# Sector Profile

## Utilities

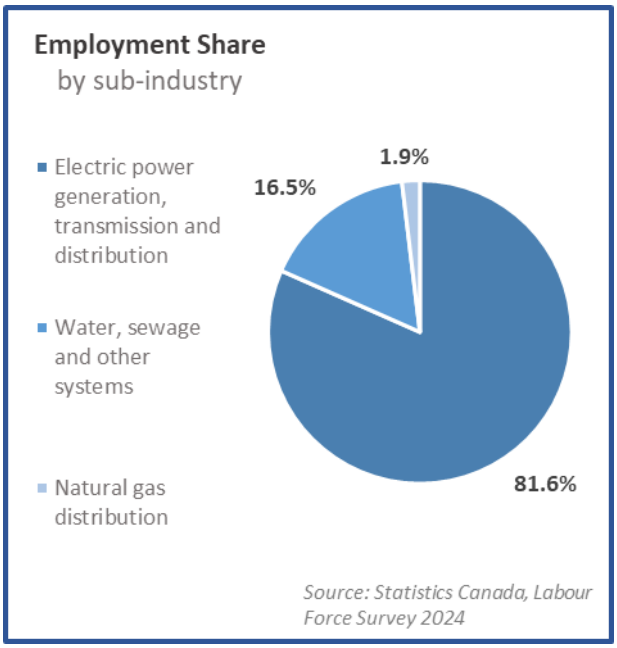
## Atlantic Region

## 2025

## HIGHLIGHTS

- While Atlantic Canada's utilities industry is relatively small in terms of employment, it plays a vital role by providing essential services to households and other sectors.
- Nearly three-quarters (72.7%) of the workers in the utilities sector are male and electrical power line and cable workers make up the largest share of the region's utilities workers, accounting for 9.3% of the total, in 2024.
- Utilities employment is expected to expand at a rate of 0.7% over the forecast period (2025 to 2027). One of the most important upcoming projects in the region is the Gull Island and Churchill Falls development between Hydro-Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, which is expected to generate substantial utilities investment.
- Recent government legislation in the form of Bill C-5 may also encourage utilities investment in the region.

## ABOUT THE INDUSTRY




### Composition and Importance of the Sector

Atlantic Canada's utilities sector is small in terms of employment but is crucial to the health of other industries, as its workforce oversees the infrastructure that supplies clean water, electricity, natural gas, and other resources.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Atlantic Canada's utilities sector fell by 9.0% from 2023 to 2024. This was largely due to power generation issues at Point Lepreau in New Brunswick (N.B.) and lower volumes of hydraulic power generated in Newfoundland and Labrador (N.L.).

On a sub-industry basis, the largest employer is electric power generation, transmission and distribution, accounting for over four-fifths (81.5%) of overall employment, in 2024. Water, sewage and other systems accounted for another 16.5%, while natural gas distribution (1.9%) minimally impacts employment.

## Geographic Distribution of Employment

New Brunswick's (N.B.) utilities sector accounted for 1.4% of the province's total workforce, leading all Atlantic provinces. This was followed by Newfoundland and Labrador (N.L.) and Nova Scotia (N.S.), at 0.9% and 0.8% respectively, while Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.) has the lowest share, by a wide margin, at 0.3%.

Power generation is the main driver of utilities employment in the region. The electricity largely comes from hydraulic turbines in N.L., wind power in N.S and P.E.I, and nuclear energy in N.B. Combustible fuels such as coal also factor in significantly in N.B. and N.S.

| | Employed 2024 | Industry Share (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Atlantic Canada | 12,100 | 1.0% |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 2,100 | 0.9% |
| Prince Edward Island | 300 | 0.3% |
| Nova Scotia | 4,300 | 0.8% |
| New Brunswick | 5,400 | 1.4% |

*Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey*

# WORKFORCE

## Workforce Characteristics

Nearly three-quarters (72.7%) of the workers in the utilities sector are male, compared to about half (50.9%) of workers across all industries. The sector also employs a greater share of individuals aged 25 to 54 years (76.5% vs. 63.4%). As a result, there are fewer workers aged 55 years and older (19.4% vs 23.2%) and roughly three times fewer youth (aged 15 to 24 years old), relative to all industries (4.2% vs 13.0%) .

