

Labour Force, January 2021

Source: ABS Labour Force, released 18 February 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,	2,300	(0.1%)
(persons, growth)	Australia,	29,100	(0.2%)
Unemployment:	Queensland,	-15,200	(7.0%)
(persons, rate)	Australia,	-34,300	(6.4%)
Labour force:	Queensland,	-12,900	(-0.5%)
(persons, growth)	Australia,	-5,200	(0.0%)
Underemployment:	Queensland,	600	(8.6%)
(persons, rate)	Australia,	-55,500	(8.1%)
Hours worked:	Queensland,	-16,000	(-4.5%)
(thousands, growth)	Australia,	-86,000	(-4.9%)

Main findings

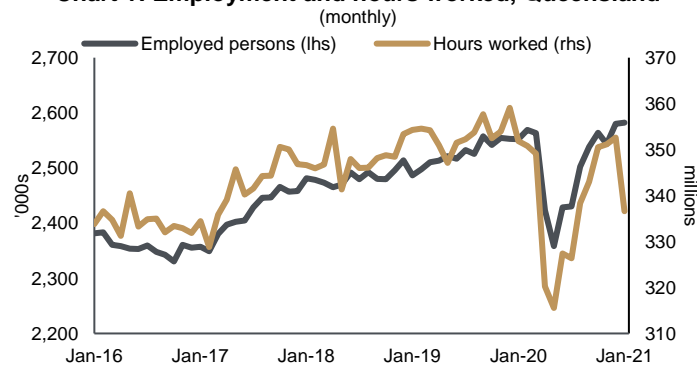
Employment in Queensland rose 2,300 persons (0.1%) in January 2021 with a rise in full-time employment (up 9,300 persons) more than offsetting a fall in part-time employment (down 6,900). Employment in Queensland is 224,000 persons (9.5%) above its COVID-impacted low in May 2020 and 19,100 persons above the pre-pandemic level of March 2020.

In contrast, hours worked in Queensland fell 4.5% in January 2021 and were down 3.6% since March 2020 but 6.7% higher than the pre-pandemic low in May (Chart 1).

However, the ABS noted in this release, 'a larger than usual number of people took annual leave in January 2021. This led to the unusual combination of a rise in seasonally adjusted employment and a large fall in seasonally adjusted hours worked. Given the extent of the disruption during 2020, including to people's leave plans, it is not surprising that more than the usual amount of leave was taken in the Christmas-New Year holiday period.'

Further the ABS noted, 'this fall in hours worked should be viewed differently to the fall in April and May 2020, which resulted from restrictions in the labour market and coincided with falls in employment'.

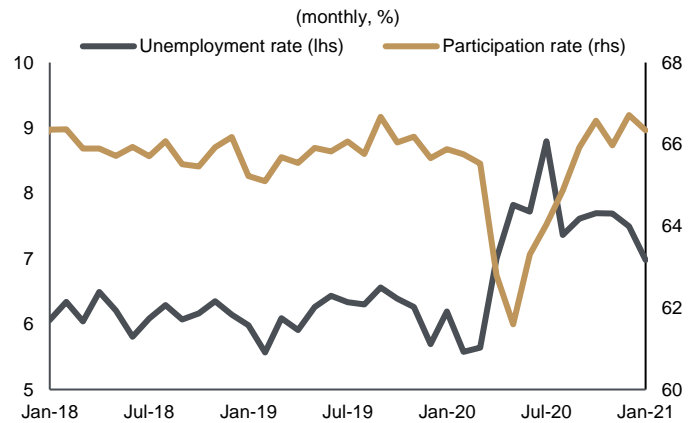
Chart 1: Employment and hours worked, Queensland



The unemployment rate in Queensland was 7.0% in January 2021, down from 7.5% in December 2020, but above the pre-pandemic level of 5.6% in March 2020 (Chart 2). The number of unemployed persons in Queensland fell 15,200 in January 2021 to 193,800, down from a peak of 234,400 persons in July 2020 but 40,600 persons higher than the pre-pandemic level in March 2020.

