



Labour Market Bulletin

Saskatchewan

February 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 economy continued its slow recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2021 as employment edged up 0.4% for a second month in a row. Job gains were all in full-time employment, as part-time employment contracted slightly compared to the previous month.

Taking a longer view, overall employment in Saskatchewan was down 4.0% compared to February 2020. Public sector employment was the least affected, down 2,000 positions (-1.4%), while private sector employment was down (-11,300 or -3.4%). In contrast, self-employment (-9,700 or -9.9%) remains significantly below the level of February 2020.¹

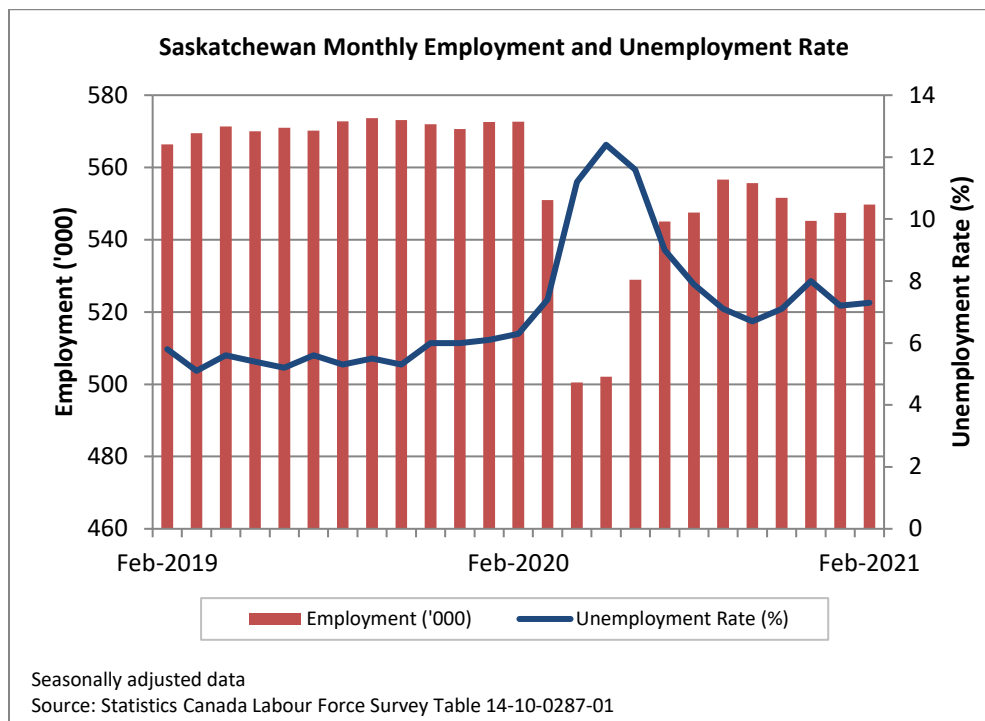
Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	February 2021	January 2021	February 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	889.1	888.2	888.1	0.9	0.1	1.0	0.1
Labour Force ('000)	592.8	589.7	611.1	3.1	0.5	-18.3	-3.0
Employment ('000)	549.7	547.4	572.7	2.3	0.4	-23.0	-4.0
Full-Time ('000)	449.4	446.9	467.1	2.5	0.6	-17.7	-3.8
Part-Time ('000)	100.3	100.5	105.6	-0.2	-0.2	-5.3	-5.0
Unemployment ('000)	43.1	42.3	38.5	0.8	1.9	4.6	11.9
Unemployment Rate (%)	7.3	7.2	6.3	0.1	-	1.0	-
Participation Rate (%)	66.7	66.4	68.8	0.3	-	-2.1	-
Employment Rate (%)	61.8	61.6	64.5	0.2	-	-2.7	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

After several months of tighter COVID-19 restrictions, the Province recently relaxed its indoor gathering limit for household bubbles to 10, while increasing its places of worship limit to 30% of capacity or 150 people, whichever is less. Face masks remain mandatory in public places province-wide.



Despite job gains on the month, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate rose 0.1 percentage points to 7.3% in February, as more people entered the labour market actively looking for work. This affects the rate because unemployment rates include people who are without a job and actively searching for work. The province's unemployment rate remains a full percentage point above the rate of February 2020 (6.3%).

