

# Amherst Economic Dashboard

June 2019

Amherst Town Council has identified economic development as one of its key strategic priorities. In order to put resources toward the best strategies that will strengthen the economy while providing an environment where businesses can thrive and grow, Council and Economic Development staff need a clear understanding of the demographic and business development profile of the Town of Amherst.

Sixteen economic indicators have been chosen, each falling under one of four categories. This enables us to measure different aspects of economic health while identifying areas that would benefit from initiatives and strategic interventions. The economic dashboard will be updated regularly to track trends and measure the effectiveness of interventions.



## Economic Indicators, Town of Amherst, Nova Scotia (2014-2018)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>BUSINESS OUTLOOK – How well are businesses doing in Amherst?</b>					
Number of businesses <sup>1</sup>	—	—	—	—	442
Number of employees in the industrial park <sup>1</sup>	—	—	—	—	1,320
Average length of time in business <sup>1</sup>	—	—	—	—	29
Total commercial assessment	\$131,345,540	\$129,762,600	\$129,057,000	\$128,857,500	\$128,605,400
<b>POPULATION – Is our population growing or shrinking?</b>					
Primary registration <sup>2</sup>	152	143	117	128	137
Annual population estimate <sup>3</sup>	9,687	9,569	9,562	9,555	9,555
Median age	—	—	47.7	—	—
Ethnic diversity index	—	—	57.4%	—	—
<b>HOUSING – How desirable is Amherst as a place to live?</b>					
Average length of time on the market <sup>4</sup>	186	163	157	133	126
Listing volumes <sup>4</sup> (\$ million)	\$11.18	\$13.32	\$11.27	\$12.58	\$9.54
Average price of a single-family detached home <sup>4</sup>	\$103,485	\$115,820	\$110,474	\$101,448	\$101,470
Total residential assessment	\$411,625,800	\$417,150,200	\$423,852,500	\$426,278,900	\$420,487,100
<b>LABOUR FORCE – How strong is the labour pool in Amherst?</b>					
Participation rate <sup>5</sup>	58.2	60.6	58.7	59.5	57.7
Unemployment rate <sup>5</sup>	10.7	9.2	8.9	9.6	7.1
High school graduation rate <sup>2</sup>	97	93	90	82	87
NSCC Amherst Learning Centre enrolment <sup>6</sup>	130	179	196	232	140

<sup>1</sup> Business Retention and Expansion survey (number of businesses that have two or more employees.) Biannual.

<sup>2</sup> Chignecto-Central Regional Education Centre. Annual.

<sup>3</sup> Nova Scotia Department of Finance and Treasury Board. Annual.

<sup>4</sup> Nova Scotia Real Estate Association. Quarterly.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. Labour Force Survey. Monthly.

<sup>6</sup> Nova Scotia Community College. Annual.



*Amherst*  
NOVA SCOTIA

# 2019 Community Economic Analysis

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## Executive Summary

This community economic analysis of the Town of Amherst was conducted to get a clearer understanding of the latest state of the local economy using available statistical data. The study is based on community and economic profiling and comparisons as well as a sectoral and employment concentration analysis.

A dashboard of 16 economic indicators measuring business outlook, population, housing and labour force will enable staff to track trends and measure the effectiveness of interventions.

The following is a summary of the key findings:

1. Close to two-thirds of Amherst businesses have been in operation at least 15 years and 96 per cent of business owners are optimistic about the future.
2. Amherst's population is relatively stable at 9,555, with little change during the past five years and a slow decline predicted during the next 10 years.
3. While the median age of 47.7 years is older than the provincial median of 45.5 years, about half of the people living in Amherst are between 25 and 64 years of age.
4. The cost of owning a home in Amherst is just 21.5 per cent of median household income, well below the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's 30 per cent threshold for affordability.
5. Uncapped residential property assessments declined by close to \$5.8 million from 2017 to 2018.
6. The regional unemployment rate is at the lowest in five years, dropping to 7.1 per cent from 10.7 per cent over that period.
7. About half of Amherst's labour force works in health care/social assistance, retail or manufacturing. Amherst has more people working in manufacturing and retail trade compared to the rest of Nova Scotia.
8. Tourism, manufacturing and administration sectors have good potential for development, while retail and accommodation/food are high priority retention targets.

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## 1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide information that demonstrates the economic areas where Amherst has comparative advantages, as well as areas that need improvement, and to help Amherst develop a sustainable economic ecosystem. This report will be used to create an economic development strategy that is relevant and focused.

This analysis was primarily based on data found through the Statistics Canada Census (2006, 2011 and 2016), Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, community surveys and from partner organizations. Data analysis methods included retail gravitation zone calculation, location quotient analysis and Carvalho Classification.

Comparisons are made between Amherst and the next-largest municipality (Truro), the next-smallest municipality (New Glasgow), the province of Nova Scotia and other small towns that share similar characteristics.

A limitation of this study is the lack of data at the community level. In some cases, data is available only at a regional level.



## 2.0 Business Outlook

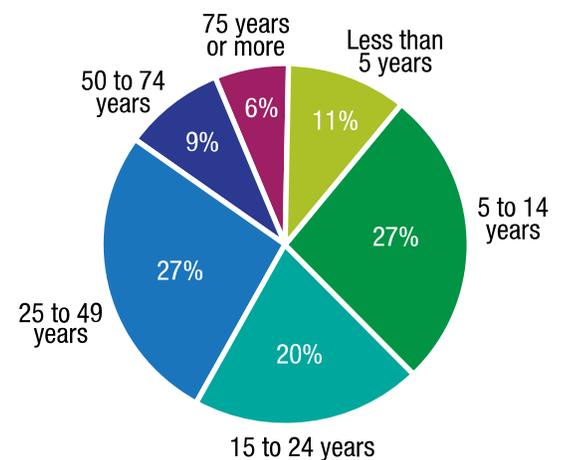
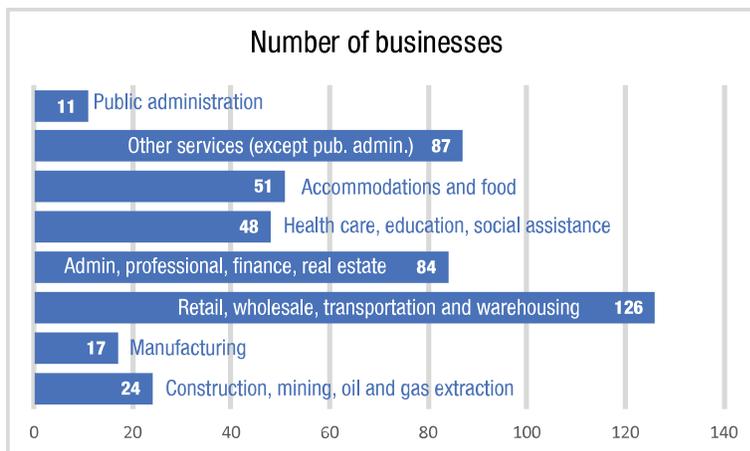
### Business counts

The Town of Amherst is home to 448 businesses, with all but two fitting in the “small to medium enterprise” category with less than 250 employees.

Most businesses in Amherst are small, with 76 per cent employing 10 or less people. Only 6 per cent of Amherst businesses employ more than 50 people. The largest employer is Emmerson Packaging, with more than 300 employees. Other major employers include Weston Bakeries, Victorian Order of Nurses, Indigenous Services Canada, IMP Aerostructures and Gordon Food Service.

The Amherst Industrial Park is home to 39 businesses employing a total of 1,320 people.

The majority of businesses in Amherst are longstanding, with about two-thirds in operation for 15 years or more.

