



Labour Market Bulletin

Saskatchewan

October 2020



This Labour Market Bulletin provides an analysis of Labour Force Survey results for the province of Saskatchewan, including Regina-Moose Mountain, Swift Current-Moose Jaw, Saskatoon-Biggar, Yorkton-Melville and Prince Albert and Northern economic regions.

OVERVIEW

Saskatchewan's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic stalled in October. Employment dipped (-1,600) on the month for the first time since restrictions were relaxed in May 2020. Public sector employment added 1,900 positions (+1.3%) in October, and has in large part, recovered to pre-pandemic levels. In contrast, both private sector (-2,000 or -0.6%) and self-employment (-1,500 or -1.5%) dropped in October and remain significantly below October 2019 levels.¹

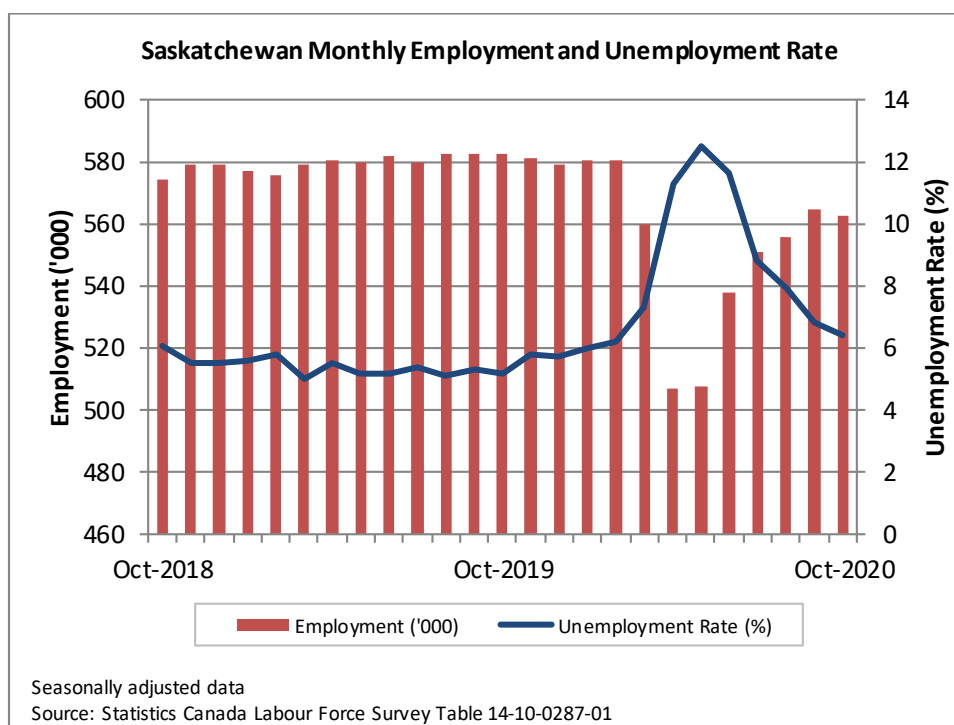
Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	October 2020	September 2020	October 2019	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	893.8	893.9	891.9	-0.1	0.0	1.9	0.2
Labour Force ('000)	601.2	605.8	614.0	-4.6	-0.8	-12.8	-2.1
Employment ('000)	562.9	564.5	582.2	-1.6	-0.3	-19.3	-3.3
Full-Time ('000)	459.8	461.8	474.6	-2.0	-0.4	-14.8	-3.1
Part-Time ('000)	103.1	102.7	107.6	0.4	0.4	-4.5	-4.2
Unemployment ('000)	38.2	41.4	31.8	-3.2	-7.7	6.4	20.1
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.4	6.8	5.2	-0.4	-	1.2	-
Participation Rate (%)	67.3	67.8	68.8	-0.5	-	-1.5	-
Employment Rate (%)	63.0	63.2	65.3	-0.2	-	-2.3	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287-01, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

The Province remains in Phase 4 of its Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan but rising COVID-19 infection counts led to a tightening of restrictions in high risk areas. Indoor private gathering limits were reduced to ten people while face masks are now mandatory in public places in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert.



Saskatchewan's unemployment rate (6.4%) improved for the fifth consecutive month and is the lowest among provinces. However, this progress is influenced in part by people no longer looking for work, as reflected by the province's participation rate declining (-0.5%) over the month. Unemployment figures do not include people not actively searching for work. The province's unemployment rate remains over a full percentage point above the rate in October 2019 (5.2%).

