



# Labour Market Bulletin

## Saskatchewan

August 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 looked relatively strong in August, with the province being one of only four to post an increase in employment month-to-month. Total employment was up 10,100 (+1.8%) compared to July, with gains coming exclusively in full-time employment (+10,800).

Annually, employment was up 14,900 workers (2.7%) in August. However, compared with pre-pandemic February 2020, employment in August remained down by 10,300 jobs (-1.8%).

Private sector employment was down 2,000 positions compared to February 2020, but it was the closest it has been to pre-pandemic numbers since the pandemic began.

Self-employment continues to lag, down 7,000 jobs (-7.5%) from August 2020, and 12,000 jobs (12.5%) from February 2020. Uncertainty surrounding the fourth wave may be deterring people from pursuing self-employment.<sup>1</sup>

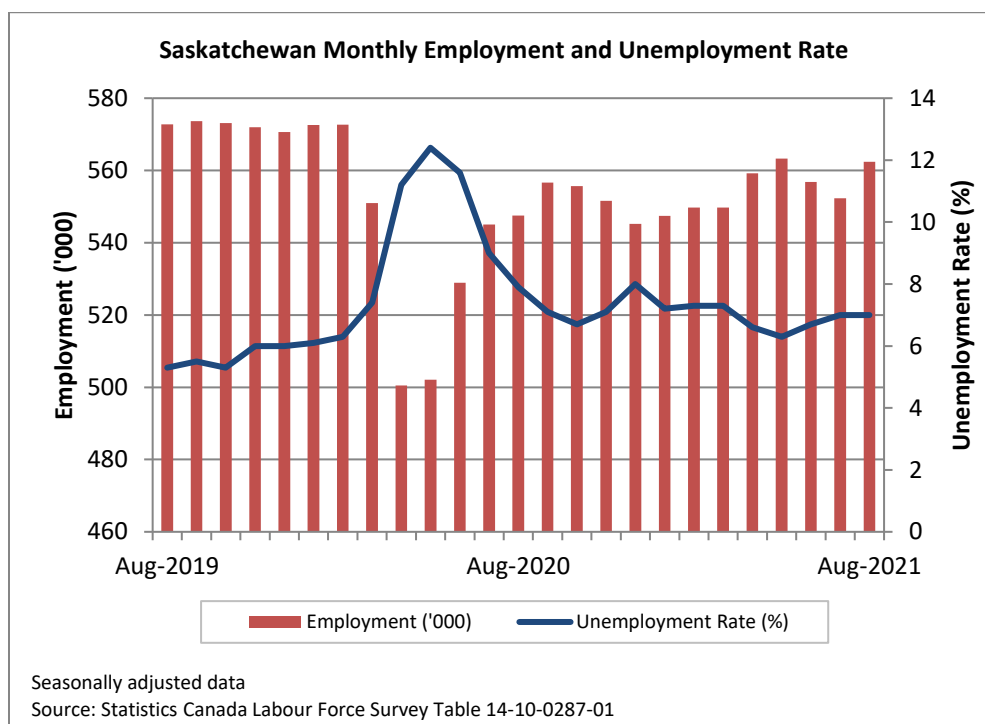
### Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	August 2021	July 2021	August 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Population 15 + ('000)</b>	889.9	889.4	888.0	0.5	0.1	1.9	0.2
<b>Labour Force ('000)</b>	604.7	594.1	594.3	10.6	1.8	10.4	1.7
<b>Employment ('000)</b>	562.4	552.3	547.5	10.1	1.8	14.9	2.7
Full-Time ('000)	457.9	447.1	450.7	10.8	2.4	7.2	1.6
Part-Time ('000)	104.5	105.2	96.8	-0.7	-0.7	7.7	8.0
<b>Unemployment ('000)</b>	42.3	41.8	46.8	0.5	1.2	-4.5	-9.6
<b>Unemployment Rate (%)</b>	7.0	7.0	7.9	0.0	-	-0.9	-
<b>Participation Rate (%)</b>	68.0	66.8	66.9	1.2	-	1.1	-
<b>Employment Rate (%)</b>	63.2	62.1	61.7	1.1	-	1.5	-

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 continued to increase in August, but at a lower pace than the previous two months. As of September 10, 68% of those 12 and over were fully vaccinated.<sup>2</sup> The Delta variant is driving a fourth wave, with more active cases in the province on September 10 than at any other time during the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> The impact on employment numbers remains to be fully seen.