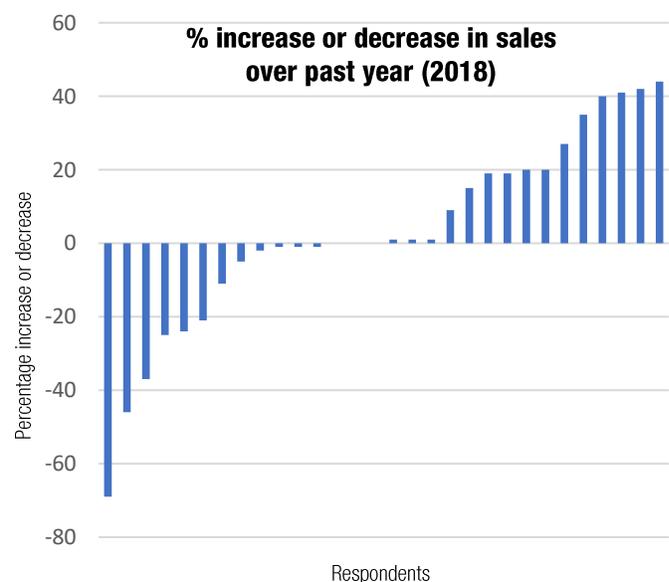


### Business Outlook Survey

A survey of business owners in March, 2019 showed that 77 per cent maintained or increased sales volumes in 2018 compared to the previous year.

Business owners are generally optimistic when it comes to their outlook for the future, with 63 per cent anticipating things will stay the same or slightly improve. An additional 33 per cent anticipated significant positive changes within six months.

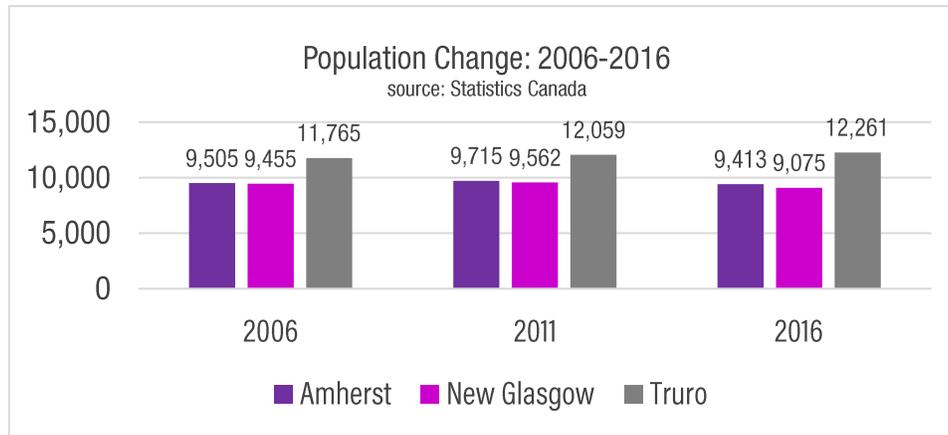
When asked how likely they were to recommend Amherst as a place to do business, most said they were somewhat or very likely to do so, while 33 per cent said they would discourage friends or family from locating a business in Amherst.



## 3.0 Population

### 3.1 Total population

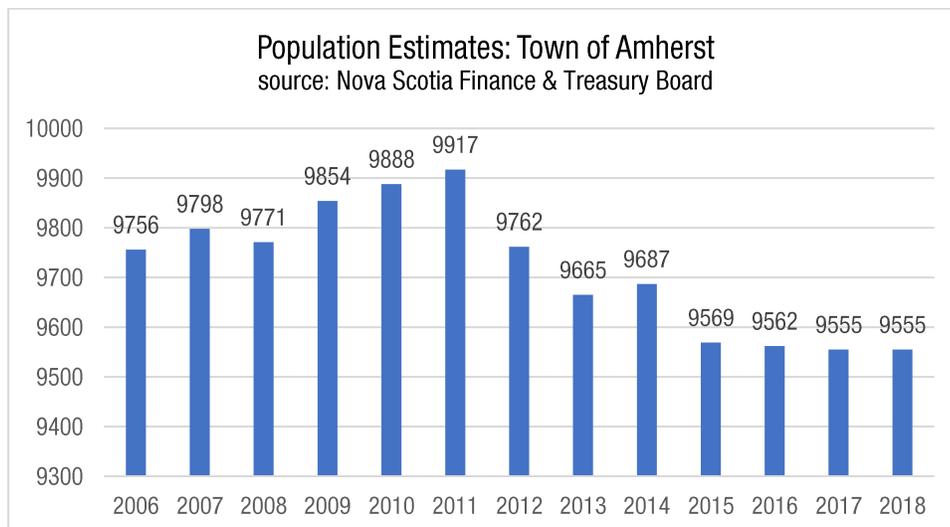
According to Statistics Canada census data, Amherst's population declined by a little less than 1 per cent between 2006 and 2016. The bulk of the decline occurred between 2011 and 2016, with a loss of 3.1 per cent of the population, following a 2.2 per cent increase in population during the five prior years.



Over the same time period, the population in the province of Nova Scotia grew by 1.1 per cent, while the Town of Truro grew by 4.2 per cent, and Town of New Glasgow declined by 4.0 per cent.

In 2015, Stantec Consulting Ltd. prepared a projection that predicted a moderate and steady increase in Amherst population that would peak at 9,765 in 2021, followed by a very slow decline over the next 10 years to 9,470. Actual numbers show more volatility than predicted, peaking 10 years earlier than expected and declining much more rapidly than anticipated.

However, annual population estimates from the Nova Scotia Department of Finance and Treasury Board suggest Amherst's population may be stabilizing. The 2018 annual population estimates indicate the population has held steady for the past four years and is currently at 9,555.



## 3.2 Population composition

### Ethnic Diversity

Statistics Canada collects information on ethnic origin based on eight potential locations. Using the Simpson's Diversity Index formula, where a score near 0 indicates low diversity and a score near 1.00 indicates high diversity, we find Amherst is only slightly less diverse than the rest of Nova Scotia, and somewhat less diverse than Canada overall.

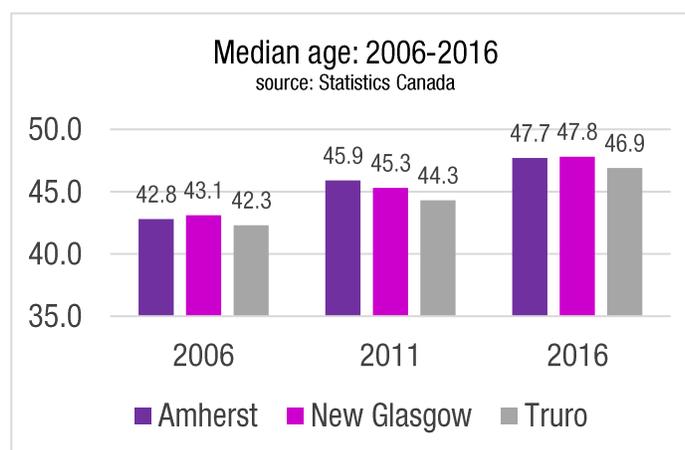
<b>Ethnic Origin<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Amherst</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>Canada</b>
North American Aboriginal	5.0%	6.3%	5.1%
Other North American (Acadian, American, Canadian)	42.0%	34.9%	27.6%
European	49.6%	52.9%	46.7%
Caribbean	0.2%	0.4%	1.8%
Central and South American	0.5%	0.3%	1.6%
African	1.2%	1.5%	2.5%
Asian	1.5%	3.6%	14.5%
Oceania	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
<b>Simpson's Diversity Index score</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.68</b>

Amherst's population is becoming more diverse over time, increasing at the same rate as Nova Scotia and somewhat slower than Canada overall.<sup>8</sup>

	2006	2011	2016
Amherst	0.47	0.54	0.57
Nova Scotia	0.48	0.55	0.59
Canada	0.49	0.65	0.68

### Age

Statistics Canada census data indicates the median age in Amherst is 47.7 years, slightly younger than the median age of 47.8 years in New Glasgow and older than the median age of 46.9 years in Truro. The median age in Nova Scotia is 45.5 years.

