

Job vacancies, second quarter 2021

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Job vacancies up as labour market adjusts to changes in public health measures

As the labour market adapted to challenges associated with the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in late spring and early summer, there were 731,900 job vacancies in the second quarter of 2021. Previously released data from the [Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#) showed that during the quarter, employment fell in April (-207,000; -1.1%) and May (-68,000; -0.4%) as public health measures were tightened in several jurisdictions, and then rebounded in June (+231,000; +1.2%) as restrictions were eased (seasonally adjusted).

There were 25.8% (+150,300) more vacancies in the second quarter of 2021 than in the same quarter two years earlier. While this increase brought the number of job vacancies to a record high in the second quarter of 2021, the two-year increase itself was similar in magnitude to that observed in the two-year period from the second quarter of 2017 to the second quarter of 2019 (+121,900; +26.5%).

The job vacancy rate—which represents vacant positions as a proportion of all positions (vacant and occupied)—was 4.6% in the second quarter of 2021, the highest since comparable data became available in 2015. The job vacancy rate increased 1.1 percentage points from the second quarter of 2019 to the same quarter in 2021, influenced by both the rise in vacancies over the period and a decline in payroll employment, which remained below its pre-COVID level in June 2021 (seasonally adjusted).

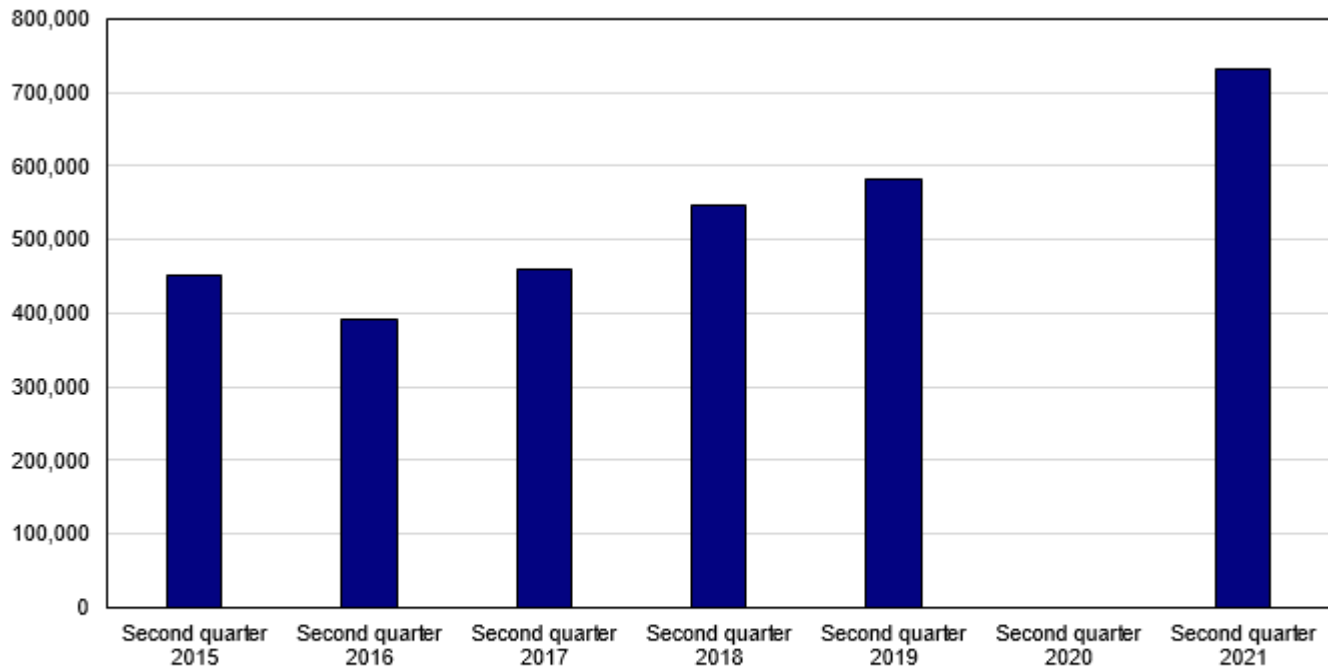
The ratio of unemployed people to job vacancies increased from 2.0 in the second quarter of 2019 to 2.2 in the second quarter of 2021. This relative stability was due to both unemployment and job vacancies increasing over the period.

According to the LFS, since the end of the second quarter of 2021, employment increased by 94,000 (+0.5%) in July and 90,000 (+0.5%) in August (seasonally adjusted), indicating that the further easing of public health restrictions has resulted in changing labour market conditions. Future releases of monthly job vacancy statistics will shed light on whether this has led to changes in unmet labour demand.



