



Labour Market Bulletin

Alberta

February 2022



This Labour Market Bulletin provides an analysis of Labour Force Survey results for the province of Alberta, including the regions of Calgary, Edmonton, Central Alberta and Mountain Parks, Southern Alberta, and Northern Alberta.

OVERVIEW

High energy prices, increased demand for construction, and robust retail sales have driven economic growth in Alberta in recent months. Employment in February 2022 averaged around 2.3 million, which was essentially unchanged from the month prior. Employment did increase by +111,800 jobs (+5.1%) on an annual basis compared to February 2021. While full-time employment essentially stayed the same from the previous month, part-time employment showed improvement. Moving forward, the gradual lifting of public health restrictions related to the Omicron variant should support job growth in the coming months.

Alberta entered the first step of its three step plan to ease public health measures on February 9. The first step of the re-opening plan involved removing the Restrictions Exemption Program along with most associated restrictions. Masking requirements were also lifted for children under 13 in all settings and students of any age attending K-12 schools and participating in school activities. On March 1, Alberta entered step two of its re-opening plan which involved removing the provincial mask mandate except on municipal and intra-provincial public transit and at Alberta Health Service-operated and contracted facilities, and all continuing care settings. Capacity limits on large entertainment venues were lifted as were restrictions on interactive activities, table limits, liquor sales and closing times for bars, restaurants and other food serving businesses. Indoor and outdoor social gathering limits including for all wedding and funeral events were lifted as were mandatory work-from-home requirements.¹

The lifting of restrictions is good news for employment in many sectors, especially those that have been directly affected, such as the food and accommodations sector and the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector.

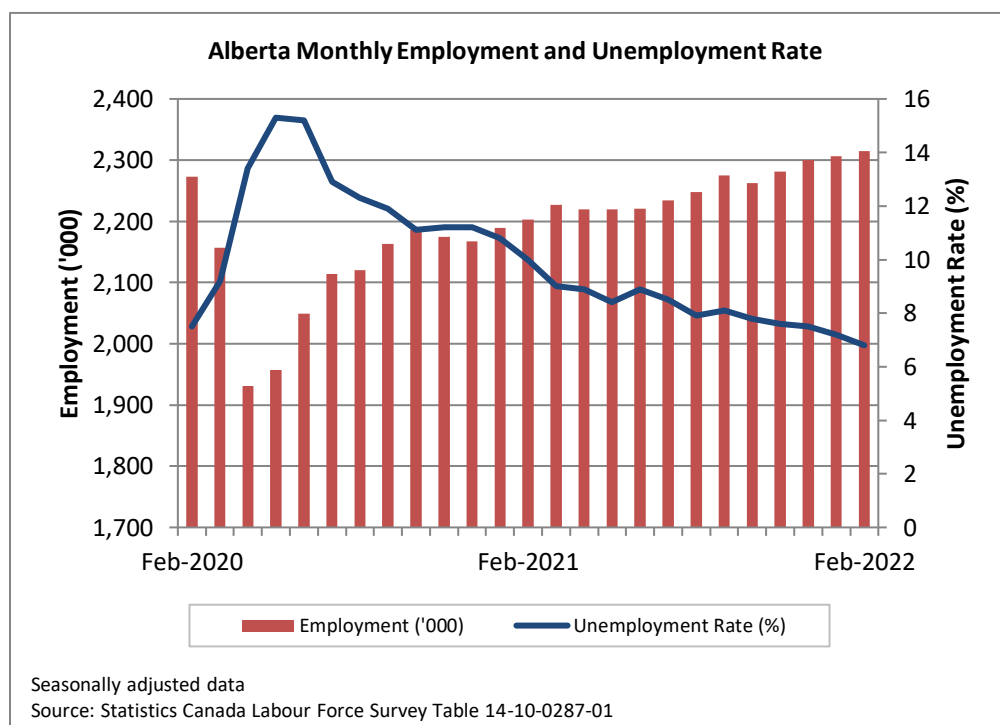
In recent months, high global energy prices have contributed to rapid economic recovery in Alberta. This trend is likely to continue in the short term, as the conflict in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia have pushed global energy prices even higher.

