Household Labour Force Survey: March 2012 quarter

Embargoed until 10:45am – 03 May 2012

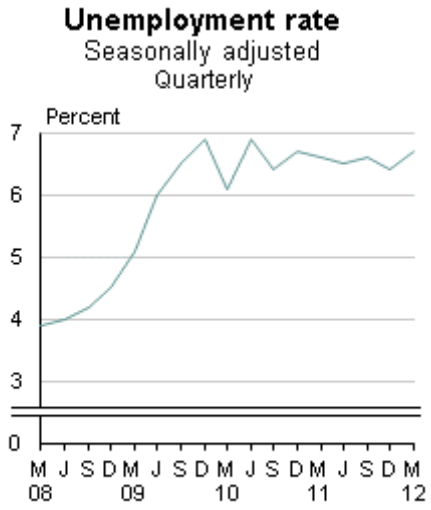
Key facts

In the March 2012 quarter compared with the December 2011 quarter:

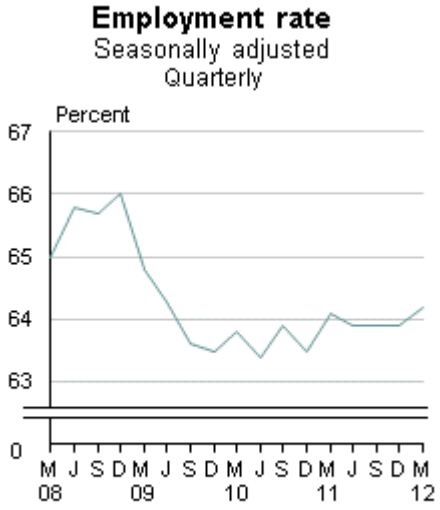
- The employment rate rose 0.3 percentage points, to 64.2 percent.
- The number of people employed increased by 9,000.
- The unemployment rate rose 0.3 percentage points, to 6.7 percent.
- The number of people unemployed increased by 9,000.
- The labour force participation rate rose to its second-highest rate ever, 68.8 percent.

All figures are seasonally adjusted.

	March 2012 quarter	Quarterly change	Annual change
	(000)	(Percent)	
Unemployed	160	+6.1	+3.1
Employed	2,230	+0.4	+0.9
Not in the labour force	1,086	-1.7	+0.1
Working-age population	3,477	0.0	+0.8
	(Percent)	(Percentage points)	
Unemployment rate	6.7	+0.3	+0.1
Employment rate	64.2	+0.3	+0.1
Labour force participation rate	68.8	+0.6	+0.2



Source: Statistics New Zealand



Source: Statistics New Zealand

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Commentary

Labour force expands as both employment and unemployment rise

The **labour force** increased by 18,000 people in the March 2012 quarter. This increase was reflected in an increase in both employment and unemployment.

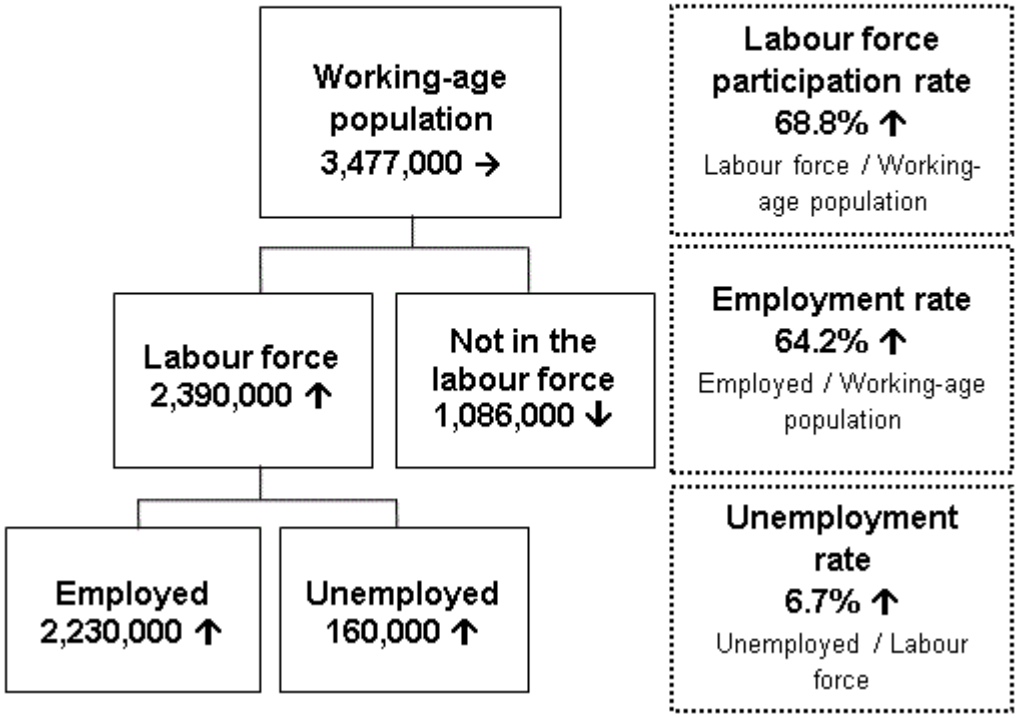
The number of people employed rose by 9,000. This saw the **employment rate** rise 0.3 percentage points, to 64.2 percent. This rise highlights that the growth in employment was larger than the growth in the working-age population. Behind the employment growth was an increase in part-time employment, while full-time employment fell. Total part-time employment increased by 13,000 (2.5 percent) over the quarter, to reach a new peak.

The **unemployment rate** also increased 0.3 percentage points to 6.7 percent in the March 2012 quarter, with the number of people unemployed increasing by 9,000. This indicates that more people have entered the labour force who are looking for work and are available. Behind the increase in unemployment was an increase in female unemployment.

The increases in employment and unemployment resulted in a 0.6 percentage point rise in the labour force participation rate over the quarter, up to 68.8 percent. This reflects 18,000 more people in the labour force and a corresponding decrease of 19,000 in the number who are not in the labour force. This is the highest labour force participation rate since its peak (69.1 percent) in the December 2008 quarter.