Unemployment by Major Demographic Group

Saskatchewan Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	October 2020 (%)	September 2020 (%)	October 2019 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	6.4	6.8	5.2	-0.4	1.2
25 years and over	5.2	5.9	4.4	-0.7	0.8
Men - 25 years and over	6.1	6.2	4.3	-0.1	1.8
Women - 25 years and over	4.2	5.6	4.4	-1.4	-0.2
15 to 24 years	13.4	12.4	10.3	1.0	3.1
Men - 15 to 24 years	17.9	15.0	12.4	2.9	5.5
Women - 15 to 24 years	8.3	9.9	7.8	-1.6	0.5

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

Saskatchewan workers 25 years and over continue to fare better than their younger counterparts (15 to 24 years). Younger workers have historically experienced an unemployment rate double that of their older counterparts, a trend only amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is particularly true for young men as they were the only demographic group to see an increase in their unemployment rate (+2.9 percentage points) on

the month. Young men often find employment in the construction industry, which contracted this month as several seasonal highway and commercial projects wrapped up earlier this fall.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Employment in Saskatchewan's goods-producing sector held steady in October (+100 or +0.1%). In contrast, the services-producing sector shed 1,600 (-0.4%) positions over the same period, led by sizable losses in the **finance, insurance, real estate and leasing** and the **information, culture and recreation** industries. Year-over-year, employment in both sectors is still below October 2019 levels.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	October 2020	September 2020	October 2019	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	562.9	564.5	582.2	-1.6	-0.3	-19.3	-3.3
Goods-producing sector	134.5	134.4	144.9	0.1	0.1	-10.4	-7.2
Agriculture	34.9	34.8	40.2	0.1	0.3	-5.3	-13.2
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	20.8	20.7	22.1	0.1	0.5	-1.3	-5.9
Utilities	6.4	6.4	5.5	0.0	0.0	0.9	16.4
Construction	41.1	42.3	45.9	-1.2	-2.8	-4.8	-10.5
Manufacturing	31.3	30.2	31.1	1.1	3.6	0.2	0.6
Services-producing sector	428.5	430.1	437.3	-1.6	-0.4	-8.8	-2.0
Trade	90.3	90.4	82.7	-0.1	-0.1	7.6	9.2
Transportation and warehousing	25.5	25.0	25.5	0.5	2.0	0.0	0.0
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	29.2	30.8	30.1	-1.6	-5.2	-0.9	-3.0
Professional, scientific and technical services	27.4	26.9	27.5	0.5	1.9	-0.1	-0.4
Business, building and other support services	16.0	16.9	16.5	-0.9	-5.3	-0.5	-3.0
Educational services	46.7	46.2	46.3	0.5	1.1	0.4	0.9
Health care and social assistance	82.5	82.2	81.1	0.3	0.4	1.4	1.7
Information, culture and recreation	15.3	18.1	22.3	-2.8	-15.5	-7.0	-31.4
Accommodation and food services	30.3	28.3	40.3	2.0	7.1	-10.0	-24.8
Other services	31.2	30.7	31.5	0.5	1.6	-0.3	-1.0
Public administration	34.2	34.6	33.4	-0.4	-1.2	0.8	2.4

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0355, formerly CANSIM 282-0088

Within the goods-producing sector, year-over-year employment is down significantly in the **agriculture** industry (-5,300). Employment in the **construction** industry slowed in October (-1,200 or -2.8%) as several seasonal construction projects wrapped up. On a year-over-year basis, employment in this industry contracted 4,800 (-10.5%). Nevertheless, the construction industry is central to government economic recovery stimulus plans over the long term, with several large initiatives in development or underway. Among these are a number of school renovation and new builds, highway projects, and affordable housing projects in northern communities. In addition, SaskTel plans to build 74 new macro cell towers in underserved rural and resort communities by early summer 2021.²

Saskatchewan's resource extraction industry (**forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas**) showed little net job change over October (+100 or +0.5%). However the longer term outlook for the industry is mixed. For example, in the oil and gas sector, the Government of Canada hopes to create 2,100 full-time jobs for Saskatchewan-based service companies by the end of 2022 as it reclaims up to 8,000 inactive wells and facilities.³ In contrast, the impending Cenovus-Husky Energy merger will likely result in significant workforce changes as Cenovus aims to find savings of \$1.2 billion in the new configuration.⁴

Turning to the services-producing sector, the **accommodation and food services** industry saw the largest monthly gain in employment (+2,000 or +7.1%) although industry employment is still down 10,000 (-24.8%) from last October. A recent Restaurants Canada survey found that the majority of Saskatchewan restaurants are still not profitable under provincial directives restricting indoor capacity and outdoor seating limited by colder weather.⁵ Adding to the challenge, the recent upswing in COVID-19 cases has led to targeted restrictions on capacity and alcohol sales for entertainment venues and restaurants in the province's largest cities. Several night clubs anticipate losing business and having to reduce staffing shifts to comply with the new public health orders.⁶