The utilities workforce is well-educated as over half (51.6%) possess a postsecondary certificate or diploma, compared to 38.7% across all industries. Nearly all utilities sector workers are employed full-time (99.0%), while self-employment (0.2%) is incredibly rare, compared to the all-industry averages of 84.0% and 9.5%, respectively.

## Main Occupations

In 2024, electrical power line and cable workers made up the largest share of utilities workers in the region. This was followed by power engineers and systems operators, supervisors, petroleum, gas and chemical processing and utilities, utility maintenance workers, and construction millwrights and industrial mechanics.

Employment in this sector has become increasingly concentrated among these top occupations over the past decade. Between 2014 and 2024, percentage point (p.p.) increases ranged from 0.9 p.p. to 2.7 p.p. The only exception was power engineers and power systems operators (-0.3 p.p.).

Workers employed in these occupations are generally employed by power companies or other enterprises and are physical in nature.

| **Top 5 largest occupations** | Employed 2024 | % Share of Industry |
|---|---|---|
| Electrical power line and cable workers | 1,125 | 9.3% |
| Power engineers and power systems operators | 825 | 6.9% |
| Supervisors, petroleum, gas and chemical processing and utilities | 825 | 6.9% |
| Utility maintenance workers | 625 | 5.1% |
| Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics | 600 | 4.9% |

*Source: ESDC/Service Canada*

## RECENT HISTORY

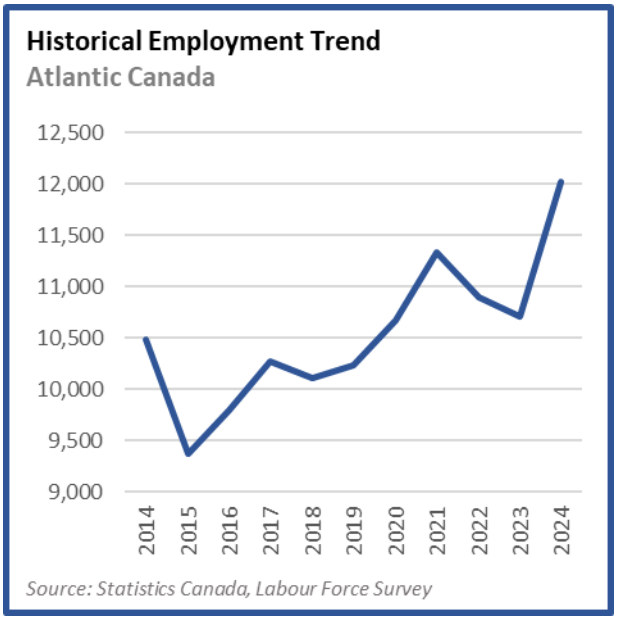
Employment in the utilities sector has been trending upward since 2015, with the exception of declines in 2022 and 2023, which were more than recovered in 2024. Strong population growth, higher electronic device usage, and the electrification of heat, vehicles, etc. are all factors that are driving the demand for utilities.

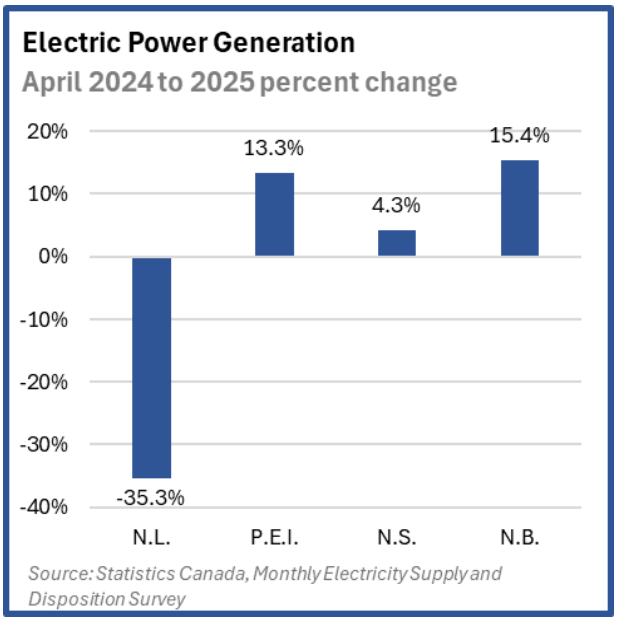
The sector has been transitioning towards increased dependence on renewable energy in recent years. Significant investments have been made in hydroelectric power generation, including at Churchill Falls and Muskrat Falls, resulting in a 17.6% increase in hydraulic power generation capacity between 2015 to 2023 (2024 data not yet available; source: Statistics Canada, Table 25-10-0022-01). Additionally, wind development is progressing across the region, contributing to a 10.3% increase in wind turbine capacity during the same period. Solar plays a much smaller role in the region and investment has largely been focused on homes and agriculture.

