



# Labour Market Bulletin

## Saskatchewan

January 2022



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 reached a milestone in January as employment surpassed pre-pandemic levels for the first time. There were 574,600 people working in the province, an increase of 500 from February 2020.<sup>1</sup> The public sector was up 5,800 positions compared to February 2020, and the private sector 3,600. Self-employment continues to lag, however, down 8,900 from February 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Year-over-year, total employment climbed 4.5% (+25,000). On a monthly basis, employment is up 3,900 (0.7%), with gains in both full-time (+1,100) and part-time (+2,800) employment. While total employment has gained ground steadily since last summer, increasing in every month but October, part-time employment has fluctuated. January's 2.8% monthly increase in part-time work is the first since September 2021.<sup>3</sup>

### Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics

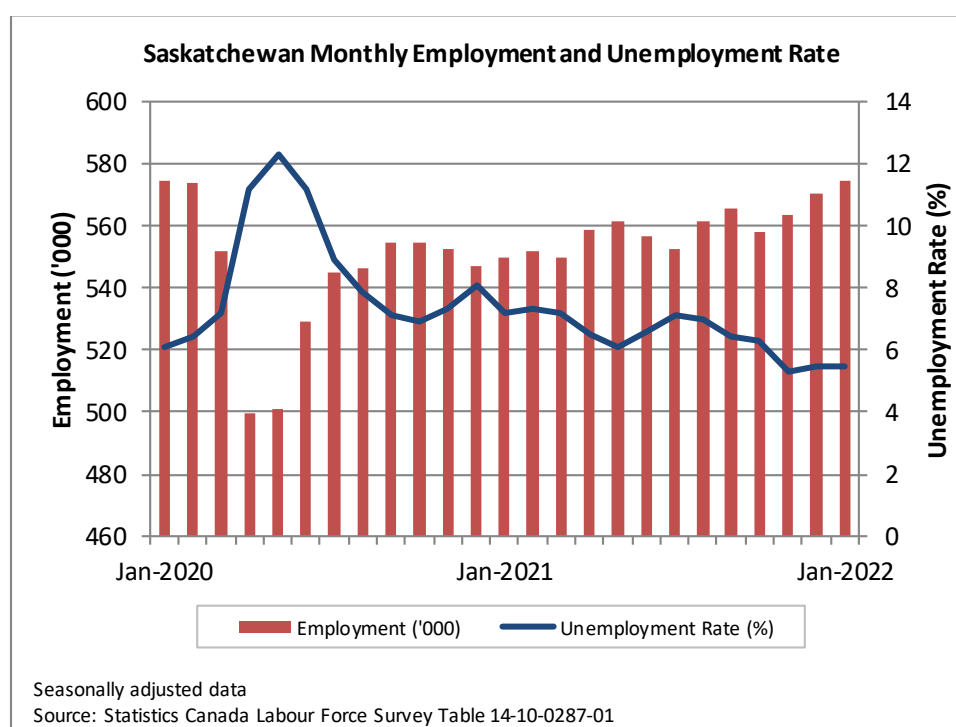
Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	January 2022	December 2021	January 2021	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Population 15 + ('000)</b>	891.8	890.9	888.2	0.9	0.1	3.6	0.4
<b>Labour Force ('000)</b>	607.9	604.1	592.2	3.8	0.6	15.7	2.7
<b>Employment ('000)</b>	574.6	570.7	549.6	3.9	0.7	25.0	4.5
Full-Time ('000)	470.7	469.6	449.0	1.1	0.2	21.7	4.8
Part-Time ('000)	103.9	101.1	100.6	2.8	2.8	3.3	3.3
<b>Unemployment ('000)</b>	33.3	33.4	42.6	-0.1	-0.3	-9.3	-21.8
<b>Unemployment Rate (%)</b>	5.5	5.5	7.2	0.0	-	-1.7	-
<b>Participation Rate (%)</b>	68.2	67.8	66.7	0.4	-	1.5	-
<b>Employment Rate (%)</b>	64.4	64.1	61.9	0.3	-	2.5	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