In August, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate remained unchanged at 7.0%, which is historically a relatively high rate for the province. However, at the peak of COVID-19's labour market disruption in May 2020, the provincial unemployment rate reached 12.4%, the 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	August 2021 (%)	July 2021 (%)	August 2020 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
<b>Total</b>	7.0	7.0	7.9	0.0	-0.9
<b>25 years and over</b>	6.4	6.4	6.6	0.0	-0.2
Men - 25 years and over	7.9	7.1	6.6	0.8	1.3
Women - 25 years and over	4.5	5.6	6.7	-1.1	-2.2
<b>15 to 24 years</b>	10.7	10.5	15.2	0.2	-4.5
Men - 15 to 24 years	12.4	12.1	17.9	0.3	-5.5
Women - 15 to 24 years	8.9	8.8	12.3	0.1	-3.4

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 by the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, young men appear particularly vulnerable to employment downturns. In August, the unemployment rate for young men aged 15 to 24 years increased 0.8 percentage points, while women of the same age cohort saw a decline. The gap in unemployment rates in older and younger men and women is similar for both age groups.

## EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

On the month, employment in Saskatchewan's goods-producing sector fell by 1,300 (-1.3%), while employment in the services-producing sector increased by 11,400 (+2.7%). Employment levels in the goods-producing sector have not reached pre-pandemic levels, still down (-9.2%) from February 2020. However, the gains in the services-producing sector represent an overall increase of 0.6% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, staff shortages persist in **accommodation and food services** and **healthcare and social assistance**, as many of these workers opt for new careers due to wage constraints, irregular hours, or burnout.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	August 2021	July 2021	August 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Total employed, all industries</b>	562.4	552.3	547.5	10.1	1.8	14.9	2.7
<b>Goods-producing sector</b>	129.3	130.6	135.0	-1.3	-1.0	-5.7	-4.2
Agriculture	28.8	30.3	35.2	-1.5	-5.0	-6.4	-18.2
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	19.2	18.8	20.7	0.4	2.1	-1.5	-7.2
Utilities	6.2	6.5	6.0	-0.3	-4.6	0.2	3.3
Construction	42.6	42.9	40.7	-0.3	-0.7	1.9	4.7
Manufacturing	32.5	32.1	32.4	0.4	1.2	0.1	0.3
<b>Services-producing sector</b>	433.1	421.7	412.5	11.4	2.7	20.6	5.0
Trade	96.5	88.8	81.7	7.7	8.7	14.8	18.1
Transportation and warehousing	23.2	22.0	25.3	1.2	5.5	-2.1	-8.3
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	27.7	27.9	29.1	-0.2	-0.7	-1.4	-4.8
Professional, scientific and technical services	27.1	27.5	26.5	-0.4	-1.5	0.6	2.3
Business, building and other support services	15.0	15.8	16.4	-0.8	-5.1	-1.4	-8.5
Educational services	46.5	45.0	44.6	1.5	3.3	1.9	4.3
Health care and social assistance	86.4	84.7	80.9	1.7	2.0	5.5	6.8
Information, culture and recreation	19.2	20.0	17.2	-0.8	-4.0	2.0	11.6
Accommodation and food services	30.6	28.6	27.0	2.0	7.0	3.6	13.3
Other services	25.8	25.8	29.6	0.0	0.0	-3.8	-12.8
Public administration	35.1	35.6	34.3	-0.5	-1.4	0.8	2.3

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** (-6,400 or -18.2%). Prolonged drought conditions caused harvest to begin early and progress quickly as many farmers tried to preserve yields.<sup>4</sup> The estimated average crop yield for canola this year is 20 bushels per acre, which is less than half of the five-year average yield of 41 bushels per acre.<sup>5,6</sup> Elevated commodity prices may help cushion the financial impact on growers, while ranchers were also affected by the harsh conditions as less feed was available for livestock. As of September 1, producers affected by drought will be eligible to apply for part of the \$119M of funding available through the AgriRecovery program.<sup>7</sup>

