

LMI SOURCES

Business Counts Data (Business Register)

WHAT IS IT?

Counts of the number of businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador are compiled as part of Statistics Canada's Business Register, a data source that includes most businesses operating within Canada as well as foreign businesses that have links with Canadian companies. Although Statistics Canada provides source data tables from the Business Register semi-annually (June and December), the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency (NLSA) also provides a count of businesses in the province across a number of indicators. NLSA counts are made available in both PDF and Excel file formats.

REASONS TO USE (STRENGTHS)

- **Higher quality data** – Because counts are based on the number of businesses who officially meet all criteria for inclusion in the business register, the administrative data created is more reliable than data that would be collected from a survey alone. This means the counts from the register are more likely to represent the true distribution of businesses throughout the province.
- **Wide range of indicators** – Business counts provided by the NLSA cover a wide range of indicators beyond total numbers, including: geography (economic zones, rural secretariat regions, St. John's CMA and province overall); industry classification (based on the North American Industry Classification System or NAICS); and employment size (based on size groupings, ranging from 1 to 4 all the way to 500+). These indicators can also be examined in the same table, allowing for even more in depth analysis. For instance, one can look at the number of St. John's businesses in different employment size categories within different industry categories.
- **Multiple beneficial applications** – The number of indicators captured, as well as the general high quality of the collected data, mean these business counts can be used for a number of useful purposes, including analyzing conditions related to: regional labour market development, industry profiling, and changes in the number of provincial businesses as an indicator of economic health within Newfoundland and Labrador.

AREAS OF CAUTION (WEAKNESSES)

- **Snapshot of the labour market** – Although survey data for the Register is collected continuously throughout the year, data released by Statistics Canada only represents the number of businesses at two specific times throughout the year, June and December. In the case of NLSA’s data, this is further restricted to data for only December of each year. Consequently, these snapshots of data only represent the business profile at a specific point in time and may vary from counts during other points of the year. This is especially true if there are factors that have arisen which have been unaccounted for in previous snapshots of the business count profile (e.g., impact of COVID-19 and ensuing public health measures on businesses).
- **Timeliness** – Although Statistics Canada releases updated data from the Business Register in August and February (showing data for the earlier months of June and December), the NLSA’s version only covers data for the single time period of December in each year.
- **Differences in data depending on source** – Business totals vary slightly depending on the source used, meaning you have to be aware of what factors may be responsible for the discrepancies between the two (for example, some businesses could be filtered out of one data summary and not the other). In addition, the data available varies depending on the source used. For instance, the NLSA includes a customized category of geography for Rural Secretariat Regions which they assemble themselves and which is not available through the original Statistics Canada source.

RELATED LINKS

- **Information on Statistics Canada’s Business Register -**
<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/survey/business/1105>
- **Statistics Canada data tables on Canadian business counts (sample) -**
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3310080601>
- **NLSA tables on number of businesses –**
<https://www.stats.gov.nl.ca/Statistics/Statistics.aspx?Topic=trade>