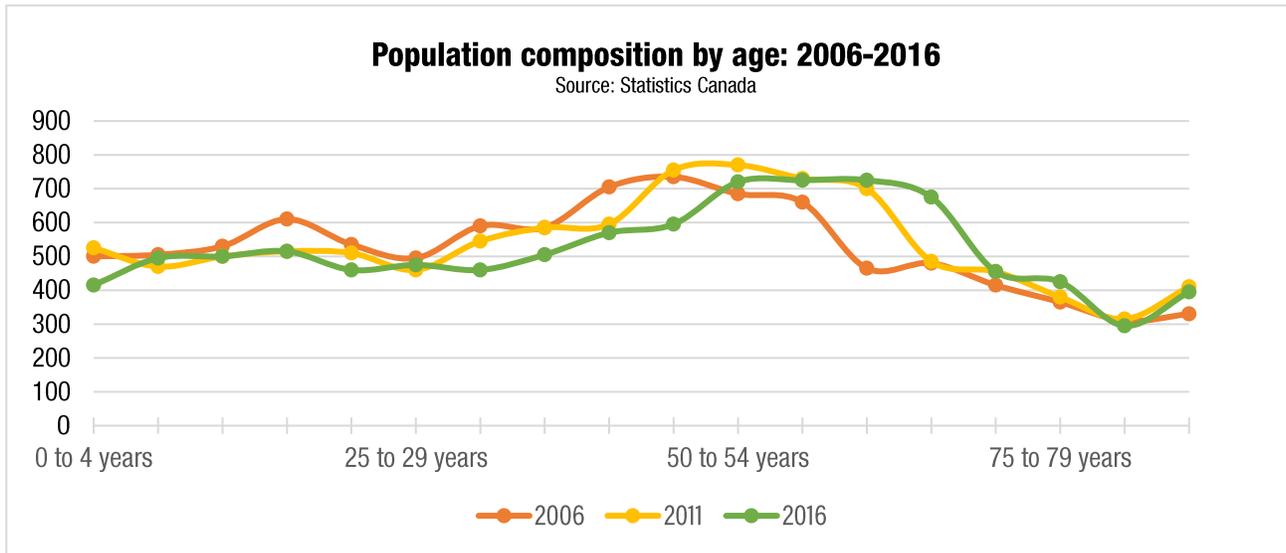


**Over the 10-year period from 2006 to 2016, the median age in Amherst increased at a 5 per cent faster rate than comparable small towns and 2.9 per cent faster than the province.**

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada 2016 Census

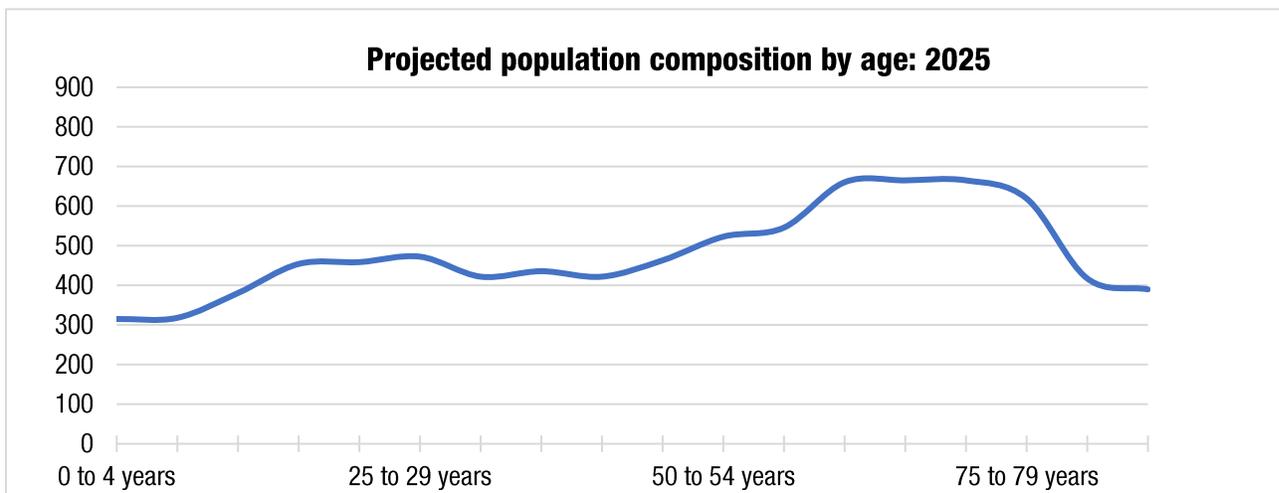
<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada 2006 National Household Survey, 2011 Census, 2016 Census

A significant number of people who were between 15 and 19 years of age in 2006 dropped off the population by the 2011 census. A loss of 100 young adults accounts for almost half the population loss during that period. The economic recession of 2008 likely contributed to out-migration of people looking for work. Another significant change in Amherst's population composition is the number of pre-school aged children in 2016, with 20 per cent fewer children between 0 and 4 years of age compared to the two previous censuses.



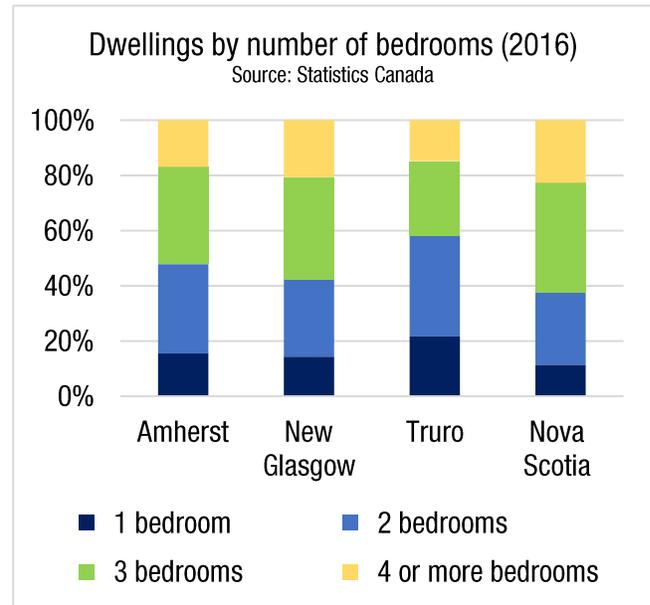
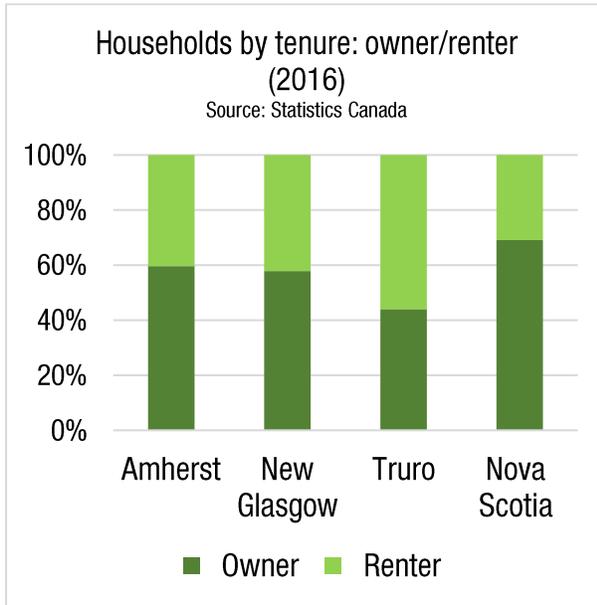
Assuming birth rates and average life span remain the same, within the next 10 years it is anticipated the composition of Amherst's population will see the percentage of working age people dip below 50 per cent, while the percentage of retired people will approach one-third of the population.

	2016		2025	
0-4 years	412	4.4%	315	3.7%
5-24 years	1,956	20.9%	1,611	18.7%
25-64 years	4,740	50.8%	3,943	45.7%
65-84 years	1,836	19.7%	2,366	27.4%
85 years and older	392	4.2%	390	4.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,336</b>		<b>8,625</b>	



## 4.0 Housing

Compared to similar sized communities in Nova Scotia, Amherst has a somewhat higher percentage of people who own their homes rather than rent. The median cost of owning a home in Amherst is just 21.5 per cent of Amherst's median household income, well below the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's 30 per cent threshold for affordability.