In annual unadjusted terms, the Canterbury region had a noticeable decrease in the number of unemployed, down 3,800 to 18,800. The Auckland region had a significant increase in employment over the year ended March 2012 (30,400 people).

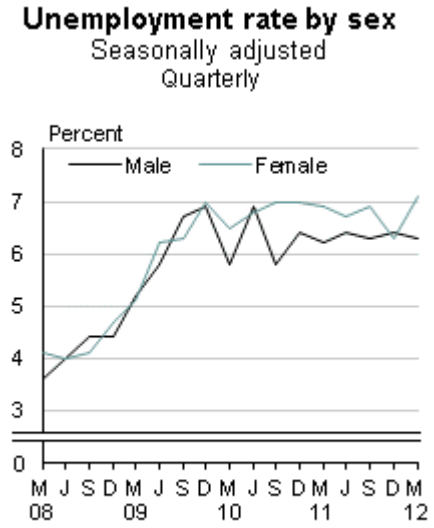
The labour market March 2012 quarter
Seasonally adjusted figures



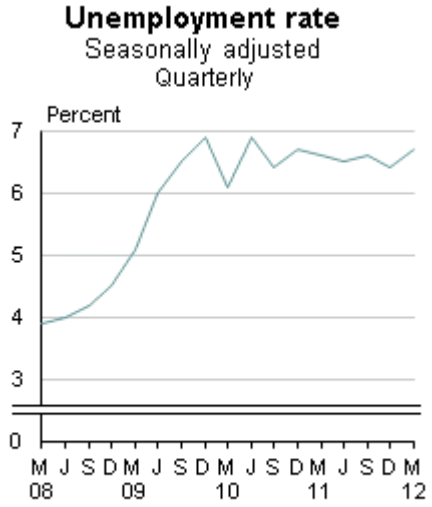
Female unemployment rises

In seasonally adjusted terms, **unemployment** increased by 9,000 (6.1 percent) to 160,000 people in the March 2012 quarter. This increase reflected a rise in the number of unemployed women, while the number of unemployed men remained flat. The number of unemployed women and men was the same this quarter, at 80,000.

The unemployment rate for women increased 0.8 percentage points (to 7.1 percent), while the male unemployment rate decreased 0.1 percentage points (to 6.3 percent). The female unemployment rate was similar to levels last seen in the September and December 2009 quarters. The last time the female unemployment rate was higher was in the December 1998 quarter.



Source: Statistics New Zealand



Source: Statistics New Zealand

The trend series

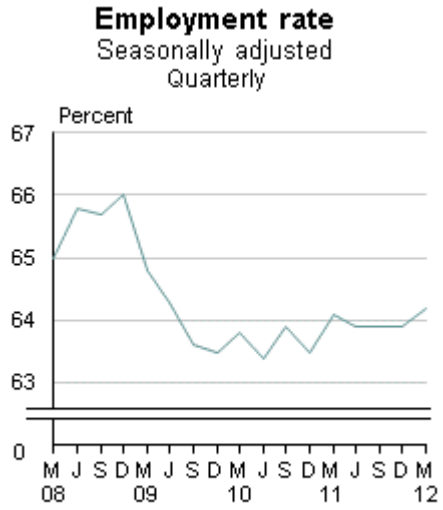
The trend series shows unemployment increased by 3,000 (1.8 percent) to 157,000 people, with male unemployment flat over the quarter and female unemployment increasing by 3,000 (3.7 percent).

The trend series adjusts for seasonal effects and removes the irregular component from a series. This can help reveal the underlying movement in a series. Refer to the Data quality section of this release for more information about trend series.

Employment rate rises for first time in a year

During the March 2012 quarter, the **employment rate** increased 0.3 percentage points (to 64.2 percent), after being flat for the previous three quarters. This highlights that the number of people employed has increased at a greater rate than the number of people entering the working-age population. This rise in the employment rate was due to a rise in seasonally adjusted employment of 9,000 people (0.4 percent), coupled with no growth in the working-age population.

The number of men employed increased by 8,000 (0.7 percent) while the number of women employed increased by 1,000 (0.1 percent). This is reflected by a 0.5 percentage point rise in the male employment rate, up to 70.2 percent. The female employment rate remained flat at 58.4 percent.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

The trend series

The trend series for employment saw a 7,000 increase (0.3 percent) in the March 2012 quarter. Unlike the seasonally adjusted series, the trend series showed similar rises in employment for men and women, 3,000 and 4,000, respectively.

Unadjusted annual movements

Ethnicity – In the year ended March 2012, employment for all people who identified with the Māori ethnic group (including those who also identified with other groups) increased significantly, by 10,800 (4.4 percent) to 256,900.

Industry – Over the March 2012 year, employment in the wholesale trade industry decreased significantly, by 16,500 people (14.6 percent), coming down from a peak in the March 2011 quarter. In contrast, the arts, recreation and other services industry had a significant increase in employment, 21,200 people (17.9 percent).

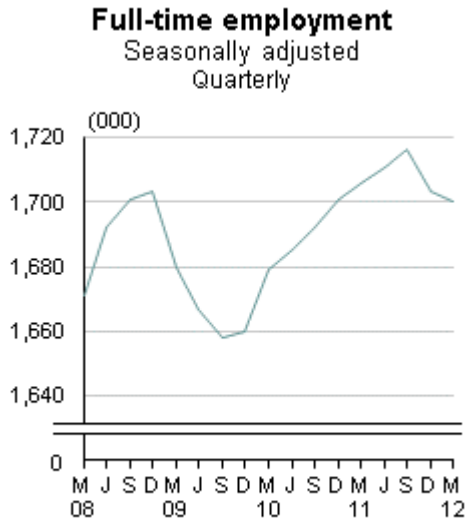
Age group – During the March 2012 year, there were significant increases in employment for people aged 50–54 years, 55–59 years, and 65 years and over. Employment in these age groups rose by 6,900 (2.8 percent), 10,700 (5.4 percent), and 11,400 (11.5 percent), respectively. This reflects an ageing population, as well as rising labour force participation for these groups. In contrast, people aged 35–39 and 40–44 years had significant decreases in employment, 7,300 (3.2 percent) and 7,800 (3.0 percent), respectively.

