



Labour Market Bulletin

Saskatchewan

November 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 strengthened in November, as employment edged up 0.2% following a pullback the previous month. Total employment was up 1,400 compared to October 2021, with gains in full-time employment (+5,500) more than off-setting losses in part-time work (-4,100).

On an annual basis, employment was up 11,000 workers (+2.0%) in November. However, compared with pre-pandemic February 2020, employment remained down by 10,100 jobs (-1.8%). Saskatchewan is one of only two provinces yet to reach its pre-pandemic employment level. Nationally, employment is 1.0% above February 2020.

Private sector employment narrowed its pre-pandemic gap in November, and is now 4,700 (-1.4%) below February 2020. By contrast, public sector employment now sits 7,400 (+5.1%) above its February 2020 pre-pandemic level.¹

Self-employment continues to lag, down 5,100 jobs (-5.6%) from November 2020, and 12,800 jobs (-13.0%) from February 2020. This category of workers, which includes many small business owners, has been disproportionately affected since the beginning of the pandemic.²

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics

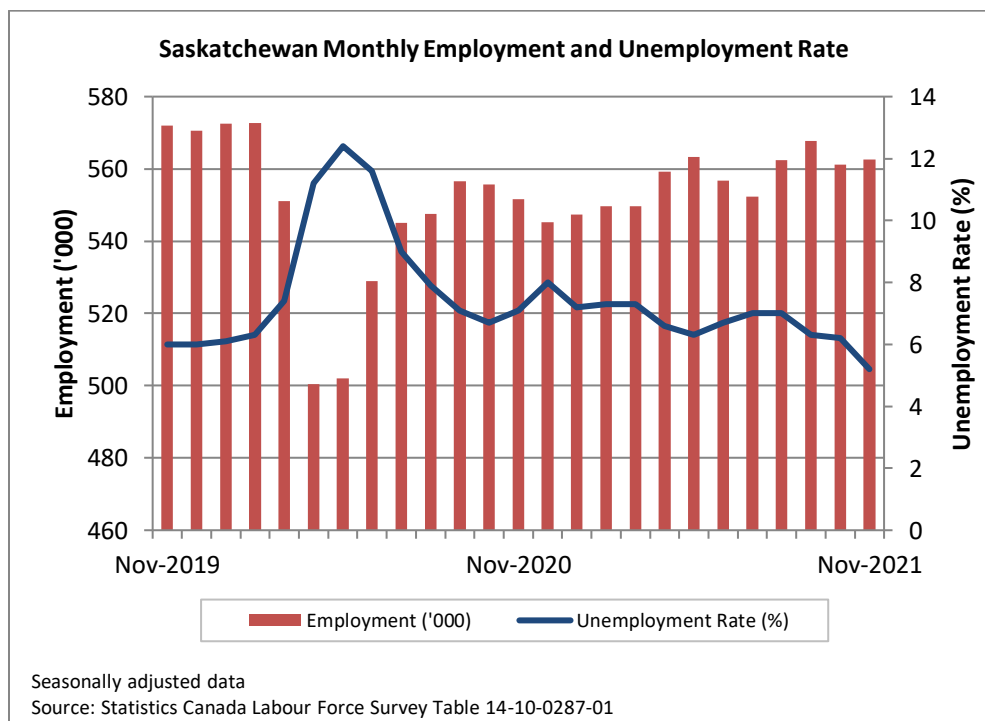
Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	November 2021	October 2021	November 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	890.1	890.0	888.0	0.1	0.0	2.1	0.2
Labour Force ('000)	593.2	598.4	593.9	-5.2	-0.9	-0.7	-0.1
Employment ('000)	562.6	561.2	551.6	1.4	0.2	11.0	2.0
Full-Time ('000)	460.4	454.9	451.9	5.5	1.2	8.5	1.9
Part-Time ('000)	102.2	106.3	99.7	-4.1	-3.9	2.5	2.5
Unemployment ('000)	30.6	37.2	42.2	-6.6	-17.7	-11.6	-27.5
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.2	6.2	7.1	-1.0	-	-1.9	-
Participation Rate (%)	66.6	67.2	66.9	-0.6	-	-0.3	-
Employment Rate (%)	63.2	63.1	62.1	0.1	-	1.1	-

