



Labour Market Bulletin

Saskatchewan

January 2021



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 picked up modestly in January 2021 as employment edged up 0.4% from December. By contrast, employment fell 1.2% Canada-wide on a monthly basis.

Taking a longer view, overall employment in Saskatchewan was down 4.4% compared to January 2020. Public sector employment dropped 3,800 positions (-2.6%), in step with the private sector (-8,700 or -2.7%). Self-employment (-12,700 or -12.8%) remains significantly below the level of January last year.¹

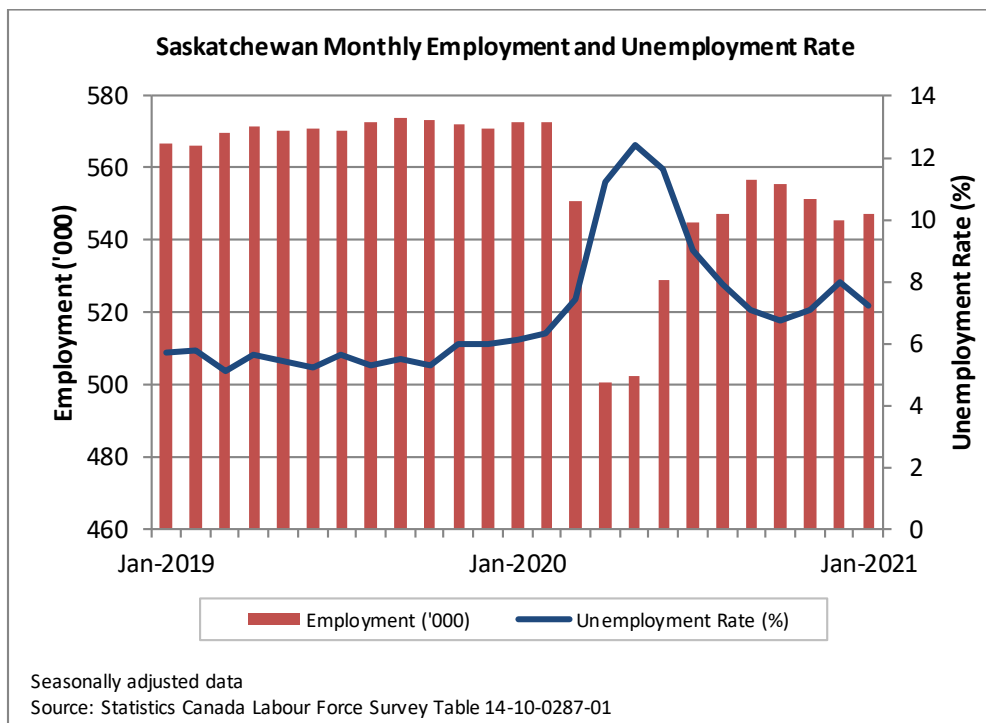
Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	January 2021	December 2020	January 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	888.2	888.1	887.6	0.1	0.0	0.6	0.1
Labour Force ('000)	589.7	592.3	609.8	-2.6	-0.4	-20.1	-3.3
Employment ('000)	547.4	545.2	572.6	2.2	0.4	-25.2	-4.4
Full-Time ('000)	446.9	446.9	469.5	0.0	0.0	-22.6	-4.8
Part-Time ('000)	100.5	98.3	103.1	2.2	2.2	-2.6	-2.5
Unemployment ('000)	42.3	47.1	37.2	-4.8	-10.2	5.1	13.7
Unemployment Rate (%)	7.2	8.0	6.1	-0.8	-	1.1	-
Participation Rate (%)	66.4	66.7	68.7	-0.3	-	-2.3	-
Employment Rate (%)	61.6	61.4	64.5	0.2	-	-2.9	-

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 elevated COVID-19 infection counts have led to tighter restrictions in high risk areas. Face masks are now mandatory in public places province-wide.



After rising for two consecutive months, Saskatchewan’s unemployment rate fell 0.8 percentage points to 7.2% in January. The decrease was partially driven by job gains, but was also influenced by a decrease in the number of people actively looking for work. This affects the rate because unemployment rates only include people actively searching for work. The province’s unemployment rate remains over a full percentage point above that of January 2020 (6.1%).