Alberta Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	February 2022	January 2022	February 2021	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	3,580.2	3,573.9	3,531.3	6.3	0.2	48.9	1.4
Labour Force ('000)	2,484.0	2,486.7	2,447.1	-2.7	-0.1	36.9	1.5
Employment ('000)	2,315.0	2,306.8	2,203.2	8.2	0.4	111.8	5.1
Full-Time ('000)	1,854.7	1,864.3	1,782.7	-9.6	-0.5	72.0	4.0
Part-Time ('000)	460.2	442.5	420.5	17.7	4.0	39.7	9.4
Unemployment ('000)	169.0	179.9	243.9	-10.9	-6.1	-74.9	-30.7
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.8	7.2	10.0	-0.4	-	-3.2	-
Participation Rate (%)	69.4	69.6	69.3	-0.2	-	0.1	-
Employment Rate (%)	64.7	64.5	62.4	0.2	-	2.3	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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



On a positive note, the unemployment rate fell by -0.4 percentage points to 6.8% in February 2022. This is Alberta's lowest monthly unemployment rate since the pandemic began. High energy prices, record oil production, and strong demand in construction have supported job growth and economic recovery in recent months. The phased lifting of restrictions should support job growth and economic recovery in the near term.

Alberta Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	February 2022 (%)	January 2022 (%)	February 2021 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	6.8	7.2	10.0	-0.4	-3.2
25 years and over	5.7	6.1	8.4	-0.4	-2.7
Men - 25 years and over	6.1	5.6	8.6	0.5	-2.5
Women - 25 years and over	5.2	6.7	8.2	-1.5	-3.0
15 to 24 years	13.8	14.2	19.9	-0.4	-6.1
Men - 15 to 24 years	13.4	16.1	20.8	-2.7	-7.4
Women - 15 to 24 years	14.1	12.2	19.0	1.9	-4.9

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

Between January and February, young men (aged 15-24 years) had the most significant decrease in unemployment rate compared to other demographic groups, with a -2.7 percentage point decrease. Compared to last February, the unemployment rate has declined for young men by -7.4 percentage points. In February, young women (aged 15-24 years) had the highest unemployment rate at 14.1 percent. This was a 1.9 percentage point increase from January 2022 but a 4.9 percentage point improvement on an annual basis. Year-over-year changes among men and women 25 years of age and over have been smaller, with their unemployment rates decreasing by -2.5 and -3.0 percentage points respectively.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Alberta 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	2,315.0	2,306.8	2,203.2	8.2	0.4	111.8	5.1
Goods-producing sector	555.4	556.5	543.9	-1.1	-0.2	11.5	2.1
Agriculture	34.9	33.5	38.4	1.4	4.2	-3.5	-9.1
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	147.1	146.0	136.8	1.1	0.8	10.3	7.5
Utilities	18.3	19.8	23.7	-1.5	-7.6	-5.4	-22.8
Construction	228.5	227.9	223.5	0.6	0.3	5.0	2.2
Manufacturing	126.6	129.4	121.6	-2.8	-2.2	5.0	4.1
Services-producing sector	1,759.6	1,750.4	1,659.3	9.2	0.5	100.3	6.0
Trade	357.7	354.0	335.2	3.7	1.0	22.5	6.7
Transportation and warehousing	126.7	138.7	128.5	-12.0	-8.7	-1.8	-1.4
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	113.2	118.2	109.4	-5.0	-4.2	3.8	3.5
Professional, scientific and technical services	200.6	191.1	176.8	9.5	5.0	23.8	13.5
Business, building and other support services	72.9	70.1	76.8	2.8	4.0	-3.9	-5.1
Educational services	163.1	158.2	160.4	4.9	3.1	2.7	1.7
Health care and social assistance	316.4	319.4	309.0	-3.0	-0.9	7.4	2.4
Information, culture and recreation	80.3	75.5	59.4	4.8	6.4	20.9	35.2
Accommodation and food services	129.5	125.3	105.6	4.2	3.4	23.9	22.6
Other services	95.7	92.7	98.9	3.0	3.2	-3.2	-3.2
Public administration	103.6	107.1	99.3	-3.5	-3.3	4.3	4.3

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

In February 2022, there was little change in employment in the goods-producing sector (-0.2%) on a monthly basis while employment in the services-producing sector increased by +9,200 jobs (+0.5%). On an annual basis, employment in the goods-producing sector as grown by +11,500 jobs (+2.1%); however, employment in the services-producing sector increased substantially by +100,300 jobs (+6.0%). The goods-producing sector may have been affected less by public health restrictions since the beginning of the pandemic, but periods of weak economic activity slowed subsequent employment growth. Meanwhile, the services-producing sector had larger employment gains due to the significant recovery that the retail, food service, and tourism industries underwent during periods when public health orders were more relaxed.

Goods-producing industries

Many industries and businesses in the goods-producing sector were deemed essential and permitted to continue operating through the peak of the pandemic. Nevertheless, weak economic activity and persistent uncertainty have weighed heavily on the sector. Recently, employment in the goods-producing sector has begun to recover as global energy prices have continued to increase.