The Omicron variant arrived in Saskatchewan in early December and drove hospitalizations to a record high in January.<sup>4</sup> The province has taken a different approach than other jurisdictions, however, declining to implement gathering restrictions or other additional public health measures.<sup>5</sup> By the end of January, Premier Scott Moe announced that Saskatchewan would soon end its vaccine requirement program.<sup>6</sup> The province has also relaxed self-isolation requirements<sup>7</sup> as well as restricted eligibility for PCR testing only to high-risk populations, part of a shift in its overall public health strategy.<sup>8</sup> The province will scale back testing, contact tracing, and reporting of statistics, and will instead manage COVID-19 similarly to other communicable illnesses such as influenza.<sup>9</sup>

Saskatchewan's unemployment rate remained unchanged since December at 5.5%, fourth lowest among provinces and well below the national rate of 6.5%. The unemployment rate in the province was sitting at 6.4% in February 2020 prior to the pandemic, and reached 12.3% at the peak of COVID-19's labour market disruption in May 2020.



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

Seasonally Adjusted Data	January 2022 (%)	December 2021 (%)	January 2021 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
<b>Total</b>	5.5	5.5	7.2	0.0	-1.7
<b>25 years and over</b>	4.7	4.4	5.8	0.3	-1.1
Men - 25 years and over	4.5	4.6	6.3	-0.1	-1.8
Women - 25 years and over	5.0	4.2	5.3	0.8	-0.3
<b>15 to 24 years</b>	9.8	11.9	15.2	-2.1	-5.4
Men - 15 to 24 years	10.1	13.2	18.8	-3.1	-8.7
Women - 15 to 24 years	9.3	10.3	11.9	-1.0	-2.6

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

Young workers in Saskatchewan tend to fare worse in the labour market than their older counterparts, with unemployment rates about double those of workers age 25 and older. In the first year of the pandemic the gap between the two groups widened and the unemployment rate for workers age 15-24 reached 26.7% in May 2020, more than 2.5 times that of workers 25 and up. Throughout 2021, the young worker unemployment rate remained in the double-digits until the third quarter, gradually decreasing from 15.2% in January to more historically normal levels in the fall.<sup>10</sup> Now in January 2022, the unemployment rate for young workers has fallen 2.1 percentage points on a monthly basis and 5.4 percentage points year-over-year. Young men are still worse off than young women by 0.8 percentage points, but the disparity has narrowed significantly from where it was a year ago, at 6.9 percentage points.

## EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Employment in Saskatchewan's **goods-producing sector** increased both month-to-month (+3.3%) and year-over-year (0.2%). However, it remains below pre-pandemic levels, down 7.8% from February 2020. Employment in the **services-producing sector**, on the other hand, has risen 2.7% since pre-pandemic. It is up on an annual basis (5.9%) and little-changed month-to-month (-0.1%).

Within the goods-producing sector, employment in **agriculture** was up from December (+1,300 or 5.4%) but down significantly year-over-year (-7,100 or -21.9%). Drought and extreme temperatures resulted in below average yields for the 2021 harvest season, with overall production falling nearly 47% from the previous year.<sup>11</sup> As a result, some producers were unable to fulfill their delivery contracts with grain companies. Saskatchewan crop commissions are now calling on the federal government to regulate contracts, allowing them to be terminated or rolled into the next year when crop failure is not the fault of the grower.<sup>12</sup> Snowfall received so far this winter may improve growing conditions for next year, but some areas of the province are still at risk, including the west central region between Saskatoon and Swift Current.<sup>13</sup>

In a boost to crop research, the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan are providing \$9.1 million to 55 projects throughout the province, and an additional \$4.1 million will be contributed by producers' associations and other industry partners.<sup>14</sup> The federal government is also offering funding for clean-energy technology on farms, with 24 projects totalling \$7.6 million approved so far on the Prairies.<sup>15</sup> Finally, in an effort to bring more people into the industry, four Saskatchewan colleges are introducing an eight-month diploma program that will train students to work in agricultural operations, with a focus on crop production.<sup>16</sup>

## Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	January 2022	December 2021	January 2021	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Total employed, all industries</b>	574.6	570.7	549.6	3.9	0.7	25.0	4.5
<b>Goods-producing sector</b>	131.1	126.9	130.8	4.2	3.3	0.3	0.2
Agriculture	25.3	24.0	32.4	1.3	5.4	-7.1	-21.9
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	19.6	19.3	21.0	0.3	1.6	-1.4	-6.7
Utilities	6.1	6.4	5.9	-0.3	-4.7	0.2	3.4
Construction	47.7	45.2	41.4	2.5	5.5	6.3	15.2
Manufacturing	32.3	32.0	30.1	0.3	0.9	2.2	7.3
<b>Services-producing sector</b>	443.5	443.8	418.8	-0.3	-0.1	24.7	5.9
Trade	96.1	96.0	87.7	0.1	0.1	8.4	9.6
Transportation and warehousing	26.0	26.2	24.4	-0.2	-0.8	1.6	6.6
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	31.7	31.0	26.0	0.7	2.3	5.7	21.9
Professional, scientific and technical services	28.2	28.7	28.7	-0.5	-1.7	-0.5	-1.7
Business, building and other support services	18.1	15.9	16.6	2.2	13.8	1.5	9.0
Educational services	48.3	47.3	44.5	1.0	2.1	3.8	8.5
Health care and social assistance	86.1	90.1	83.9	-4.0	-4.4	2.2	2.6
Information, culture and recreation	17.5	17.0	13.3	0.5	2.9	4.2	31.6
Accommodation and food services	31.8	31.9	28.7	-0.1	-0.3	3.1	10.8
Other services	25.7	24.9	30.2	0.8	3.2	-4.5	-14.9
Public administration	34.0	34.6	34.7	-0.6	-1.7	-0.7	-2.0

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0355, formerly CANSIM 282-0088

The **manufacturing** industry dropped 300 jobs (-0.9%) on the month, but was up 2,200 (7.3%) year-over-year. The Brandt Group of Companies, headquartered in Regina, plans to add 1,500 new positions in 2022 after a year of record growth in 2021. About 40% of hiring will be in manufacturing positions in Regina, Saskatoon, and Illinois.<sup>17</sup> In food processing and manufacturing, Scoular Canada opened a flax processing plant in Richardson, just east of Regina.<sup>18</sup> Looking longer-term, Federated Co-operatives Limited plans to build an Integrated Agriculture Complex in Regina. The project includes a renewable diesel facility as well as a canola crushing plant in partnership with AGT Foods, and is expected to have direct and indirect economic benefits of \$4.5 billion. The diesel plant should create 150 operating jobs when open in 2027.<sup>19</sup>

Employment in **construction** increased 2,500 on a monthly basis (5.5%) and even more significantly year-over-year (6,300, or 15.2%). Canada's construction sector is at risk of labour shortages, with 22% of the workforce expected to retire by 2030. The Government of Canada recently launched a marketing campaign promoting the skilled trades to youth and young adults.<sup>20</sup> In Saskatchewan, vacancies for industrial, electrical, and construction trades grew from 345 in the first quarter of 2021 to 830 in the second quarter and 1,090 in the third, the latest period for which data is available. Vacancies for trades helpers and construction labourers increased from 190 in Q1 to 810 in Q2, before dropping to 670 in Q3.<sup>21</sup>

Several large projects on the horizon suggest continued growth in Saskatchewan's industry. Construction is slated to begin on Regina's new Urgent Care Centre this spring.<sup>22</sup> The FCL canola crush and diesel plants announced this month will also generate jobs – an expected 2,500 for the diesel facility alone. BHP, a mining, metals, and petroleum company, announced last summer it would be investing \$7.5 billion in the Jansen potash mine east of Saskatoon, supporting approximately 3,500 construction jobs between now and 2027.<sup>23</sup>

The design phase of the Saskatoon Central Library is nearly complete, and the construction budget set at \$73.3 million. The final design will be released later this year, with plans to open the facility in 2026.<sup>24</sup> Rapid population growth occurred over the past decade in White City and surrounding area, near Regina. Its school division, Prairie Valley School Division, has prioritized the construction of two new schools.<sup>25</sup>