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 November, but still remain the lowest among provinces. As of December 3, 69.98% of Saskatchewan's population was fully vaccinated, compared to 75.86% nationwide.³ With low vaccination rates, the earlier lifting of public health measures in July proved premature and active cases soared. Public health measures introduced in mid-September and recently extended until January 31, 2022, finally turned the tide in November. At the beginning of the month, Saskatchewan's rate of active cases per population was the highest among provinces, and second only to Yukon among all jurisdictions. At 62 active cases per 100,000 population, Saskatchewan was below the national average of 70, as of December 3.⁴

In November, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate decreased sharply to 5.2%, third lowest among provinces and well below the national rate of 6.0%. However, this improvement had less to do with new hiring and more to do with people exiting the labour force, which declined both on the month (-0.9%) and on the year (-0.1%).



Unemployment by Major Demographic Group

Saskatchewan Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	November 2021 (%)	October 2021 (%)	November 2020 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	5.2	6.2	7.1	-1.0	-1.9
25 years and over	4.4	5.7	6.1	-1.3	-1.7
Men - 25 years and over	4.7	6.6	6.9	-1.9	-2.2
Women - 25 years and over	4.1	4.6	5.1	-0.5	-1.0
15 to 24 years	9.4	9.4	13.2	0.0	-3.8
Men - 15 to 24 years	9.6	9.7	16.9	-0.1	-7.3
Women - 15 to 24 years	9.3	8.8	9.1	0.5	0.2

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 November 2020 when their unemployment rate was 16.9%, almost double 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 fact, recent male youth unemployment rates are lower than annual averages dating back to 2016.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

On the month, employment in Saskatchewan's goods-producing sector increased by 1,100 (+0.9%), while employment in the services-producing sector also edged up (+0.1%). Employment in the goods-producing sector is far below pre-pandemic levels, down (-12.9%) from February 2020. By contrast, employment in the services-producing sector represents an overall increase of 1.9% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, staff shortages persist in such services-producing industries as **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 Data ('000)	November 2021	October 2021	November 2020	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	562.6	561.2	551.6	1.4	0.2	11.0	2.0
Goods-producing sector	124.1	123.0	131.9	1.1	0.9	-7.8	-5.9
Agriculture	24.0	24.4	33.9	-0.4	-1.6	-9.9	-29.2
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	18.2	16.8	20.6	1.4	8.3	-2.4	-11.7
Utilities	6.3	6.3	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Construction	42.7	43.0	39.7	-0.3	-0.7	3.0	7.6
Manufacturing	32.8	32.5	31.3	0.3	0.9	1.5	4.8
Services-producing sector	438.5	438.1	419.8	0.4	0.1	18.7	4.5
Trade	96.8	96.3	85.3	0.5	0.5	11.5	13.5
Transportation and warehousing	25.6	25.3	24.7	0.3	1.2	0.9	3.6
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	31.6	31.7	26.6	-0.1	-0.3	5.0	18.8
Professional, scientific and technical services	26.5	26.6	28.0	-0.1	-0.4	-1.5	-5.4
Business, building and other support services	15.5	13.3	16.5	2.2	16.5	-1.0	-6.1
Educational services	46.5	45.6	43.1	0.9	2.0	3.4	7.9
Health care and social assistance	89.2	89.9	82.9	-0.7	-0.8	6.3	7.6
Information, culture and recreation	16.5	18.4	13.3	-1.9	-10.3	3.2	24.1
Accommodation and food services	31.2	31.5	31.8	-0.3	-1.0	-0.6	-1.9
Other services	24.7	24.9	31.8	-0.2	-0.8	-7.1	-22.3
Public administration	34.4	34.6	35.7	-0.2	-0.6	-1.3	-3.6