Employment in the **construction** industry remained stable on the month (-0.7%), and increased by 1,900 jobs (+4.7%) year-over-year 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, a mining, metals, and petroleum company, announced that they will invest a further \$7.5 billion into the Jansen potash mine east of Saskatoon, supporting approximately 3,500 construction jobs through to 2027.<sup>8</sup> Residential construction is also up 34% year-to-date compared to 2020.<sup>9</sup> According to the Conference Board of Canada, housing starts in the province were up 30% in 2020 from 2019 to 3,100 units, with 5,000 units forecasted for 2021. Residential construction is being driven by combination of higher than average household savings and lower than average mortgage rates as a result of the pandemic.

Saskatchewan's resource extraction industry (**forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas**) lost 1,500 jobs year-over-year, primarily in mining. Some mining jobs could return as potash demand increases. Indeed, BHP expects to add 600 jobs at its Jansen potash mine by 2027.

Saskatchewan is the second-largest producer of oil and gas by volume in the country. Rock-bottom oil prices in the early pandemic had an impact on jobs in the industry. While prices have since rebounded, production has not kept up. According to the Government of Saskatchewan, year-to-date oil production is roughly equivalent to 2020 levels, continuing the lower production trend that began with the pandemic.<sup>10</sup> However, oil prices remain above pre-pandemic levels, and that, coupled with the construction of a new provincial-funded pipeline, could induce increased production. The Husky Midstream Saskatchewan Gathering System Expansion project is now complete and adds new shipping capacity of up to 48,000 barrels per day.<sup>11</sup>

Turning to the services-producing sector, employment in Saskatchewan's **retail and wholesale trade** industry increased 7,700 jobs (+8.7%) on the month, a significant increase compared to the country as whole where numbers remained relatively unchanged. Annual gains in this industry come as vaccination rates rise, COVID-19 public health restrictions fully ease, and outlets resume full in-store operations. Aside from workers returning to jobs post-lockdown, new retail businesses are also adding to employment numbers. For example, 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.<sup>12</sup> Also, two new cannabis stores in Estevan added 11 new jobs.<sup>13,14</sup>

Employment in the **health care and social assistance** industry was up on the month (+1,700) while also showing growth on a year-over-year basis (+6,800). However, the health care industry began to grapple with the start of the fourth wave of the pandemic towards the end of the month, which threatens to strain 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. The Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon lost nurses, and some rural hospitals are already diverting patients to larger centres due to a lack of nurses and physicians.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

The **accommodation and food services** industry welcomed changes to public health orders that lifted all restrictions. As of July 11, restaurants in Saskatchewan were allowed to operate without restrictions. Despite adding 2,000 jobs since restrictions were lifted, employment in the industry remains 7,700 below pre-pandemic levels (-20.1%). Some restaurant owners continue to face staffing challenges. Businesses are reporting staffing shortages of 15% to 20%, as former workers may have new jobs or no longer want to work in the restaurant industry.<sup>17,18</sup>

## REGIONAL ANALYSIS

On a year-over-year basis, employment is up in three of five economic regions compared to August 2020. The Government of Saskatchewan lifted all COVID-19 public health orders in July 2021 and encouraged employers to recall employees laid off due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take its toll. Yorkton-Melville saw job losses (-2.5%) on the year, while Regina – Moose Mountain led the province in employment growth (+6.9%).

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

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	August 2021 ('000)	August 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	August 2021 (%)	August 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	565.6	548.1	3.2	6.9	9.6	-2.7
<b>Economic Regions</b>						
Regina - Moose Mountain	181.9	170.2	6.9	6.7	9.4	-2.7
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	52.3	53.1	-1.5	7.7	7.3	0.4
Saskatoon - Biggar	197.4	193.2	2.2	7.9	11.3	-3.4
Yorkton - Melville	35.5	36.4	-2.5	4.6	6.2	-1.6
Prince Albert and Northern	98.6	95.2	3.6	5.3	9.2	-3.9

*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 4,200 (+2.2%) to slightly below (-0.2%) February 2020's pre-pandemic employment level. One of the key contributors is the increase of 5,600 jobs (+3.8%) in the services-producing sector over the past year.