Region – Employment increased significantly in the Auckland region. The number of people employed in Auckland increased by 30,400 (4.5 percent), to 709,300 in the March 2012 year. The number of women employed in this region also increased significantly.

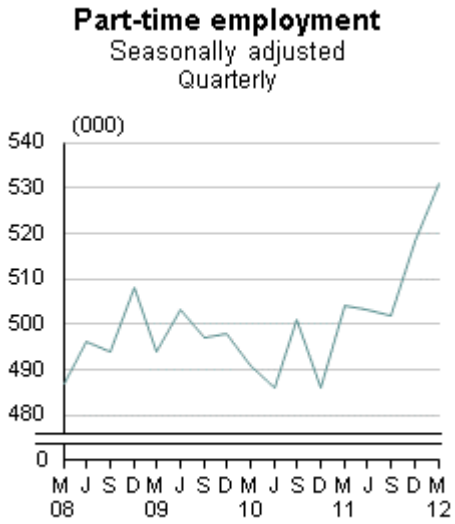
Part-time employment grows

In seasonally adjusted terms, part-time employment has continued to increase, rising for a third consecutive quarter. In the March 2012 quarter, part-time employment saw a 13,000 increase (2.5 percent), to reach the highest number of people in part-time employment since the series began in 1986. Full-time employment decreased over the latest quarter, by 3,000 (0.2 percent).

In unadjusted terms, underemployment increased by 4,000 (3.8 percent) over the year ended March 2012. Almost all the increase was from women. People who are underemployed are individuals who are in part-time employment and would prefer to work more hours.



Source: Statistics New Zealand



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Total hours worked remains flat

In seasonally adjusted terms, both actual and usual hours worked remained relatively flat, both increasing just 0.1 percent in the March 2012 quarter. The number of actual hours worked increased to 73,880,000 hours and the number of usual hours increased to 79,741,000 hours.

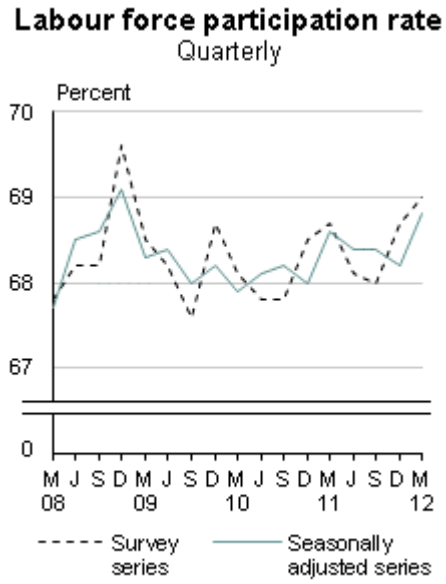
Actual hours worked are the number of hours a person worked in the reference week (including overtime). Usual hours worked are the number of hours a person normally works in a week (including overtime).

Labour force participation rate reaches second-highest level ever

With a greater number of people in both employment and unemployment in the March 2012 quarter, the seasonally adjusted labour force participation rate increased by 0.6 percentage points, to 68.8 percent. This is the highest rate since its peak in the December 2008 quarter. The labour force participation rates for both men and women increased, by 0.4 and 0.6 percentage points, respectively.

In the March 2012 quarter, the number of people not in the labour force decreased by 19,000 (1.7 percent). Women not in the labour force decreased by a greater amount than men, down 10,000 (1.5 percent) and 9,000 (2.0 percent), respectively.

Care should be taken with interpreting changes in the number of women not in the labour force in seasonally adjusted terms. There is evidence of a changing seasonal pattern for the number of women who are not in the labour force. See the Data quality section for more information.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Canterbury hints at recovery

The labour market in the Canterbury region is beginning to show signs of recovery.

Unadjusted annual changes for the March 2012 quarter			
	Annual change		
	Canterbury	National excluding Canterbury	National
Unemployment rate	-0.9	+0.3	+0.1
Employment rate	+0.3	+0.1	+0.1
Labour force participation rate	-0.4	+0.4	+0.3
Unemployed	-16.8%	+5.7%	+2.7%
Employed	-1.8%	+1.4%	+0.9%
Not in the labour force	-0.9%	+0.2%	+0.1%
Actual hours	+13.1%	-0.9%	+1.1%

For the year ended March 2012, actual hours worked increased in the Canterbury region, while employment decreased 1.8 percent over the year, to 325,600. Actual hours worked in the March 2011 quarter were affected by the 22 February 2011 earthquake. Usual hours were down 1.0 percent in the year ended March 2012.

The retail trade, accommodation, and food services industry had the largest decrease in employment over the year. The fall in this industry is reflected in the fall in total female employment, as women make up a larger proportion of this industry. In contrast, the largest increase in employment in the Canterbury region was in the construction industry, in which 7 of every 8 people employed are men.

These changes highlighted a divergence between men and women. While male employment increased by 5,400 (up 3.1 percent) over the March 2012 year, female employment decreased by 11,300 (down 7.2 percent).

In the year ended March 2012, the number of unemployed people decreased in the Canterbury region, down 16.8 percent to 18,800. The decrease was larger for women than for men. Female unemployment fell by 3,700 (down 33.1 percent) while male unemployment remained relatively flat.

In comparison, the level of unemployment for ‘national excluding Canterbury’ increased 5.7 percent, to 152,400. Over the year, the unemployment rate also fell in the Canterbury region – by 0.9 percentage points to 5.5 percent, still below the national rate.

Supplementary tables with detailed data for the Canterbury region are included in this release. These are similar to tables 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 14 from the main tables. Data in the tables for the Canterbury region are all unadjusted.

