

Sector Profile

Arts, Entertainment and Recreation

Atlantic Region

2025

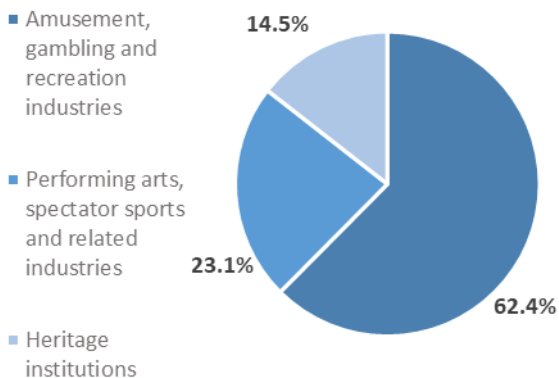


HIGHLIGHTS

- Arts, entertainment and recreation activity is closely linked to economic conditions and benefits from higher levels of consumer disposable income. Tourism spending is a major driver.
- The industry's workforce is young, with over a third (34.6%) aged 15 to 24 years old. Nearly one-fifth (18.3%) of workers in this industry are self-employed.
- Arts, entertainment and recreation employment declined slightly in 2024, but was up by 9.2% over its pre-pandemic (2019) level. A surge in the number of cruise ship visits to the Port of Saint John has been a boon for the industry.
- The average annual rate of job growth from 2025 to 2027 is expected to fall in-line with the all-industry average (0.8% vs. 0.6%). Reduced international travel and a greater number of climate-related events (including wildfires) represent negative risks to this forecast.

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

Employment Share by sub-industry



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 2024

Composition and Importance of the Sector

The arts, entertainment and recreation industry comprises establishments primarily engaged in operating facilities or providing services to meet the cultural, entertainment and recreational interests of their patrons.

Amusement, gambling and recreation industries accounted for over three-fifths (62.4%) of total employment, in 2024, followed by performing arts, spectator sports and related industries (23.1%) and heritage institutions (14.5%), with the latter including museums, zoos, etc.

The vast majority of employers in Atlantic Canada are small enterprises, with fewer than 50 workers. Large employers (over 200 employees) generally operate in the amusement, gambling and recreation industries subsector.

Real GDP grew by 3.5% between 2023 to 2024 and is 9.6% higher than at its pre-pandemic level, in 2019.



Geographic Distribution of Employment

There were 24,400 persons employed in Atlantic Canada’s arts, entertainment and recreation sector in 2024, with N.S. accounting for nearly half (45.5%) of this total.

P.E.I.’s arts, entertainment and recreation sector accounted for an outsized share of its total workforce (2.3%), thanks to its status as a regional tourist hub. For Atlantic Canada this rate was 1.9% (provincial details are provided in the table to the right).

	Employed 2024	Industry Share (%)
Atlantic Canada	24,400	1.9%
Newfoundland and Labrador	4,100	1.7%
Prince Edward Island	2,100	2.3%
Nova Scotia	11,100	2.1%
New Brunswick	7,100	1.8%

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

WORKFORCE

Workforce Characteristics

The workforce of the arts, entertainment and recreation industry is young, with over one-third (34.6%) aged 15 to 24 years old, compared to 13.0% across all industries. The sector employs many high school and post-secondary students and as a result, only 54.1% of workers have a postsecondary degree or higher, compared to 70.2% across all industries.

Activity increases drastically during summer tourism months, and therefore the industry relies heavily on having a flexible workforce. Over one-third (36.3%) of the industry’s workforce is employed part-time, which is much higher than the rate of 16.0% observed across all industries. Moreover, temporary work is nearly three times as common in this industry (36.1% vs. 13.7%).

Self-employment is twice as likely in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry (18.3% vs. 9.5%). Independent artists, and small business enterprises operating in sport and recreation are responsible for this discrepancy.

Main Occupations

Program leaders and instructors in recreation, sport and fitness make up by far the greatest share of employment in the industry, at over one-fifth (21.0%) of all jobs in the region. This is followed by operators and attendants in amusement, recreation and sport; landscaping and grounds maintenance labourers; musicians and singers; and authors and writers (except technical). Overall, the top five occupations represent over two-fifths (40.1%) of all arts, entertainment and recreation jobs in Atlantic Canada.

On-the-job training, talent, and ability are generally required for these occupations. Certifications are generally required for program leaders and instructors in recreation, sport and fitness. Some of these jobs are physical in nature and require working outdoors.