Looking at construction-related jobs in the region, the federal and provincial governments, along with the City of Saskatoon, are spending \$19.5M to build a new waste diversion facility to divert more than half of the garbage heading to the landfill. The new facility is set to open in 2023.<sup>19</sup> PCL Construction will be providing construction management services for the Saskatoon Remand Centre expansion project. The project will create around 600 construction jobs and is expected to be complete by spring 2024.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, the Government of Canada is providing over \$23M per year, over a three-year period, to expand the Saskatoon Tribal Council's capacity to administer a full range of child and family services programs.<sup>21</sup> The Government of Canada is providing up to \$130.9M for national urban parks in Canada. Saskatoon's Meewasin Valley Authority is working with Parks Canada and other organizations to plan for local improvements under the National Urban Parks Program.<sup>22</sup>

Employment in **Regina-Moose Mountain** is up 11,700 (+6.9%) compared to August 2020. While employment in the region continues to surpass February 2020's pre-pandemic level, there were 2,600 fewer jobs in August 2021 than in August 2019. Similar to the Saskatoon region, Regina's services-producing sector has seen strong growth in employment (+13,200) year-over-year, with the removal of the COVID-19 restrictions. A new bakery/eatery recently opened in the town of Lampman. Scratch Baking, Catering and Eatery sells different types of baked treats as well as lunches and suppers. They also provide catering for weddings and other events.<sup>23</sup> QuickBit Vending Systems Inc. recently opened in Regina, offering services for those interested in learning about cryptocurrency.<sup>24</sup>

In manufacturing-related news, Oxbow-based Saskarc is adding a location in Estevan. The company performs fabrication, modularization and industrial finishing of commercial projects.<sup>25</sup>

Moving to retail news, Prairie Sky Co-op recently opened a new home centre in Weyburn, with dedicated contractor service, a drive-thru lumberyard, and indoor lumber storage.<sup>26</sup>

Compared to August 2020, 3,400 (+3.6%) more people were employed in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region, returning the region to February 2020's pre-pandemic employment level. Tipi Fuel and Convenience Store recently opened in Prince Albert. The store is owned and operated by Sturgeon Lake Developments, which is owned by the Sturgeon Lake First Nation. There are currently 31 employees.

In construction-related news, the federal and provincial governments provided \$2.4M to St. Brieux to upgrade the town's wastewater treatment system. The improvements will help the town expand, as the lagoon is currently at full capacity.<sup>27</sup> The provincial government is also spending \$67.8M to upgrade airports and highways in Northern Saskatchewan. The largest project is a \$14M upgrade to the Fond-du-Lac airport that is expected to be completed this fall.<sup>28</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>2</sup> Saskatchewan Vaccination Data. Accessed on September 10, 2021. <https://covid19tracker.ca/provincevac.html?p=SK>
- <sup>3</sup> Government of Canada. COVID-19 daily epidemiology update. Accessed on September 10, 2021. <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html?stat=rate&measure=active&map=pt#a2>
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- <sup>16</sup> Global News, Sask Polytech doubles seats in Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists program. September 1, 2021.
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<sup>18</sup> CTV News, Saskatoon restaurants struggle to find staff in post-COVID-19 industry; July 26, 2021.

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<sup>19</sup> Global News, Construction of new waste diversion facility starts in Saskatoon; July 28, 2021.

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<sup>20</sup> The Government of Saskatchewan, PCL Selected As Saskatoon Remand Centre Construction Manager; August 5, 2021.

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<sup>21</sup> CTV News, Saskatoon Tribal Council to receive more than \$70 million in federal funding for child and family care; August 5, 2021. <https://saskatoon.ctvnews.ca/saskatoon-tribal-council-to-receive-more-than-70-million-in-federal-funding-for-child-and-family-care-1.5536154>

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<sup>25</sup> SaskToday, Saskarc is expanding into Estevan; August 19, 2021. <https://www.sasktoday.ca/south/local-business/saskarc-is-expanding-into-estevan-4230604>

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