Despite the increase in green energy capacity, electricity generation in the region declined by 20.6% from April 2024 to April 2025. This decrease can be entirely attributed to N.L. (-35.3%) as poor weather conditions negatively impacted hydraulic power production over this period. In contrast, there were strong gains in P.E.I. (13.3%) due to wind, and in N.B. (15.4%) due to the Point Lepreau Nuclear Generating Station returning to operations in late 2024. N.S. (4.3%) saw a moderate increase due to combustible fuels.

Several notable wind projects have begun construction in the region, including the Eastern Kings Wind Farm (P.E.I.), the Goose Harbour Lake Wind Farm (N.S.), and the Brighton Mountain Wind Project (N.B.). Battery storage is crucial to the growth of the industry as unpredictable weather can make renewable energy production volatile and/or damage equipment. The federal government's commitment to phase coal out by 2030 further highlights the need for storing excess renewable power.

Managing the impacts of climate change remains a major challenge for the utilities sector, as natural events like droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, and other forms of extreme weather are posing an increasing risk to infrastructure. In addition, more extreme heat and cold spells are leading to more energy usage. Companies have been implementing smart meters as a means of managing peak demand, while mitigation efforts are being made in areas like infrastructure maintenance, tree-trimming, safety training, etc.



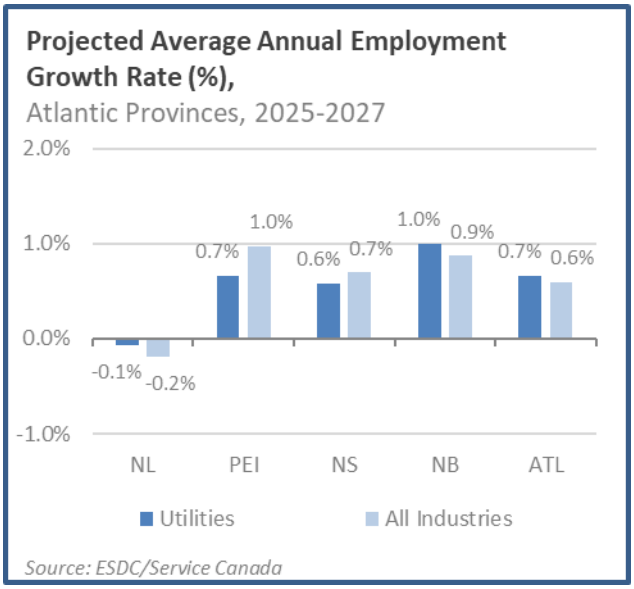
Another notable challenge has been the recruitment of skilled workers to the industry. There is a particular demand for skilled tradespeople, who are needed to build and operate utilities infrastructure, as well as for back-end support workers in areas such as information technology, business analysis and cybersecurity. In response to this challenge, stakeholders have been promoting apprenticeships and co-op programs and have been actively recruiting in high schools.

## OUTLOOK

Utilities employment in Atlantic Canada is projected to grow in-line with the all-industry pace over the forecast period (2025 to 2027). Growth is expected in the maritime provinces, with increases varying from 0.6% to 1.0%. A slight decline (-0.1%) is projected in N.L.