In 2018, the average selling price of a single-family detached home was \$101,470. During the past five years, the housing market has shown signs of trending toward a housing shortage, with houses spending one-third less time on the market and volumes down by about 25 per cent. While there are fewer homes available, housing prices remain low.

Amherst housing market (Source: MLS)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Average length of time on the market (days)	186	163	157	133	126
Listing volumes (\$million)	\$11.18	\$13.32	\$11.27	\$12.58	\$9.54
Average price of a single family detached home	\$103,485	\$115,820	\$110,474	\$101,448	\$101,470

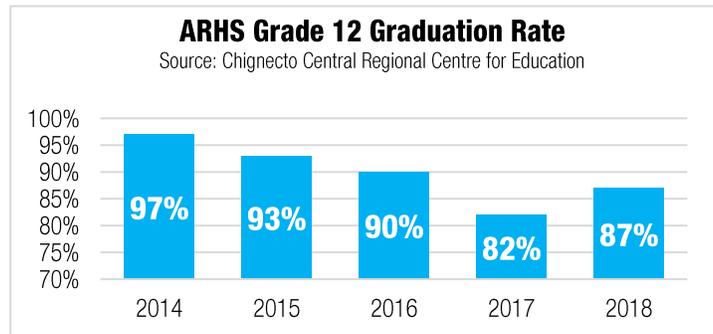
The total uncapped residential property assessment is \$420,487,100, showing a decline in the market value of Amherst's housing of close to \$5.8 million from 2017 to 2018. This was the first decline after four years of slight annual growth. There are 3,733 residential properties on the assessment roll.

## 5.0 Labour Force

Generally, we can anticipate growth or decreases in available workforce based on corresponding changes in the number of new workers entering the market and the number of older workers leaving for retirement. High school graduates and post-secondary students are “inputs” to the local labour force.

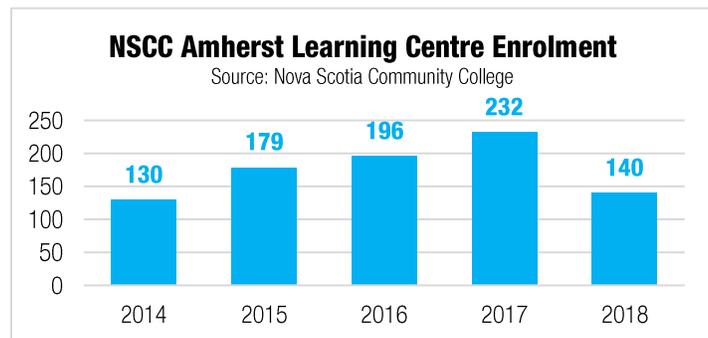
### High School Graduation Rate

Over the past five years, Amherst Regional High School had between 129 and 168 students enrolled in Grade 12. Graduation rates saw a steady decline from 97 per cent in 2014 to 82 per cent in 2017, with a rebound to 87 per cent in 2018.



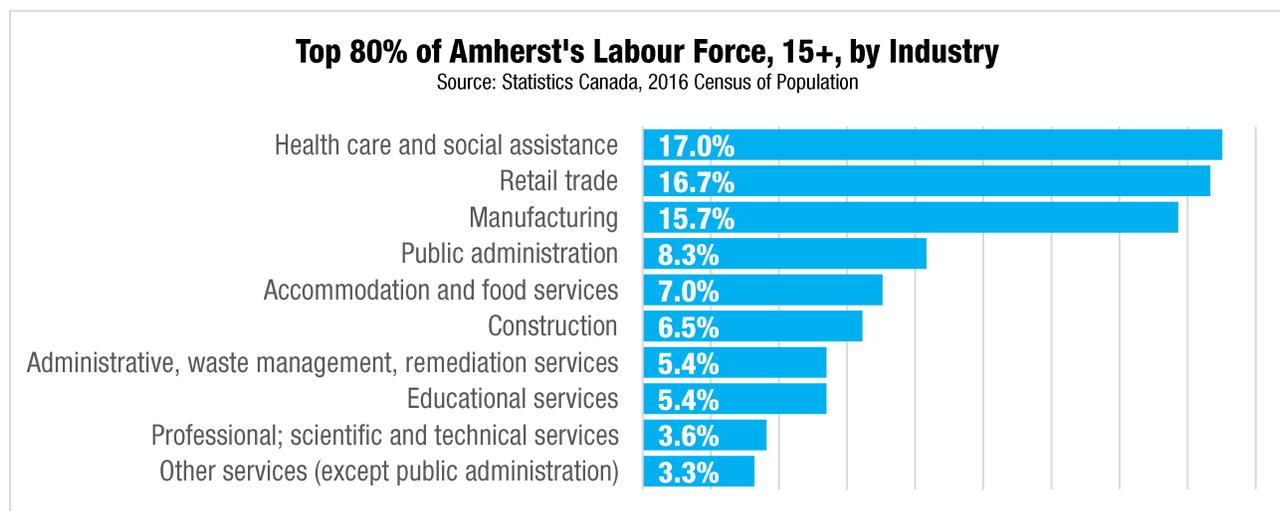
### NSCC Enrolment – Amherst Learning Centre

Enrolment at the local campus of the Nova Scotia Community College fluctuates because some programs (practical nursing, electronic engineering, paralegal) have an intake of students only in alternate years. There was also a continuing care assistant-link cohort in 2016 and 2017 that contributed to the higher numbers in those years.



### Employment sectors

According to Statistics Canada, about half of the labour force living in Amherst works in health care and social assistance (725), retail (710) or manufacturing (670).



Note: This data is a reflection of where people who live in Amherst work and not of the jobs that are actually located in Amherst.

The health care and social assistance sector saw the largest growth in employment for Amherst residents between 2011 and 2016, with an increase of 165 workers, representing a growth in share of the workforce from 12.7 per cent to 17 per cent. Other sectors that saw significant increases in employment for Amherst residents were manufacturing and construction.

The greatest decline in employment proportion was in retail trade, which lost 120 positions, representing a decrease in the share of the workforce to 16.7 per cent from 18.8 per cent. Retail continues to be one of the top three employment sectors, however, so this sector should be watched closely. Other sectors that saw declines in employment for Amherst residents were finance and insurance and other services.

### **Employment Growth by Sector**

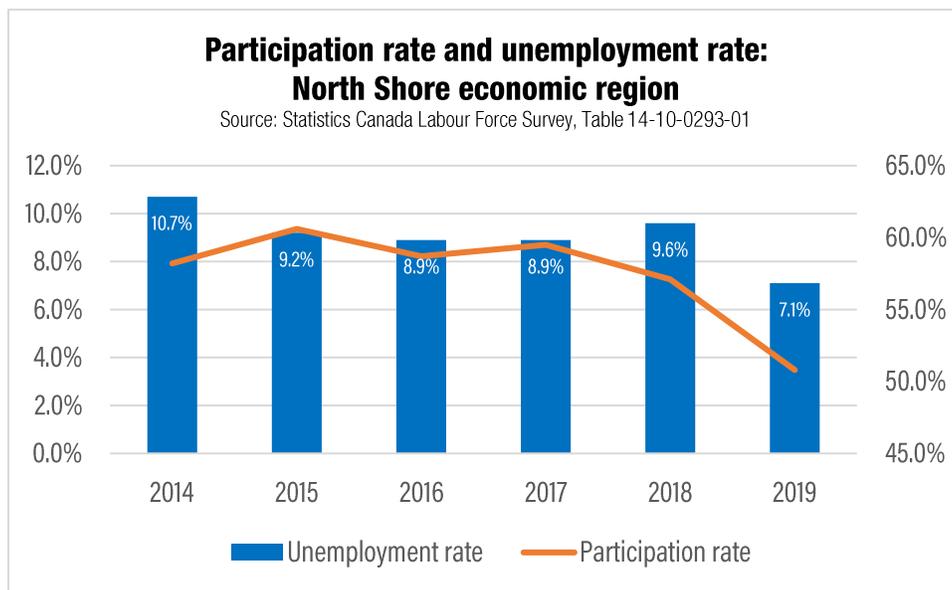
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