To view these tables, see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

Proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) increases

In seasonally adjusted terms, the youth (15–24 years) NEET rate increased 0.5 percentage points over the March 2012 year, to 13.6 percent. The NEET rate for people aged 20–24 years was up 1.7 percentage points, to 18.1 percent, while it was down for people aged 15–19 years, by 0.8 percentage points to 8.9 percent.

The male NEET rate increased 0.7 percentage points to 11.9 percent, and the female NEET rate increased 0.2 percentage points to 15.3 percent in the March 2012 quarter.

The youth NEET rate was introduced into the HLFS official estimates in the December 2011 quarter. The rate is calculated as the total number of youth who are NEET, as a proportion of the total youth working-age population. Refer to the Data quality section for more information.

Unadjusted annual movements

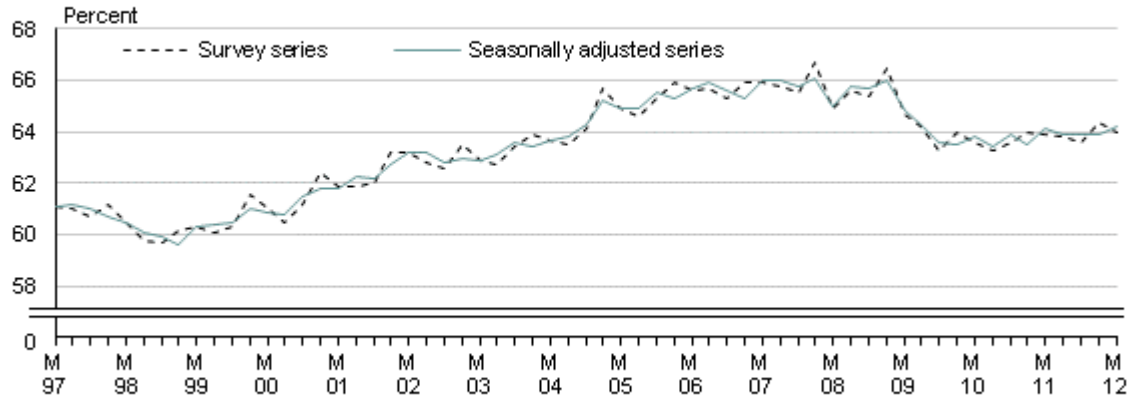
The NEET rate remained relatively unchanged for European (13.0 percent), Māori (24.8 percent), and Pacific peoples (19.5 percent) over the year ended March 2012.

In unadjusted terms, the number of youth who were not in the labour force, but were engaged in education, increased by 5,000 (2.9 percent) over the March 2012 year. This increase reflects a rise for women who were not in the labour force but were engaged in education, of 4,000 (4.8 percent).

Longer time series

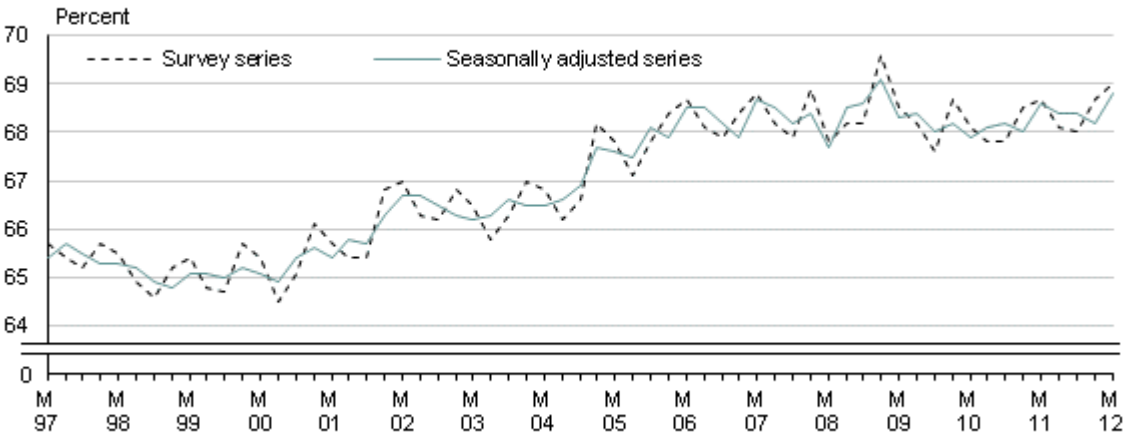
The following graphs show the HLFS series for the employment rate, the labour force participation rate, and the unemployment rate over a 15-year period. A complete time series from March 1986 onwards is available on request.

