



# Labour Market Bulletin

## Saskatchewan

April 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 accelerated in April 2021 as employment increased 9,500 compared to March. Job gains were mostly in part-time employment (+8,000), as full-time employment increased 1,500. Unemployment decreased by 4,000 during the same period.

Taking a longer view, overall employment in Saskatchewan was up 11.7% compared to April 2020, the low point for employment (deepest employment trough) during the initial lockdown period last year. Nevertheless, in April 2021, overall employment in Saskatchewan was still 13,500 below February 2020's pre-pandemic level (-2.4%). Private sector employment was down 7,800 positions compared to February 2020, while self-employment was down 8,900. In contrast, public sector employment increased (+3,100).<sup>1</sup>

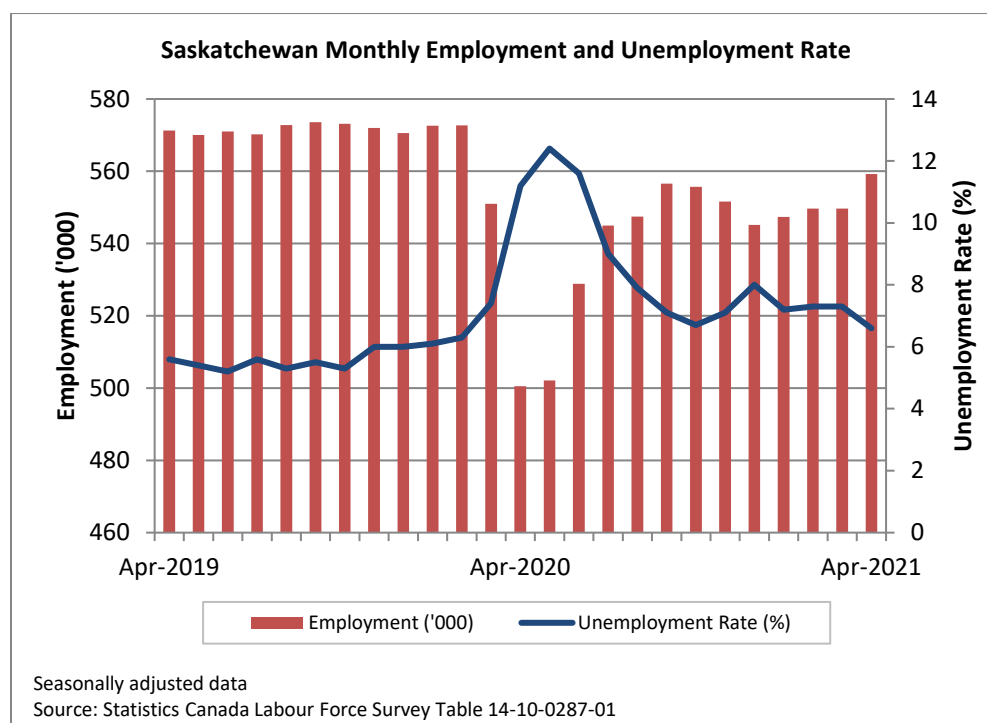
### Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	April 2021	March 2021	April 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Population 15 + ('000)</b>	889.4	889.4	888.5	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.1
<b>Labour Force ('000)</b>	598.6	593.1	563.9	5.5	0.9	34.7	6.2
<b>Employment ('000)</b>	559.2	549.7	500.5	9.5	1.7	58.7	11.7
Full-Time ('000)	449.0	447.5	423.9	1.5	0.3	25.1	5.9
Part-Time ('000)	110.2	102.2	76.6	8.0	7.8	33.6	43.9
<b>Unemployment ('000)</b>	39.4	43.4	63.4	-4.0	-9.2	-24.0	-37.9
<b>Unemployment Rate (%)</b>	6.6	7.3	11.2	-0.7	-	-4.6	-
<b>Participation Rate (%)</b>	67.3	66.7	63.5	0.6	-	3.8	-
<b>Employment Rate (%)</b>	62.9	61.8	56.3	1.1	-	6.6	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

While rising numbers of variant cases are a concern, Saskatchewan's COVID-19 vaccination efforts are outpacing the Canadian average. In mid-March the Province mandated that workers are entitled to three consecutive hours' paid leave during work hours to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.