Unemployment by Major Demographic Group

Saskatchewan Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	February 2021 (%)	January 2021 (%)	February 2020 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	7.3	7.2	6.3	0.1	1.0
25 years and over	6.1	5.7	5.0	0.4	1.1
Men - 25 years and over	5.9	6.3	5.5	-0.4	0.4
Women - 25 years and over	6.3	5.1	4.4	1.2	1.9
15 to 24 years	14.4	15.6	13.9	-1.2	0.5
Men - 15 to 24 years	18.8	19.1	15.5	-0.3	3.3
Women - 15 to 24 years	10.2	12.1	12.0	-1.9	-1.8

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

Saskatchewan workers 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 small dip in their unemployment rate (-0.3 percentage points) on the month. Young women saw the largest decrease in their unemployment rate (-1.9 percentage points) over the same period. Notably, older men had a lower unemployment rate than older women in February, while young men had an unemployment rate almost double that of young women.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

In February, employment in Saskatchewan's goods-producing sector increased 3,900 (+3.0%), while employment in the services-producing sector dipped 1,400 (-0.3%). Year-over-year, employment in the goods-producing sector fell 6.1%, while employment in the services-producing sector was 3.3% below February 2020 levels.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	February 2021	January 2021	February 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	549.7	547.4	572.7	2.3	0.4	-23.0	-4.0
Goods-producing sector	133.8	129.9	142.5	3.9	3.0	-8.7	-6.1
Agriculture	32.2	32.0	39.6	0.2	0.6	-7.4	-18.7
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	21.9	21.4	21.0	0.5	2.3	0.9	4.3
Utilities	5.8	5.8	5.5	0.0	0.0	0.3	5.5
Construction	43.1	41.1	43.1	2.0	4.9	0.0	0.0
Manufacturing	30.8	29.6	33.2	1.2	4.1	-2.4	-7.2
Services-producing sector	416.0	417.4	430.2	-1.4	-0.3	-14.2	-3.3
Trade	87.9	87.4	84.7	0.5	0.6	3.2	3.8
Transportation and warehousing	22.9	24.3	26.1	-1.4	-5.8	-3.2	-12.3
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	26.4	25.9	29.7	0.5	1.9	-3.3	-11.1
Professional, scientific and technical services	27.6	28.7	27.1	-1.1	-3.8	0.5	1.8
Business, building and other support services	16.0	16.5	15.3	-0.5	-3.0	0.7	4.6
Educational services	43.4	44.2	46.3	-0.8	-1.8	-2.9	-6.3
Health care and social assistance	83.2	83.6	79.7	-0.4	-0.5	3.5	4.4
Information, culture and recreation	13.8	13.1	22.2	0.7	5.3	-8.4	-37.8
Accommodation and food services	30.2	28.8	38.3	1.4	4.9	-8.1	-21.1
Other services	28.6	30.4	28.7	-1.8	-5.9	-0.1	-0.3
Public administration	36.0	34.4	32.1	1.6	4.7	3.9	12.1

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 (-7,400), with job losses concentrated in the production of animals, primarily cattle. Nevertheless, Saskatchewan remains home to many agri-food research initiatives. The Canada Foundation for Innovation is providing \$3.2M for the University of Saskatchewan's new biomanufacturing facility. The facility focuses on agri-food innovation and strengthening food security.²

The **construction** industry gained 2,000 jobs on the month. The Government of Saskatchewan continues to focus on construction as an avenue for economic recovery, and several large provincially funded projects were announced in February. Over \$130M will go toward 16 highway construction projects throughout the province,³ with an additional \$3M slated for Saskatchewan's smaller cities to operate and upgrade their local highways.⁴ Looking ahead, Saskatoon-based Strategic Prairie Region Alliance will provide design and engineering services for the upcoming Saskatoon Remand Centre expansion project. The project is expected to create around 600 construction jobs over its lifetime.⁵

Manufacturing lost 2,400 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.⁶ Turning to agricultural-related manufacturing, BASF Agricultural Solutions completed a \$14M transformation of its Regina crop protection production facility.⁷ In food manufacturing, 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.⁸

Saskatchewan's resource extraction industry (**forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas**) saw encouraging employment gains in February, adding 900 jobs (+4.3%) year-over-year. In oil and gas, certain alternative ventures are creating jobs in the industry: Saskatoon-based Royal Helium Ltd. drilled three helium wells near Climax, while Calgary-based North American Helium Inc. plans to drill 15 helium wells in Saskatchewan's southwest corner.⁹ Also in the oil and gas industry, the Government of Saskatchewan introduced two new programs to increase participation of First Nations and Métis workers and contractors in inactive oil and gas well reclamation.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 in Alberta and British Columbia this year.¹¹

Turning to the services-producing sector, the **transportation and warehousing** industry shed 1,400 jobs in February. Due to significantly reduced demand for air travel since the beginning of the pandemic, Nav Canada laid off all 10 of its air traffic controllers at Regina International Airport. The corporation also announced it is considering permanently closing its Regina traffic control tower, pending a review of whether the airport is busy enough to require the service.¹²