Employment rate
Quarterly

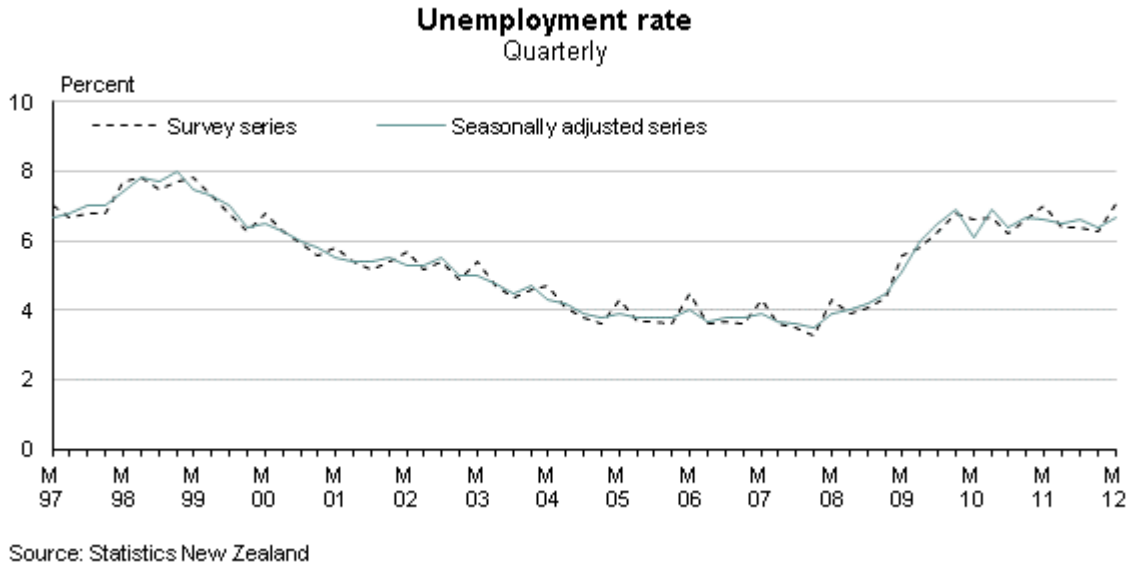


Source: Statistics New Zealand

Labour force participation rate
Quarterly



Source: Statistics New Zealand



For more detailed data see the Excel tables in the ‘Downloads’ box.

Definitions

About the Household Labour Force Survey

The Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) started in October 1985 and the first results published were for the March 1986 quarter. The survey provides a regular, timely, and comprehensive portrayal of New Zealand's labour force.

Each quarter, Statistics New Zealand produces a range of statistics relating to employment, unemployment, and people not in the labour force.

More definitions

The labour force category to which a person is assigned depends on their actual activity during a survey reference week.

This section includes definitions used in the HLFS release. These conform closely to the international standard definitions specified by the International Labour Organization.

Employed: people in the working-age population who, during the reference week, did one of the following:

- worked for one hour or more for pay or profit in the context of an employee/employer relationship or self-employment
- worked without pay for one hour or more in work which contributed directly to the operation of a farm, business, or professional practice owned or operated by a relative
- had a job but were not at work due to: own illness or injury, personal or family responsibilities, bad weather or mechanical breakdown, direct involvement in an industrial dispute, or leave or holiday.

Employment rate: the number of employed people expressed as a percentage of the working-age population. The employment rate is closely linked to how the working-age population is defined. See Data quality for more details about how the employment rate used in this release is calculated.

Formal study statistics: to be participating in formal study, a person must be working towards a qualification that takes three or more months of full-time study to complete. Full-time study is defined as 20 or more hours per week.

Full-time/part-time status: full-time workers are those who usually work 30 hours or more per week, even if they did not do so in the survey reference week because of sickness, holidays, or other reasons. Part-time workers are those who usually work fewer than 30 hours per week.

Hours worked: actual hours are the number of hours a person worked in the reference week (including overtime). Usual hours refers to the number of hours a person normally works in a week (including overtime).

Jobless: people who are either officially unemployed, available but not seeking work, or actively seeking but not available for work. The ‘available but not seeking work’ category is made up of the ‘seeking through newspaper only’, ‘discouraged’, and ‘other’ categories.

Labour force: members of the working-age population, who during the survey reference week, were classified as 'employed' or 'unemployed'.

Labour force participation rate: the total labour force expressed as a percentage of the working-age population. Labour force participation is closely linked to how the working-age population is defined. See Data quality for more details about how the labour force participation rate used in this release is calculated.

Not in the labour force: any person in the working-age population who is neither employed nor unemployed. For example, this residual category includes people who:

- are retired
- have personal or family responsibilities such as unpaid housework and childcare
- attend educational institutions
- are permanently unable to work due to physical or mental disabilities
- were temporarily unavailable for work in the survey reference week
- are not actively seeking work.

Underemployment: employed people who work part time (ie usually work less than 30 hours in all jobs) and would prefer to work more hours.

Unemployed: all people in the working-age population who during the reference week were without a paid job, available for work, and had either actively sought work in the past four weeks ending with the reference week, or had a new job to start within the next four weeks.

Unemployment rate: the number of unemployed people expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

Young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET): young people aged 15–24 years who are unemployed (part of the labour force) and not engaged in education or training, and those not in the labour force and not engaged in education or training for many reasons.

Working-age population: the usually resident, non-institutionalised, civilian population of New Zealand aged 15 years and over.

For more information on these definitions please refer to Labour force categories used in the Household Labour Force Survey.

Related links

Upcoming releases

The *Household Labour Force Survey: June 2012 quarter* will be released on 9 August 2012.

The Release calendar lists all upcoming information releases by date of release.

Past releases

See Household Labour Force Survey – information releases for links to past releases.

Related information

For information on the employment rate added to the Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS), please see Introducing the employment rate.

For information on youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) see Introducing the youth not in employment, education, or training indicator.

Quarterly Employment Survey includes statistics on total gross earnings, total paid hours, filled jobs, average hourly and weekly earnings, and average weekly paid hours, based on the Quarterly Employment Survey.

National Employment Indicator (NEI) provides an early indication of changes in the number of filled jobs at the national level. The NEI covers filled jobs, where employees were paid wages or salaries in the month, by an employer who filled an employer monthly schedule with Inland Revenue. This includes jobs filled by self-employed people who pay themselves a wage or salary.

Linked Employer-Employee Data (LEED) provides statistics on filled jobs, job flows, worker flows, mean and median earnings for continuing jobs and new hires, and total earnings. LEED information is based on tax data.

Data quality

Period-specific information
This section is for information that changes between periods.

- Response rate
- Ethnic statistics

General information
This section has information about data that does not change between releases.

- Data source
- Accuracy of the data
- How labour force statistics are classified
- Comparability with other datasets
- Interpreting the data
- Timing of published data
- Confidentiality
- More information

Period-specific information

Response rate

The target response rate for the Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) is 90 percent. The response rate for the March 2012 quarter was 87.3 percent.

Ethnic statistics

Total response

From the December 2011 quarter, the HLFS publishes ethnicity data using the total response ethnicity output in the information release. Using this method, people who reported that they belonged to more than one ethnic group are counted once in each group reported. This means that the total number of responses for all ethnic groups can be greater than the total number of people who stated their ethnicities.