Sector	2011		2016		difference 2011-2016
Health care and social assistance	560	12.7%	725	17.0%	4.3%
Manufacturing	530	12.0%	670	15.7%	3.7%
Construction	195	4.4%	275	6.5%	2.0%
Administrative, waste management, remediation services	195	4.4%	230	5.4%	1.0%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	30	0.7%	65	1.5%	0.8%
Public administration	340	7.7%	355	8.3%	0.6%
Real estate and rental and leasing	30	0.7%	50	1.2%	0.5%
Management of companies and enterprises	0	0.0%	10	0.2%	0.2%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	55	1.2%	40	0.9%	-0.3%
Wholesale trade	130	2.9%	110	2.6%	-0.4%
Utilities	25	0.6%	0	0.0%	-0.6%
Professional, scientific and technical services	205	4.6%	155	3.6%	-1.0%
Transportation and warehousing	120	2.7%	70	1.6%	-1.1%
Information and cultural industries	85	1.9%	35	0.8%	-1.1%
Accommodation and food services	360	8.1%	300	7.0%	-1.1%
Educational services	290	6.6%	230	5.4%	-1.2%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	75	1.7%	20	0.5%	-1.2%
Other services (except public administration)	205	4.6%	140	3.3%	-1.4%
Finance and insurance	160	3.6%	70	1.6%	-2.0%
Retail trade	830	18.8%	710	16.6%	-2.1%

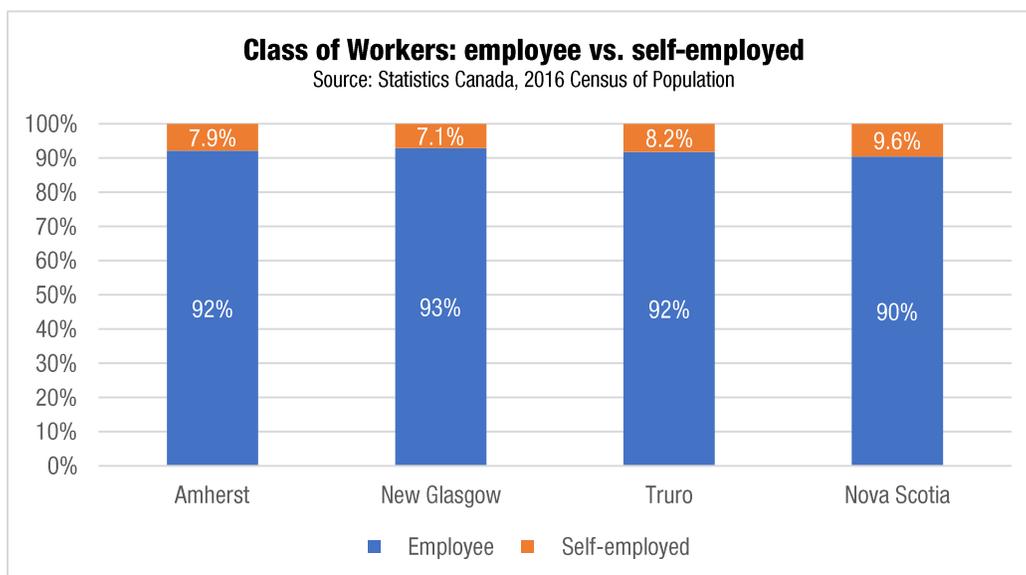
## Unemployment and participation

Labour force information is only available for the North Shore economic region, which includes more than 150,000 people living in Cumberland, Colchester, Pictou, Antigonish, and Guysborough counties. Any major gains or losses in employment outside of Amherst would have an effect on the overall rate, which would not necessarily be reflective of the labour conditions in Amherst.

As of April 2019, the North Shore area's unemployment rate has dropped to 7.1 per cent, slightly higher than the provincial unemployment rate of 6.5 per cent and somewhat higher than the Canadian unemployment of 5.8 per cent. The North Shore shows a downward trend in labour force participation, which may reflect more retirees, stay-at-home parents or people giving up looking for work.



**Self-employment was reported by 7.9 per cent of Amherst workers, which is similar to Truro and New Glasgow, but lower than Nova Scotia at 9.6 per cent and Canada at 12.0 per cent.**



## 6.0 Local Industry Sector Analysis

There are 11 employers in Amherst that employ 100 people or more, with a total of 1,793 jobs.

- Emmerson Packaging
- IMP Aerospace
- Gordon Food Service
- Douglas L. Costin Investments (Tim Hortons)
- Weston Bakeries Limited
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Victorian Order of Nurses
- Gables Lodge
- Sobeys
- Atlantic Superstore
- Wal-Mart

### 6.1 Employment Sectors

In section 5.0 Labour Force, we identified the sectors where Amherst residents work, whether or not those jobs are located in Amherst. In this section, we focus on the jobs that are located within the Town of Amherst, regardless of where the employees live.

Based on 2018 data from the Finance and Treasury Board and the Statistics Canada 2019 Labour Force Survey, there are about 4,440 employed people living in Amherst. A survey of employers identified an estimated total of 4,638 jobs in Amherst, resulting in a net of 198 more jobs than employed workers in Amherst. Statistics Canada's 2016 census data on journey to work, which found that 930 people who live in Amherst work elsewhere, a figure that would be offset by the number of people commuting into Amherst for work.

A 2019 survey of employers in Amherst identified the following top three employment sectors based on the number of workers they employ:

Manufacturing	1,011 (21.8%)
Retail trade	986 (21.3%)
Health care and social services	535 (11.5%)

#### Manufacturing – “a few employing many”

The manufacturing sector is responsible for the largest employment in Amherst, with approximately 1,011 full-time equivalent positions accounting for about one-fifth of the jobs located within the town. The sector's largest employers are Emmerson Packaging, IMP Aerostructures, Weston Bakeries, Atlantic All-Weather Windows and Waldale Manufacturing, which collectively employ 816 people. The remaining 12 businesses in Amherst's manufacturing sector employ an average of 16 people each.

#### Retail – “many employing a few”

The retail sector's 109 businesses make up the majority of enterprises in Amherst, accounting for 24 per cent of all businesses and organizations. This sector also supports a significant workforce, with its 986 employees making up almost one-fifth of all jobs in the Town of Amherst. Unlike the manufacturing sector, the retail sector does not benefit from a handful of large employers. In fact, more than 80 per cent of Amherst's retailers employ five people or less. Top employers in the retail sector include grocery stores, department stores and automotive dealers.

#### Health and social services

About 11 per cent of the jobs located in Amherst are in the health care and social services sector, with about 535 people working at the 41 businesses and organizations in this sector. The largest employers in the health and social services sector provide home care and residential senior care.

## 6.2 Commercial Zones

### Downtown Core

The 80-acre downtown core has a diverse mix of businesses including retail, restaurants, finance and insurance services, personal care services, and public administration offices. Parking is plentiful and the downtown core is cohesive with high walkability throughout. Generally speaking, the downtown is attractive and well maintained, although there are some buildings that require general upkeep and restoration. In 2012, the downtown core saw a redevelopment that included a makeover of Victoria Square, installation of historic light fixtures and streetscape improvements. Floral displays and holiday lighting are notable recent additions to beautification efforts. As of early 2019, vacant spaces include:

- 14,000 sq. ft. former grocery store
- 8,000 sq. ft. former office supply store
- 6,800 sq. ft. former dentist office
- 3,000 sq. ft. former liquor store
- 2,000 sq. ft. former music store
- 1,800 sq. ft. former service station

The total assessment for the 109 taxable commercial properties in downtown Amherst is \$20,247,200.