In terms of electricity demand, factors like increasing reliance on electronics and industrial expansion should offset slowing population growth. Demand for more renewable energy development and transmission should also support this sector.

The upcoming Mactaquac dam refurbishment is a major investment that should help the industry. However, it's unclear when this project will start. The sector is also shifting away from coal, it's likely that natural gas plays a big role in this process.




Bill C-5 was passed in June 2025 and aims to mobilise major project development, specifically energy infrastructure. The law is also designed to increase interprovincial trade and labour mobility. Removing regulatory barriers should help the sector grow in the coming years.

One of the most important upcoming projects in the region is the Gull Island and Churchill Falls development between Hydro-Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. It's estimated that N.L. Hydro's capacity will rise by 3,900 MW once construction is complete. The agreement will also see the effective price that N.L. Hydro receives increase thirty-fold in 2025 which will result in more cash available for employment and investments.

Some potential "nation-building" projects that have been proposed recently include Wind West in N.S., which would produce an astonishing 27% of Canada's total demand for electricity. A second reactor at Point Lepreau has also been put forward, along with various transmission lines. There is concern over the capacity to build these projects given the skilled trades shortage. Moreover, it's unclear of the time frame for these projects, so it's likely that they take place outside of the employment outlook period if they are approved.

***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**

| | Utilities | | | All Industries | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Share of Total | AAGR* | Number | Share of Total | AAGR* |
| Real GDP (M$) | $2,943.3 | 100.0% | 1.9% | $118,731.2 | 100.0% | 1.2% |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | $666.4 | 22.6% | 2.7% | $29,645.2 | 25.0% | -0.3% |
| Prince Edward Island | $112.5 | 3.8% | 3.8% | $7,604.7 | 6.4% | 2.9% |
| Nova Scotia | $907.3 | 30.8% | 1.0% | $45,644.6 | 38.4% | 1.9% |
| New Brunswick | $1,257.1 | 42.7% | 2.1% | $35,836.7 | 30.2% | 1.4% |
| Employment (000s) | 12.0 | 100.0% | 1.4% | 1258.7 | 100.0% | 1.2% |
| Men+ | 8.8 | 72.7% | 1.3% | 640.8 | 50.9% | 1.2% |
| Women+ | 3.3 | 27.3% | 1.5% | 618.0 | 49.1% | 1.2% |
| 15-24 years old | 0.5 | 4.2% | 4.1% | 163.8 | 13.0% | 0.9% |
| 25-54 years old | 9.2 | 76.5% | 1.5% | 803.1 | 63.8% | 1.0% |
| 55 years and older | 2.3 | 19.4% | 0.5% | 291.9 | 23.2% | 2.0% |
| Worked full-time | 11.9 | 99.0% | 1.4% | 1057.5 | 84.0% | 1.3% |
| Worked part-time | 0.1 | 0.9% | -3.3% | 201.2 | 16.0% | 0.5% |
| Self-employed | 0.0 | 0.2% | n/a | 119.1 | 9.5% | -1.1% |
| Employees | 12.0 | 99.8% | 1.4% | 1139.7 | 90.5% | 1.5% |
| Permanent job | 11.2 | 92.7% | 1.4% | 967.1 | 76.8% | 1.9% |
| Temporary job | 0.8 | 6.9% | 1.1% | 172.6 | 13.7% | -0.5% |
| Less than high school | 0.1 | 0.9% | 0.0% | 87.9 | 7.0% | -3.1% |
| High school graduate | 1.4 | 11.8% | -0.4% | 286.9 | 22.8% | -0.3% |
| Postsecondary cert. or diploma | 6.2 | 51.6% | 0.5% | 487.2 | 38.7% | 1.1% |
| University degree | 4.3 | 35.6% | 3.6% | 396.8 | 31.5% | 4.1% |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 2.1 | 17.1% | -2.9% | 245.0 | 19.5% | 0.2% |
| Prince Edward Island | 0.4 | 2.9% | 3.5% | 92.5 | 7.3% | 2.3% |
| Nova Scotia | 4.3 | 35.3% | 1.5% | 521.4 | 41.4% | 1.6% |
| New Brunswick | 5.4 | 44.5% | 3.5% | 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)*