Single/combination

An alternate method of classifying ethnicity is using the single/combination output method. Using the single/combination ethnicity output, people are counted just once according to the ethnic group or combination of ethnic groups they have reported. This means that the total number of responses equals the total number of people who stated an ethnicity. The table below shows single/combination data for the working-age population for the March 2012 and December 2011 quarters of the HLFS. Ethnicity data using the single/combination output method is available on Infoshare.

Single/combination HLFS ethnicity data for working-age population		
Ethnic group	**March 2012 quarter**	**December 2011 quarter**
European only	2,377,500	2,366,700
Māori only	246,700	249,400
Pacific peoples only	152,100	163,700
Asian only	351,100	356,500
MELAA only(1)	29,200	28,900
Other ethnicity only	69,200	67,300
European/Māori	166,700	169,600
Two or more groups not elsewhere included	76,200	65,000
Residual categories	15,200	9,100
Total all ethnic groups	3,483,900	3,476,000
1. MELAA = Middle Eastern/Latin American/African.		

See the 2005 New Zealand standard classification of ethnicity for more information.

General information

Data source

The target population for the HLFS is the civilian, usually resident, non-institutionalised population aged 15 years and over.

The statistics in this release **do not** cover:

- long-term residents of homes for older people, hospitals, and psychiatric institutions
- those living in non-private dwellings (eg hotels, motels, hostels)
- inmates of penal institutions
- members of the permanent armed forces
- members of the non-New Zealand armed forces
- overseas diplomats
- overseas visitors who expect to be a resident in New Zealand for less than 12 months
- those aged under 15 years
- people living on offshore islands (except Waiheke Island).

Accuracy of the data

Sample design

The HLFS sample contains about 15,000 private households and about 30,000 individuals each quarter. We sample households on a statistically representative basis from areas throughout New Zealand, and obtain information for each member of the household. The sample is stratified by geographic region, urban and rural areas, ethnic density, and socio-economic characteristics.

Households stay in the survey for two years. Each quarter, one-eighth of the households in the sample are rotated out and replaced by a new set of households. Therefore, up to seven-eighths of the same people are surveyed in adjacent quarters. This overlap improves the reliability of quarterly change estimates.

The period of surveying/interviewing is 13 weeks. The information obtained relates to the week

before the interview (referred to as the 'survey reference week'). We first interview respondents face-to-face at their home. Subsequent interviews are by telephone wherever possible. Respondents also have the option to file self-completed questionnaires.

Where practicable, we obtain information directly from each household member. Otherwise a proxy interview is conducted, in which details are obtained from another adult in the household.

Sampling errors

Sampling errors can be measured. They quantify the variability that occurs by chance because a sample rather than an entire population is surveyed.

We calculate sampling errors using the jackknife method. It is based on the variation between estimates, based on different subsamples taken from the whole sample. This is an attempt to see how estimates would vary if we were to repeat the survey with new samples of individuals.

We calculate sampling errors for each cell in the published tables and for estimates of change between adjacent quarters. For example, the estimated total number of people employed in the March 2012 quarter is 2,230,900 before seasonal adjustment. This estimate is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 22,100, or 1.0 percent (measured at the 95 percent confidence level). This means that there is a 95 percent chance that the true number of employed people lies between 2,208,800 and 2,253,000.

Smaller estimates, such as the number of people who are unemployed, are subject to larger relative sampling errors than larger estimates. For example, the estimated total number of people unemployed in the March 2012 quarter is 171,200 before seasonal adjustment. This estimate is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 10,500 or 6.1 percent (measured at the 95 percent confidence level). This means that there is a 95 percent chance that the true number of unemployed people lies between 160,700 and 181,700.

Estimates of change are also subject to sampling error. For example, the survey estimate of change in total employment from the March 2011 quarter to the March 2012 quarter is an increase of 21,000. This estimate is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 29,500 (at the 95 percent confidence level). Therefore, the true value of the change in surveyed employment from the March 2011 quarter to the March 2012 quarter has a 95 percent chance of lying between -8,500 and 50,500.

A change in an estimate, either from one adjacent quarter to the next, or between quarters a year apart, is said to be statistically significant if it is larger than the associated sampling error. Therefore, the example quoted above does not represent a significant movement.

In general, the sampling errors associated with subnational estimates (eg breakdowns by regional council area or ethnic group) are larger than those associated with national estimates.

A non-sampling error is very difficult to measure, and if present can lead to biased estimates. Statistics New Zealand endeavours to minimise the impact of these errors by applying best survey practices and monitoring known indicators (eg non-response).

Suppression of data

Cells with estimates of less than 1,000 are suppressed and appear as 'S' in the tables. These estimates are subject to sampling errors too great for most practical purposes.

Response rates

The target response rate for the HLFS is 90 percent. The response rate is calculated by determining the number of eligible households that responded to the survey, as a proportion of the estimated number of total eligible households in the sample. The following table shows the HLFS response rates for the last five quarters.

HLFS response rates	
Quarter	**National response rate (percent)**
March 2011	84.3
June 2011	87.2
September 2011	88.2
December 2011	88.8
March 2012	87.3

Seasonal adjustment and trend series

In the labour market, cyclical events that affect labour supply and demand occur around the same time each year. For example, in summertime a large pool of student labour is both available for, and actively seeking, work. Demand for labour in the retail sector and in many primary production industries also increases.

For any series, the estimates can be broken down into three components: trend, seasonal, and irregular. Seasonally adjusted series have had the seasonal component removed. Trend series have had both the seasonal and irregular components removed, and reveal the underlying direction of movement in a series.

The series for each labour market statistic is adjusted separately. For this reason, the sum of the seasonally adjusted estimates for employment, unemployment, and people not in the labour force will usually not add up to the working-age population estimates.

See Seasonal adjustment in Statistics New Zealand for more information about how we seasonally adjust our statistics. Seasonal adjustment makes data for adjacent quarters more comparable by smoothing out the effect on the times series of any regular seasonal events. This ensures that the underlying movements in the time series are more visible. Information on the change in estimates between the current and previous publication for the seasonally adjusted and trend data can be found in the Revisions section. All seasonally adjusted and trend series are produced using the X-12-ARIMA Version 0.2.10 package developed by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Quality of seasonal adjustment

We monitor our data to make sure that our seasonal adjustment is robust.