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 -29.2%). In 2021, prolonged drought conditions caused harvest to begin early and progress quickly as many farmers tried to preserve yields.⁵ Overall production is estimated to have declined by as much as 47% from 2020.⁶ While elevated commodity prices may help cushion the financial impact on growers over the short term, ranchers were also affected by the harsh conditions. Looking ahead, governments are maintaining focus on the human resource needs of the industry. The federal and provincial governments will provide \$100,000 to the Next Gen Agriculture Mentorship Program. Applications to the program are now being accepted and the successful candidates will develop leadership skills in the agriculture sector.⁷

Employment in the **construction** industry was little changed on the month (-300), while showing good growth year-over-year (+3,000). 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 2024.⁸ In another major development, Federated Co-operatives Limited is looking to purchase land in Regina's north end to build a renewable diesel plant. The proposed development could cost up to \$2 billion, and create about 1,500 construction jobs and more than 150 permanent jobs.⁹ In October, the most recent data available, housing starts in the province were up 42% year-to-date compared to 2020.¹⁰ 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**) added 1,400 jobs on the month, down 2,400 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

Saskatchewan is the second-largest producer of oil and gas by volume in the country. With oil prices at seven-year highs, production has started to rise. In August 2021, oil production in Saskatchewan increased by 4.6% compared to August 2020.¹² According to PetrolMI, an industry labour market information provider, in September, the unemployment rate among oil and gas services workers in Saskatchewan was essentially zero.¹³ Meanwhile, two projects at the North Portal gas plant have qualified for Saskatchewan's Oil and Gas Processing Investment Incentive. Steel Reef Infrastructure Corp. will invest \$40M to reduce the venting and flaring of methane gas, reducing greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁴

In the services-producing sector, Saskatchewan's **retail and wholesale trade** industry added 500 jobs (+0.5%) on the month; employment in the industry is far beyond its pre-pandemic level (+14.3%). Hiring surged over the past year as vaccination rates rose, COVID-19 public health restrictions eased, and outlets resumed full in-store operations. New retail businesses are also adding to employment numbers. With the announcement of BHP's Jansen project, the Quill Centre in Humboldt is looking to expand and add more storefronts. The centre is in talks with one retailer to add a store by winter 2022, with room to add two more.¹⁵ In addition, a new Indigenous store, Nîkikhk, recently opened in Saskatoon's Midtown Plaza. Besides retail operations, the store also provides a space for Indigenous artists to create and showcase their work.¹⁶

Employment in the **health care and social assistance** industry declined on the month (-700), while showing notable growth on a year-over-year basis (+6,300). In recent months, the health care industry grappled with the fourth wave of the pandemic, straining already under-staffed health care facilities in the province. For example, patients saw a disruption to services at the Foam Lake Health Centre near Yorkton when health care providers were redeployed to Saskatoon to assist in the intensive care unit (ICU).¹⁷ In response to overflowing ICUs in the province, at least 27 patients were transferred to hospitals in Ontario.¹⁸ However, the situation improved greatly over the course of the month, as the Saskatchewan Health Authority began redeploying 450 staff members working in contact tracing, testing assessment, and outbreak management back to their home departments.¹⁹

While employment in Saskatchewan’s **Professional, scientific and technical services** industry was little changed on the month (-100), several recent developments are likely to support future job growth. Optek Solutions, a new IT firm that provides technical support, has opened in Saskatoon. The company received investment from two Indigenous-owned companies, the Peter Ballantyne Group of Companies and Athabasca Basin Development.²⁰ In addition, 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.²¹ Finally, the University of Saskatchewan’s Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) is being recognized for its work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations has awarded VIDO \$6 million, with a further \$230,000 coming from three of Saskatoon’s hospital foundations.^{22, 23}

