Sector Profile

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services

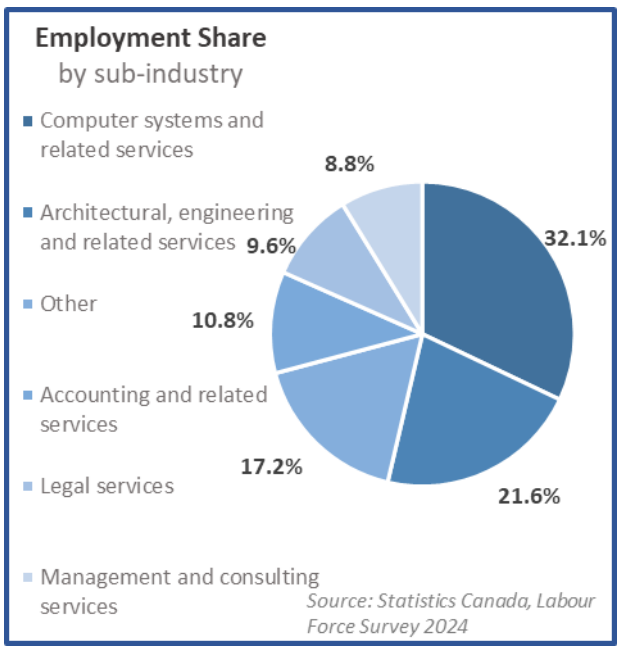
Atlantic Region

2025

HIGHLIGHTS

- The professional, scientific, and technical services sector is a diverse sector that includes a wide range of activities and occupations. It accounted for 6.2% of Atlantic Canada's workforce in 2024.
- The workforce in this sector is highly educated, earns above-average wages, and is relatively young. More than half of workers in the sector are men+.
- After growing continuously from 2016 to 2023, sectoral employment decreased by 1% in 2024.
- Employment growth in the sector is projected to average 0.8% annually through 2027, slightly faster than the overall rate of employment growth for all industries. Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are forecasted to have the strongest average annual job growth rates at 1.4% and 0.9%, respectively.

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY



Composition and Importance of the Sector

The professional, scientific, and technical services sector is made up of several sub-industries centred around high-level expertise. The services provided by these sub-sectors are diverse, but the need for highly skilled labour is a trait they all have in common. Some notable highly skilled specializations include engineering, computer systems design, accounting, law, and scientific research.

The two largest sub-industries comprise more than half of employment in this sector: computer systems design and related services (32.1%) and architectural, engineering and related services (21.6%). As well, one in five jobs can be found in legal or accounting services.

The sector contributed more than $5B to Atlantic Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024, representing 4.4% of the total economic output in the region.

Geographic Distribution of Employment

The sector employed 6.2% of Atlantic Canada's workforce in 2024, with an employment level of 77,800. This was a decrease of 600 workers compared to 2023.

With 35,900 workers, Nova Scotia has the highest share of employment in this sector and comprises almost half of the sectoral workforce in the Atlantic region (46.1%). This can be attributed in part to a growing technology hub centered in Halifax. New Brunswick, which is home to large employers in cybersecurity, has the second largest employment share in the region, at nearly one-third (31.7%). The other Atlantic provinces also have prominent sub-industries with large employers, such as bioscience in Prince Edward Island, and financial technology in Newfoundland and Labrador.

	Employed 2024	Industry Share (%)
Atlantic Canada	77,800	6.2%
Newfoundland and Labrador	12,400	5.1%
Prince Edward Island	4,800	5.2%
Nova Scotia	35,900	6.9%
New Brunswick	24,700	6.2%

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

WORKFORCE

Workforce Characteristics

Workers in the professional, scientific, and technical services sector tend to be highly educated. In 2024, a very small minority of workers in the sector had less than a high school degree (0.9%), while 59.2% had at least a university degree—well above the average share (31.5%) for all workers in Atlantic Canada.

Employment income in this sector is above average for the Atlantic Canadian workforce. The average hourly wage for workers in professional, scientific and technical services stood at $39.90 in 2024, well above the overall average for workers in the Atlantic provinces ($30.80). This underscores the sector's high educational requirements and strong demand for its specialized services.

The workforce in this sector is relatively young, with almost 80% of workers falling between the ages of 15 and 54, which is less than the overall workforce (76.8%). The sector also has a higher share of self-employed individuals, at 18.6%, nearly double the all-industry average (9.5%). Women+ accounted for 43.5% of sectoral employment in 2024, down by 1.2 percentage points from the previous year.

Main Occupations

The occupations in this sector possess diverse skill sets and are found in various work settings. Consequently, even the largest occupations constitute only a small share of total sectoral employment. As of 2024, the three largest occupations in this sector were software developers and programmers, lawyers, and information systems specialists, employing 14,300 workers in the region (18.4%). The next two largest occupations were in professions related to financial services.