The X-12-ARIMA programme is highly customisable and can produce a wide variety of possible adjustments for any particular input series. Consequently, X-12-ARIMA produces a number of diagnostics which are useful in assessing the quality of the chosen adjustment.

The following table provides a selection of diagnostics. The reference value provides an indication of the desired value for each. Most are acceptable, though there is evidence of a changing seasonal pattern for the number of males who are unemployed and females who are not in the labour force. More detail about seasonal adjustment in the HLFS is available upon request.

Seasonal adjustment diagnostics							
	Reference value	Male employed	Female employed	Male unemployed	Female unemployed	Male not in labour force	Female not in labour force
Test for seasonality	<0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Test for moving seasonality	>0.10	0.17	0.66	0.02	0.29	0.68	0.05
Periods until trend dominates	<3	1	1	1	2	2	2
Trend contribution to change	<20	32.04	41.78	46.66	14.87	12.24	20.02
Seasonal contribution to change	>50	58.52	42.97	37.53	67.08	75.83	51.83
Irregular contribution to change	<20	9.44	15.25	15.82	18.06	11.93	28.14
Quality statistic	<1	0.42	0.52	0.79	0.71	0.63	0.97

Outliers

During the seasonal adjustment process, X-12-ARIMA can give less weight to the irregular component. Specifically, if the estimated irregular component at a point in time is sufficiently large compared with the standard deviation of the irregular component as a whole, then the irregular component at that point can be downweighted or removed completely and re-estimated. Such observations are referred to as partial and zero-outliers, respectively. In practice, the downweighting of outliers will do little to seasonally adjusted data, but the impact of the outliers on the trend series will generally be reduced. However, if an outlier ceases to be an outlier as more data becomes available, then significant revisions to the trend series become possible. There are no outliers present over the last four quarters of data.

Rounding procedures

Figures presented in this release are rounded. Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred or to the nearest thousand for seasonally adjusted and trend estimates. This may result in a total disagreeing slightly with the sum of the individual items as shown in the table. Where figures are rounded the unit is shown as (000) for thousands.

How labour force statistics are classified

The HLFS release includes specific statistics about industry, occupation, study, ethnicity, and region. This section defines what we measure for each of these statistics.

Industry statistics

Since the September 2009 quarter, the industry statistics have been based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006 (ANZSIC06), the latest edition of the classification. When ANZSIC06 was introduced, Statistics NZ developed the New Zealand Standard Industrial Output Categories (NZSIOC). Classifying industries using NZSIOC helps to standardise outputs. Industry outputs defined using ANZSIC06 are not comparable with those based on ANZSIC96, the version used before the September 2009 quarter.

See Implementing ANZSIC 2006 in the Household Labour Force Survey for more information.

Occupation statistics

Since the September 2009 quarter, we have used the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) to classify occupation data in the HLFS. ANZSCO is a harmonised classification developed by Statistics NZ, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the Australian Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, for use in both Australia and New Zealand. Occupation data was previously based on the New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations 1999 (NZSCO99). The occupation data is available on Infoshare.

See Implementing ANZSCO in the Household Labour Force Survey for more information.

Māori benchmarks

Before April 2009, we did not benchmark the Māori working-age population to population estimates. This, along with other sample design restrictions, caused a high degree of volatility in Māori statistics in the HLFS. Movements in the working-age population estimates of certain ethnic groups, such as Māori, may reflect this volatility rather than a real change in the estimated ethnic demographic. Including Māori benchmarks in the working-age population mitigates the known undercount of Māori in the HLFS and also results in smoother time series for Māori statistics in the HLFS. However, introducing the Māori population benchmarks does not necessarily translate to improved estimates for non-Māori ethnic groups.

Household statistics

A household's labour force status is derived by looking at the labour force status of household members aged 18–64 years. For example, if a couple is living by themselves and one is aged 64 years and the other is aged 65 years, this couple will be assigned to the 'All employed' or 'None employed' category, depending on the labour force status of the 64-year-old.

Households that have no members aged 18–64 years are excluded from this analysis. The

household categories incorporate the concept of dependent children rather than just children. A child is a person of any age who usually resides with at least one parent (natural, step, adopted, or foster) and who does not usually reside with a partner or child(ren) of his or her own. Statistics NZ defines a dependent child as a child under the age of 18 years and not in full-time employment.

Updated regional classification

In November 2010, the new Auckland territorial authority replaced the existing Rodney district, North Shore city, Auckland city, Waitakere city, Manukau city, Papakura district, and part of Franklin district councils. This resulted in a minor change in the boundary between the Auckland and Waikato regions.

From the June 2011 quarter, the statistics in the HLFS release were produced using the new boundaries and backcast for the March 2011 quarter. The new boundaries do not significantly affect measures from the HLFS.

Comparability with other datasets

See Comparing our labour market statistics for more information on how the HLFS compares with the other labour market statistics that we produce. This page explains which measures of employment are included in each of our employment releases, and the timings and coverage of each release.

See A Guide to Unemployment Statistics for more information on comparing the HLFS with other datasets on unemployment. This page explains which measures of unemployment are included in the HLFS, the unemployment benefit, and the job-seekers register. It also includes information on the timings, coverage, and different purposes of each of these measures.

International comparability of the labour force participation rate and the employment rate

Several alternative definitions of labour force participation rate and employment rate are used by other organisations and countries; they differ in the age of the working-age population and the inclusion of military personnel. A common definition is to restrict the labour force and working-age population to the 15–64-year age group, particularly in countries with a compulsory retirement age. Generally, this definition leads to a higher labour force participation rate and employment rate. Using this definition for the New Zealand HLFS in the March 2012 quarter gives a surveyed figure of 78.6 percent (labour force participation rate) and 72.8 percent (employment rate).

