

Labour Market Bulletin

Saskatchewan

October 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 economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic lost momentum in October, as employment dipped for the first time in three months. Total employment was down 6,500 (-1.1%) compared to September 2021, with losses seen in both full-time (-0.7%) and part-time (-2.8%) employment.

Annually, employment was up 5,500 workers (+1.0%) in October. However, compared with pre-pandemic February 2020, employment remained down by 11,500 jobs (-2.0%).

While September saw a positive milestone, with private sector employment exceeding the pre-pandemic February 2020 level for the first time, October results represent a set back. In October, private sector employment was 7,900 (-2.4%) below February 2020.

Self-employment continues to lag, down 3,700 jobs (-3.9%) from October 2020, and 7,100 jobs (-7.2%) from February 2020.¹ This category of workers, which includes many small business owners, has been disproportionately affected since the beginning of the pandemic.²



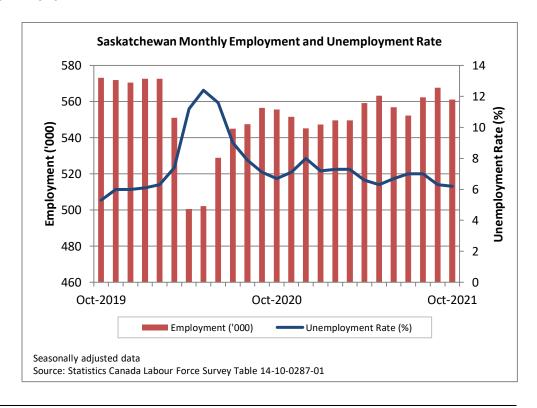
| Seasonally Adjusted | October | September | October | Monthly Variation | | Yearly Variation | |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|-------------------|------|------------------|------|
| Monthly Data | 2021 2021 | | 2020 | Number | % | Number | % |
| Population 15 + ('000) | 890.0 | 889.8 | 887.9 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 2.1 | 0.2 |
| Labour Force ('000) | 598.4 | 606.1 | 595.6 | -7.7 | -1.3 | 2.8 | 0.5 |
| Employment ('000) | 561.2 | 567.7 | 555.7 | -6.5 | -1.1 | 5.5 | 1.0 |
| Full-Time ('000) | 454.9 | 458.3 | 450.9 | -3.4 | -0.7 | 4.0 | 0.9 |
| Part-Time ('000) | 106.3 | 109.4 | 104.8 | -3.1 | -2.8 | 1.5 | 1.4 |
| Unemployment ('000) | 37.2 | 38.4 | 39.9 | -1.2 | -3.1 | -2.7 | -6.8 |
| Unemployment Rate (%) | 6.2 | 6.3 | 6.7 | -0.1 | - | -0.5 | - |
| Participation Rate (%) | 67.2 | 68.1 | 67.1 | -0.9 | - | 0.1 | - |
| Employment Rate (%) | 63.1 | 63.8 | 62.6 | -0.7 | - | 0.5 | - |

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

Vaccination rates increased during October, but still remain the lowest among provinces. As of October 30, 66.85% of Saskatchewan's population was fully vaccinated, compared to 73.96% nationwide.³ With low vaccination rates, the earlier lifting of public health measures in July proved premature and active cases soared. This led to the reinstatement of some public health measures mid-September. As of November 5, Saskatchewan's rate of active cases per population was the highest among provinces, and second only to Yukon among all jurisdictions.⁴

In October, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate decreased to 6.2%, fourth lowest among provinces and well below the national rate of 6.7%. At the peak of COVID-19's labour market disruption in May 2020, the provincial unemployment rate reached 12.4%, Saskatchewan's highest rate on record since the current Statistics Canada series began in 1976.





