 was 75.3%. In general, the employment rate increases with education level. The employment rate for those with university credentials was 81.6%, compared with 55.8% for those who had no certificate, diploma or degree.

In the three Prairie provinces, employment rates were consistently above the national average for all education levels.



The difference in the employment rate for workers with university credentials compared with those with no certificate, diploma or degree varied by province or territory. For example, the difference was smallest in Alberta at 16.9 percentage points, followed by Prince Edward Island (20.9 percentage points) and Saskatchewan (22.8 percentage points). In comparison, the largest differences were in Nunavut (47.9 percentage points) and Newfoundland and Labrador (39.5 percentage points).

Note to readers

University credentials include university certificate or diploma below bachelor level; university certificate, diploma or degree at the bachelor level or above: bachelor's degree; university certificate or diploma above bachelor level; degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry; master's degree; earned doctorate.

Almost one in five workers was aged 55 years and over

According to the 2011 NHS, workers aged 55 and over accounted for 18.7% of total employment compared with 15.5% in the 2006 Census. This was the result of the aging of the baby boom generation and the increased participation of older workers in the labour force.

In 2011, just over 3 million people aged 55 and over were employed. The employment rate for this age group was 34.9% compared with 32.2% in the 2006 Census.

The North had the largest share of workers in 2011 who lived in another province or territory five years earlier

In 2011, 516,475 workers, or 3.2% of the employed population aged 15 and over, lived in a different province or territory five years earlier.

The proportion of workers in 2011 who reported living in another province or territory five years earlier was highest in the North, with the Northwest Territories at 19.2%, followed by Nunavut (17.3%) and Yukon (16.1%).

Among the provinces, Alberta (7.6%) had the largest proportions of workers in 2011 living in another province or territory five years earlier, followed by Prince Edward Island (7.3%), while Quebec (1.0%) and Ontario (1.7%) had the lowest.

Almost three out of four commuters drove to work

According to the 2011 NHS, 15.4 million people in the employed labour force or 92.7% of them commuted to work, while 1.1 million worked at home most of the time.

Of those who commuted to work, the predominant mode of transportation was driving. In 2011, 74.0% of commuters, or 11.4 million workers, drove a car, truck or van. Another 5.6%, or 867,100 people, commuted to work as passengers.

In 2011, 12.0% of commuters or 1.8 million workers used public transit, compared with 11.0% of commuters or 1.6 million workers in the 2006 Census.

In addition, 5.7% of commuters walked to work, while 1.3% cycled. In the 2006 Census, 6.4% of commuters walked and 1.3% cycled.

Commuting to work varied between CMAs in 2011.

The CMAs with the highest proportions of public transit users were Toronto (23.3%), Montréal (22.2%), Ottawa–Gatineau (20.1%) and Vancouver (19.7%).

Walking to work was most popular in Victoria (10.0%), Kingston (8.5%) and Halifax (8.5%).

Longest commuting times in Toronto, Oshawa and Montréal

Commuters spent an average of 25.4 minutes travelling to work in 2011. Commuters who travelled by public transit (42.9 minutes) took longer to get to work, on average, than commuters who used cars (23.7 minutes). Public transit commute times include the time required to walk to the bus stop, subway or train station, as well as wait times.

The average commuting time was longest in the CMAs of Toronto (32.8 minutes), Oshawa, (31.8 minutes) and Montréal (29.7 minutes).

For some commuters, the time it takes to get to work was longer. In 2011, 17.2% of commuters, or 2.6 million workers, took 45 minutes or more on average to get to work. Commuters who lived in the area surrounding and within the Toronto CMA were the most likely to be in this group, with 29.9% of commuters in Oshawa, 28.4% of those in Toronto and 26.6% of those in Barrie taking 45 minutes or more to get to work.

Language use in the workplace

Close to 99% of Canadian workers reported using English, French or both in the workplace most often or on a regular basis. Specifically, 84.7% of the population used English and 25.3% used French.

In 2011, 93.9% of the population in Quebec reported using French at work, while 39.2% reported using English. In all the other provinces and territories, English was the dominant language in the workplace. In 2011, 98.4% of the population reported using this language, and 4.6% of the population reported French as the language used at work.

Among all languages other than English or French used in the workplace, the family of Chinese languages, with 224,000 references, ranked first in 2011.

In 2011, 2.65 million individuals (13.9%) reported using more than one language at work. Of all the country's CMAs, the Quebec part of the Ottawa–Gatineau CMA had the highest proportion of workers who reported using at least two languages in the workplace (58.4%), followed by the CMAs of Montréal (47.5%), Moncton (36.7%), Sherbrooke (28.7%), Ottawa–Gatineau [Ontario part] (27.9%) and Greater Sudbury (23.2%).

National Household Survey

This is the second release of data from the NHS. The third release will be on August 14.

The analytical document [Portrait of Canada's Labour Force](#) presents the results of the NHS on labour. In addition, there are two companion analytical articles in the *National Household Survey in Brief series* entitled '[Commuting to work](#)' and '[Language use in the workplace in Canada](#).'

A second analytical document [Education in Canada: Attainment, Field of Study and Location of Study](#), also released today, analyzes findings from the NHS on education. There is also a companion article in the *National Household Survey in Brief series* for this topic entitled '[The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada](#).'

Data and highlights on key topics found in these analytical products are also available for various standard levels of geography in the [National Household Survey Focus on Geography Series](#).

Various data and reference products are also available from the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\) website](#). A wide range of data on education, labour, place of work, commuting to work, language of work as well as mobility and migration are available for standard geographic areas in the [National Household Survey Profile](#) and [National Household Survey Data Tables](#).

Information on the quality of NHS data on education, labour, place of work, commuting to work, language of work and mobility and migration as well as explanations of concepts, classifications, questions and comparability with other data sources can be found in the series of [reference guides](#) for these topics. Note the [Languages Reference Guide](#) (99-010-X2011007) was updated to include language of work.

Other reference materials include the [National Household Survey Dictionary](#) which provides definitions of NHS concepts, universes and variables. As well, users can refer to the [National Household Survey User Guide](#) (released on May 8, 2013), which provides information on the methodology, collection, processing, evaluation and data quality of the NHS.

A brief portrait of labour in Canada is presented on [video](#).

Users are also invited to [Chat with an expert](#) on June 28, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5178.

The report *Portrait of Canada's Labour Force* (99-012-X2011002) is now available from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

Additional analysis is also available in the *National Household Survey in Brief Series* (99-012-X2011003): '[Commuting to work](#)' and '[Language use in the workplace in Canada](#).'

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