Unemployment by Major Demographic Group

Saskatchewan Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	January 2021 (%)	December 2020 (%)	January 2020 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	7.2	8.0	6.1	-0.8	1.1
25 years and over	5.7	6.3	4.6	-0.6	1.1
Men - 25 years and over	6.3	7.2	5.1	-0.9	1.2
Women - 25 years and over	5.1	5.2	4.0	-0.1	1.1
15 to 24 years	15.6	17.6	14.8	-2.0	0.8
Men - 15 to 24 years	19.1	23.3	17.1	-4.2	2.0
Women - 15 to 24 years	12.1	11.8	12.0	0.3	0.1

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 unemployment rates double that of their older counterparts, a trend only amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is particularly true for young men, although they did see a sharp dip in their unemployment rate (-4.2 percentage points) on the month. Except for young

women, who saw a slight increase in their unemployment rate (+0.3 percentage points) on the month, the unemployment rate for all groups decreased on a monthly basis and increased on the year.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

In January, Saskatchewan's monthly employment gains were split relatively evenly between the goods-producing (+0.8%) and services-producing sectors (+0.3%). On a year-over-year basis, employment in the goods-producing sector fell 8.9% while employment in the services-producing sector declined by just 3.0%.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	January 2021	December 2020	January 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	547.4	545.2	572.6	2.2	0.4	-25.2	-4.4
Goods-producing sector	129.9	128.9	142.6	1.0	0.8	-12.7	-8.9
Agriculture	32.0	32.5	40.3	-0.5	-1.5	-8.3	-20.6
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	21.4	20.5	21.0	0.9	4.4	0.4	1.9
Utilities	5.8	6.3	5.6	-0.5	-7.9	0.2	3.6
Construction	41.1	39.7	43.0	1.4	3.5	-1.9	-4.4
Manufacturing	29.6	29.9	32.7	-0.3	-1.0	-3.1	-9.5
Services-producing sector	417.4	416.3	430.1	1.1	0.3	-12.7	-3.0
Trade	87.4	88.1	82.2	-0.7	-0.8	5.2	6.3
Transportation and warehousing	24.3	24.5	25.9	-0.2	-0.8	-1.6	-6.2
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	25.9	26.6	30.2	-0.7	-2.6	-4.3	-14.2
Professional, scientific and technical services	28.7	28.1	27.1	0.6	2.1	1.6	5.9
Business, building and other support services	16.5	16.0	15.4	0.5	3.1	1.1	7.1
Educational services	44.2	42.4	46.0	1.8	4.2	-1.8	-3.9
Health care and social assistance	83.6	81.6	80.0	2.0	2.5	3.6	4.5
Information, culture and recreation	13.1	13.2	22.5	-0.1	-0.8	-9.4	-41.8
Accommodation and food services	28.8	30.2	39.8	-1.4	-4.6	-11.0	-27.6
Other services	30.4	30.7	28.5	-0.3	-1.0	1.9	6.7
Public administration	34.4	34.9	32.5	-0.5	-1.4	1.9	5.8

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 was down significantly in the **agriculture** industry (-8,300), with job losses concentrated in the production of animals, primarily cattle. Nevertheless, Saskatchewan remains home to many agri-food research initiatives. In January, the federal and provincial governments granted \$9.8 million in funding for 39 crop-related research projects through Saskatchewan's Agriculture Development Fund with an additional \$3.1 million to be provided by industry partners.²

The **construction** industry, which saw employment gains of 1,400 on the month, remains central to government economic recovery stimulus plans going forward. For example, Regina-based Graham Construction has begun construction on two overpasses, just east of Swift Current. The \$18M project is expected to be completed by the fall of 2021.³ Meanwhile, the federal and provincial governments awarded a \$14M contract to Saskatchewan-

based Whitford Construction to upgrade the Fond Du Lac Airport. Construction is also scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2021.⁴

Manufacturing lost 3,100 jobs year over year, including roughly 600 at Evraz Steel Mill’s tubular (pipe) division in Regina in December 2020. The company has run out of major orders amid a shortage of pipeline projects.⁵ Turning to agricultural-related manufacturing, several developments showcase the diversity of Saskatchewan’s agribusinesses. Recently, BASF Agricultural Solutions completed a \$14M transformation of its Regina crop protection production facility.⁶ Looking ahead, Regina-based Mera Food Group will begin full production of oat milk in May and June. The beverage will be sold at Co-op food stores across Canada by summertime.⁷ On the downside, Morris Industries’ farm equipment manufacturing facility in Yorkton is set to close, affecting 70 employees.⁸

Saskatchewan’s resource extraction industry (**forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas**) showed healthy job gains in January, adding 900 positions compared to December 2020. In the mining sector, Cameco, a Saskatchewan-based uranium company, is temporarily shutting down operations at its Cigar Lake mine due to COVID-19 related issues, putting about 200 employees out of work.⁹ In the oil and gas sector, the Government of Canada is providing \$200M for phase two of Saskatchewan’s Accelerated Site Closure Program aimed at cleaning up abandoned oil and gas wells. The funding will create more than 2,000 full-time jobs and will run from January 2021 to March 2022.¹⁰ Looking ahead, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers is forecasting that Saskatchewan will see a five percent increase in upstream oil and gas investment in 2021 compared to 2020. The association expects that investment in Saskatchewan will lag behind that of Alberta and British Columbia this year.¹¹

