

Labour Force, September 2020

Source: ABS Labour Force, released 15 October 2020, 10:30 am AEST.

NOTE: The ABS has suspended trend data due to COVID-19. As a result, all numbers in this brief are seasonally adjusted.

Key data (monthly)

Employment:	Queensland,	32,200	(1.3%)
(persons, growth)	Australia,	-29,500	(-0.2%)
Unemployment:	Queensland,	11,100	(7.7%)
(persons, rate)	Australia,	11,300	(6.9%)
Labour force:	Queensland,	43,300	(1.6%)
(persons, growth)	Australia,	-18,300	(-0.1%)
Underemployment:	Queensland,	31,900	(10.7%)
(persons, rate)	Australia,	11,800	(11.4%)
Hours worked:	Queensland,	5,800	(1.7%)
(thousands, growth)	Australia,	8,700	(0.5%)

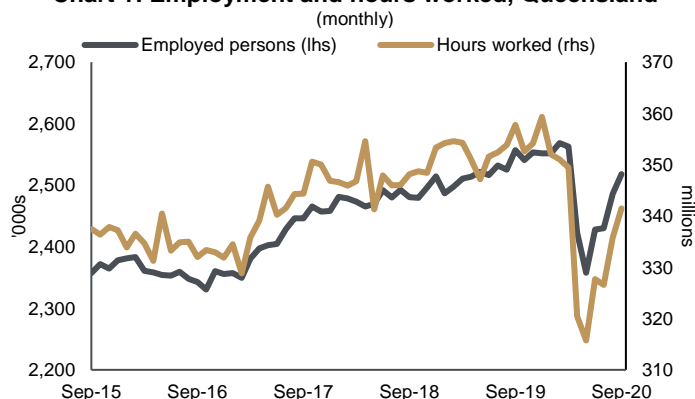
Main findings

Employment in Queensland rose by 32,200 persons (1.3%) in September 2020, with full-time employment up 19,900 persons and part-time employment up 12,300 persons.

Employment is up 160,400 (6.8%) since its recent low in May 2020 but remains 45,000 (-1.8%) below its pre-pandemic level in March 2020. The reduction in employment would likely have been much larger if not for the *JobKeeper* program, which had the effect of keeping many people classified as 'employed' even if they were not actually working.

The increase in hours worked is a good indicator of the impact of easing COVID-19 social distancing measures on labour market activity. Hours worked in Queensland rose 1.7% in September 2020, to be up 8.2% from the low in May, but down 2.3% since March (Chart 1). The monthly increase is the second best of all states, behind New South Wales (up 2.1%).

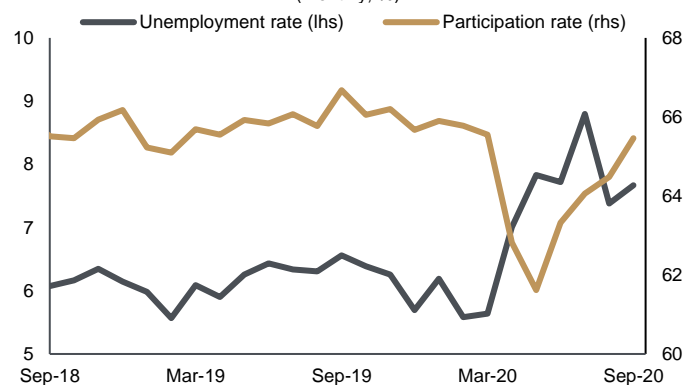
Chart 1: Employment and hours worked, Queensland



The unemployment rate in Queensland increased to 7.7% in September, up from 7.4% in August and remains higher than its pre-pandemic level of 5.6% in March 2020 (Chart 2). The number of unemployed persons in Queensland rose 11,100, primarily driven by more people re-entering the labour force looking for work.

The participation rate in Queensland rose to 65.5% in September 2020, up from 64.5% in August. This equates to 43,300 persons entering the labour force in Queensland in September 2020 and 11,100 persons since March 2020. The participation rate has increased in the last four consecutive months since its low of 61.6% in May 2020, to be back at the same level it was in March 2020.

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



Nationally, employment decreased by 29,500 persons (-0.2%) in September and is 425,100 persons (-3.3%) lower than its pre-pandemic level in March. The national unemployment rate increased from 6.8% in August to 6.9% in September and remained higher than its pre-pandemic level of 5.2% in March (Table 1).

The number of hours worked nationally rose slightly in September (up 0.5%) at 1.7 billion, due to declines in Victoria (-2.1%) and Tasmania (-2.2%) partially offsetting increases in New South Wales (2.1%), Queensland (1.7%) and South Australia (1.5%).

A decrease in employed persons in Victoria (down 35,500) largely offset increases in Queensland (up 32,200) and South Australia (up 8,700), resulting in a decrease in national employment in the month (Table 2). Employment in Victoria continues to fall following restrictions initially imposed on 8 July and further tightened on 5 August.

Table 1: Labour force outcomes¹, September 2020

	Queensland			Australia		
	Sep-20	Monthly change	Yearly change	Sep-20	Monthly change	Yearly change
Employed	'000	'000	%	'000	'000	%
Full-time	2,518.0	32.2	1.3	-38.9	-1.5	12,571.9
Part-time	1,689.7	19.9	1.2	-58.6	-3.4	8,540.3
Unemployed	209.2	11.1	5.6	29.8	16.6	937.4
Underemployed	290.5	31.9	12.3	55.9	23.8	1,536.8
Labour force	2,727.2	43.3	1.6	-9.1	-0.3	13,509.4
	millions	millions	%	millions	millions	%
Hours worked	341.5	5.8	1.7	-16.3	-4.6	1,688.2
	Sep-20	Aug-20	Sep-19	Sep-20	Aug-20	Sep-19
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unemployment rate	7.7	7.4	6.6	6.9	6.8	5.2
Underemployment rate	10.7	9.6	8.6	11.4	11.3	8.3
Participation rate	65.5	64.5	66.7	64.8	64.9	66.1

Table 2: Interstate comparison¹, September 2020

	Qld	NSW	Vic	SA	WA	Tas	Aus
Employed							
% change on a month ago	1.3	0.1	-1.1	1.0	0.2	-1.0	-0.2
Change on a month ago (no.)	32,200	3,300	-35,500	8,700	2,900	-2,500	-29,500
% change since May 2020	6.8	4.5	-0.6	4.4	5.9	5.2	3.7
Change since May 2020 (no.)	160,400	173,800	-20,900	35,900	75,900	12,400	446,500
% change since March 2020	-1.8	-2.3	-6.4	-1.5	-1.4	-2.6	-3.3
Change since March 2020 (no.)	-45,000	-95,000	-218,800	-12,600	-19,500	-6,700	-425,100
Unemployment rate							
September-20	7.7	7.2	6.7	7.1	6.7	7.6	6.9
August-20	7.4	6.7	7.1	8.1	7.0	6.4	6.8
May-20	7.8	6.4	6.9	7.9	8.1	6.3	7.1
March-20	5.6	4.9	5.2	6.3	5.4	4.9	5.2
Hours worked (millions)							
September-20	341.5	554.7	410.0	111.2	188.0	32.4	1,688.2
monthly % change	1.7	2.1	-2.1	1.5	-0.1	-2.2	0.5
% change since May 2020	8.2	9.3	-1.5	8.2	8.4	12.4	6.0
% change since March 2020	-2.3	-1.9	-13.7	-2.4	-1.2	-3.1	-5.1

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