Given the monthly employment gains, it is not surprising that Saskatchewan's unemployment rate fell 0.7 percentage points to 6.6% in April. The total labour supply also increased on the month, up 5,500 or +0.9%. In April, the province's unemployment rate was 4.6 percentage points below April 2020 (11.2%) when the employment impacts of COVID-19 were at or near their most severe.

### Unemployment by Major Demographic Group

**Saskatchewan Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age**

Seasonally Adjusted Data	April 2021 (%)	March 2021 (%)	April 2020 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
<b>Total</b>	6.6	7.3	11.2	-0.7	-4.6
<b>25 years and over</b>	5.5	6.2	9.3	-0.7	-3.8
Men - 25 years and over	5.9	6.8	8.5	-0.9	-2.6
Women - 25 years and over	5.1	5.6	10.3	-0.5	-5.2
<b>15 to 24 years</b>	12.8	13.7	23.7	-0.9	-10.9
Men - 15 to 24 years	14.9	17.2	20.2	-2.3	-5.3
Women - 15 to 24 years	10.6	9.9	27.6	0.7	-17.0

*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 dip in their unemployment rate (-2.3 percentage points) on the month. On the year, young women saw the largest decrease in their unemployment rate (-17.0 percentage points). Notably, older men had a unemployment rate close to that of older women in April 2021 (0.8 percentage points higher), while young men had an unemployment rate more than 4 percentage points higher than that of young women.

## EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

In April 2021, employment in Saskatchewan's goods-producing sector increased 4,800 (+3.6%), while employment in the services-producing sector increased 4,600 (+1.1%). Year-over-year, employment in the goods-producing sector was up 7.7%, while employment in the services-producing sector was 13.1% above the employment trough of April 2020.

**Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry**

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	April 2021	March 2021	April 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Total employed, all industries</b>	559.2	549.7	500.5	9.5	1.7	58.7	11.7
<b>Goods-producing sector</b>	138.2	133.4	128.3	4.8	3.6	9.9	7.7
Agriculture	33.1	31.5	39.3	1.6	5.1	-6.2	-15.8
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	20.8	20.9	17.1	-0.1	-0.5	3.7	21.6
Utilities	5.5	5.6	5.8	-0.1	-1.8	-0.3	-5.2
Construction	46.7	45.9	37.7	0.8	1.7	9.0	23.9
Manufacturing	32.1	29.5	28.3	2.6	8.8	3.8	13.4
<b>Services-producing sector</b>	420.9	416.3	372.2	4.6	1.1	48.7	13.1
Trade	89.0	89.4	72.0	-0.4	-0.4	17.0	23.6
Transportation and warehousing	20.8	23.1	22.9	-2.3	-10.0	-2.1	-9.2
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	26.5	25.9	29.0	0.6	2.3	-2.5	-8.6
Professional, scientific and technical services	29.8	28.1	26.3	1.7	6.0	3.5	13.3
Business, building and other support services	15.2	16.0	13.3	-0.8	-5.0	1.9	14.3
Educational services	45.3	43.3	39.6	2.0	4.6	5.7	14.4
Health care and social assistance	86.3	84.6	75.0	1.7	2.0	11.3	15.1
Information, culture and recreation	15.5	13.5	16.1	2.0	14.8	-0.6	-3.7
Accommodation and food services	29.1	28.9	20.5	0.2	0.7	8.6	42.0
Other services	27.7	27.6	25.9	0.1	0.4	1.8	6.9
Public administration	35.8	35.7	31.6	0.1	0.3	4.2	13.3

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** (-6,200), with job losses seen in the production of animals, primarily cattle. Nevertheless, Saskatchewan's crop producers enjoyed a good year in 2020 and the province remains home to many agri-food research initiatives. The Canada

Foundation for Innovation is providing \$3.2M for the University of Saskatchewan's new bio-manufacturing facility. The facility focuses on agri-food innovation and strengthening food security.<sup>2</sup>