### South Albion St. - Robert Angus Drive

The South Albion St. - Robert Angus area features quick service restaurants, national department stores, car dealerships, shopping plazas and an indoor mall, making up about 200 acres in developed and undeveloped land. While the indoor mall is struggling to fill vacant spaces, most other commercial buildings are occupied in this area. The two national chain motels had an average occupancy rate of 64 per cent in 2018, indicative of a competitive market that is performing well. With easy access directly off the Trans Canada Highway, Albion Street has one of the highest traffic volumes in Amherst. A traffic study in 2013 reported an average daily traffic of 12,393 vehicles near the A&W on Albion St. The total assessment for the 78 taxable commercial properties in this area is \$60,945,400.

### Industrial Park

Amherst's 500-acre industrial park is home to about 40 businesses, including Gordon Food Service, Maritime Pride Eggs, Atlantic Windows and Weston Bakeries, which saw a total of \$13 million in expansions in 2018. Vacant lots are owned by Nova Scotia Business Inc. and range in size from one to 122 acres. The park is serviced with 3-Phase electrical service with 25 kV/14.4 kV line, municipal water, sewer, stormwater, natural gas, fibre-optic service up to 940 Mbps and access to rail. The total assessment for the 44 taxable commercial properties in the industrial park is \$33,524,200.



## 6.3 Retail Trade Zone

Amherst is located 45 minutes from the closest international airport, 120 minutes from Halifax (pop 297,000) and 3.5 hours from the USA.

**Amherst has more people living within a 150-km radius than any other municipality in the Maritimes.<sup>9</sup>**

Municipality	Number of people within 150 km
Amherst	1,114,894
Truro	1,005,127
Moncton	816,327
New Glasgow	775,446
Halifax	731,788
St. John	626,064
Fredericton	599,125
Summerside	530,941

Knowing the size and shape of a retail trade area is extremely important because its boundaries allow for measurement of the number of potential customers, their demographics and their spending potential.

Reilly's Law of Retail Gravitation is a theoretical means of trade area definition that's based on the premise that people are attracted to larger places to do their shopping but will travel shorter distances when possible. The calculation measures the distance between two cities and uses the population of each city to calculate a "breaking point" of distance from the smaller city. People living beyond the breaking point are more likely to travel to the larger city.

Using the Reilly's Law calculation for Amherst and surrounding communities, a retail trade zone can be mapped that covers an area of 5,071 square kilometres and has a population of 34,661 people.



<sup>9</sup> Population Explorer, [www.populationexplorer.com](http://www.populationexplorer.com). Viewed June 1, 2019.

## 6.4 Competitive Advantage Analysis

The objective of a competitive advantage analysis is to identify opportunities to maximize Amherst's potential for retention of existing businesses, development of niche marketing strategies, and recruitment of new businesses. Three types of analysis are used: location quotients, shift share analysis and leading-lagging analysis.

This analysis is based entirely on employment data from the 2011 and 2016 Statistics Canada population census. The data is collected through the census long form, with each industry classified according to the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS). By classifying sectors according to their concentration of employment, we can measure the growth and decline of each sector compared to provincial and industry trends.

### Location quotient

The location quotient (LQ) measures the concentration of employment in a selected area. It's calculated by dividing the percentage of local employment in a given sector by the percentage of provincial employment in that same sector. The LQ is used to indicate Amherst's level of specialization in each sector, as well as the level of self-sufficiency (import/export).

A low LQ (below 0.75) indicates local needs are not being met by the sector and the community is importing goods and services in that sector. A high LQ (more than 1.25) indicates the sector is serving needs that extend beyond the community. That is, the sector is "exporting" goods and services. When a sector's LQ is between 0.75 and 1.25, the local economy for that sector is self-sufficient.

### Amherst has more people working in manufacturing, management of companies and retail trade compared to the rest of Nova Scotia.

	High LQ (>1.25)	Low LQ (<0.75)
Amherst	Manufacturing (2.26) Management of companies and enterprises (1.77) Retail trade (1.30)	Professional, scientific, and technical services (0.65) Mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction (0.55) Finance and insurance (0.50) Arts, entertainment and recreation (0.47) Information and cultural industries (0.41) Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting (0.40) Transportation and warehousing (0.39)
Cumberland & Sackville region	Manufacturing (2.16) Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (1.85) Health care and social assistance (1.82) Mining, quarrying, oil, and gas extraction (1.77) Retail trade (1.32) Accommodation and food services (1.26)	Transportation and warehousing (0.66) Professional, scientific and technical services (0.63) Information and cultural industries (0.55) Management of companies and enterprises (0.46)

## Shift share analysis

Shift share analysis tells us whether jobs are lost or gained due to overall provincial employment level changes, provincial decline or growth in individual sectors, or local influences. A combination of these three effects contribute to an overall gain or loss of jobs within a sector.

A review of employment gains and losses in Amherst's top six sectors shows some sectors, such as manufacturing and public administration, made significant gains despite losses at provincial and industry levels. In other cases, such as retail trade and accommodation food services, job losses may have been greater if not for increases in the overall sector.

**Between 2011-2016, employment in manufacturing and public administration sectors increased by 305 jobs, while retail and accommodation and food services sectors decreased by 180 jobs.**

	Net change in number of jobs 2011 - 2016	Change in # of jobs resulting from provincial effects	Change in # of jobs resulting from industry effects	Change in # of jobs resulting from local effects
Health care and social assistance	165	-11	55	121
Retail trade	-120	-16	-2	-102
Manufacturing	140	-10	-13	163
Public administration	15	-7	-43	64
Accommodation and food services	-60	-7	23	-76
Construction	80	-4	12	72



## Leading-lagging analysis

Knowing the relative growth rate of a sector is crucial to understanding how well it's performing at a local level compared to the rest of the province. This in turn helps identify the sectors that would most benefit from economic development resources.

Sector growth rates produce two key values:

- Provincial Sector Relative Growth (PSRG) indicates whether a sector's rate of growth at the provincial level was higher ("leading") or lower ("lagging") than provincial growth overall.
- Local Sector Relative Growth (LSRG) indicates whether a sector is growing faster (or declining slower) than the provincial sector ("leading") or growing at a slower rate (or declining faster) ("lagging").

Two classification tools were used in this analysis: Carvalho Classification and Industry Targeting. Both tools use PSRG and LSRG, along with location quotient (LQ), to categorize each sector. This analysis identifies the following employment sectors as promising for future growth in Amherst.

**Strong sectors include health care/social assistance and construction. Manufacturing and administration sectors have good potential for development.**

Sector	PSRG	LSRG	LQ	Carvalho	Industry Targeting
Health care and social assistance	Leading	Leading	1.23 (medium)	Accelerating	Current strength
Construction	Leading	Leading	0.89 (medium)	Accelerating	Current strength
Real estate and leasing	Leading	Leading	0.79 (medium)	Accelerating	Current strength
Manufacturing	Lagging	Leading	2.26 (high)	Evolving	Prospects limited by external trends
Administrative, support, waste management	Lagging	Leading	1.13 (medium)	Transitional	Prospects limited by external trends
Public administration	Lagging	Leading	0.96 (medium)	Transitional	Prospects limited by external trends
Management of companies and enterprises	Leading	Lagging	1.77 (high)	Promising	High priority retention target
Retail trade	Leading	Lagging	1.30 (high)	Promising	High priority retention target
Accommodation and food service	Leading	Lagging	0.99 (medium)	Yielding	High priority retention target

