



# Labour Market Bulletin

## Saskatchewan

May 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 slow economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic continued in May 2021 as employment increased 4,100 compared to April. Job gains were evenly divided between part-time employment (+2,100) and full-time employment (+2,000).

Taking a longer view, overall employment in Saskatchewan is up 12.2% compared to May 2020, a low point for employment (deep employment trough) during the initial lockdown period last year. Nevertheless, in May 2021, overall employment in Saskatchewan was still 9,400 below February 2020's pre-pandemic level (-1.6%). Private sector employment was down 2,300 positions compared to February 2020, while self-employment was down 13,100. In contrast, public sector employment increased (+6,100).<sup>1</sup>

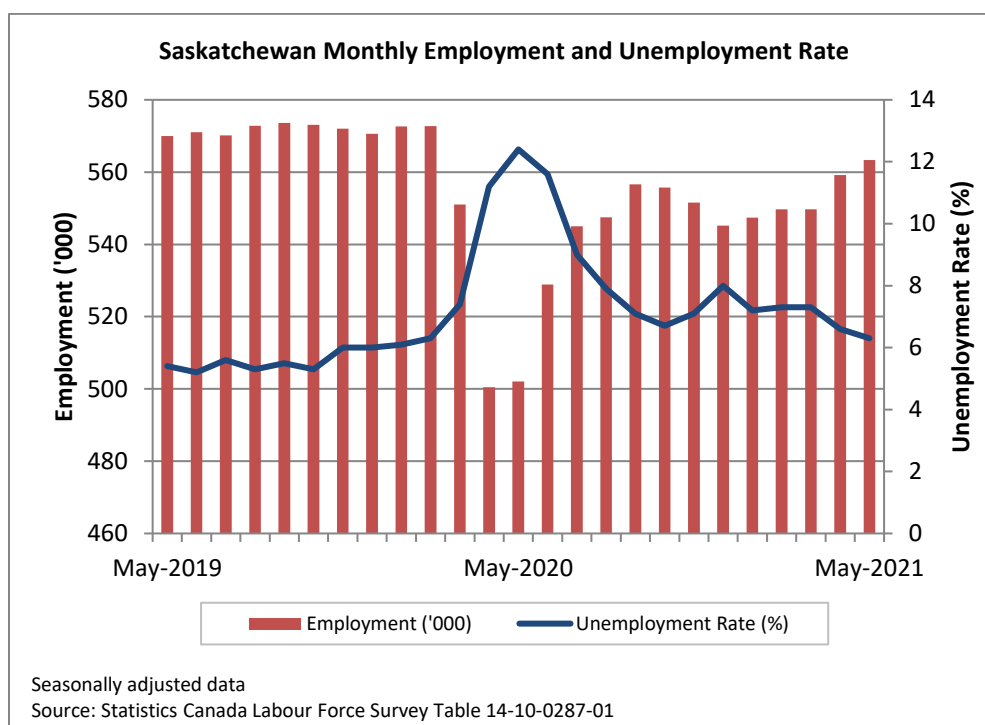
### Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	May 2021	April 2021	May 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	889.4	889.4	888.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.2
Labour Force ('000)	601.3	598.6	573.3	2.7	0.5	28.0	4.9
Employment ('000)	563.3	559.2	502.1	4.1	0.7	61.2	12.2
Full-Time ('000)	451.0	449.0	421.6	2.0	0.4	29.4	7.0
Part-Time ('000)	112.3	110.2	80.5	2.1	1.9	31.8	39.5
Unemployment ('000)	37.9	39.4	71.2	-1.5	-3.8	-33.3	-46.8
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.3	6.6	12.4	-0.3	-	-6.1	-
Participation Rate (%)	67.6	67.3	64.6	0.3	-	3.0	-
Employment Rate (%)	63.3	62.9	56.5	0.4	-	6.8	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

While variant cases remain a concern, Saskatchewan's COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations are down. The province's vaccination rates are on par with the Canadian average.