	Employed 2024	% Share of Industry
Top 5 largest occupations		
Program leaders and instructors in recreation, sport and fitness	5,125	21.0%
Operators and attendants in amusement, recreation and sport	2,300	9.5%
Landscaping and grounds maintenance labourers	1,100	4.5%
Musicians and singers	625	2.6%
Authors and writers (except technical)	600	2.5%

Source: ESDC/Service Canada



RECENT HISTORY

Employment in the region climbed steadily from 2014 to 2019, before plummeting during the pandemic due to bans and limits on large gatherings and travel. The number of jobs has since rebounded. Except for a small decline between 2023 and 2024, employment has been trending upwards and is 9.2% higher than its pre-pandemic (2019) level.

A recent surge in domestic tourism has been massive for the arts, entertainment and recreation industry. Canadian residents have been favouring domestic vacations over international travel, due to the ongoing trade dispute with the U.S. These visitors are largely from within Atlantic Canada, along with residents from Ontario and Québec.

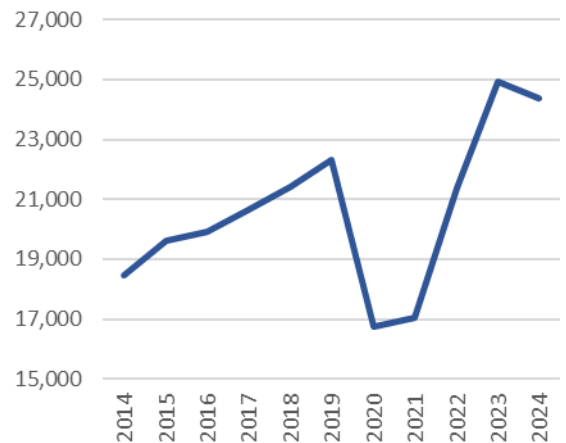
Air passenger traffic in the region increased by nearly one-tenth (9.1%) from 2023 to 2024. However, recent declines in travellers from the United States may reverse this trend. Overall, the total number of air passengers in the Atlantic provinces remains 7.6% lower than 2019 levels (source: Statistics Canada. Table 23-10-0253-01).

Cruise ship passengers have also been key to the economic health of this sector. Atlantic Canada experienced over one million visits from April to November 2024, which is a 30% year-over-year increase from 2023 (source: Atlantic Canada Cruise Association). The sub-sector has grown resiliently after having its 2020 and 2021 seasons cancelled due to the pandemic and remains a significant source of revenue for the arts, entertainment and recreation industry.

Ongoing labour shortages have challenged some employers in this sector. Significant amounts of temporary and/or gig work in the industry, along with low wages have been noted as factors that have reduced the labour supply. At a national level, average hourly wages are 25.2% lower for employees in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry compared to all industries (source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0206-01). Employees in the industry also worked fewer hours as the annual average number of hours worked ranged from 223 hours lower than that of all industries in P.E.I. to 617 fewer hours in N.L. (source: Statistics Canada. Table 36-10-0480-01). This is likely due to both part-time and gig work being prevalent in the sector.

Artists have also been seeing revenues shrink due to the digital transformation of the sector. This includes lower revenues for musicians due to streaming overtaking physical media, and increased competition for independent visual artists and artisans due to the prevalence of generative artificial intelligence. Low wages and revenues, coupled with increased digital competition has hurt some workers in the sector.

Historical Employment Trend
Atlantic Canada



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey



OUTLOOK

Employment in Atlantic Canada’s arts, entertainment and recreation sector is projected to grow in-line with the all-industry average from 2025 to 2027 (0.8% vs 0.6%). Expected provincial growth rates are identified in the chart to the right.

The shift towards domestic tourism is expected to be a major driver throughout the forecast period. Extending the tourism season is also key to the health of this sector. The industry currently expects the tourism season to continue to get busier and longer. However, the increases are expected to be offset by fewer international visitors from the United States – at least over the short-term.

Inflation and discretionary spending also factor heavily in the demand for this industry’s services. Rising wages and cooling inflation in recent months should help spur growth in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry.

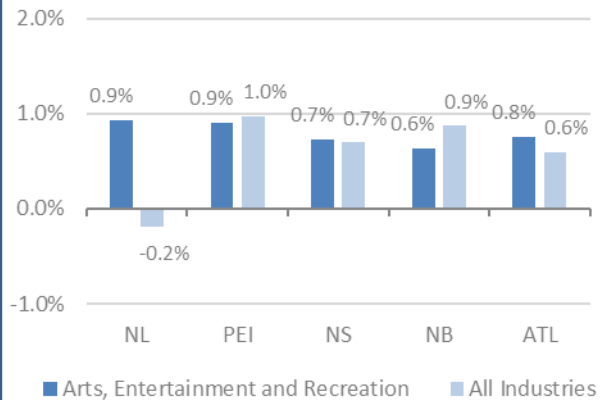
Climate change, including the increasing frequency of wildfires, could hurt employment prospects in the industry as refunds, reduced bookings, and property damages could negatively impact jobs. Wildfires and extreme weather events can also lead to bans on hiking and access to various parks and trails which dampens the outlook.