Interpreting the data

Information releases contain seasonally adjusted, trend, and survey statistics for the latest quarter. These statistics are averages for the three-month period and do not apply to any specific point in time. Data sourced from the seasonally adjusted series and trend series are identified as such in the table or section headings. All other data, in the commentary or in tables, are sourced from the original survey series and are unadjusted.

Timing of published data

The HLFS is published within six weeks after the end of the quarter's reference period.

Confidentiality

Only people authorised by the Statistics Act 1975 are allowed to see your individual information, and they must use it only for statistical purposes. Your information is combined with similar information from other people or households to prepare summary statistics.

More information

For more technical information, see Information about the Household Labour Force Survey.

Liability

While all care and diligence has been used in processing, analysing, and extracting data and information in this publication, Statistics NZ gives no warranty it is error-free and will not be liable for any loss or damage suffered by the use directly, or indirectly, of the information in this publication.

Timing

Timed statistical releases are delivered using postal and electronic services provided by third parties. Delivery of these releases may be delayed by circumstances outside the control of Statistics NZ. Statistics NZ accepts no responsibility for any such delays.

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Revisions

Each quarter, the seasonal adjustment process is applied to the latest quarter and all previous quarters. This means that seasonally adjusted estimates for any of the previously published quarters may change slightly. The following table lists the change in estimates between the current and previous publication for the seasonally adjusted data. For example, the seasonally adjusted number of males unemployed for the December 2011 quarter was 81,000. In the March 2012 quarter release, that same estimate has been revised to 80,000. These numbers are rounded to the nearest 1,000, but the relative change derived from the unrounded estimates is a downward revision of 0.30 percent.

Percent revision from last published, seasonally adjusted

Quarter	Male employed	Female employed	Male unemployed	Female unemployed	Male not in labour force	Female not in labour force
Mar 2011	-0.05	-0.05	0.03	0.01	0.16	0.18
Jun 2011	0.03	0.01	0.00	-0.16	-0.06	-0.03
Sep 2011	-0.03	0.05	0.38	-0.83	0.07	-0.04
Dec 2011	0.05	0.01	-0.30	0.97	-0.19	-0.13

The following table presents information on how the trend estimates have been revised. Trend revisions are generally larger than those of the seasonally adjusted data.

Percent revision from last published, trend

Quarter	Male employed	Female employed	Male unemployed	Female unemployed	Male not in labour force	Female not in labour force
Mar 2011	0.00	-0.03	0.07	0.35	0.01	0.06
Jun 2011	-0.01	0.00	0.13	-0.47	0.06	0.04
Sep 2011	-0.02	0.02	0.25	-1.25	0.13	0.10
Dec 2011	0.10	0.04	-0.14	3.57	-0.49	-0.58

Every estimate is subject to revision each quarter as new data is added, though in practice estimates more than two years from the end-point will change little. For example, the trend estimate of male employment for the March 2011 quarter was 1,172,000 when first published. In the March 2012 quarter, one year later, the trend estimate of male employment for the March 2011 quarter is 1,171,000, a decrease of 1,000 (or a decrease of 0.7 percent using the unrounded estimates). This is an example of a '4-step ahead' revision.

The table below shows the average of all such absolute revisions expressed relatively and gives some indication of how much the current estimates might be revised when the June 2012 data becomes available.

Mean absolute percent revisions

	Seasonally adjusted		Trend	
	1-step	4-step	1-step	4-step
Male employed	0.05	0.09	0.16	0.17
Female employed	0.07	0.12	0.26	0.27
Male unemployed	0.44	0.70	1.62	1.72
Female unemployed	0.54	0.98	1.94	1.87
Male not in labour force	0.09	0.18	0.36	0.38
Female not in labour force	0.09	0.15	0.36	0.39

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Tables

The following tables are included with this release. They are available in Excel format from the 'Downloads' box of *Household Labour Force Survey: March 2012 quarter* on the Statistics NZ website.

If you do not have access to Excel, you may use the Excel file viewer to view, print, and export the contents of the file.

1. People employed, unemployed, and not in labour force, by sex, seasonally adjusted series
2. People employed, unemployed, and not in labour force, by sex, trend series
3. People employed, unemployed, and not in labour force, by sex
4. People employed, unemployed, and not in labour force, by age group
5. People employed, unemployed, and not in labour force, by ethnic group
6. People employed, unemployed, and not in labour force, by regional council area
7. People employed, by industry and sex
8. The jobless: those without a job and wanting a job, by sex
9. Total actual hours worked
10. Household composition, by household labour force status
11. Underemployment, by sex
12. People employed, unemployed, not in the labour force, and total actual hours worked, seasonally adjusted series
13. Harmonised unemployment rates in OECD countries, latest available
14. People employed, unemployed, and not in labour force, by sex and formal study status
15. Labour force and education status of those aged 15–24, seasonally adjusted

Supplementary tables

The following tables provide unadjusted statistics for the Canterbury region and can be downloaded from the Statistics NZ website in Excel format.

1. People employed, unemployed, and not in labour force in Canterbury, by sex
2. People employed, unemployed, and not in the labour force in Canterbury, by age group
3. People employed in Canterbury, by industry and sex
4. The jobless: those without a job and wanting a job in Canterbury, by sex
5. Total actual and usual hours worked in Canterbury only
6. Underemployment in Canterbury, by sex
7. People employed, unemployed, and not in labour force in Canterbury, by sex and formal study status

A longer time series of the supplementary tables is available on request.

Access more data on Infoshare and Table Builder

Use Infoshare, a free, online database to access time-series data specific to your needs. To access the release time series on Infoshare, select the following categories from the homepage:

Subject category: **Work Income and Spending**
Group: **Household Labour Force Survey – [HLF]**

Use Table Builder, a free, online tool that enables you to extract the information you want. To the release data on Table Builder, select the following tables from the homepage:

Subject category: **Employment & Unemployment (Labour Market) Tables**
Table title: **Key Labour force measures by qualification, age and sex**