Unemployment by Major Demographic Group

Saskatchewan Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

| Seasonally Adjusted Data | October 2021 (%) | September 2021 (%) | October 2020 (%) | Monthly Variation (% points) | Yearly Variation (% points) |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Total | 6.2 | 6.3 | 6.7 | -0.1 | -0.5 |
| 25 years and over | 5.7 | 5.8 | 5.3 | -0.1 | 0.4 |
| Men - 25 years and over | 6.6 | 6.9 | 6.1 | -0.3 | 0.5 |
| Women - 25 years and over | 4.6 | 4.6 | 4.2 | 0.0 | 0.4 |
| 15 to 24 years | 9.4 | 9.1 | 14.8 | 0.3 | -5.4 |
| Men - 15 to 24 years | 9.7 | 8.7 | 17.8 | 1.0 | -8.1 |
| Women - 15 to 24 years | 8.8 | 9.5 | 11.6 | -0.7 | -2.8 |

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

Saskatchewan workers aged 25 years and over continue to fare better than their younger counterparts (15 to 24 years). Younger workers have historically experienced unemployment rates as much as double that of their older counterparts, a trend amplified earlier during the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally, young men appear particularly vulnerable to employment downturns, as seen in October 2020 when their unemployment rate reached 17.8%, one-third higher than that of young women. Since then, as Saskatchewan's economy has improved from its pandemic lows, the unemployment rates of the major demographic groups have returned to more historically normal levels. In October 2021, the unemployment rate gap between young men and young women was 0.9 percentage points, less than that seen between men and women aged 25 years and above.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

On the month, employment in Saskatchewan's goods-producing sector fell by 6,000 (-4.7%), while employment in the services-producing sector decreased by just 600 (-0.1%). Employment in the goods-producing sector is far below pre-pandemic levels, down (-13.7%) from February 2020. On the bright side, employment in the services-producing sector represents an overall increase of 1.8% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, staff shortages persist in **accommodation and food services** and **healthcare and social assistance**, as many workers in these industries opt for new careers due to wage constraints, irregular hours, or burnout.



Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

| Seasonally Adjusted | October | September | October | Monthly Variation | | Yearly Variation | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|-------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| Data ('000) | 2021 | 2021 | 2020 | Number | % | Number | % |
| Total employed, all industries | 561.2 | 567.7 | 555.7 | -6.5 | -1.1 | 5.5 | 1.0 |
| Goods-producing sector | 123.0 | 129.0 | 132.7 | -6.0 | -4.7 | -9.7 | -7.3 |
| Agriculture | 24.4 | 26.3 | 34.3 | -1.9 | -7.2 | -9.9 | -28.9 |
| Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas | 16.8 | 19.4 | 20.6 | -2.6 | -13.4 | -3.8 | -18.4 |
| Utilities | 6.3 | 7.0 | 6.3 | -0.7 | -10.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Construction | 43.0 | 41.9 | 39.3 | 1.1 | 2.6 | 3.7 | 9.4 |
| Manufacturing | 32.5 | 34.4 | 32.1 | -1.9 | -5.5 | 0.4 | 1.2 |
| Services-producing sector | 438.1 | 438.7 | 423.0 | -0.6 | -0.1 | 15.1 | 3.6 |
| Trade | 96.3 | 97.5 | 88.2 | -1.2 | -1.2 | 8.1 | 9.2 |
| Transportation and warehousing | 25.3 | 24.2 | 24.5 | 1.1 | 4.5 | 0.8 | 3.3 |
| Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing | 31.7 | 30.2 | 27.8 | 1.5 | 5.0 | 3.9 | 14.0 |
| Professional, scientific and technical services | 26.6 | 27.9 | 27.1 | -1.3 | -4.7 | -0.5 | -1.8 |
| Business, building and other support services | 13.3 | 15.5 | 16.4 | -2.2 | -14.2 | -3.1 | -18.9 |
| Educational services | 45.6 | 46.5 | 44.7 | -0.9 | -1.9 | 0.9 | 2.0 |
| Health care and social assistance | 89.9 | 88.3 | 82.1 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 7.8 | 9.5 |
| Information, culture and recreation | 18.4 | 18.6 | 14.9 | -0.2 | -1.1 | 3.5 | 23.5 |
| Accommodation and food services | 31.5 | 30.2 | 31.6 | 1.3 | 4.3 | -0.1 | -0.3 |
| Other services | 24.9 | 24.9 | 31.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | -6.5 | -20.7 |
| Public administration | 34.6 | 35.0 | 34.3 | -0.4 | -1.1 | 0.3 | 0.9 |

