

Labour Force, December 2020

Source: ABS Labour Force, released 21 January 2021, 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,	36,600	(1.4%)
(persons, growth)	Australia,	50,000	(0.4%)
Unemployment:	Queensland,	-2,900	(7.5%)
(persons, rate)	Australia,	-30,100	(6.6%)
Labour force:	Queensland,	33,700	(1.2%)
(persons, growth)	Australia,	20,000	(0.1%)
Underemployment:	Queensland,	-18,500	(8.6%)
(persons, rate)	Australia,	-112,700	(8.5%)
Hours worked:	Queensland,	1,400	(0.4%)
(thousands, growth)	Australia,	1,700	(0.1%)

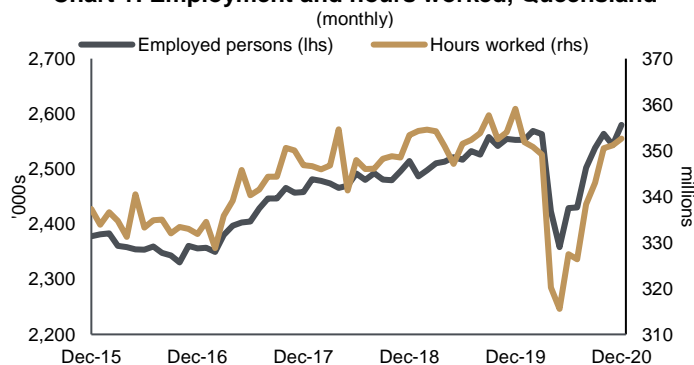
Main findings

Employment in Queensland rose 36,600 persons (1.4%) in December 2020, reflecting an increase in both full-time employment (up 25,800 persons) and part-time employment (up 10,800) during the month. Employment in Queensland is 221,700 persons (9.4%) above its COVID-impacted low in May 2020 and 16,700 persons above the pre-pandemic level of March 2020.

With persons not working but receiving *JobKeeper* payments from their employers classified as 'employed' by the ABS, movements in hours worked is probably the clearest example of the full impact of COVID-19 social distancing measures on labour market activity. However, this effect is likely to have lessened in second phase of the *JobKeeper* program.

Hours worked in Queensland rose 0.4% in December 2020, up 11.7% from May to be 1.0% above the pre-pandemic level of March 2020 (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Employment and hours worked, Queensland

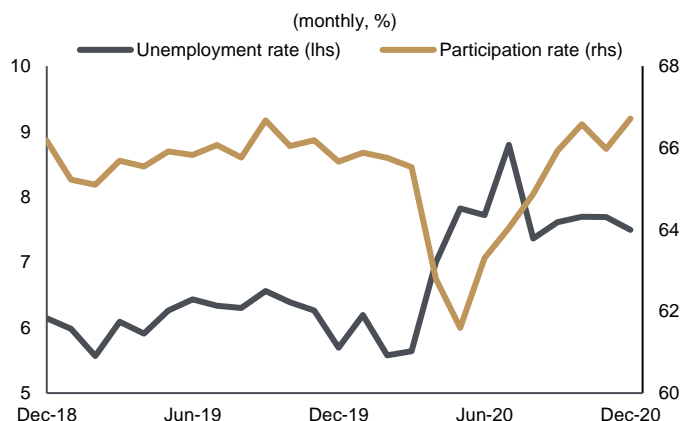


The unemployment rate in Queensland was 7.5% in December, down from 7.7% in November, but above the pre-pandemic level of 5.6% in March (Chart 2).

The number of unemployed persons in Queensland fell 2,900 to 209,000 persons, down from a peak of 234,400 persons in July 2020 but 55,900 persons higher than in March 2020.

The participation rate in Queensland was 66.7% in December, up from 66.0% in November and higher than the pre-pandemic level of 65.5% in March. This equates to 33,700 persons entering the labour force in December 2020, with a total of 72,600 persons entering the labour force since March 2020.

Chart 2: Unemployment and participation rates, Queensland



Nationally, employment rose by 50,000 persons (0.4%) in December but remains 87,600 persons (0.7%) lower than its pre-pandemic level in March. The monthly rise was primarily driven by Queensland, which recorded the strongest employment growth of any state or territory in December 2020, in both level and percentage terms. Northern Territory (up 0.7%), Victoria (up 0.4%) and Tasmania (up 0.3%) recorded modest increases in the month.

The number of hours worked nationally rose slightly in December (up 0.1%) to 1,753 million hours. This is 10.1% above the low point in May 2020 but down 1.4% from March 2020.

The national unemployment rate fell from 6.8% in November to 6.6% in December (Table 1) but remained higher than its pre-pandemic level of 5.2% in March 2020.

Table 1: Labour force outcomes¹, December 2020

	Queensland				Australia					
	Dec-20 '000	Monthly change '000	Yearly change '000 %		Dec-20 '000	Monthly change '000	Yearly change '000 %			
Employed	2,579.9	36.6	1.4	27.3	1.1	12,910.8	50.0	0.4	-63.9	-0.5
Full-time	1,733.0	25.8	1.5	-18.7	-1.1	8,761.4	35.7	0.4	-75.9	-0.9
Part-time	846.9	10.8	1.3	45.9	5.7	4,149.3	14.3	0.3	12.0	0.3
Unemployed	209.0	-2.9	-1.4	54.9	35.6	912.0	-30.1	-3.2	221.7	32.1
Underemployed	239.5	-18.5	-7.2	9.6	4.2	1,181.1	-112.7	-8.7	55.8	5.0
Labour force	2,788.9	33.7	1.2	82.2	3.0	13,822.8	20.0	0.1	157.8	1.2

	Queensland			Australia		
	Dec-20 %	Nov-20 %	Dec-19 %	Dec-20 %	Nov-20 %	Dec-19 %
Unemployment rate	7.5	7.7	5.7	6.6	6.8	5.1
Underemployment rate	8.6	9.4	8.5	8.5	9.4	8.2
Participation rate	66.7	66.0	65.7	66.2	66.1	65.9

Table 2: Interstate comparison¹, December 2020

	Qld	NSW	Vic	SA	WA	Tas	Aus
Employed							
% change on a month ago	1.4	-0.4	0.4	-0.1	0.0	0.3	0.4
Change on a month ago (no.)	36,600	-17,100	14,600	-500	400	800	50,000
% change since May 2020	9.4	5.7	4.4	5.4	8.0	6.1	6.5
Change since May 2020 (no.)	221,700	121,400	142,700	44,000	102,100	14,500	784,500
% change since March 2020	0.7	-1.1	-1.7	-0.5	0.5	-1.8	-0.7
Change since March 2020 (no.)	16,700	-47,100	-57,300	-4,400	6,900	-4,500	-87,600
Unemployment rate							
December-20	7.5	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.2	7.0	6.6
November-20	7.7	6.5	7.1	6.2	6.4	7.9	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)							
December-20	352.6	558.3	453.1	113.6	190.4	33.5	1,753.2
monthly % change	0.4	0.0	-0.1	1.1	-1.0	1.3	0.1
% change since May 2020	11.7	10.1	9.1	10.6	9.8	16.4	10.1
% change since March 2020	1.0	-1.2	-4.5	-0.2	0.1	0.4	-1.4

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