Increased demand, high energy prices and record levels of oil production have supported an annual increase of employment in the **resource extraction (forestry, mining, and oil and gas)** sector. Annual employment increased by +10,300 jobs (+7.5%) from February 2021 to February 2022. On a monthly basis, employment in the sector remained stable. Oil prices increased by 21% from January to February. In February, Western Canadian Select (WCS) averaged \$78.96 USD per barrel, up by 66% from February 2021.² Oil production in Alberta was 17.5 million cubic metres in January 2022, down -4.8% compared to January 2021. Non-conventional (or oil sands) production, which constituted 85.5% of all oil production in Alberta in January 2022, decreased by -6.6% year-over-year, while production of conventional oil increased by +6.6%.³

Employment in the **construction** industry remained unchanged on a monthly basis. However, the construction sector posted an annual employment increase of +5,000 jobs (+2.2%) from February 2021 to February 2022. This increase in employment is driven by robust demand for construction in the province. After decreasing by -9.0% in December, the seasonally adjusted value of building permits issued by Alberta municipalities in January increased by +2.1%. The increase was mostly due to an increase in the value of commercial sector building permits (+73.3%) as residential (-11.8%), industrial (-25.9%) and institutional/governmental (-17.2%) permit values fell.⁴ The provincial government recently released the Alberta Budget for 2022. The budget includes plans to average \$6.7 billion in capital spending over the next three years on infrastructure priorities. The government hopes that the spending will support 31,000 direct and indirect jobs in construction, engineering and other trades over the next three years.⁵

Services-producing industries

The services-producing sector includes labour intensive and public-facing industries such as wholesale and retail trade, and food and accommodation. These industries were initially among the most impacted during the height of COVID-19 related closures. In recent months employment has begun to recover, especially during periods when public health orders were more relaxed. However employment still remains below pre-pandemic levels in most industries.

Employment in **wholesale and retail trade** increased in February after a busy holiday shopping season. Employment in the sector increased by +3,700 jobs (+1%) from last month. Employment in the sector also increased on an annual basis by +22,500 jobs (+6.7%). Looking back at 2021, there was an increase in demand for retail shopping, a trend we can expect to continue into 2022 as restrictions continue to ease. Total retail sales were 13.1% higher in 2021 than in 2020 and 10.0% above their 2019 level. Annual sales were higher compared to 2020 across all major retail categories except food and beverage stores, which saw sales contract by -2.4%.⁶ Wholesale trade also increased in 2021. On an unadjusted basis, revenues for the full year were up by \$11 billion (+14.4%) from 2020 and \$6.9 billion (+8.6%) from 2019. With an over 30% year-over-year increase, the building material and supplies category was the biggest contributor to both Alberta's and Canada's annual growth in wholesale trade in 2021.⁷ This is a trend that will likely continue in the coming months.

Employment increased in the **accommodation and food services** sector by +4,200 jobs (+3.4%) from last month, and also increased by +23,900 jobs (+22.6%) on an annual basis. The phased easing of public health restrictions should help increase employment in the sector in the near term. As of March 1, restrictions on interactive activities, table limits, liquor sales and closing times for bars, restaurants and other food serving businesses have been lifted.⁸

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

The statistics for the economic regions are not seasonally adjusted and should only be compared on a year-over-year basis. Employment is sometimes influenced by seasonal and calendar effects occurring at the same time and with the same magnitude every year, which can bring about changes in the data that make monthly comparisons difficult.

In February 2022 employment increased on an annual basis in every economic region, as the labour market improved significantly from the same period last year. **Camrose-Drumheller** and **Lethbridge-Medicine Hat** had the largest employment gains on a percentage basis at +10.1% and +5.9% respectively. **Red Deer**, meanwhile, had the smallest employment gains, at + 2.9%.

Alberta 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)
Alberta	2,278.3	2,159.3	5.5	7.1	10.7	-3.6
Economic Regions						
Lethbridge - Medicine Hat	137.8	130.1	5.9	6.6	11.1	-4.5
Camrose - Drumheller	91.2	82.8	10.1	6.1	9.5	-3.4
Calgary	887.0	843.8	5.1	7.6	10.5	-2.9
Banff - Jasper - Rocky Mountain House and Athabasca - Grand Prairie - Peace River	184.4	174.3	5.8	5.2	9.8	-4.6
Red Deer	106.2	103.2	2.9	7.1	9.9	-2.8
Edmonton	798.8	756.1	5.6	7.1	11.5	-4.4
Wood Buffalo - Cold Lake	72.8	69.0	5.5	6.9	9.4	-2.5

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0387, formerly CANSIM 282-0122