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 **agriculture** (-9,900 or -28.9%). In 2021, prolonged drought conditions caused harvest to begin early and progress quickly as many farmers tried to preserve yields.⁵ The estimated average crop yield for canola was 21 bushels per acre, two-thirds the ten-year average yield of 34 bushels per acre.⁶ Overall production is estimated to have declined by as much as 47% from 2020.⁷ While elevated commodity prices may help cushion the financial impact on growers over the short term, ranchers were also affected by the harsh conditions as less feed was available for livestock. As of September 1, producers affected by drought were eligible to apply for part of the \$119M of funding available through the AgriRecovery program.⁸

Employment in the **construction** industry increased on the month (+2.6%) and year-over-year (+9.4%), as the Government of Saskatchewan continues to focus on construction as an avenue for economic recovery. In addition to the new and expanding canola crush plants announced this year, another major private sector construction project will begin shortly. BHP, the world's second largest mining company by revenue, is investing a further \$7.5 billion into the Jansen potash mine east of Saskatoon. Around 1,000 construction jobs will be created during 2022 with 3,500 occurring during the peak construction period of 2024. In August, the most recent data available, housing starts in the province were up 28% year-to-date compared to 2020. Residential construction is being driven by a combination of higher than average household savings and lower than average mortgage rates, both as a result of the pandemic.



Saskatchewan's resource extraction industry (**forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas**) lost 3,800 jobs year-over-year, primarily in mining. Mining jobs are expected to return as potash demand increases. Indeed, once operational, BHP expects to add 400 jobs at its Jansen potash mine and 200 at its Saskatoon Discovery Plaza office as of 2027. The company aims at having its operational workforce be gender-balanced and 20% Indigenous.¹¹

Sasakatchewan is the second-largest producer of oil and gas by volume in the country, and rock-bottom oil prices in the early pandemic had an impact on industry jobs. Prices have since rebounded, and now production has started to rise. In August 2021, oil production in Saskatchewan increased by 4.6% compared to August 2020. Nevertheless, year-to-date oil production is roughly equivalent to 2020 levels, continuing the lower production trend that began with the pandemic. However, this may be changing. According to PetroLMI, an industry labour market information provider, the unemployment rate in the Canadian oil and gas services sector fell from 17.7% in September 2020 to 3.7% in September 2021. In Saskatchewan, the current unemployment rate among oil and gas services workers was characterized as essentially zero. ¹³

Turning to the services-producing sector, employment in Saskatchewan's **retail and wholesale trade** industry lost 1,200 jobs (-1.2%) on the month, while remaining well above its pre-pandemic level (+13.7%). Annual gains in this industry came as vaccination rates rose, COVID-19 public health restrictions eased, and outlets resumed full in-store operations. Aside from workers returning to jobs, new retail businesses also added to employment numbers. For example, a new Indigenous store, Nîkihk, opened in Saskatoon's Midtown Plaza in October. The store also provides a space for Indigenous artists to create and showcase their work. Meanwhile, the number of retail cannabis stores in Saskatchewan continues to increase. Notably, High Tide will open five retail locations in Regina under the name "Canna Cabana" by the end of the year. New vape shops recently opened in Canora and Kamsack. 16

Employment in the **health care and social assistance** industry rose on the month (+1,600), while also showing notable growth on a year-over-year basis (+7,800). However, the health care industry grappled with the fourth wave of the pandemic, which strained already under-staffed health care facilities in the province. According to the Saskatchewan Health Authority, there are labour shortages in both urban and rural care centres. Starting November 1, patients may see a disruption to services at the Foam Lake Health Centre near Yorkton. Health care providers are being redeployed to Saskatoon to assist in the intensive care unit (ICU).¹⁷ In response to overflowing ICUs in the province, at least 22 patients were transferred to hospitals in Ontario.¹⁸ At the same time, Saskatchewan Polytechnic is aiming to address shortages in x-ray and laboratory positions by doubling the number of seats in the combined laboratory and x-ray technologists program.¹⁹

While the **accommodation and food services** industry welcomed changes to public health orders that lifted all restrictions in July, rising cases required partial reinstatements as of October 1. Despite adding 1,300 jobs in October, employment in the industry remains 6,800 below pre-pandemic levels of February 2020 (-17.8%). In a trend seen nationwide, some restaurant owners continue to face staffing challenges. Businesses are reporting staff shortages of 15% to 20%, as former workers may have new jobs or no longer want to work in the restaurant industry.^{20,21}



