

Labour Force, May 2020

Source: ABS 6202.0, released 18 June 2020, 11:30 am AEST.

NOTE: The ABS has suspended trend data due to COVID-19. Trend data will be reinstated by the ABS when more certainty emerges in the underlying trend in the labour market. As a result, all numbers in this brief are seasonally adjusted.

Key data (monthly)

Employment:	Queensland,	-28,100	(-1.2%)
(persons, growth)	Australia,	-227,700	(-1.8%)
Unemployment:	Queensland,	22,000	(7.9%)
(persons, rate)	Australia,	85,700	(7.1%)
Labour force:	Queensland,	-6,100	(-0.2%)
(persons, growth)	Australia,	-142,000	(-1.1%)
Underemployment:	Queensland,	-28,900	(11.8%)
(persons, rate)	Australia,	-109,500	(13.1%)
Hours worked:	Queensland,	-500	(-0.1%)
(thousands, growth)	Australia,	-12,100	(-0.7%)

Main findings

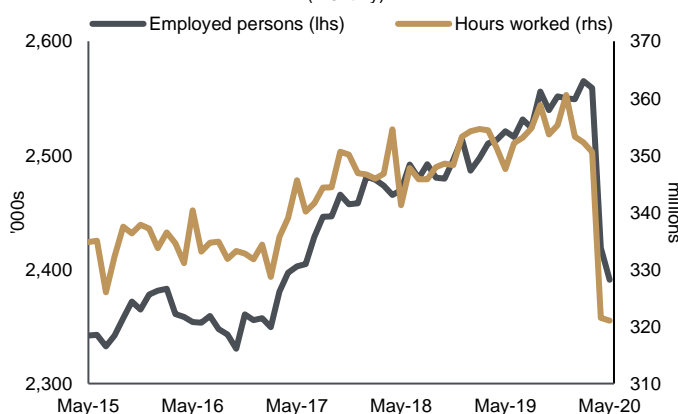
Employment in Queensland fell 28,100 persons (or 1.2%) in May 2020, the second month of *Labour Force* data following the implementation of social distancing measures designed to limit the spread of COVID-19. The decline in May followed the largest monthly decline in employment on record in April, of (a revised) 139,800 persons. The decline in employment would likely have been larger if not for the JobKeeper program, which had the effect of keeping many people classified by the ABS as 'employed' even if they were not actually working.

The decline in April reflected a fall in both full-time (down 10,100) and part-time (down 18,100) employment, while over the year, employment fell by 130,200 persons (or 5.2%).

With persons not working but receiving *JobKeeper* payments from their employers classified as 'employed' by the ABS, the reduction in hours worked is probably the clearest example of the full impact of COVID-19 social distancing measures on labour market activity.

There were 321.0 million hours worked in Queensland in May 2020, down 0.1% from April and down 7.6% over the year (**Chart 1**). Hours worked declined in all states and territories except Western Australia, the Northern Territory and South Australia.

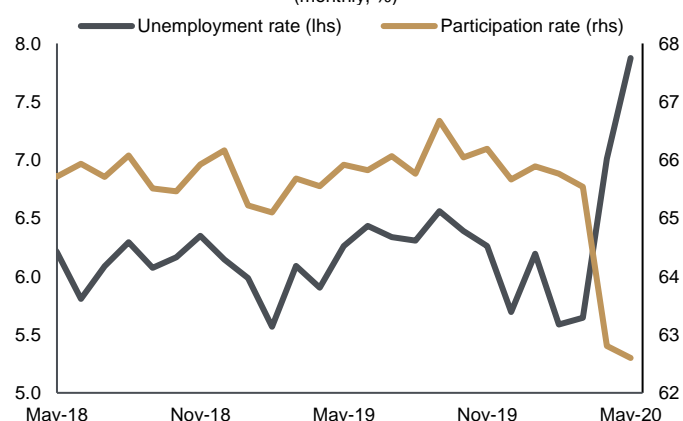
Chart 1: Employment and hours worked, Queensland (monthly)



The unemployment rate in Queensland increased from 5.6% in March 2020, to 7.0% in April 2020 and then to 7.9% in May, the largest two-month increase in the unemployment rate on record.