Turning to the services-producing sector, employment in the **transportation and warehousing** industry fell by 200 (-0.8%) on the month, but remains up 1,600 (6.6%) year-over-year. The airline industry has been hard-hit by COVID-19 in Saskatchewan and across the country. According to the Saskatoon Airport Authority, passenger volumes in 2021 were just a third of what they were pre-pandemic.<sup>26</sup> The outlook may be better for 2022, however, as some Saskatchewan travel agents report that interest in international travel is increasing.<sup>27</sup> The Government of Canada is providing \$15.8 million to the Regina International Airport for infrastructure upgrades, and the provincial government has opened applications for its Community Airport Partnership program.<sup>28</sup> Communities may apply for grants of up to \$275,000 for airport rehabilitation and improvements.<sup>29</sup>

In truck transportation, labour shortages are an increasing concern as the industry posted an 8% vacancy rate nationally, the second highest in the economy after accommodation and food services.<sup>30</sup> Filling vacancies may become more challenging still as an aging workforce retires.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, as of this month, truckers returning to Canada from the U.S. must be vaccinated against COVID-19 to avoid testing and isolation requirements. The Saskatchewan Trucking Association expects that some drivers will leave their jobs as a result, worsening labour shortages and supply chain disruptions.<sup>32</sup> On a positive note for truck drivers, the current situation could lead to higher wages as companies strive to keep their workforces stable. Bison Transport, one of the largest carriers in Canada, recently gave its cross-border drivers raises of 15%, the largest pay increase in company history.<sup>33</sup>

Employment in the **accommodation and food services** industry gained ground considerably year-over-year (+3,100, or 10.8%) even as it remained essentially unchanged (-100) on the month. However, it is clear the industry has not recovered from the impacts of the pandemic as employment remains 16.5% below February 2020 levels. The Regina Hotels Association estimates losses of \$162 million for local hotels since the beginning of the pandemic.<sup>34</sup> The Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association says restaurants have struggled with a combination of challenges this winter: staff absenteeism due to illness as well as customers staying home due to frigid weather and a hesitation about being in public places.<sup>35</sup>

Employment in **health care and social assistance** increased by 2.6% (2,200) on an annual basis, but recorded a notable drop of 4.4% (-4,000) month-to-month. The health care system, recovering from the pandemic's difficult fourth wave, struggled again under increasing hospitalization rates as the Omicron wave progressed. The province's longstanding nursing shortage worsened over the course of the pandemic as workers retire early or change jobs. Statistics Canada data show 330 nursing vacancies in Saskatchewan in the third quarter of 2021 compared to 100 in the first quarter of 2020.<sup>36</sup> Temporary shortages due to illness are also straining the system, with absenteeism rates up to 20% projected for the fifth wave.<sup>37</sup>

In January, the Saskatchewan Health Authority contracted 300 staff to assist with contact tracing and case management, the majority hired through the private firm Canadian Health Labs.<sup>38</sup> It also deployed 500 public sector workers into the health care system to assist with non-medical roles.<sup>39</sup> The SHA plans to hire 150 nursing and laboratory staff from the Philippines this year in an effort to address staffing shortages.<sup>40</sup>

## REGIONAL ANALYSIS

On a year-over-year basis, employment is up in three of five economic regions. Yearly job losses of -1,100 (-2.2%) and -400 (-1.2%) occurred in **Swift Current – Moose Jaw** and **Yorkton – Melville** respectively. **Saskatoon – Biggar** led the regions in employment growth, adding 12,500 jobs (+6.5%) overall, while **Regina – Moose Mountain** held the lowest unemployment rate in the province at 4.3%.

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

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	January 2022 ('000)	January 2021 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	January 2022 (%)	January 2021 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	564.1	545.3	3.4	5.2	7.3	-2.1
<b>Economic Regions</b>						
Regina - Moose Mountain	177.5	170.9	3.9	4.3	7.2	-2.9
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	50.0	51.1	-2.2	7.6	6.9	0.7
Saskatoon - Biggar	205.7	193.2	6.5	5.1	7.8	-2.7
Yorkton - Melville	34.3	34.7	-1.2	6.0	6.0	0.0
Prince Albert and Northern	96.6	95.4	1.3	5.4	7.0	-1.6

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 strong employment gains of 12,500 (+6.5%). The unemployment rate dropped 2.7 percentage points to 5.1%, below 6.0% for a third consecutive month. A key contributor is the increase of 14,900 jobs (+9.7%) in the region's services-producing sector over the past year. According to the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority, the city's economy achieved almost 86% of pre-pandemic levels in the fourth quarter of 2021.<sup>41</sup>