The new Canada Strong Pass, which offers free or discounted travel packages, and admission to parks, museums, and heritage places, has been a massive boost to the industry. The Anne of Green Gables House in P.E.I. estimated a 20% year-over-year increase in the number of visitors which helps drive long-term demand and increases visits to other nearby services offered by the industry. Recent bridge and ferry fee reductions will also improve demand.

The 2025 Canada Games taking place in St. John’s is estimated to contribute \$100 million in economic benefits to St. John’s and surrounding areas (source: Canada Games). The influx of visitors also likely improved business conditions in the industry in N.L. The province will also benefit from facilities upgrades to prepare for the games.

Construction on the New Brunswick Museum in Saint is expected to wrap-up 2027. As a result, any employment gains will likely happen outside of the forecast period. However, the recent doubling of New Brunswick’s arts budget will help grow the sector. The new Halifax Tides women’s football club will also increase employment in the Atlantic region.

**Projected Average Annual Employment Growth Rate (%),
Atlantic Provinces, 2025-2027**



Source: ESDC/Service Canada

Note: In preparing this document, the authors have taken care to provide clients with labour market information that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since this document was published. Users are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect official policies of Employment and Social Development Canada.

The analysis in this report was finalized as of **September 2025**

Prepared by: Business Intelligence and Labour Market and Analysis Directorate, Service Canada – Atlantic Region

For further information, you may contact us at: ATL-LMI-IMT-GD@servicecanada.gc.ca

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APPENDIX

Real GDP (2024) and Employment (2024) for Atlantic Canada

	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation			All Industries		
	Number	Share of		Number	Share of	
		Total	AAGR*		Total	AAGR*
Real GDP (M\$)	\$609.8	100.0%	1.3%	\$118,731.2	100.0%	1.2%
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$86.6	14.2%	-0.6%	\$29,645.2	25.0%	-0.3%
Prince Edward Island	\$78.9	12.9%	2.9%	\$7,604.7	6.4%	2.9%
Nova Scotia	\$254.1	41.7%	2.2%	\$45,644.6	38.4%	1.9%
New Brunswick	\$190.2	31.2%	0.5%	\$35,836.7	30.2%	1.4%
Employment (000s)	24.4	100.0%	2.8%	1258.7	100.0%	1.2%
Men+	12.6	51.8%	2.6%	640.8	50.9%	1.2%
Women+	11.7	48.2%	3.1%	618.0	49.1%	1.2%
15-24 years old	8.4	34.6%	2.6%	163.8	13.0%	0.9%
25-54 years old	10.9	44.9%	3.7%	803.1	63.8%	1.0%
55 years and older	5.0	20.5%	1.4%	291.9	23.2%	2.0%
Worked full-time	15.5	63.8%	3.3%	1057.5	84.0%	1.3%
Worked part-time	8.8	36.3%	2.0%	201.2	16.0%	0.5%
Self-employed	4.5	18.3%	1.3%	119.1	9.5%	-1.1%
Employees	19.9	81.8%	3.2%	1139.7	90.5%	1.5%
Permanent job	11.1	45.6%	4.1%	967.1	76.8%	1.9%
Temporary job	8.8	36.1%	2.2%	172.6	13.7%	-0.5%
Less than high school	3.9	16.2%	0.9%	87.9	7.0%	-3.1%
High school graduate	7.2	29.7%	1.4%	286.9	22.8%	-0.3%
Postsecondary cert. or diploma	6.7	27.5%	4.6%	487.2	38.7%	1.1%
University degree	6.5	26.6%	4.1%	396.8	31.5%	4.1%
Newfoundland and Labrador	4.1	16.7%	2.6%	245.0	19.5%	0.2%
Prince Edward Island	2.1	8.6%	1.6%	92.5	7.3%	2.3%
Nova Scotia	11.1	45.7%	2.0%	521.4	41.4%	1.6%
New Brunswick	7.1	29.1%	4.7%	400.0	31.8%	1.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey - Custom Table; Table 36-10-0402-01

*Average annual growth rate for last ten years of available data (GDP 2015-24 and Employment 2015-24)