The number of software developers and programmers has drastically increased by 182% from 2014 to 2024 ranging from 2,452 to 6,925 employed due mainly to the recent use of artificial intelligence.

Top 5 largest occupations	Employed 2024	% Share of Industry
Software developers and programmers	6,925	8.9%
Lawyers and Quebec notaries	3,975	5.1%
Information systems specialists	3,400	4.4%
Accounting technicians and bookkeepers	2,700	3.5%
Financial auditors and accountants	2,650	3.4%

Source: ESDC/Service Canada

RECENT HISTORY

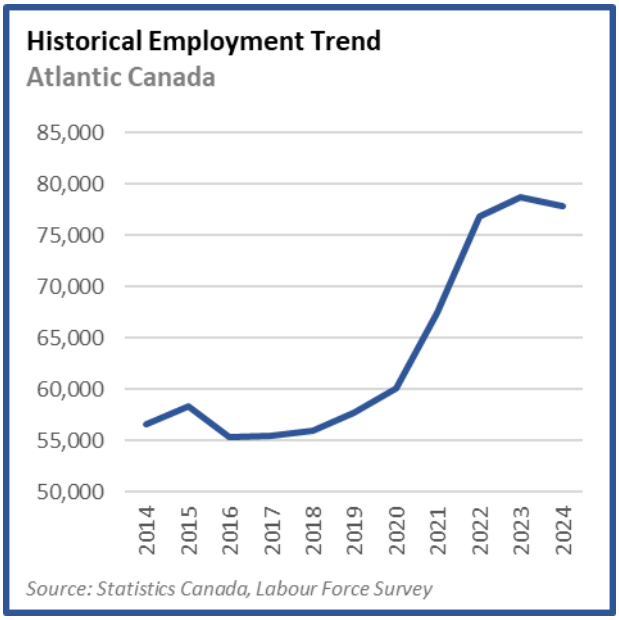
After maintaining a positive rate of growth between 2016 and 2023, employment in the professional, scientific, and technical services sector in Atlantic Canada declined by 1% in 2024.

The growing role of artificial intelligence (AI) has been reshaping which skills and seniority levels are in high demand in the computer systems and related services sub-industry. As AI is increasingly used to assist or automate more routine coding and programming tasks, the need for workers in junior and entry-level positions to perform these tasks has softened. At the same time, demand has risen for mid-career and senior-level positions with skills related to engineering and modifying AI tools and models. In addition to an acute need for candidates with leading-edge technical skills, industry stakeholders have also noted the growing importance of soft skills such as team and project management at these levels.

Other areas of expertise that are in high demand in the information technology (IT) sector include software development and cybersecurity; the latter is expected to remain an active subset of this sector as cyber threats continue to evolve. Opportunities for digital services exports in video game development and ocean technology have also been noted.

Recent investments exemplify the relationships between IT and other industries. For example, a partnership between McCain Foods, University of New Brunswick's (UNB) McKenna Institute, ResearchNB, and the N.B. Government was announced in 2024 related to a $4M initiative to develop a digital model of sustainable farming. Moreover, St. John's-based technology company Mavin Industrial has received $186K from the Newfoundland and Labrador (N.L.) Government to advance AI in jobsite safety compliance. The money will be used to hire new employees who will help enhance the platform's AI capabilities.

In recent years, investment in large-scale construction projects has been high in parts of Atlantic Canada, supporting demand for architectural, engineering, and related services. These projects include large multi-unit dwellings, as well as public infrastructure such as highways, schools, and healthcare facilities.



In veterinary services, industry associations are highlighting nation-wide concern about labour shortages facing the industry, including in the Atlantic region. Local clinics continue to indicate that there is a shortage of veterinarians and have had to cut back hours—and in some cases, services—as they deal with limited staffing. Rural communities have been the most severely affected and are underserved in veterinary care. The veterinarian shortage has also put upward pressure on wages and resulted in more overtime being worked, driving a rise in veterinary care costs. In response, the N.L. government has increased funding to double the number of subsidized seats for students from that province to attend the four-year veterinarian program at the Atlantic Veterinary College in Prince Edward Island (P.E.I) starting in the 2026-27 academic year.

Clean energy and hydrogen production is another emerging industry that has the potential to support robust job growth in the professional, scientific and technical services sector in the Atlantics for years to come. Launched recently, both Nujio'qonik project in N.L and EverWind Point Tupper Green Hydrogen/Ammonia Project in N.S are designated to position the region as a global hub for green hydrogen exports.