Looking closer at the services-producing sector, Oil Can Charlie's, an oil change and automotive services shop, has opened a second location in Battleford,<sup>42</sup> and a new bakery recently opened in Unity.<sup>43</sup> Despite the region's strong employment numbers, many services-producing businesses do continue to struggle. Two restaurants in Saskatoon's Riversdale neighbourhood closed their doors this month, and a fitness studio in the city will be closing in February due to pandemic difficulties.<sup>44</sup>

In construction news, the Saskatoon Wildlife Federation is building a \$1.7 million multi-purpose facility and archery range, with an expected completion date of March 2022.<sup>45</sup> The provincial government is providing \$300,000 to a job training pilot program for Saskatoon residents who face barriers to employment in the construction industry. The Quint Development Corporation's Build Up Saskatoon program offers supervised employment opportunities to people whose job prospects are limited by lack of work experience or a criminal record.<sup>46</sup>

Compared to the previous year, employment in **Regina – Moose Mountain** grew 6,600 (+3.9%), while the unemployment rate dropped 2.9 percentage points to 4.3%. Modest employment gains of 5,100 (3.7%) in the services-producing sector contributed to the region's growth. Southeast Business Startup, an organization that provides guidance for entrepreneurs, has helped businesses in the Estevan area to create 15 full-time jobs and 30 jobs for self-employed people over the past two years.<sup>47</sup>

In the city of Regina, High Tide Inc. is opening a Canna Cabana retail cannabis store, its seventh location in Saskatchewan.<sup>48</sup> An Indigenous-owned salon in Regina, Miyosiwin Salon, has received a \$50,000 grant from the Mazda Canada Local Legends campaign and plans to expand operations.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, the Government of Canada is providing \$900,000 to Regina's new Agtech Accelerator and an additional \$400,000 to support Jobbox Software Inc. The funding will help the two tech companies expand their functionality and markets.<sup>50</sup>

On an annual basis, 1,200 (+1.3%) more people were employed this month in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region. Looking at the past six months, however, the region's total employment is at its lowest level since June. Year-over-year, the region's unemployment rate fell 1.6 percentage points to 5.4%. This month, the provincial government announced funding of \$337,000 for the Muskwa Lake Wellness Camp, located near Pinehouse. The camp provides traditional Indigenous teachings and western addictions education to assist with alcoholism, suicide rates, and overdose deaths.<sup>51</sup>

In construction news, the provincial government is looking for a company to lead the design and construction of a new addition to Prince Albert's Victoria Hospital. The new multi-level acute care tower will increase the number of hospital beds from 173 to 242.<sup>52</sup> Construction on a new elementary school will also begin later this year in the northern village of La Loche. The new school will serve around 475 students, is projected to cost \$24 million and is scheduled to open in September 2024.<sup>53</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 14-10-0287-01. [Labour force characteristics, monthly, seasonally adjusted and trend-cycle, last 5 months](#). Accessed February 4, 2022.
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- <sup>5</sup> Regina Leader-Post (January 14, 2022). [Saskatchewan spurns the rest of Canada's COVID-19 approach](#).
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- <sup>8</sup> Government of Saskatchewan (February 3, 2022). [Living with COVID: Transition of Public Health Management](#).
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- <sup>23</sup> CBC News (August 17, 2021). [BHP approves plan to build Jansen potash mine near Saskatoon.](#)
- <sup>24</sup> Global News (January 21, 2022). [Design phase of new Saskatoon central library nears completion.](#)
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- <sup>40</sup> Saskatoon StarPhoenix (January 5, 2022). [Sask. turns to Philippines to address health care labour shortage.](#)
- <sup>41</sup> Global News (January 25, 2022). [Saskatoon hit 85% per cent economic recovery before Omicron swept in: SREDA.](#)
- <sup>42</sup> SaskToday (January 12, 2022). [Oil Can Charlie's now open in Battleford.](#)
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- <sup>49</sup> SaskToday (December 22, 2021). [Indigenous-owned Regina salon recipient of \\$50K national grant.](#)
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