



Labour Market Bulletin

Saskatchewan

February 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 made steady progress in February, approaching the two-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic. The province posted employment gains on both a monthly and annual basis, and the unemployment rate reached a nearly seven-year low.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	February 2022	January 2022	February 2021	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	892.9	891.8	889.1	1.1	0.1	3.8	0.4
Labour Force ('000)	610.7	607.9	595.3	2.8	0.5	15.4	2.6
Employment ('000)	582.0	574.6	552.0	7.4	1.3	30.0	5.4
Full-Time ('000)	471.1	470.7	451.4	0.4	0.1	19.7	4.4
Part-Time ('000)	110.8	103.9	100.6	6.9	6.6	10.2	10.1
Unemployment ('000)	28.7	33.3	43.3	-4.6	-13.8	-14.6	-33.7
Unemployment Rate (%)	4.7	5.5	7.3	-0.8	-	-2.6	-
Participation Rate (%)	68.4	68.2	67.0	0.2	-	1.4	-
Employment Rate (%)	65.2	64.4	62.1	0.8	-	3.1	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

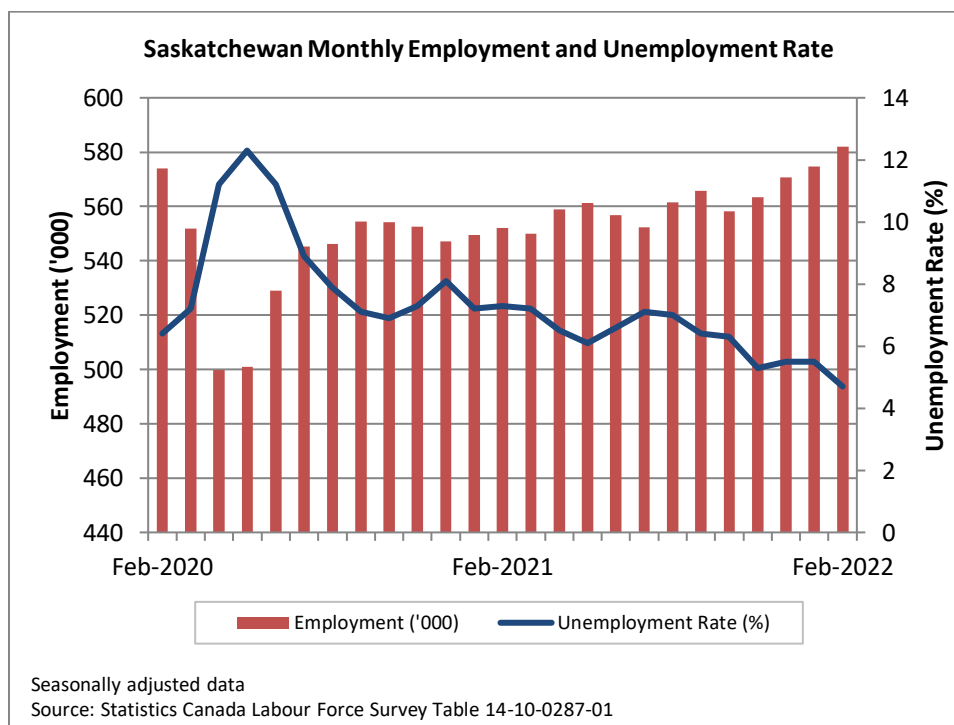
Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287-01, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

Saskatchewan added 7,400 jobs in February, an increase of 1.3% from the previous month and 5.4% compared with this same time last year. February marks the fourth consecutive month of employment growth and the second in which employment surpassed pre-pandemic levels. There were 582,000 people working in the province in February 2022, an increase of 1.4% from February 2020, the last month before COVID-19 was detected in Saskatchewan.

Both the public and private sectors reported employment growth since February 2020, with increases of 7.6% and 2.2% respectively. Self-employment lagged behind, however, fluctuating on a monthly basis throughout 2021, and down -10.5% from February 2020 to February 2022.¹

Much of the movement in February's employment numbers was specifically in part-time work. On the month, part-time employment increased 6.6% after three months of decreases at the end of 2021. Part-time employment was up 4.5% since before the pandemic and 10.1% year-over-year. Full-time employment was essentially unchanged on the month and since pre-pandemic (0.1% and 0.6%), but showed improvement year-over-year (4.4%).