CARVALHO CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM	
Driving	PSRG and LSRG are both leading and LQ > 1.25 (high)
Accelerating	PSRG and LSRG are both leading and LQ is 0.75-1.25 (medium)
Rising	PSRG and LSRG are both leading and LQ < 0.75 (low)
Evolving	PSRG is lagging but LSRG is leading and LQ > 1.25 (high)
Transitional	PSRG is lagging but LSRG is leading and LQ is 0.75 - 1.25 (medium)
Moderate	PSRG is lagging but LSRG is leading and LQ < 0.75 (low)
Promising	PSRG is leading but LSRG is lagging and LQ > 1.25 (high)
Yielding	PSRG is leading but LSRG is lagging and LQ 0.75 - 1.25 (medium)
Modest	PSRG is leading but LSRG is lagging and LQ < 0.75 (low)
Challenging	PSRG and LSRG are both lagging and LQ > 1.25 (high)
Vulnerable	PSRG and LSRG are both lagging and LQ is 0.75 - 1.25 (medium)
Marginal	PSRG and LSRG are both lagging and LQ is < 0.75 (low)

INDUSTRY TARGETING CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM			
LQ	PSRG	LSRG	Classification
>0.75	+	+	Current strength
<0.75	+	+	Emerging strength
>0.75	-	+	Prospects limited by external trends
<0.75	-	+	Prospects limited by weak base and external trends
>0.75	+	-	High priority retention target
<0.75	+	-	Prospects limited by weak base and declining competitiveness
>0.75	-	-	Prospects limited by external trends & declining competitiveness
<0.75	-	-	Prospects limited overall

## 7.0 Comparative Analysis

Amherst is one of five municipalities in Nova Scotia with populations between 6,500 and 12,500. By comparing the economic and demographic characteristics of similar sized towns, we can begin to differentiate strengths and potential areas for development.

- Amherst: Population is slowly declining; lowest median house value.
- Bridgewater: Population has grown significantly; highest median age; highest median house value.
- Yarmouth: Population has declined significantly; lowest household income; highest prevalence of low income.
- New Glasgow: Highest average household income; highest normalized residential tax rate.
- Truro: Lowest median age; population is steadily growing.

Population attraction and retention is strongly tied to quality of life, which is why many economic development initiatives focus on developing community assets. It's worth noting that all of the comparison communities in Nova Scotia of a similar size to Amherst boast a remarkable natural area, such as a waterfront or central park, and have invested in world class cultural and recreational facilities.

	AMHERST, NS	BRIDGEWATER, NS	YARMOUTH, NS	NEW GLASGOW, NS	TRURO, NS
POPULATION <sup>10</sup>	9,413	8,532	6,518	9,075	12,261
10 YR. CHANGE <sup>11</sup>	1.0% ↓	7.4% ↑	9.9% ↓	4.0% ↓	4.2% ↑
MEDIAN AGE <sup>7</sup>	47.7	49.2	48.6	47.8	46.9
WORKFORCE <sup>7</sup>	7,730	7,155	5,320	7,460	10,130
PARTICIPATION RATE <sup>7</sup>	56.7%	54.9%	55.8%	56.3%	56.8%
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE <sup>7</sup>	11.6%	8.9%	11.8%	11.1%	10.6%
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS <sup>7</sup>	4,375	4,075	3,115	4,210	6,052
MEDIAN HOUSE VALUE <sup>7</sup>	\$117,034	\$170,056	\$129,822	\$149,563	\$160,189
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME <sup>7</sup>	\$58,460	\$59,207	\$51,819	\$76,512	\$60,446
PREVALENCE OF LOW INCOME <sup>7</sup>	21.9%	20.9%	29.1%	21.2%	26.3%
NORMALIZED RESIDENTIAL TAX RATE <sup>12</sup>	\$1.775	\$1.71	\$1.85	\$1.95	\$1.83
RETAIL TRADE ZONE POPULATION <sup>13</sup>	34,661	54,233	47,062	82,006	79,169
RETAIL TRADE ZONE AREA (SQ.KM.)	5,071	3,579	6551	4,082	5,299
TRADE ZONE DENSITY (PEOPLE/SQ.KM.)	6.8	15.2	7.2	20.1	14.9
TOURISM VISITORS <sup>14</sup>	158,400	130,560	126,720	142,560	383,040
LICENSED ACCOMMODATION UNITS PER 1,000 RESIDENTS <sup>15</sup>	23.8	22.5	31.29	47.4	56.9
TOTAL 2018 RESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT	\$420.5M	\$515.3 M	\$282.8 M	\$467.9 M	\$649.4 M
TOTAL 2018 COMMERCIAL ASSESSMENT	\$128.6M	\$168.2 M	\$133.3 M	\$134.3 M	\$219.3 M

<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada. 2017. Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed December 9, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada. 2007. 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007. <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?lang=E> (accessed December 9, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Residential tax rates, adjusted for uniform charges and uniform charge solid waste.

<sup>13</sup> Population Explorer, [www.populationexplorer.com](http://www.populationexplorer.com)

<sup>14</sup> Tourism Nova Scotia, 2017 Visitor Exit Survey

<sup>15</sup> Tourism Nova Scotia, Licensed Accommodations Database, 2019.

# Amherst, Nova Scotia



2016 population .....	9,413	2016 average household income .....	\$58,460
2016 workforce (15+).....	7,730	2016 prevalence of low income .....	21.9%
2018 participation rate.....	57.7%	2018 residential tax rate.....	\$1.635
2018 unemployment rate.....	8.9%	Retail trade zone population.....	34,661
2018 number of households.....	4,375	Retail trade zone area.....	5,071 km <sup>2</sup>
2016 median house price.....	\$117,034	2017 tourism visitors.....	158,400

Labour force: Health care and social assistance (17.0%), Retail (16.7%), Manufacturing (15.7%).



Moncton, NB – population 71,890  
(45 min.)



Oxford, NS – pop. 1,190  
(25 min.)



Springhill, NS – pop. 2,743  
(22 min)

Amherst is the largest community in the Cumberland region, serving as the retail and community service centre to more than 34,000 people in its retail trade zone. Community facilities include the Amherst Stadium, a single pad ice arena that was built in 1959. Other facilities include a 10,000 sq. ft. skatepark, tennis courts, dog park, baseball complex and splash pad. The YMCA provides fitness studios and a recreational swimming pool. A network of trails is being developed throughout the town and along the marsh.

The Community Credit Union Business Innovation Centre was renovated in 2016 to provide a centre for business development and meetings. The conference room can accommodate up to 150 people and is equipped with audio-visual equipment that makes it suitable for local theatre and music productions.

Downtown Amherst saw a significant development in 2012, with the \$3.5-million revitalization of Victoria Square and aesthetic improvements that included lighting, benches and entrance signage. The downtown area is noted for its beautiful architecture and floral displays, as well as for the holiday lighting display at Victoria Square.

Amherst is located at the border to New Brunswick, where more than \$1.4 million visitors enter Nova Scotia each year. This represents 59 per cent of all visitors to Nova Scotia and is twice as many as enter at the Halifax airport.



# Bridgewater, Nova Scotia



2016 population .....	8,532	2016 median household income .....	\$59,207
2016 workforce (15+).....	7,155	2016 prevalence of low income.....	20.9%
2016 participation rate.....	54.9%	2018 normalized residential tax rate.....	\$1.71
2016 unemployment rate .....	8.9%	Retail trade zone population .....	54,233
2016 number of households.....	4,075	Retail trade zone area .....	3,579 km <sup>2</sup>
2016 median house price.....	\$170,056	2017 tourism visitors.....	130,560

Labour force: Health care and social assistance (16.3%), Retail trade (16.2%), Manufacturing (12.9%)



Halifax, NS – pop. 403,130  
(60 min.)



Lunenburg, NS – pop. 2,263  
(20 min.)



Retail trade zone – pop. 54,233

Bridgewater is the largest community in Lunenburg County, serving as the retail and community service centre to more than 54,000 people in its retail trade zone. The waterfront on the LaHave River provides a natural tourism attraction. A \$5-million infrastructure project that was completed in 2017 allows residents and visitors to gather along the riverbank for weekly music concerts and special events.

Community facilities include the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre, an energy-efficient multipurpose recreation and cultural facility that includes an NHL ice pad, a swimming pool and a library. The \$32-million facility was built in 2013 with \$20 million in federal and provincial contributions and a combined total of \$8.85 million in funding from the Town of Bridgewater and the Municipality of Lunenburg County.