Turning to the services-producing sector, the hard-hit **accommodation and food services** industry lost another 1,400 jobs on the month and overall industry employment is down 11,000 (-27.6%) from January 2020. Original Joe’s, a restaurant and bar chain with locations across Western Canada, permanently closed their Estevan location in November.¹² Habano’s Martini and Cocktail Club, a Regina nightclub, also permanently closed due to COVID-19 after over 18 years in business. New restrictions in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 presented financial challenges that made the business unsustainable.¹³

Saskatchewan’s **retail and wholesale trade** industry lost 700 jobs on the month as COVID-19 cases hampered retail operations. Some firms have voluntarily turned to delivery or curbside pickup. Recently, Sweden-based H&M recently opened its first store in Saskatoon. The major clothing retailer has one other Saskatchewan location, in Regina.¹⁴ Also of note, Tesla opened its first Saskatchewan dealership in Saskatoon at the Stonebridge auto mall in January. The company is the first electric-only vehicle manufacturer to open a store in the province.¹⁵

Employment in the public-facing **information, culture and recreation** industry remains significantly below pre-pandemic levels, down 9,400 on the year. The industry shed another 100 positions on the month. In Hudson Bay, the hockey arena will close for the season on February 12 as no hockey games are taking place due to COVID-19 restrictions.¹⁶ In Regina, the YMCA permanently closed two locations due to financial concerns. The organization has struggled financially since mid-2019; the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions worsened those difficulties and made operating unfeasible.¹⁷ On the plus side, Duck Mountain Ski Hill near Kamsack hired extra staff this season to help implement COVID-19 safety protocols, including additional steps in food service, as well as extra cleaning and sanitizing.¹⁸

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 (-13.0%), while **Regina – Moose Mountain** 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		
	January 2021 ('000)	January 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	January 2021 (%)	January 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Saskatchewan	545.3	569.5	-4.2	7.3	5.8	1.5
Economic Regions						
Regina - Moose Mountain	170.9	175.9	-2.8	7.2	6.3	0.9
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	51.1	55.0	-7.1	6.9	4.2	2.7
Saskatoon - Biggar	193.2	199.5	-3.2	7.8	5.6	2.2
Yorkton - Melville	34.7	39.9	-13.0	6.0	5.7	0.3
Prince Albert and Northern	95.4	99.3	-3.9	7.0	6.2	0.8

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0387, formerly CANSIM 282-0122

Year-over-year employment in **Saskatoon-Biggar** fell 6,300 (-3.2%) as job losses were seen both in goods-producing and services-producing industries. The region's manufacturing sector bucked the trend, gaining 500 jobs on the year. Saskatoon-based manufacturer, Benchmark Personal Protective Equipment, made 18,000 face shields and 4 million disposable masks to be shipped to schools throughout the province.¹⁹ On the social services side, the Hospice at Glengarda recently opened in Saskatoon. The 15-bed facility is the first freestanding hospice in the province and will be operated by Emmanuel Health.²⁰ Meanwhile, First Nations organizations are partnering on new initiatives aimed at providing employment to Indigenous people. The kanātan nipīy program is a new Saskatoon-based training program for Indigenous people to gain essential skills and access employment opportunities in water treatment and distribution facilities. Training is set to start in March 2021.²¹ Elsewhere in the region, the Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$924,000 in funding to construct a facility to host day program supports for people with intellectual disabilities. The new building will be located in the Town of Kindersley and will be operated by West Central Abilities.²²

The **Regina-Moose Mountain** region posted moderate employment losses (-5,000 or -2.8%) on the year, while ongoing uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 continues to prompt businesses to re-examine their long-term sustainability. In a worrying sign for the region, Nav Canada recently gave layoff notices to all 10 air traffic controllers at Regina's International Airport and is considering permanently closing its traffic control tower.²³ On a more positive note, SaskPower has started a competition for a contractor to build its Logistics Warehouse Complex. The facility will be built at Regina's Global Transportation Hub in two phases with the first phase set to be completed in 2023 at an estimated cost of \$100M.²⁴

In another sign of the times, the Royal Canadian Legion's Regina branch is closing its bar, the Lamplighter, and laying off four bar staff members. The branch is also closing its museum.²⁵ By contrast, the Awasiw Warm Up

Centre recently opened in Regina. The centre provides people a warm place to stay, as well as hot food and drink when available. The centre will be open until at least March 31, 2021.²⁶

Compared to last January, 3,900 (-3.9%) fewer people were employed in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region where COVID-19 has significantly impacted some communities in the far north. In resource development news, Vancouver-based company SSR Mining Inc. is spending an additional \$3M on the Fisher gold project. The gold mine is located approximately 125 kilometres northeast of La Ronge.²⁷ In transportation news, West Wind Aviation and Transwest Air merged under one air-operating certificate to form Rise Air. The merger comes as the two Northern Saskatchewan airline companies saw their operations down by approximately 50 per cent due to COVID-19.²⁸

A new grocery store, Northern Store, recently opened in Pelican Narrows. The community has been without a grocery store since 2015, when the previous one burned down. The new store and services will create approximately 40 full-time jobs.²⁹

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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