Saskatchewan's unemployment rate was the second-lowest among provinces in February at 4.7% and sitting well below the national average of 5.5%. Unemployment in Saskatchewan was at 6.4% in February 2020 just prior to the onset of the pandemic, and reached a peak of 12.3% in May of 2020. It ranged from 7.3% to 5.3% throughout 2021 before falling to its current position, the lowest rate recorded since April of 2015.



Younger workers in Saskatchewan are especially benefiting from this trend. The unemployment rate for those between 15 and 24 was the lowest in the country in February, at 5.9%. Young men (5.3%) fared better than young women (6.8%), but both groups saw a decline in their unemployment rate on a monthly basis (4.8 and 2.5 percentage points respectively). The unemployment rate for women over 25 also improved significantly on the month, falling to 3.8% from 5.0% in January.

Saskatchewan Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	February 2022 (%)	January 2022 (%)	February 2021 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	4.7	5.5	7.3	-0.8	-2.6
25 years and over	4.5	4.7	6.1	-0.2	-1.6
Men - 25 years and over	5.1	4.5	6.0	0.6	-0.9
Women - 25 years and over	3.8	5.0	6.3	-1.2	-2.5
15 to 24 years	5.9	9.8	14.1	-3.9	-8.2
Men - 15 to 24 years	5.3	10.1	17.8	-4.8	-12.5
Women - 15 to 24 years	6.8	9.3	10.3	-2.5	-3.5

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

In February, Saskatchewan became the first province in Canada to lift all public health restrictions and transition toward treating COVID-19 like a common contagious illness.² While the Province renewed the state of emergency on February 24, it has ended its mask mandate, self-isolation requirements, and vaccine passport program for non-essential venues and services.³ COVID-19 may continue to play a role in economic recovery, however, as the incidence of illness in the province remains high. Some businesses and organizations have elected to retain vaccination requirements voluntarily,⁴ and many small businesses in particular continue to struggle. While 88% of those recently surveyed were open, only 50% were fully staffed and only 34% were reporting revenues at or above pre-pandemic levels.⁵

To assist small and medium-sized business, the federal government recently launched the Canada Digital Adoption program, which provides funding to help businesses adopt digital technologies.⁶ For individuals hoping to re-enter the labour force, the Government of Saskatchewan earmarked \$2.2 million for its Training Voucher Program, which reimburses tuition and other eligible costs at a range of public and private training institutions.⁷

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Employment in Saskatchewan's **goods-producing sector** decreased both month-to-month (-1.4%) and year-over-year (-3.6%) in February. It also remained well below pre-pandemic levels, down -9.2% from February 2020. Employment in the **services-producing sector**, on the other hand, rose 4.9% since pre-pandemic and was up on both an annual (8.3%) and monthly basis (2.1%).

Within the goods-producing sector, employment in the **agriculture** industry was up from January (2.0%), but down significantly year-over-year (-20.6%). Drought and extreme temperatures resulted in below-average yields for the 2021 harvest season and overall production fell nearly 47% from the previous year.⁸ Heavy snowfall this winter and the likelihood of more rain this spring has improved the drought forecast for parts of Saskatchewan, and much of the central and southeast regions could be removed from drought status by the end of March.⁹ Projected increases to interest rates this spring will affect operating costs for producers,¹⁰ but the 2022 Saskatchewan Crop Guide is predicting a profitable year for almost all grains and oilseeds typically grown in the province.¹¹ Grain prices have risen in recent weeks, partly the result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine late in February.¹² Strong commodity prices throughout 2021 allowed Saskatchewan producers to post record exports despite significant production losses. The province's agricultural exports were almost \$17.5 billion in 2021, an increase of almost seven percent over the record set the previous year.¹³

Saskatchewan's provincial crop insurance program, which processed a historic number of claims in 2021, is increasing coverage and premiums in 2022 and expanding its contract price option.¹⁴ The federal government is also spending \$40 million for a 26-month project aimed at helping Saskatchewan and Manitoba farmers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will provide financial support to producers who adopt practices such as rotational grazing, nutrient management, and the use of cover crops.¹⁵