The increase in the unemployment rate was muted by a decline in the participation rate, which fell 2.7 percentage points in April 2020 to 62.8%, the largest monthly decline on record, and fell a further 0.2 percentage point in May. This equates to 116,600 people leaving the labour force in Queensland in April and May.

Chart 2: Unemployment and participation rate, Queensland (monthly, %)



Nationally, employment fell by 227,700 persons (or 1.8%) in May, to be 695,600 (or 5.4%) lower over the year. The national unemployment rate increased from 5.2% in March 2020, to 6.4% in April and then to 7.1% in May. Hours worked nationally fell 0.7% in May 2020, to be down 9.0% over the year (**Table 1**).

Victoria (down 70,800), New South Wales (down 43,900) and Western Australia (down 30,200) were the largest contributors to the 227,700 persons decline in national employment in the month.

Table 1: Labour force outcomes¹, May 2020

	Queensland			Australia		
	May-20 '000	Monthly change '000 %	Yearly change '000 %	May-20 '000	Monthly change '000 %	Yearly change '000 %
Employed	2,390.9	-28.1 -1.2	-130.2 -5.2	12,154.1	-227.7 -1.8	-695.6 -5.4
Full-time	1,670.7	-10.1 -0.6	-64.4 -3.7	8,540.0	-89.1 -1.0	-237.9 -2.7
Part-time	720.2	-18.1 -2.4	-65.8 -8.4	3,614.1	-138.6 -3.7	-457.7 -11.2
Unemployed	204.4	22.0 12.1	36.0 21.4	927.6	85.7 10.2	219.2 30.9
Underemployed	307.4	-28.9 -8.6	68.1 28.5	1,711.5	-109.5 -6.0	552.3 47.6
Labour force	2,595.3	-6.1 -0.2	-94.2 -3.5	13,081.7	-142.0 -1.1	-476.4 -3.5
Hours worked	millions	millions %	millions %	millions	millions %	millions %
	May-20	Apr-20	May-19	May-20	Apr-20	May-19
	321.0	-0.5 -0.1	-26.6 -7.6	1,604.7	-12.1 -0.7	-158.8 -9.0
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unemployment rate	7.9	7.0	6.3	7.1	6.4	5.2
Underemployment rate	11.8	12.9	8.9	13.1	13.8	8.5
Participation rate	62.6	62.8	65.9	62.9	63.6	66.0

Table 2: Interstate comparison¹, May 2020

	Qld	NSW	Vic	SA	WA	Tas	Aus
Employed							
% change on a month ago	-1.2	-1.1	-2.1	-1.4	-2.3	-4.0	-1.8
Change on a month ago (no.)	-28,100	-43,900	-70,800	-11,100	-30,200	-9,900	-227,700
% change on a year ago	-5.2	-7.0	-4.3	-6.3	-5.4	-3.8	-5.4
Change on a year ago (no.)	-130,200	-289,500	-147,500	-53,800	-72,400	-9,300	-695,600
Unemployment rate							
May-20	7.9	6.4	6.9	7.9	8.1	6.4	7.1
April-20	7.0	6.3	6.0	7.2	6.1	6.2	6.4
May-19	6.3	4.6	4.6	5.8	6.2	6.4	5.2
Hours worked (millions)							
May-20	321.0	510.3	418.5	103.0	173.7	28.9	1,604.7
monthly % change	-0.1	-1.1	-1.9	0.3	2.1	-2.7	-0.7
annual % change	-7.6	-10.3	-8.9	-10.8	-9.1	-9.9	-9.0

1. Note – numbers may not add due to rounding.