Employment in the public-facing **information, culture and recreation** industry remains significantly below pre-pandemic levels. On a monthly basis, the industry shed 2,800 positions (-15.5%). The provincial government recently announced the \$30 million Tourism Sector Support Program Employment to assist businesses weather the downturn. The program provides one-time, non-repayable emergency payments to operators and a further \$5 million to support the marketing of local tourism experiences.⁷ One industry success story is the new Dakota Dunes Resort and Casino that the Whitecap Dakota First Nation opened in early October. The facility currently employs 50 due to reduced demand from COVID-19, which will increase to 150 when fully operational.⁸

Saskatchewan's **professional, scientific and technical services** industry has developed significantly over the past decade, capitalizing on tech-start-ups and the influx of health-related research funding. Building upon the \$23 million federal funding received in April 2020, Saskatoon's VIDO-Intervac attracted an additional \$830,000 in October from various sources to expand its research capacity. The centre has since hired additional staff to meet the growing demand to test COVID-19 vaccines, antiviral drugs and therapeutics for more than 70 companies in Canada and across the world.⁹

The number of people working in **educational services** edged up 500 on a monthly basis (+1.1%). Post-secondary institutions are adjusting their curriculums to meet the needs and expectations of a new pandemic workforce. For example, Saskatchewan Polytechnic launched a new School of Continuing Education to respond to the changing nature of work by offering new micro-credentials for lifelong learnings. The institution is also partnering with Microsoft to provide training in data and artificial intelligence (AI) skills to improve the employability of workers as many sectors undergo an accelerated digital transformation.¹⁰

Monthly employment in **healthcare and social assistance** has rebounded to pre-pandemic levels and is up 1.7% (+1,400) on the year. The Saskatchewan Health Authority continues to adjust its labour market needs in response to a heightened demand and delays for COVID-19 testing. The Authority has trained more than 370 staff for contact tracing efforts and is getting nursing students to assist with negative test result call backs.¹¹ Meanwhile, the Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$2.9 million to improve emergency medical services through new paramedic staffing in Saskatoon and Regina and extra Emergency Department staffing at Saskatoon's Royal University Hospital.¹²

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

On an annual basis, employment is down in all five economic regions as the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take its toll on businesses. **Yorkton-Melville** saw the largest job losses on a percentage basis (-12.6%), while **Swift Current – Moose Jaw** has shown the most promising signs of employment recovery.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	October 2020 ('000)	October 2019 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	October 2020 (%)	October 2019 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Saskatchewan	565.9	587.4	-3.7	6.8	5.1	1.7
Economic Regions						
Regina - Moose Mountain	178.4	185.0	-3.6	5.9	4.9	1.0
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	51.5	52.8	-2.5	6.2	5.4	0.8
Saskatoon - Biggar	206.5	211.0	-2.1	7.9	5.1	2.8
Yorkton - Melville	34.0	38.9	-12.6	5.0	3.0	2.0
Prince Albert and Northern	95.6	99.7	-4.1	7.2	6.1	1.1

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0293, formerly CANSIM 282-0122

The **Regina-Moose Mountain** region posted the largest year-over-year employment losses (-6,600 or -3.6%). Ongoing uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 continues to prompt businesses to re-examine their long-term sustainability. Some, like Globe Fabrics and Dino Bouncers, are closing permanently. Others are increasingly focusing on retraining and developing other employment opportunities. The Estevan and Coronach area has received federal funding to transition away from coal-generated power¹³ while VIGR Life Cannabis Inc. plans to start growing cannabis in its Regina facility by the end of October. The company has a current staff of 6 with plans to expand to 12-15 employees by the end of 2021.¹⁴

Year-over-year employment in **Saskatoon-Biggar** fell 4,500 (-2.1%). First Nations organizations are leading development of two initiatives aimed at providing employment to Indigenous people in the Saskatoon area. The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) and the Kahkewistahaw First Nation unveiled plans for a 40-acre development near the Saskatoon airport that will include a new building for FSIN, a gas station, and a hotel and convention centre. The project should provide a significant number of jobs to Indigenous people both during construction and once the businesses are operational.¹⁵ Elsewhere in the city, SAGE Roadway Signs is partnering with the provincial government on a pilot program to supply highway traffic signs. The company, which is partially owned by the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation and English River First Nation, plans to employ a dozen Cree workers.¹⁶

In the North, 4,100 (-4.1%) fewer people were employed in the **Prince Albert and Northern** economic region in October compared to a year ago. Looking ahead, opportunities in the construction industry will increase in 2021 with planning underway on a number of community and school infrastructure projects. For example, work is scheduled to begin on new kindergarten to grade 12 schools in Blaine Lake and Carrot River in 2021, while renovations totalling \$46.5 million to three high schools in Lloydminster and North Battleford are expected to be completed by 2023.¹⁷

Note: In preparing this document, the authors have taken care to provide clients with labour market information that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since this document was published. Users are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect official policies of Employment and Social Development Canada.

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For information on the Labour Force Survey, please visit the Statistics Canada Web site at: www.statcan.gc.ca

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