The participation rate in Queensland was 66.3% in January, up from 65.5% in March 2020. This equates to 12,900 persons leaving the labour force in Queensland in January, but with a total of 59,700 persons having entered the labour force since March 2020.

Chart 2: Unemployment and participation rates, Queensland



Nationally, employment rose by 29,100 persons (0.2%) in January but was 58,500 persons (0.5%) lower than its pre-pandemic level in March. The monthly rise was driven by Victoria (up 43,600) while employment fell in Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

There were 1,667.2 million hours worked in Australia in January 2021, down 4.9% from December 2020 and down 6.2% from March 2020. The national unemployment rate fell from 6.6% in December 2020 to 6.4% in January (Table 1) but remained higher than its pre-pandemic level of 5.2% in March 2020.

Table 1: Labour force outcomes¹, January 2021

	Queensland				Australia			
	Jan-21 '000	Monthly change '000	%	Yearly change '000	Jan-21 '000	Monthly change '000	%	Yearly change '000
Employed	2,582.2	2.3	0.1	29.7	12,939.9	29.1	0.2	-45.6
Full-time	1,742.2	9.3	0.5	-18.1	8,820.4	59.0	0.7	-62.9
Part-time	839.9	-6.9	-0.8	47.9	4,119.5	-29.8	-0.7	17.3
Unemployed	193.8	-15.2	-7.3	25.2	15.0	877.6	-34.3	-3.8
Underemployed	240.0	0.6	0.2	1.3	0.5	1,125.7	-55.5	-4.7
Labour force	2,776.0	-12.9	-0.5	55.0	2.0	13,817.5	-5.2	0.0

	millions	millions	%	millions	%	millions	millions	%	millions	%
Hours worked	336.6	-16.0	-4.5	-15.3	-4.3	1,667.2	-86.0	-4.9	-100.3	-5.7
	Jan-21	Dec-20	Jan-20			Jan-21	Dec-20	Jan-20		
	%	%	%			%	%	%		
Unemployment rate	7.0	7.5	6.2			6.4	6.6	5.3		
Underemployment rate	8.6	8.6	8.8			8.1	8.5	8.6		
Participation rate	66.3	66.7	65.9			66.1	66.2	66.1		

Table 2: Interstate comparison¹, January 2021

	Qld	NSW	Vic	SA	WA	Tas	Aus
Employed							
% change on a month ago	0.1	0.0	1.3	-1.4	-1.0	1.2	0.2
Change on a month ago (no.)	2,300	-1,200	43,600	-12,200	-13,400	3,000	29,100
% change since May 2020	9.5	5.7	5.7	3.9	6.9	7.3	6.7
Change since May 2020 (no.)	224,000	220,200	186,300	31,800	88,600	17,500	813,600
% change since March 2020	0.7	-1.2	-0.4	-1.9	-0.5	-0.6	-0.5
Change since March 2020 (no.)	19,100	-48,300	-13,700	-16,600	-6,600	-1,500	-58,500
Unemployment rate (%)							
January 2021	7.0	6.0	6.3	7.1	6.2	5.9	6.4
December 2020	7.5	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.2	7.0	6.6
May 2020	7.8	6.4	6.9	7.9	8.1	6.3	7.1
March 2020	5.6	4.9	5.2	6.3	5.4	4.9	5.2
Hours worked (millions)							
January 2021	336.6	514.9	439.9	108.5	186.9	31.8	1,667.2
monthly % change	-4.5	-7.8	-2.9	-4.6	-1.9	-4.9	-4.9
% change since May 2020	6.7	1.6	5.9	5.6	7.8	10.7	4.7
% change since March 2020	-3.6	-8.8	-7.3	-4.7	-1.8	-4.6	-6.2

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