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

On a year-over-year basis, employment is up in four of five economic regions compared to November 2020, as the province recovers from a fourth wave of COVID-19 cases and COVID-19 related hospitalizations. Only Swift Current – Moose Jaw saw job losses on the year of -2,300 (-4.3%), due to weakness across the services-producing sector. Saskatoon - Biggar led the regions by adding 3,500 jobs (+1.8%) overall. The Yorkton - Melville region has the lowest unemployment rate in the province, down 2.7 percentage points, to 3.0%.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	November 2021 ('000)	November 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	November 2021 (%)	November 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Saskatchewan	566.2	557.7	1.5	5.0	6.1	-1.1
Economic Regions						
Regina - Moose Mountain	179.4	176.3	1.8	4.9	5.2	-0.3
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	50.6	52.9	-4.3	6.3	6.5	-0.2
Saskatoon - Biggar	200.6	197.1	1.8	5.3	7.1	-1.8
Yorkton - Melville	35.9	34.7	3.5	3.0	5.7	-2.7
Prince Albert and Northern	99.6	96.6	3.1	4.7	5.7	-1.0

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, the **Saskatoon - Biggar** region posted modest employment gains of 3,500 (+1.8%). The unemployment rate dropped 1.8 percentage points to 5.3, the first time it has been below 6% since the pandemic started. One of the key contributors is the increase of 5,000 jobs (+3.2%) in the services-producing sector over the past year. In a rare development during pandemic times, The Vault restaurant is opening a second location in Saskatoon. The restaurant serves a fusion of Vietnamese, Chinese, and Thai food.²⁴ Another services-producing business, the Affinity Learning Centre at the Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park & Zoo, recently reopened after undergoing renovations. The newly renovated facility is home to a variety of reptiles, amphibians and fish.²⁵

In construction-related news, the City of Saskatoon will spend \$4.25M to install its largest solar farm. The installation of 5,000 ground-mounted solar panels will begin in 2022 with the solar farm becoming operational in 2023; generating enough power for 330 homes.²⁶ A new \$30M gas-to-power facility will be built near Coleville,

a small community north of Kindersley. The Kopahawakenum Flare to Power Facility is expected to open in 2023, create 50 jobs during construction and 20 jobs once in operation.²⁷

Compared to the previous year, employment in **Regina - Moose Mountain** grew 3,100 (+1.8%), while the unemployment rate dropped 0.3 percentage points to 4.9%. Strong employment gains of 7,700 (5.6%) in the services-producing industries contributed to the region's growth. Copperhead Energy Services Ltd. recently started operating out of Carlyle. The company provides equipment-cleaning services to the oil patch and other sectors, as well as steaming services if pipes freeze at an oil site.²⁸

Looking at construction-related jobs in the region, construction is underway on a new \$47M joint-use elementary school in Regina, which will replace two existing schools. The new facility has two permanent buildings able to accommodate up to 400 students each, and is expected to be ready by fall 2023.²⁹ Tim Hortons is planning to build a new restaurant in Regina that will use sustainable technologies. The new restaurant would be a first-of-its kind for the company, incorporating a green living roof, a mobile order lane and electric vehicle charging stations.³⁰

Compared to November 2020, 3,000 (+3.1%) more people were employed in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region, the only region in Saskatchewan to experience gains in the goods-producing sector (+6.3%) and services-producing sector (2.0%). Meanwhile, the region's unemployment rate fell one percentage point to 4.7%.

Housing shortages and homelessness are on-going issues in the north. In La Loche, an affordable housing project consisting of 20 tiny homes will specifically target low-income residents and the homeless.³¹ In La Ronge, the overnight shelter run by the Scattered Site Outreach Program has re-opened. Site operators are looking to hire six full-time employees.³²

Moving to training opportunities, the Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$2M in funding to support training and employment services in northern Saskatchewan. Northern Career Quest Inc. will facilitate the programs and services, helping approximately 400 Indigenous job seekers.³³

Looking forward, the Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$1.5M in 2021-22 and \$3.2M each subsequent year to expand the Crime Reduction Team in the La Ronge and Meadow Lake areas. A total of 20 permanent positions will be added.³⁴

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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