OUTLOOK

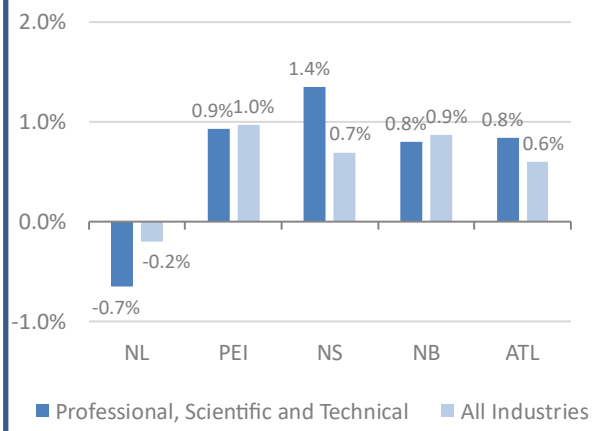
Employment growth in professional, scientific, and technical services is projected to average 0.8% from 2025 to 2027, slightly faster than the overall employment growth rate for all industries.

Three of four Atlantic provinces are expected to see employment growth in this sector. Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are forecasted to have the strongest average annual job growth rates, at 1.4% and 0.9%, respectively. Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province expected to shed jobs in this sector, averaging -0.7% annually over the projection period.

The outlook for computer systems and related services is expected to be strongly shaped by widespread demand for AI tools by Canadian businesses during the next several years, as well as the ongoing need for cybersecurity services. A 2024 KPMG report indicated that Atlantic Canadian workers had the highest rate of AI use in the country in 2024, as well as the largest increase in usage from 2023. Industry stakeholders in the region are aiming to capitalize on this trend but may be challenged by the rapidly evolving skillsets needed to keep up with leading-edge AI engineering. The duration of traditional post-secondary curricula has been noted as an obstacle, as skills may already be obsolete upon completion of a multi-year program.

While the strong population growth that drove higher levels of investment in infrastructure in the region has slowed, the multi-year timeline of major projects and lingering excess demand for dwellings should continue to support the architecture and engineering services sub-industry through 2027.

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



Source: ESDC/Service Canada

Further, several green hydrogen and large-scale wind farm projects are under consideration in multiple provinces. As these advance through planning and review stages, they could also contribute to the need for engineering services.

Employment growth in legal services and accounting and bookkeeping services is generally expected to reflect the tempered rate of population and economic growth projected during the next few years.

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 **August 2025.**

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APPENDIX

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

	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services			All Industries		
	Number	Share of Total	AAGR*	Number	Share of Total	AAGR*
Real GDP (M$)	$5,263.0	100.0%	3.1%	$118,731.2	100.0%	1.2%
Newfoundland and Labrador	$1,161.3	22.1%	1.0%	$29,645.2	25.0%	-0.3%
Prince Edward Island	$279.3	5.3%	5.3%	$7,604.7	6.4%	2.9%
Nova Scotia	$2,378.7	45.2%	4.0%	$45,644.6	38.4%	1.9%
New Brunswick	$1,443.7	27.4%	3.0%	$35,836.7	30.2%	1.4%
Employment (000s)	77.8	100.0%	3.2%	1258.7	100.0%	1.2%
Men+	44.0	56.5%	3.0%	640.8	50.9%	1.2%
Women+	33.8	43.5%	3.5%	618.0	49.1%	1.2%
15-24 years old	5.9	7.5%	3.4%	163.8	13.0%	0.9%
25-54 years old	56.2	72.2%	3.2%	803.1	63.8%	1.0%
55 years and older	15.8	20.3%	3.3%	291.9	23.2%	2.0%
Worked full-time	70.0	89.9%	3.4%	1057.5	84.0%	1.3%
Worked part-time	7.9	10.1%	1.6%	201.2	16.0%	0.5%
Self-employed	14.5	18.6%	-0.4%	119.1	9.5%	-1.1%
Employees	63.4	81.4%	4.3%	1139.7	90.5%	1.5%
Permanent job	58.9	75.7%	4.7%	967.1	76.8%	1.9%
Temporary job	4.4	5.7%	0.0%	172.6	13.7%	-0.5%
Less than high school	0.7	0.9%	-0.8%	87.9	7.0%	-3.1%
High school graduate	7.2	9.2%	2.0%	286.9	22.8%	-0.3%
Postsecondary cert. or diploma	23.9	30.8%	1.5%	487.2	38.7%	1.1%
University degree	46.0	59.2%	4.6%	396.8	31.5%	4.1%
Newfoundland and Labrador	12.4	15.9%	0.9%	245.0	19.5%	0.2%
Prince Edward Island	4.8	6.2%	4.6%	92.5	7.3%	2.3%
Nova Scotia	35.9	46.2%	3.5%	521.4	41.4%	1.6%
New Brunswick	24.7	31.7%	4.0%	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)*