The **construction** industry gained 800 jobs on the month as the Government of Saskatchewan continues to focus on construction as an avenue for economic recovery. Many large provincially funded projects were announced in the province's 2021-2022 budget. An expected \$520M will go toward highway projects throughout the province, including passing lane and other safety and efficiency projects, with an additional \$33M slated for other transportation initiatives.<sup>3</sup> Publicly-owned SaskPower is building the Great Plains Power Plant in Moose Jaw, with construction of the 350-megawatt gas plant slated to begin this spring.<sup>4</sup> In the private sector, three firms have announced major canola crushing projects, with all three slated for completion in 2024. Richardson International is expanding its Yorkton-based canola crush plant, with construction beginning this spring.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, both Cargill and Viterra are planning new crush plants in the Regina area. Of the three, Viterra's new facility will be the largest, supporting 1,000 workers during the construction phase and 100 permanent staff once operational.<sup>6</sup> Cargill's \$350 million plant is expected to support 50 jobs upon completion.<sup>7</sup>

Compared to March, the **manufacturing** industry gained 2,600 jobs, mostly in food manufacturing, but also in the manufacturing of petroleum and chemical products. Covenant Energy, a Saskatchewan-based renewable fuel company, is in the early planning-stages to build a renewable diesel fuel processing plant in southern Saskatchewan. The new facility would create around 60 permanent jobs.<sup>8</sup>

Saskatchewan's resource extraction industry (**forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas**) saw encouraging employment gains, adding 3,700 jobs (+21.6%) on a year-over-year basis. In oil and gas, certain alternative ventures are creating jobs in the industry; Calgary-based North American Helium Inc. opened a new helium production facility near Battle Creek. The \$32M plant is the largest of its kind in Canada and will create local job opportunities.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, Saskatoon-based Royal Helium Ltd. drilled three helium wells near Climax, while North American Helium plans to drill 15 helium wells in Saskatchewan's southwest corner.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

Turning to the services-producing sector, Saskatchewan's **retail and wholesale trade** industry lost 400 jobs on the month as COVID-19 cases hampered retail operations. Some firms have voluntarily turned to delivery or curbside pickup. On a positive note, some small town grocers are seeing an increase in business as residents are choosing to shop locally instead of going to bigger stores in nearby cities.<sup>12</sup> Also noteworthy, Cargill is expanding its operations in southeast Saskatchewan by acquiring Precision Ag, an agricultural retail business with facilities located in Griffin, Odessa, Carlyle and Carnduff.<sup>13</sup>

Employment in the **health care and social assistance** industry rose both on the month (+1,700) and on the year (+11,300) as the demands of COVID-19 increased staffing needs. Vaccination clinics are now in operation around the province and pharmacies are also providing immunizations. In funding news, the Government of Canada is providing \$6.5M to the province to expand and strengthen Saskatchewan's virtual health care services.<sup>14</sup> In health care scientific and technical news, the University of Saskatchewan's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) was pledged \$59.2 million in the federal budget to develop and manufacture bio-

solutions such as vaccines and therapeutics. The funding will also allow VIDO to upgrade to become one of just two level 4 containment labs in the country (in addition to the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg).<sup>15</sup>

The **accommodation and food services** industry continues to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with employment little changed (+200) from March. Despite the gain of 8,600 jobs since April 2020, employment in accommodation and food services remains 9,200 below the pre-pandemic level of February 2020 (-24.0%). 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.<sup>16</sup> Effective March 28, the Government of Saskatchewan ordered all restaurants in Regina to close their doors to dine-in customers. Delivery and take-out services will still be allowed.<sup>17</sup>

In a move likely welcomed by the accommodation industry, the Government of Canada is providing \$11.6M in funding for the Safe Voluntary Isolation Sites program. The program provides individuals in Saskatchewan who are unable to self-isolate at home a place to safely isolate (usually a hotel room).<sup>18</sup>

## REGIONAL ANALYSIS

On an annual basis, employment is up in four of five economic regions compared to the employment trough of April 2020, as the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take its toll. **Yorkton-Melville** continued to see job losses (-5.3%) on the year, while **Swift Current-Moose Jaw** has shown the most promising signs of employment recovery (+4.1%).

**Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region**

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	April 2021 ('000)	April 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	April 2021 (%)	April 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	543.5	532.2	2.1	7.8	8.9	-1.1
<b>Economic Regions</b>						
Regina - Moose Mountain	169.7	165.8	2.4	8.8	8.9	-0.1
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	52.9	50.8	4.1	6.7	8.5	-1.8
Saskatoon - Biggar	191.5	185.1	3.5	8.1	10.1	-2.0
Yorkton - Melville	35.4	37.4	-5.3	5.1	7.2	-2.1
Prince Albert and Northern	94.1	93.0	1.2	6.8	7.5	-0.7

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** rose 6,400 (+3.5%). Nevertheless, employment in the region is still 6,200 below February 2020's pre-pandemic level, as job losses were seen both in goods-producing and services-producing industries. The region saw heavy job losses in agriculture, second only to accommodation and food services in their severity. In agriculture-related news, the federal and provincial governments are providing \$2.3M to expand Saskatoon's Agri-Food Innovation Centre. The expansion will help food processors develop value-added foods and beverages and bring these products to market.<sup>19</sup>

By contrast with agriculture, the region's construction industry saw good job growth in April, up 2,900 compared to February 2020's pre-pandemic level. Looking ahead, the federal, provincial, and municipal governments are spending \$102M on 11 projects in Saskatoon and the surrounding area. Projects include upgrades to water and wastewater systems and a new solar power plant.<sup>20</sup> Another project in the early phases has Saskatoon-based Strategic Prairie Region Alliance providing 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 and is scheduled for completion by spring 2024.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, in arts and entertainment news, Saskatoon-based retailer, The Better Good, is looking to hire outdoor performing artists for Saskatoon's Broadway district. Performances will run from June to the end of August.<sup>22</sup>

First Nations organizations in the region are active in partnering on new initiatives in support of Indigenous people. The Government of Saskatchewan is providing Saskatoon Tribal Council with an additional \$350,000 to continue the Sawêyihotân pilot project. The project helps people experiencing homelessness find stable and long-term housing.<sup>23</sup>

On an annual basis, employment in **Regina-Moose Mountain** is up 3,900 (+2.4%) compared to April 2020. Nonetheless, employment in the region is still 6,000 below February 2020's pre-pandemic level. The Regina area has been hard hit as COVID-19 cases and variants of concern continue to challenge residents and businesses alike. Starting May 3, Regina Public and Catholic School students returned for in-person classes after lengthy school closures. High school students in Regina's public schools were learning online since March 24, while elementary students were remote learning since March 29.<sup>24</sup>

The provincial government has chosen Regina-based contractor Westridge Construction Inc. to upgrade two bridges on Highway 11 in the Lumsden Valley. Construction was set to begin April 13 and will be completed by late fall 2021 at a cost of \$1.7M.<sup>25</sup> In other construction news, the City of Regina is spending \$112.6M on construction projects in 2021. The projects include \$22.8 million for residential road upgrades, \$16.8 million for street infrastructure, and \$55 million towards water, wastewater and drainage projects.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, SaskPower is involved with two construction projects in the region. The utility is spending \$7M to upgrade the electrical infrastructure in downtown Regina to improve the electrical system's reliability as well as prepare it for future projects. SaskPower is also teaming up with Kruger Energy Saskatchewan Solar on a project to build a new solar energy facility in Regina. The facility would be the second of its kind in the province and be operational by the fall of 2022.<sup>27</sup>

The federal government is putting \$4.5 million into Regina's RCMP heritage centre to make it a national museum, only the third national museum outside of the Ottawa region; the other two are Halifax's Pier 21 Museum of Immigration and Winnipeg's Human Rights Museum. The targeted opening date is May 2023, to coincide with the 150-year anniversary of the RCMP.<sup>28</sup>

Compared to April 2020, 1,100 (+1.2%) more people were employed in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region. That leaves the region 4,400 shy of its pre-pandemic employment level in February 2020 (-4.5%). In mining, Saskatoon-based Cameco Corp., plans to resume uranium production at its Cigar Lake mine. Around 640 employees and contractors work at Cigar Lake when it is in production.<sup>29</sup>

For the second year in a row, the Ness Creek Music Festival has been cancelled due to concerns over spreading COVID-19. The three day festival is normally held mid-July near the town of Big River, 190 kms north of Saskatoon.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, operations have been suspended at Meadow Lake's sawmill after two drying kilns were damaged in a fire on March 27. Production will resume once it is deemed safe.<sup>31</sup>

In construction, the City of Humboldt is planning for the creation of a \$25M tribute centre to honour the victims of the Humboldt Broncos bus crash. The centre will include a gallery, ice surface and physiotherapy area.<sup>32</sup>

**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](http://www.statcan.gc.ca)

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