



RURAL FUTURES RESEARCH CENTRE

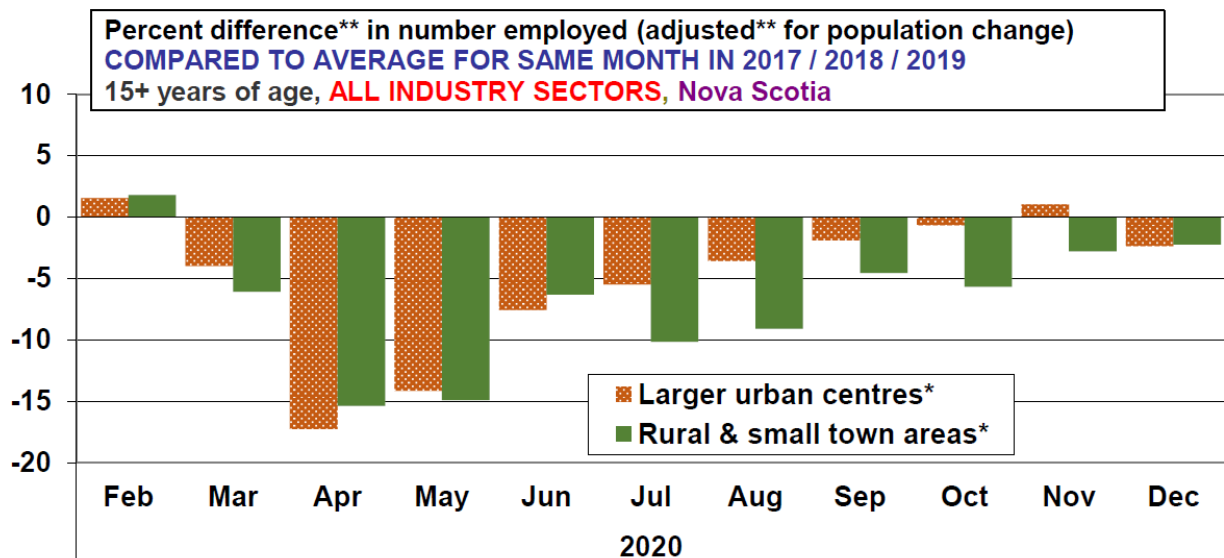
Data Brief: COVID-19 and rural employment in Nova Scotia

The situation

Nova Scotia's first case of COVID-19 was on March 15, 2020. In the 10 months since then, amid widespread shutdowns, there has been a general decrease in employment in the province compared to recent years. RFRRC associate Ray Bollman has been tracking these employment changes using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey.

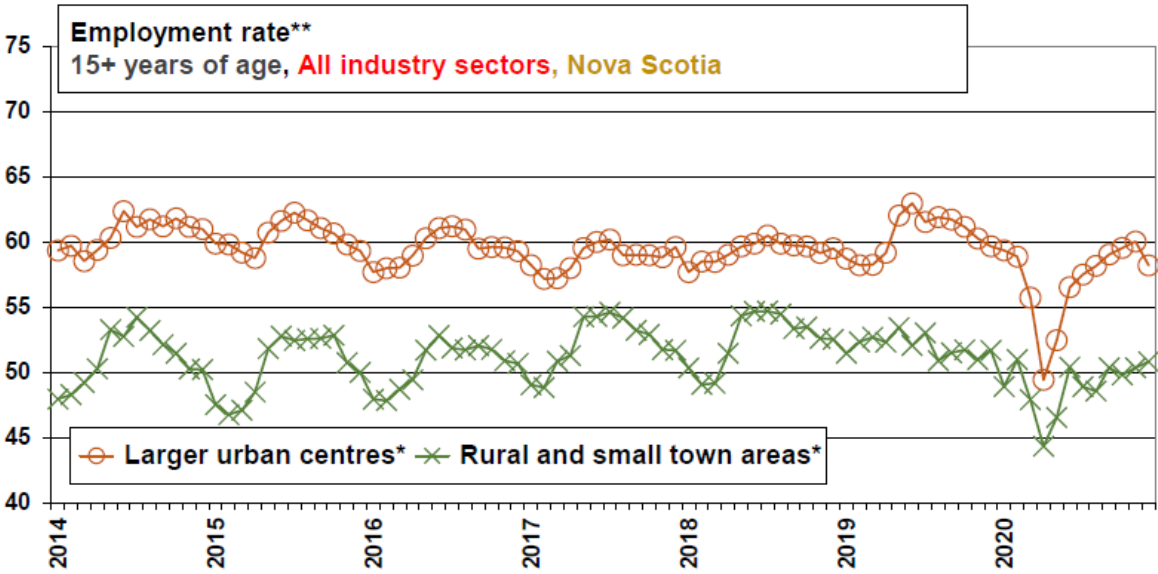
Key takeaways

The employment rate during the COVID-19 pandemic changed more in rural and small town areas of Nova Scotia than in larger urban centres (adjusted for population change). Although initially, in April 2020, there was a steeper drop in employment in larger urban centres, subsequently rural and small town areas have faced worse declines than urban in six out of the 8 months from May-December.



Specifically, 3,000 fewer people were employed in rural and small town areas in Nova Scotia in December 2020 compared to the previous three Decembers (adjusted for population change). In total, 50.8 percent of the rural and small town population over the age of 15 in Nova Scotia was employed. The remainder could be unemployed or not in the labour force (e.g. retired). In urban areas, 8,000 fewer people were employed in December 2020 compared to the previous three Decembers (adjusted for population change) and there was an employment rate of 58.2 percent.

Taking a longer view to 2014, we can see that there are always seasonal fluctuations in employment in rural and urban areas, but 2020 was remarkable. And, as of December 2020, the employment rate had bounced back quicker in large urban centres compared to rural and small town areas.



Terms and definitions

Larger urban centres (LUCs) include Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) with a total population 100,000 or more (with at least 50,000 in the urban core) and Census Agglomerations with a population of 10,000 to 99,999 and both include residents of neighbouring towns and municipalities where 50+% of employed residents commute to the CMA or CA.

Rural & small town (RST) individuals reside outside a CMA or CA.

Employment rate is the PERCENT of the population 15 years of age and over that is employed in this sector.

The estimated change is calculated as the impact on employment IF there were no change in the level of population (15+ years of age). Thus, the estimated change is due to the change in the employment rate (i.e., the change in the percent of the population that is employed) which captures the impact of COVID-19 by excluding the impact of population change which is reflected in the LFS published data on the number employed. The percent difference compared to the average for the same month in 2017 / 2018 / 2019 is calculated as the difference of logarithms times 100.

*Ray Bollman and Hannah Main
February 3, 2021*