REGIONAL ANALYSIS

On a year-over-year basis, employment is up in four of five economic regions compared to October 2020, even with the province suffering from a record high number of COVID-19 cases and COVID-19 related hospitalizations. Only Swift Current – Moose Jaw saw job losses on the year of -3,000 (-5.6%), due to weakness across the services-producing sector. Regina – Moose Mountain led the regions by adding 6,400 jobs (+3.7%) overall.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

| | Employment | | | Unemployment Rate | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data | October 2021 ('000) | October 2020 ('000) | Yearly Variation (%) | October 2021 (%) | October 2020 (%) | Yearly Variation (% points) | |
| Saskatchewan | 568.4 | 557.7 | 1.9 | 5.9 | 6.9 | -1.0 | |
| Economic Regions | | | | | | | |
| Regina - Moose Mountain | 181.3 | 174.9 | 3.7 | 5.9 | 6.0 | -0.1 | |
| Swift Current - Moose Jaw | 50.2 | 53.2 | -5.6 | 7.9 | 6.5 | 1.4 | |
| Saskatoon - Biggar | 199.0 | 198.0 | 0.5 | 6.4 | 8.0 | -1.6 | |
| Yorkton - Melville | 36.6 | 35.8 | 2.2 | 3.7 | 5.3 | -1.6 | |
| Prince Albert and Northern | 101.3 | 95.8 | 5.7 | 5.0 | 7.4 | -2.4 | |

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, the **Saskatoon-Biggar** region posted small employment gains of 1,000 (+0.5%), which are slightly above (0.7%) February 2020's pre-pandemic employment level. One of the key contributors is the increase of 2,200 jobs (+1.4%) in the services-producing sector over the past year. According to Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority, nine out of 15 economic sectors are back to pre-pandemic levels. Sectors like retail and manufacturing have seen sales and shipments exceed pre-pandemic levels whereas sectors like travel and tourism continue to lag.²²

Optek Solutions, a new IT firm that provides technical support, recently began operating in Saskatoon. The company received investment from two Indigenous-owned companies, The Peter Ballantyne Group of Companies and Athabasca Basin Development.²³

Meanwhile, the provincial government is providing \$6.37M to the Saskatoon Police Service to hire 49 new police officers in 2021-22. The new positions are funded through the Municipal Police Grants program and the Combined Traffic Services Saskatchewan initiative.²⁴

Compared to the previous year, employment in **Regina-Moose Mountain** grew 6,400 (+3.7%), due to the services-producing industries experiencing strong employment gains, 10,500 (7.7%). Saskatchewan Polytechnic's Digital Integration Centre of Excellence recently opened a new office at Regina's Innovation Place. The company will help advance Saskatchewan's growing tech sector by providing digital solutions focused on data.²⁵

On the down side, Regina's Co-op Refinery Complex announced the upcoming layoff of 54 employees within the next 6 months. The company is preparing to transition to a low carbon footprint, and is seeking improved operational efficiencies and workforce reductions.²⁶



Moving to construction-related jobs in the region, the City of Regina will be providing \$783,000 towards the construction of 29 new rapid housing units, on top of the \$7.8M the federal government announced earlier this year. The homes are expected to be built by October 2022.²⁷ Siemens Transportation Group Inc. is building a new terminal for its company Kindersley Transport at Pasqua Business Park. The site is just north of Regina and will include a new 40,000-square-foot warehouse.²⁸

Meanwhile in health-related news, a new primary health and wellness centre is under development in Oxbow. The new facility will be home to many health professionals in a centralized location.²⁹

Compared to October 2020, 5,500 (+5.7%) more people were employed in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region, surpassing February 2020's pre-pandemic level by +2.8%. The provincial government is providing \$3.78M to the Prince Albert Police Service to hire 25 new police officers in 2021-22. The new positions are funded through the Municipal Police Grants program and the Combined Traffic Services Saskatchewan initiative.³⁰

In agricultural-related news, G3, a grain handling company, will be building a new \$55.8M grain elevator in Melfort. The new facility will create up to 14 permanent full-time positions and is expected to be operational in time for the 2023 harvest season.³¹ Eat Well Group Inc. recently acquired Belle Pulses, a pulse processing company in Bellevue. The company will continue to create new plant-based foods while looking for new opportunities in the agri-food and plant-based food sectors.³²

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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