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## **Males take brunt as regional job market continues to soften**

Male jobseekers are finding it harder to secure work in the Hunter as the trend of increasing unemployment continues, according to the latest [Labour Force figures](#) from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Unemployment rates rose across the region in March despite a 12.4 per cent jump in the number of job ads in March, based on the Jobs and Skills Australia Internet Vacancy Index.

The employment figures also showed a clear distinction over the last 12 months in performance between the male and female markets.

Total employment in the region decreased by 5,900 people over the 12 months to March 2025. This followed a drop of 14,800 full-time roles, offset by an increase of 9,000 in the number of part-time roles.

Business Hunter CEO Bob Hawes said males appeared to be bearing the brunt of the constricting job market, with 5,600 fewer males employed in March 2025, compared with a drop of just 300 for females over the same 12-month period.

"It's difficult to determine from the figures alone why there would be such a marked gender bias against males, but the rise in part-time jobs might be one indicator, as these roles are traditionally more favoured by women," Mr Hawes said.

For the month of March 2025, total regional employment dropped by 1,100 people and, pushed by a rise in the participation rate, the number of unemployed increased by 4,200. This trend saw the unemployment rate rise from 3.9 per cent in February to 5 per cent in March. This compares with the 4.2 per cent unemployment rate for NSW (seasonally adjusted).

Variations between the statistical sub-regions of Newcastle/Lake Macquarie and the rest of the Hunter continue to be borne out. Unemployment in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie rose from 3.4 to 4.2 per cent from February to March, while the jobless figure spiked again in the Hunter Valley statistical region, rising from 4.6 to 6.1 per cent.

The participation rate (which measures the percentage of the working-age who are either employed or actively seeking employment) softened in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie (68.2 per cent to 67.4 per cent) yet continued to perform above the state average of 66.3 per cent.

Participation remained comparatively lower in the Hunter Valley, although rose slightly from 56.7 per cent to 58.8 per cent with 5,500 people entering the workforce or looking for work in March. This contributed to the increase in unemployment, as not all the new participants were able to find work.

“The lagging participation rate in the Hunter Valley continues to highlight issues such as poor access for workers to suitable housing and transport to work and the proportion of applicants who lack the skills and experience required by employers,” Mr Hawes said.

“The Jobs and Skills Australia Internet Vacancy Index noted there was an increase in the number of job ads across the whole of Hunter region from 4,448 in February to 4,985 in March (up 12.4 per cent).

“This represents a significant rebound compared to the falls experienced across the previous five months and was slightly ahead of broader trends in NSW.”

The youth job market (15- to 24-year-olds) continued to ease, with the March unemployment rate for the whole region rising to 8.6 per cent from 5.7 per cent in February, bringing it closer to the long-term average. There was a significant drop in full-time employment and a jump in part-time roles.

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