Given the monthly employment gains, it is not surprising that Saskatchewan's unemployment rate fell 0.3 percentage points to 6.3% in May. The total labour supply also increased on the month, up 2,700 or 0.5%. In May 2021, the province's unemployment rate was about half that of May 2020 (12.4%) 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	May 2021 (%)	April 2021 (%)	May 2020 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
<b>Total</b>	6.3	6.6	12.4	-0.3	-6.1
<b>25 years and over</b>	5.5	5.5	10.3	0.0	-4.8
Men - 25 years and over	6.0	5.9	10.6	0.1	-4.6
Women - 25 years and over	4.9	5.1	9.9	-0.2	-5.0
<b>15 to 24 years</b>	11.2	12.8	26.3	-1.6	-15.1
Men - 15 to 24 years	13.2	14.9	24.8	-1.7	-11.6
Women - 15 to 24 years	9.1	10.6	28.2	-1.5	-19.1

*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. That being said, the unemployment rate of

younger workers improved greatly in May while being little changed for those 25 years and over. On the year, young women saw the largest decrease in their unemployment rate (-19.1 percentage points). Notably, older men had a unemployment rate relatively close to that of older women in May 2021 (1.1 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 May 2021, employment in Saskatchewan's goods-producing sector decreased 5,400 (-3.9%), while employment in the services-producing sector increased 9,600 (+2.3%). Year-over-year, employment in the goods-producing sector was up 2.9%, while employment in the services-producing sector was 15.4% higher compared to May 2020.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	May 2021	April 2021	May 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Total employed, all industries</b>	563.3	559.2	502.1	4.1	0.7	61.2	12.2
<b>Goods-producing sector</b>	132.8	138.2	129.1	-5.4	-3.9	3.7	2.9
Agriculture	32.0	33.1	40.3	-1.1	-3.3	-8.3	-20.6
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	20.0	20.8	16.9	-0.8	-3.8	3.1	18.3
Utilities	5.3	5.5	5.2	-0.2	-3.6	0.1	1.9
Construction	42.6	46.7	36.9	-4.1	-8.8	5.7	15.4
Manufacturing	32.9	32.1	29.9	0.8	2.5	3.0	10.0
<b>Services-producing sector</b>	430.5	420.9	373.0	9.6	2.3	57.5	15.4
Trade	93.8	89.0	75.1	4.8	5.4	18.7	24.9
Transportation and warehousing	23.3	20.8	22.6	2.5	12.0	0.7	3.1
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	26.6	26.5	28.4	0.1	0.4	-1.8	-6.3
Professional, scientific and technical services	28.7	29.8	25.5	-1.1	-3.7	3.2	12.5
Business, building and other support services	16.2	15.2	14.0	1.0	6.6	2.2	15.7
Educational services	47.2	45.3	40.8	1.9	4.2	6.4	15.7
Health care and social assistance	86.7	86.3	75.3	0.4	0.5	11.4	15.1
Information, culture and recreation	18.0	15.5	13.9	2.5	16.1	4.1	29.5
Accommodation and food services	27.8	29.1	21.9	-1.3	-4.5	5.9	26.9
Other services	26.8	27.7	24.5	-0.9	-3.2	2.3	9.4
Public administration	35.6	35.8	31.0	-0.2	-0.6	4.6	14.8

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 **agriculture** (-8,300), with job losses seen in the production of animals, primarily cattle. Nevertheless, Saskatchewan's crop producers enjoyed a good year in 2020 as the province led the country in total net farm income at \$2.9 billion, accounting

for over one-third of the national total (\$8.1 billion).<sup>2</sup> This crop year is off to a good start as farmers got some much needed rain during seeding.