A community theatre group has proposed converting the former arena, built in 1949, into a theatre and venue for the farmer's market.

Other community facilities include an indoor sports centre with a 200 ft x 100 ft artificial grass field, a 60-metre sprint track on the ground floor plus a top floor four-lane 209-metre oval running track. The centre also offers a matted fitness area, a multipurpose function room and a physiotherapy office.

A 10,000 sq. ft. skate park plaza is designed for shared use by skaters, scooter riders and bikers.



# Yarmouth, Nova Scotia



2016 population .....	6,518	2016 median household income .....	\$51,819
2016 workforce (15+).....	5,320	2016 prevalence of low income.....	29.1%
2016 participation rate.....	55.8%	2018 normalized residential tax rate.....	\$1.85
2016 unemployment rate .....	11.8%	Resident retail trade zone population .....	47,062
2016 number of households.....	3,115	Retail trade zone area .....	6,551 km <sup>2</sup>
2016 median house price.....	\$129,822	2017 tourism visitors.....	126,720

Labour force: Retail (19.4%), Health care/social services (18.2%), Accommodations/ food services (10.5%)



Shelburne, NS – pop. 1,743  
(60 min.)



Digby, NS – pop. 2,060  
(70 min.)



Retail trade zone – pop. 47,062

The seaside community of Yarmouth is the regional centre of south-western Nova Scotia, serving as the retail and community service centre to more than 47,000 people who live in the retail trade zone.

Yarmouth's ferry terminal is a vital link for commercial carriers and 24,300 annual visitors travelling between Nova Scotia and the United States. The Town of Yarmouth is currently leading a \$9-million redevelopment project to expand and upgrade the terminal.

Community facilities include the Mariners Centre, a 65,000 sq. ft. multipurpose and double ice surface arena built in 2001. The Mariners Centre hosts gatherings of 100-1,000, with facilities that include flexible, portable stage and dance floor conversions, state-of-the-art video and sound production resources, a 16x9-foot scoreboard, roadside marquee and aisle and booth carpeting. The complex is owned by the Town of Yarmouth and the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth, with an appointed management board.

Yarmouth's town council is considering a \$35-million expansion of the Mariners Centre as way to help make the region more attractive to people who would consider moving to the area, along with the additional benefit of providing health, recreational and fitness options for residents. Proposals for the expansion include upgraded curling facilities and incorporating the YMCA and a swimming pool.



# New Glasgow, Nova Scotia



2016 population ..... 9,075  
 2016 workforce (15+)..... 7,460  
 2016 participation rate..... 56.3%  
 2016 unemployment rate ..... 11.1%  
 2016 number of households..... 4,210  
 2016 median house price..... \$149,563

2016 median household income .....\$76,512  
 2016 prevalence of low income.....21.2%  
 2018 normalized residential tax rate.....\$1.95  
 Retail trade zone population .....82,006  
 Retail trade zone area .....4,082 km<sup>2</sup>  
 2017 tourism visitors.....142,560

Labour force: Retail (19.7%), Health and social services (17.6%), Accommodations/food services (8.0%)



Antigonish, NS – pop. 4,364  
(40 min.)



Pictou, NS – pop. 3,186  
(20 min.)



Retail trade zone – pop. 82,006

New Glasgow is the largest centre serving more than 82,000 residents who live in the retail trade zone. A \$3-million revitalization of the riverfront in 2010 saw the beautification of public spaces, a façade improvement program, a new walking bridge, and expansion of the downtown marina.



The 275-seat Glasgow Square Theatre was built in 2001 to provide a venue for music, theatre, culture, community events, weddings and private rentals. The Riverfront Jubilee is an annual signature event.



The Pictou County Wellness Centre was built in 2012 and features two NHL-sized hockey arenas, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, a fitness centre and a gymnasium. The facility has hosted major concerts and galas. It will host Pinty's Grand Slam of Curling in November 2019.



# Truro, Nova Scotia



2016 population .....	12,261	2016 median household income .....	\$60,446
2016 workforce (15+).....	10,130	2016 prevalence of low income.....	26.3%
2016 participation rate.....	56.8%	2018 normalized residential tax rate.....	\$1.83
2016 unemployment rate .....	10.6%	Retail trade zone population .....	79,169
2016 number of households.....	6,052	Retail trade zone area .....	5,299 km <sup>2</sup>
2016 median house price.....	\$160,189	2017 tourism visitors.....	383,040

Labour force: retail (15.3%), health care and social services (14.5%), manufacturing (10.3%)



Halifax, NS – pop. 403,130



Tatamagouche, NS – pop. 2,037



Retail trade zone – pop. 79,169

With a population of 12,261, Truro is Nova Scotia’s largest small town, serving as the retail and community service centre to more than 79,000 people living in the retail trade zone. The town is built around the 1,000-acre Victoria Park, a forested park with trails, waterfalls and recreational areas.

Community amenities include the civic square and library, which were developed in 2016 with more than \$8.5 million in funding from federal, provincial and municipal contributions. The civic square is a gathering place for residents and visitors, with a refrigerated skating surface and space for concerts and events.

The \$50-million Rath Eastlink Community Centre opened in 2013 with an NHL-sized arena, a competition-sized swimming pool, a water slide, a fitness centre and a rock-climbing wall. The RECC hosts trade shows, concerts and international sporting events.



## 8.0 Conclusions and recommendations

**Amherst is experiencing a downward trend in population that, when paired with downward trends in labour force participation and unemployment levels, can make recruitment and retention difficult for employers.**

Recommendation:

1. Survey employers to identify whether recruitment and retention challenges exist in any sectors.
  2. Develop and implement a strategy to attract working age people to Amherst from other parts of Canada and through international immigration.
- 

**Residential real estate shows signs of a trend towards a housing shortage, with prices remaining low while volumes are down. This suggests a lack of suitable housing stock for home buyers looking for specific characteristics.**

Recommendations:

1. Conduct a housing study to determine potential real estate development needs.
  2. Use Amherst's appealing housing options as an advantage in population recruitment efforts.
- 

**Amherst's labour pool shows growth in manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and public administration, but declines in retail and accommodations/food sectors are cause for concern.**

Recommendation:

1. Conduct business retention and expansion visits to identify economic development strategies that will support future growth in strong sectors and assist important sectors that are struggling.
- 

**The small population and lower household incomes in Amherst's functional economic zone might not be sufficient to support business growth.**

Recommendations:

1. Focus economic development efforts on attracting more residents. People attraction is the top priority.
2. Conduct a business mix analysis for the functional economic zone to identify gaps and surpluses.
3. Analyse the success of thriving communities that share similar characteristics with Amherst.
4. Develop and implement a targeted business recruitment strategy.
5. Develop and implement strategies to increase visitor spending.

## Definitions

**Annual population estimates** are calculated based on the census population count after corrections for net under-coverage, and then updated based on actual births, deaths, and migration.

**Carvalho Classification** combines three values (LQ, PRSG, and LRSG) in a model developed in 2000 by Dr. Emanuel Carvalho from the University of Waterloo in collaboration with Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs Community Economic Development Unit staff. There are twelve classifications, from “driving” (for sectors that were “leading” provincially and locally and had high location quotients) to “marginal” (for sectors that were “lagging” provincially and locally and had low location quotients).

**Industrial effect** is the number of local jobs lost or gained due to the influence of growth in the sector provincially.

**Industry Targeting** is an eight-point scale identifies the sectors that would benefit most from interventions and support.

**Labour force participation rate** is a measure of the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour force, either by working or looking for work.

**Provincial effect** is the number of local jobs lost or gained due to the influence of provincial growth overall.

**Regional or local effect** is the number of local jobs lost or gained due to regional or local factors.

**Reilly's Law of Retail Gravitation** is a mathematical formula used to calculate hard numbers relating to distance people will travel to shop.