Infographic 1 – Record high number of job vacancies in the second quarter of 2021

number of job vacancies, second quarter



.. not available for a specific reference period

Note(s): Job Vacancy and Wage Survey data collection was suspended from March to September 2020; therefore, data for the second quarter of 2020 are not available. Data are not seasonally adjusted.

Source(s): Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (5217), table 14-10-0325-01.

Average offered hourly wage up

At \$22.85 per hour, the average offered hourly wage for all job vacancies was 7.3% (+\$1.55) higher in the second quarter of 2021 than in the same quarter of 2019. Changes in the average offered hourly wage can be caused by a number of factors, including wage growth, or shifts in the industries and occupations, or the types of jobs (e.g., full-time or part-time) being filled.

The average offered hourly wage rose in all provinces except for Newfoundland and Labrador and Alberta. The largest increases were in Prince Edward Island (+\$3.40 to \$18.55) and British Columbia (+\$2.40 to \$24.00), with British Columbia having the highest average offered hourly wage among the provinces.

Job vacancies up in all provinces

Job vacancies increased in all provinces from the second quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2021, with the largest increases in Quebec (+53,700; +38.3%) and Ontario (+51,300; +24.1%). The job vacancy rate also increased in all provinces, and in the second quarter was highest in British Columbia (5.4%) and Quebec (5.3%). By economic region within the provinces, the highest job vacancy rates were in Côte-Nord and Nord-du-Québec, Quebec (7.3%), Thompson–Okanagan, British Columbia (7.2%), and Vancouver Island and Coast, British Columbia (6.7%).

Health care and social assistance sector has largest two-year increase in vacancies

Vacancies in health care and social assistance increased by 40,800 (+59.9%) from the second quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2021, the largest increase of any sector. This increase brought the number of vacancies in the sector to 108,800, representing one in seven job vacancies in Canada. Vacancies grew in all subsectors, led by hospitals and nursing and residential care facilities.

Job vacancies for registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses had the largest increase of all occupations over the two-year period, up by 10,400 (+85.8%) to 22,400. Nearly half (46.5%) of vacancies for this occupation have been open for 90 days or more, compared with 24.0% across all occupations. Combined with LFS results, which showed that employment for registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses was little changed over the two-year period, this suggests that employers are facing difficulty in recruiting nurses as they attempt to meet the increased demand for health services.

The average offered hourly wage for registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses was \$32.50 in the second quarter of 2021, up 5.9% from the same quarter in 2019.

Job vacancies in construction continue to increase

Vacancies in construction increased by 19,900 (+46.7%) over two years to 62,600 in the second quarter of 2021, the highest number of vacancies for this sector since comparable data became available in 2015. Increases were led by the specialty trade contractors subsector (+14,300; +53.0%)—which comprises establishments primarily engaged in trade activities such as masonry, painting, or electrical work—followed by the construction of buildings subsector (+4,400; +40.8%).

Construction trade helpers and labourers (+8,900; +74.8%), carpenters (+3,300; +65.9%) as well as electricians (except industrial and power system) (+1,700; +109%) accounted for a large portion of the rise in vacancies in construction.

Total [investment in building construction](#) increased 7.3% in the second quarter of 2021, the fourth consecutive quarterly increase, and payroll employment surpassed its pre-pandemic level (seasonally adjusted). Amid this higher demand, the unemployed-to-job vacancy ratio for the sector fell to 1.3 in the second quarter of 2021 and, according to results from the [Canadian Survey on Business Conditions](#), recruiting skilled employees was expected to be an obstacle for over one-third (35.2%) of construction businesses, compared with 27.8% of all businesses.

Vacancies in retail trade up by one-third

Vacancies in retail trade increased by 19,900 (+31.0%) from the second quarter of 2019 to 84,300 in the second quarter of 2021, with the largest gains in food and beverage stores and building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers. According to the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, in the second quarter of 2021, one in three businesses in retail trade expected recruiting skilled employees to be an obstacle.

Within the retail trade sector, clothing and clothing accessories stores was the lone subsector to record a decline in vacancies, down by 2,800 (-28.8%) in the second quarter of 2021 compared with the second quarter of 2019. Results from the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours showed that payroll employment in this subsector declined more than in any other retail trade subsector over the two-year period (seasonally adjusted).

By occupation, retail salespersons (+8,300; +32.2%) and store shelf stockers, clerks and order filers (+4,400; +38.2%) were both among the top 10 occupations with the largest increase in vacancies from the second quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2021. The average offered hourly wage for retail salespersons increased from \$14.20 to \$15.25 (+7.5%) over this period.

Record number of job vacancies in manufacturing

Vacancies in the manufacturing sector increased by 14,800 (+28.9%) to 65,900 in the second quarter of 2021, the highest number of vacancies for this sector since comparable data became available in 2015. The increase was spread across several subsectors, with the largest gains in food manufacturing and wood product manufacturing. According to the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, in the second quarter of 2021, recruiting skilled employees was expected to be an obstacle for nearly two in five (39.1%) businesses in manufacturing, the highest proportion of all sectors.