The **construction** industry lost 4,100 jobs on the month following five consecutive months of gains. 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. The Government of Saskatchewan is spending more than \$90M to upgrade Saskatchewan's Provincial Parks. Upgrades include improvements to boat launches, park roads, pathways, parking lots, and campground areas.<sup>3</sup> The provincial government is also providing \$25.7M to assist 69 rural municipalities with the cost of constructing and upgrading their road infrastructure. The funding is part of the third phase of the Rural Integrated Roads for Growth program.<sup>4</sup>

In the private sector, four firms have announced major canola crushing projects, with all four slated for completion in 2024. Richardson International is expanding its Yorkton-based canola crush facility, with construction beginning this spring.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Cargill, Viterra, and Ceres Global Ag Corp are planning new crush plants in the Regina area. Of the four, Viterra's new facility will be the largest, supporting 1,000 workers during construction and 100 permanent staff once operational.<sup>6</sup> Cargill's and Ceres Global Ag Corp's \$350 million plants are each expected to support 50 jobs upon completion.<sup>7,8</sup>

The **manufacturing** industry added 800 jobs in May, led by machinery manufacturing and petroleum and coal products manufacturing. In fabrication news, Ready Roll Truck Tarps Inc. recently opened near Kamsack. The tarp fabricator provides repair and installation services on roll tarps to farmers along the Saskatchewan/Manitoba border. 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>9</sup> Meanwhile, the federal and provincial governments are providing \$2.3M to expand Saskatoon's Agri-Food Innovation Centre. The expansion will help food manufacturers develop value-added foods and beverages and bring these products to market.<sup>10</sup>

Saskatchewan's resource extraction industry (**forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas**) saw encouraging employment gains, adding 3,100 jobs on a year-over-year basis. However, the industry is still down 1,000 jobs from its pre-pandemic level in February 2020. Saskatchewan is currently in the second phase of the abandoned oil well clean-up program. The Accelerated Site Closure Program runs until March 2022 and provides support to the oil and gas industry by creating and maintaining jobs.<sup>11</sup> In alternate energy news, Saskatoon-based helium company Royal Helium Ltd. has discovered a large amount of the element in southwestern Saskatchewan. The company estimates there is six billion cubic-feet of helium in the prospective area.<sup>12</sup> Recently, 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 employment opportunities.<sup>13</sup>

Turning to the services-producing sector, Saskatchewan's **retail and wholesale trade** industry gained 4,800 jobs on the month, the largest increase since September 2020. The gains come as COVID-19 case loads shrink, vaccination rates rise and outlets that had voluntarily turned to delivery or curbside pickup resume in-store operations. The number of retail cannabis stores in Saskatchewan continued to increase during the pandemic. Province-wide, 80 stores have either opened or plan to open, resulting in an increase in job opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

Employment in the **health care and social assistance** industry rose both on the month (+400) and on the year (+11,400) 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 Saskatchewan is providing \$670,000 through a new program with Yorkton's Foxvalley Counseling Services Inc., to help keep vulnerable children and families together.<sup>15</sup> In the federal budget, the University of Saskatchewan's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) was pledged \$59.2 million 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>16</sup>

The **accommodation and food services** industry continues to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with employment down 1,300 from April. Despite adding 5,900 jobs since May 2020, employment in the industry remains 10,500 below the pre-pandemic level of February 2020 (-27.4%). After closing for in-person dining March 28, all restaurants and bars in Regina were allowed to reopen for in-person dining effective May 17. Establishments must still follow the COVID-19 provincial guidelines.<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 weak employment in May 2020, as the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take its toll. **Yorkton-Melville** continued to see job losses (-4.9%) on the year, while **Regina – Moose Mountain** led the province on a year over year basis (+10.8%).