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	February 2022	January 2022	February 2021	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	582.0	574.6	552.0	7.4	1.3	30.0	5.4
Goods-producing sector	129.2	131.1	134.0	-1.9	-1.4	-4.8	-3.6
Agriculture	25.8	25.3	32.5	0.5	2.0	-6.7	-20.6
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	18.5	19.6	21.4	-1.1	-5.6	-2.9	-13.6
Utilities	6.0	6.1	5.8	-0.1	-1.6	0.2	3.4
Construction	48.3	47.7	43.0	0.6	1.3	5.3	12.3
Manufacturing	30.7	32.3	31.2	-1.6	-5.0	-0.5	-1.6
Services-producing sector	452.8	443.5	418.0	9.3	2.1	34.8	8.3
Trade	101.1	96.1	88.9	5.0	5.2	12.2	13.7
Transportation and warehousing	25.6	26.0	23.0	-0.4	-1.5	2.6	11.3
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	31.6	31.7	26.4	-0.1	-0.3	5.2	19.7
Professional, scientific and technical services	27.8	28.2	27.7	-0.4	-1.4	0.1	0.4
Business, building and other support services	16.5	18.1	16.1	-1.6	-8.8	0.4	2.5
Educational services	49.5	48.3	44.0	1.2	2.5	5.5	12.5
Health care and social assistance	88.0	86.1	83.6	1.9	2.2	4.4	5.3
Information, culture and recreation	19.2	17.5	13.8	1.7	9.7	5.4	39.1
Accommodation and food services	32.0	31.8	30.0	0.2	0.6	2.0	6.7
Other services	26.8	25.7	28.5	1.1	4.3	-1.7	-6.0
Public administration	34.7	34.0	35.9	0.7	2.1	-1.2	-3.3

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

Employment in **construction** increased by 600 on a monthly basis (1.3%) and even more significantly year-over-year (12.3%). Several upcoming projects in the Regina area could continue this growth. Construction is slated to begin on a new Urgent Care Centre this spring,¹⁶ as is work on 12 transitional housing units to be managed by the non-profit MayBell Developments.¹⁷ In the longer-term, the City is planning for a new aquatic centre,¹⁸ and its executive committee is proposing to build 29 new affordable housing units with \$7.75 million received from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation last year.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Government of Canada is providing \$6.6 million to bring high-speed Internet to 2,500 households in rural Saskatchewan, including First Nations communities. Work on the projects' infrastructure is expected to be complete by summer 2022.²⁰

Turning to the services-producing sector, employment in the **professional and scientific services** industry fell by -1.4% on the month, and was little-changed since last year (0.4%). As province-run PCR testing for COVID-19 was scaled back in early February, private testing companies expect to see a sharp increase in demand.²¹ Looking

ahead, an infectious disease lab in Saskatoon is seeking a larger role in pandemic research with a bid to upgrade to a level four containment designation. If successful, the VIDO facility would be just the second such lab in Canada.²² Also in health research news, Regina's First Nations University of Canada has received a \$500,000 grant for a four-year study of traditional birthing and childrearing practices.²³ And on the technology front, the Government of Canada is providing \$80 million to programs across Canada that will help youth gain digital and coding skills. The Saskatchewan Science Centre and Saskatoon Industry Education Council are among the recipients.²⁴

The **health care and social assistance** industry as a whole added jobs on both a monthly (+2.2%) and annual basis (5.3%). However, these gains have been concentrated in health care, and employment in social assistance has trailed behind.²⁵ New developments in individual, family, and community services could help to bolster the industry after a difficult year. The Saskatoon Tribal Council's wellness centre, which opened in December, is adding 20 new beds to its downtown shelter.²⁶ The Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$1.1 million over three years to expand the Family Intervention Rapid Support Team program to include Moose Jaw, Estevan, Weyburn, Carlyle, and Nipawin.²⁷ The provincial government is also seeking an organization to establish and oversee a network of Integrated Youth Services, which will comprise mental health supports, substance use resources, and other social services.²⁸