August LFS data showed that employment in manufacturing was little changed compared with June (seasonally adjusted).

Job vacancies increase to all-time high in accommodation and food services

The number of job vacancies in accommodation and food services increased by 11,600 (+14.9%) from the second quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2021, reaching an all-time high of 89,100. This increase was entirely in the food services and drinking places subsector (+13,500; +21.2%), where employment has been particularly affected by the tightening and easing of public health restrictions.

Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations had the second largest increase in vacancies (+9,900; +27.1%) of any occupation over the two years. The average offered hourly wage for this occupation was \$14.55 in the second quarter of 2021, up 6.2% from the same quarter in 2019.

While August LFS data showed that employment in accommodation and food services rose considerably over the summer (seasonally adjusted), it remained below pre-pandemic levels in all provinces except for New Brunswick and Manitoba.

Looking ahead

According to data from the [Canadian Survey on Business Conditions](#) for the third quarter of 2021, 8.3% of businesses expected to have more job vacancies over the next three months. Results from the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (JVWS) for the third quarter of 2021 will be released on December 20, and will shed further light on the challenges faced by employers resuming or continuing operations amid the ongoing uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, monthly data from the JVWS will continue to provide snapshots of job vacancies and potential labour shortages, while monthly data from the LFS will provide insights on changing employment by occupation and industry, as well as other factors that are important to the balance between labour supply and demand, including wages.

Note to readers

The Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (JVWS) provides comprehensive data on job vacancies and wages by industrial sector and detailed occupation for Canada and the provinces, territories and economic regions. Job vacancy and offered wage data are released quarterly.

Estimates by sector are based on the North American Industry Classification System 2017 Version 3.0. Estimates by geographical area are based on the Standard Geographical Classification 2016. Estimates by occupation reflect the National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2016 Version 1.3. The NOC is a four-tiered hierarchical structure of occupational groups with successive levels of disaggregation. The structure is as follows: (1) 10 broad occupational categories, also referred to as one-digit NOC; (2) 40 major groups, also referred to as two-digit NOC; (3) 140 minor groups, also referred to as three-digit NOC; and (4) 500 unit groups, also referred to as four-digit NOC.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection for the JVWS was suspended for the second and third quarters of 2020.

In January 2020, a new electronic questionnaire was introduced. Minor changes to the content are documented in the most recent Guide to the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey ([75-514-G](#)).

Beginning with the reference period of October 2020, preliminary monthly estimates from the JVWS are released on a monthly basis alongside the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours releases. These estimates provide more timely information on the number of job vacancies and the job vacancy rate by province and by industrial sector.

The target population of the survey includes all business locations in Canada, excluding those involved primarily in religious organizations and private households. Federal, provincial and territorial, as well as international and other extra-territorial public administrations are also excluded from the survey.

JVWS data are not seasonally adjusted. Therefore, quarter-to-quarter comparisons should be interpreted with caution as they may reflect seasonal movements.

This analysis focuses on differences between estimates that are statistically significant at the 68% confidence level.

Labour Force Survey data used in this Daily release are non-seasonally adjusted three-month moving averages from June 2021 (unless otherwise specified). The number of unemployed people by industrial sector includes only persons who worked in that sector in the previous 12 months.

Next release

Job vacancy data from the JVWS for the third quarter of 2021 will be released on December 20, 2021.

Table 1
The 10 occupations with the largest two-year increases in job vacancies, second quarter of 2021

	Two-year change	
	level	%
Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses	10,355	85.8
Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations	9,870	27.1
Construction trades helpers and labourers	8,930	74.8
Retail salespersons	8,350	32.2
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	7,090	58.5
Social and community service workers	6,220	97.6
Material handlers	5,510	59.6
Licensed practical nurses	5,230	140.0
Store shelf stockers, clerks and order fillers	4,410	38.2
Carpenters	3,340	65.9

Source(s): Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (5217), table 14-10-0356-01.

Available tables: [14-10-0325-01](#), [14-10-0326-01](#), [14-10-0328-01](#) and [14-10-0356-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5217](#).

More information about the concepts and use of data from the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey is available online in the *Guide to the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey* ([75-514-G](#)).

The product "[Labour Market Indicators, by province, territory and economic region, unadjusted for seasonality](#)" ([71-607-X](#)) is also available. This dynamic web application provides access to Statistics Canada's labour market indicators for Canada, by province, territory and economic region, and allows users to view a snapshot of key labour market indicators, observe geographical rankings for each indicator using an interactive map and table, and easily copy data into other programs.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).