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

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	May 2021 ('000)	May 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	May 2021 (%)	May 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	553.0	514.1	7.6	7.3	11.1	-3.8
<b>Economic Regions</b>						
Regina - Moose Mountain	175.9	158.7	10.8	7.9	11.0	-3.1
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	52.6	50.1	5.0	7.2	10.2	-3.0
Saskatoon - Biggar	194.5	178.8	8.8	7.6	12.6	-5.0
Yorkton - Melville	34.8	36.6	-4.9	4.9	9.2	-4.3
Prince Albert and Northern	95.2	89.9	5.9	6.5	9.6	-3.1

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 15,700 (+8.8%). Nevertheless, employment in the region is still 3,200 below February 2020's pre-pandemic level, as job losses were seen both in goods-producing and

services-producing industries. Looking at technology-related jobs in the region, Saskatoon-based software company, Vendasta, plans to hire up to 150 staff in the coming year. The tech company builds and develops business software tools to help small- and medium-sized businesses market and rebrand themselves.<sup>19</sup> Saskatoon-based 7shifts plans to hire 20 more staff in sales, marketing and client success. The retail software company provides a scheduling and labour administration platform for restaurants.<sup>20</sup>

The City of Saskatoon is spending approximately \$65.5M on summer construction projects this year. Some projects include road construction and water and sewer upgrades.<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere in the region, the Saskatchewan Railway Museum recently opened for the summer season, just south of Saskatoon. The museum is home to a collection of railcars and railway buildings.<sup>22</sup> The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) and Moosomin First Nation plan to develop a horse racing track and equine sporting facility in the Rural Municipality of Corman Park. Currently, there are no timeframes for the facility.<sup>23</sup>

Employment in **Regina-Moose Mountain** is up 17,200 (+10.8%) compared to May 2020. Employment in the region has now surpassed February 2020's pre-pandemic level but remains 10,500 below May 2019. The Regina area suffered during the worst of the pandemic as COVID-19 cases and variants of concern challenged residents and businesses alike. Vaccine rates have climbed, however, and Saskatchewan's school-based COVID-19 vaccination program has begun in Regina. Pfizer vaccines are available to children aged 12 and older.<sup>24</sup> As restaurants and bars reopen indoor dining and patios in Regina and surrounding area, some establishments are hiring extra staff to prepare for an influx of customers.<sup>25</sup>

In construction-related news, the provincial government is collaborating with the rural municipalities of Souris Valley, Lake Alma, Surprise Valley and Laurier to upgrade Highways 18 and 28. The \$37M partnership will see Highway 18 completed in the fall of 2021 and Highway 28 in 2022.<sup>26</sup> The federal, provincial, and municipal governments are providing \$28.8M to replace the Winnipeg Street North overpass in Regina. The project is expected to take two years.<sup>27</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.<sup>28</sup>

Moving to arts and entertainment news, Regina's Queen City Ex is set to return this summer. Most of the fair activities will return, including games, rides, entertainment and fair food.<sup>29</sup>

Compared to May 2020, 5,300 (+5.9%) more people were employed in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region. That leaves the region 3,300 shy of its pre-pandemic employment level in February 2020 (-3.4%). In manufacturing, Paper Excellence is acquiring pulp and paper company Domtar. The company plans to reopen the Prince Albert Pulp and Paper Mill by 2023, creating around 200 jobs at the mill and 1,000 to 1,500 indirect jobs in economic spinoffs.<sup>30</sup>

The Saskatchewan Health Authority recently hired additional respiratory therapists at the Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert. The increase in staff will allow the hospital to provide respiratory care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.<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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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0288-01 Employment by class of worker, monthly, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, last 5 months (x 1,000); accessed on June 4, 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410028801>

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 32-10-0052-01 Net farm income (x 1,000); accessed on June 4, 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3210005201>

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<sup>10</sup> Government of Saskatchewan, Food Centre Expansion Will Support Saskatchewan's Value-Added Agriculture Sector; May 4, 2021. <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2021/may/04/food-centre-expansion-will-support-saskatchewan-s-value-added-agriculture-sector>

<sup>11</sup> CBC News, 500 Sask. companies work on inactive oil well cleanup in first year of program; May 27, 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/sask-oil-well-cleanup-1.6043304>

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