The social assistance sub-sector also includes child and day care services, which are likely to see significant employment growth in the coming months and years. In 2021, Saskatchewan signed on to the federal government's national early learning and childcare strategy, which aims to provide childcare for an average of \$10 per day by 2025-2026.²⁹ The short-term goal for provinces and territories is to reduce average fees by 50% before the end of 2022 and Saskatchewan was the first to hit this target, implementing parent and caregiver subsidies in February 2022.³⁰ The province has also developed partnerships with postsecondary institutions to accelerate training for early childhood educators,³¹ and plans to add 6,000 new child care spaces in 2021-2022 and 28,000 by 2025-2026.³²

The largest year-over-year increase among industries in February was in **information, culture, and recreation** (+39.1%), which was also up 9.7% on a monthly basis. After widespread cancellations due to the threat of the Omicron variant,³³ large public events began to spring up again in February. More than 17,000 people attended the opening weekend of Regina's Frost Winter Festival, and organizers reported that the event nearly broke even despite the challenges posed by COVID-19.³⁴ However, many entertainment venues still haven't been able to return to normal operations. Consumer confidence hasn't completely recovered and restrictions in other jurisdictions make it less likely for performers to plan cross-country tours.³⁵ In Regina, a new non-profit has formed to assist artists and independent theatre groups who have been impacted by the pandemic, providing in-kind resources and financial support.³⁶

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

On a year-over-year basis, employment was up in three of five economic regions. Yearly job losses of -2,100 (-4.1%) and -500 (-1.4%) occurred in **Swift Current – Moose Jaw** and **Yorkton – Melville** respectively. **Saskatoon – Biggar** led the regions in employment growth, adding 16,000 jobs, while **Regina – Moose Mountain** held the lowest unemployment rate in the province at 4.7%.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	February 2022 ('000)	February 2021 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	February 2022 (%)	February 2021 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Saskatchewan	566.2	540.7	4.7	5.3	7.7	-2.4
Economic Regions						
Regina - Moose Mountain	178.5	167.7	6.4	4.7	8.1	-3.4
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	49.3	51.4	-4.1	7.5	6.5	1.0
Saskatoon - Biggar	207.6	191.6	8.4	4.9	8.0	-3.1
Yorkton - Melville	35.0	35.5	-1.4	6.4	5.6	0.8
Prince Albert and Northern	95.9	94.4	1.6	5.6	7.7	-2.1

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, the **Saskatoon – Biggar** region posted strong employment gains (+8.4%) and the region's unemployment rate dropped 3.1 percentage points to 4.9%, the lowest it has been since November 2019. A key contributor is the increase of 19,100 jobs (+12.6%) in the region's services-producing sector over the past year. According to Express Employment Professionals, a staffing and recruitment company in Saskatoon, there are 55% more job postings in the area than there were before the start of the pandemic.³⁷

The University of Saskatchewan is introducing a new Food and Nutrition Degree program starting in September 2022. The focus is on how nutrition, health and wellness relate to agricultural production and food processing.³⁸ Meanwhile, the Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$5.7 million to 25 researchers at the University of Saskatchewan to support crop innovation research.³⁹

Compared to the previous year, employment in **Regina – Moose Mountain** increased by 10,800 (+6.4%), while the unemployment rate dropped 3.4 percentage points to 4.7%. Employment gains of 7,000 (5.2%) in the services-producing sector and 3,900 (12.0%) in the goods-producing sector contributed to the region's growth. The Government of Canada is providing \$15.8 million to the Regina International Airport to assist with infrastructure projects and to help keep services running.⁴⁰

Emergency services at the Redvers Health Centre partially reopened in February after closing in September 2021 due to staffing shortages.⁴¹ In addition, a \$2.2 million Interventional Radiology suite recently opened at the Regina Pasqua Hospital, and is expected to increase capacity and help reduce wait times.⁴²

On an annual basis, 1,500 (+1.6%) more people were employed this month in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region. Looking over the past year, however, the region's total employment is at its lowest level since May. Year-over-year, the region's unemployment rate fell 2.1 percentage points to 5.6%. Meadow Lake Mechanical Pulp Inc. will be slowing down production indefinitely due to ongoing railway supply chain issues.⁴³

Pizza Hut has recently opened a new restaurant in Melfort and the owners are planning another location in Tisdale.⁴⁴ Finally, construction on a new elementary school will begin later this year in the northern village of La Loche. The cost of the new school is around \$24 million and is scheduled to replace the existing Ducharme Elementary School by September 2024.⁴⁵

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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