

■ Energy Chamber:

Energy jobs fell in last decade

■ PORT OF SPAIN

THE Energy Chamber of Trinidad and Tobago says while the energy sector is the major contributor to national income, contributing on average 30-40% of gross domestic product (GDP), it only employs on average 2% of the national workforce or around 12,700 people. The Energy Chamber said that over the past decade, energy sector employment has fallen significantly; however, that decline is complicated by the fact that employment in the sector also varies significantly from quarter to quarter.

It said that the coefficient of variance (a statistical measure of variability) is around 24% for the energy sector, significantly higher than all other sectors where it measured about 3.5%.

The Central Statistical Office (CSO), which publishes quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) Bulletins, noted that the industry group for energy covers employment in petroleum and gas, including production, refining and service contractors.

According to the latest from the CSO, in the first quarter of 2025, the average number of people with jobs for all sectors was 558,900, representing a 2.3% decrease from the fourth quarter of last year.

By contrast, the number of people with jobs in the energy sector grew from 8,100 people in the fourth quarter of 2024 to 12,800 in the first quarter of this year, a significant increase of 58%.

'Before this is celebrated, however, it needs to be understood in the context of the very high variability between quarters in the sector. Jobs in the sector dropped by 27% between third quarter and fourth quarter in 2024,' the Energy Chamber said, adding that 'this is why it is important to look at longer-term trends and not just quarter to quarter variability'.

It said that the variability between quarters in energy sector employment is because a lot of jobs in the sector are project based and that a significant percentage of the jobs in the sector are temporary project- based jobs for major maintenance projects or 'turnarounds' (TARs) in Point Lisas, Atlantic or other downstream plants.

'While the pattern of employment in the energy sector does vary significantly from one quarter to the next, there has been an overall decline in employment in the sector in the past decade. The closure of the refinery in 2018 resulted in a significant dip in employment in the sector in 2019, but since then, average annual numbers employed have stabilised.'

The Energy Chamber said that any significant increase in jobs in the sector would only come from significant increases in activity levels.

It said construction projects in the industry were a major source of jobs in the 1990s and 2000s as new plants were built in Point Lisas and Atlantic, noting: 'It is unlikely that there will be any new plant construction work in the foreseeable future, given the gas supply outlook.'

'Reopening the refinery could create both permanent jobs and contractor jobs during the activities to refurbish and restart the facility and many in the industry are awaiting further details.'

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