The **accommodation and food services** industry has also been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with employment down 21.1% (-8,100) from February 2020 levels. Many restaurants have adapted to meet public health restrictions by limiting their capacity; consequently, sales both in full- and limited-service restaurants have declined significantly, and some restaurants have permanently closed.¹³ On a more positive note, the industry added 1,400 jobs on the month, perhaps reflecting the public's optimism for a return to

normality as the vaccine rollout quickens. The Moose and Bannock, a restaurant offering Indigenous cuisine, recently opened in Regina, displaying the industry's expectations for renewed demand post-pandemic.¹⁴

Saskatchewan's **retail and wholesale trade** industry gained 500 jobs on the month despite COVID-19 cases hampering retail operations. Some firms have voluntarily turned to delivery or curbside pickup. On the up side, residents in several Saskatchewan small towns are choosing to shop locally instead of going to bigger stores in nearby cities. As a result, at least some small town grocers are seeing an increase in business.¹⁵ Recently, Tesla opened its first Saskatchewan dealership in Saskatoon at the Stonebridge auto mall. The company is the first electric-only vehicle manufacturer to open a store in the province.¹⁶

Though employment in the **information, culture, and recreation** industry remains significantly below pre-pandemic levels (-37.8% year-over-year), the industry saw moderate (+5.3%) monthly gains, adding 700 jobs in February. In Humboldt, the fitness centre and pool at the Humboldt Uniplex reopened in early February. Aquatic centre staff were recalled for shifts starting on February 8.¹⁷ Another positive development for the industry comes as the Province announced plans to allow seasonal sports and recreational activities, though no firm date for the changes has been announced.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 (-9.9%), while **Saskatoon-Biggar** 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		
	February 2021 ('000)	February 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	February 2021 (%)	February 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Saskatchewan	540.7	565.4	-4.4	7.7	6.1	1.6
Economic Regions						
Regina - Moose Mountain	167.7	175.7	-4.6	8.1	6.3	1.8
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	51.4	54.1	-5.0	6.5	4.8	1.7
Saskatoon - Biggar	191.6	197.7	-3.1	8.0	6.4	1.6
Yorkton - Melville	35.5	39.4	-9.9	5.6	5.5	0.1
Prince Albert and Northern	94.4	98.5	-4.2	7.7	5.7	2.0

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 6,100 (-3.1%) as job losses were seen both in goods-producing and services-producing industries. The region saw heavy job losses in agriculture year-over-year. Recently, the Canada Foundation for Innovation awarded \$6.8M to the University of Saskatchewan for bison conservation research. The university will collaborate with the livestock industry and Indigenous communities to develop a bison genome biobank.¹⁹

By contrast with agriculture, the region's construction industry saw job growth on the year (+800). Looking ahead, the City of Saskatoon has approved plans to develop a permanent outdoor festival site at Friendship Park and River Landing Park. The estimated cost of the project is \$12.85M.²⁰ Turning to manufacturing, 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.²¹ Meanwhile, Saskatchewan's largest private sector employer, Nutrien Potash, is laying off or potentially transferring employees to other roles at its Saskatoon corporate offices. Fewer than 50 employees will be affected.²² At the same time, 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 2021.²³

The **Regina-Moose Mountain** region posted moderate employment losses (-8,000 or -4.6%) on the year, while ongoing uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 continues to prompt businesses to re-examine their long-term sustainability. On a positive note, the City of Regina has approved up to a maximum of \$60M to upgrade the Buffalo Pound Water Treatment Corporation plant. The plant, majority owned by Regina, provides drinking water to residents in Regina and Moose Jaw.²⁴ Looking forward, 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.²⁵

According to the Regina Downtown Business Improvement District (RDBID), around 4,500 people go into downtown Regina daily, compared to 35,000 before the pandemic. As a result, many downtown restaurants and coffee shops struggle to stay open.²⁶ Gūd Eats, a Regina vegan fast food restaurant, closed in February. Reduced traffic due to COVID-19 and high fees tied to third-party delivery services are the main reasons cited for the closure.²⁷ In transportation news, Uber is expanding its ridesharing services in the Regina area to include neighbouring municipalities such as Pilot Butte, Balgonie, Pense, and the RM of Edenwold.²⁸

Compared to last February, 4,100 (-4.2%) 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.²⁹ In the transportation industry, 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-19.³⁰

The Prince Albert Police Service signed a new partnership with the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MNS) to help identify and mentor qualified Métis applicants for a career in law enforcement. MNS will provide \$100,000 this year to fund two participants in the mentorship program.³¹ In construction, SaskPower is building new facilities in Nipawin and Hudson Bay, while closing their facilities in Carrot River and Porcupine Plain. No layoffs are expected at this time.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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