In February 2022, employment in **Lethbridge-Medicine Hat** increased by +5.9% (+7,700 jobs) on an annual basis. The regional unemployment rate dropped by -4.5 percentage points to 6.6%. There are a number of projects related to renewable energy that should increase employment in the construction sector in the near term. Invinity Energy Systems and Elemental Energy are partnering on the construction of a solar plant coupled to a technologically advanced battery storage complex at Chappice Lake, near Medicine Hat. The project is backed by Emissions Reduction Alberta.⁹ Also, Evolugen is planning to start construction on a solar farm, Spring Coulee Solar, in summer 2022. The facility near Cardston is expected to be complete in 2023. The project could create up to 100 new construction jobs.¹⁰

Year-over-year, **Camrose – Drumheller** had the largest employment gains in the province on a percentage basis at +10.1% (+8,400 jobs). The unemployment rate stood at 6.1% in February 2022, a -3.4 percentage point drop from February 2021. There have been recent announcements that should help boost employment in the construction sector in the region. For instance, the Alberta Utilities Commission has approved the Buffalo Plains Wind Farm by Germany's ABO Wind near Lomond. The project is expected to be complete by April 30, 2024.¹¹

Employment in **Banff – Jasper – Rocky Mountain House** and **Athabasca – Grande Prairie – Peace River** increased by +5.8% (+10,100 jobs) and the unemployment rate dropped by -4.6 percentage points to 5.2% on annual basis. Recently the Municipal District of Bighorn No. 8 announced that it is planning a 2022 capital plan of approximately \$9.2M that includes \$6.2M to build a new operations shop and \$1.294M for roads.¹²

The unemployment rate in **Red Deer** was 7.1% in February 2022. Employment in the region increased by +2.9% (+3,000 jobs) since last year. In a major piece of news, the Government of Alberta announced that it is committing \$1.8 billion to the expansion of the Red Deer Regional Hospital by its scheduled completion in 2030 or 2031. An estimated \$193 million will be spent over the next three years for planning, and construction is expected to start within this timeframe.¹³

Employment in **Wood Buffalo – Cold Lake** increased annually by +5.5% (+3,800 jobs). The unemployment rate has decreased by -2.5 percentage points to 6.9%. The Government of Canada is investing more than \$5M in the Fort McMurray International Airport for infrastructure improvements, airport operations and new snow removal equipment.¹⁴

Employment in the **Calgary** region increased by +5.1% (+43,200 jobs) on an annual basis. The unemployment rate was 7.6%, down -2.9 percentage points from last year. In February, sixteen companies were hiring for more than 350 jobs in Calgary in a variety of occupations including computer programmers, cyber security, retail sales, and finance specialists among others. Some of the employers offer the opportunity for remote work.¹⁵ It was also recently announced that Alberta Transportation expects construction to start in early 2022 on the Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir. Alberta allocated \$250M in its 2022-23 budget towards the total construction cost of \$432M. The work is expected to be complete in 2025.¹⁶

In **Edmonton**, employment was up by +5.6% (+42,700 jobs) compared to a year ago. The unemployment rate decreased by -4.4 percentage points to 7.1%. There were several positive developments in the region's construction sector in February. Firstly, Covenant Health is building a new \$250M wellness community in southeast Edmonton that will include a health centre, multigenerational housing, an integrated seniors' continuing care centre, surgical services or expansion space as required, and commercial buildings.¹⁷ Also, the

Government of Canada is providing \$10.4M to the Edmonton International Airport for infrastructure improvements to enhance security and enable COVID-19 testing and screening at the airport.¹⁸

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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¹ Government of Alberta (March 1, 2022) [COVID-19 public health actions](#)

² Kent Group (March 10, 2022). [Selected Crude Oil Prices](#)

³ Government of Alberta (March 2, 2022) [Oil Production](#)

⁴ ATB Financial (March 7, 2022) [Building permits rose to start the year](#)

⁵ CTV News (February 24, 2022) [Alberta Budget 2022: What the province plans to build, expand and repair for \\$20B](#)

⁶ ATB Financial (February 18, 2022) [Retail therapy](#)

⁷ ATB Financial (February 24, 2022) [Wholesale retreated in December but was still elevated in 2021](#)

⁸ Government of Alberta (March 1, 2022) [COVID-19 public health actions](#)

⁹ PV Magazine (February 3, 2022) [Canada's largest solar-powered vanadium flow battery](#)

¹⁰ PVBuzz (February 10, 2022) [Scotiabank signs 15-year PPA with Brookfield's Evolugen, purchase power from 40-MW solar park being built in Alberta](#)

¹¹ OkotoksOnline (February 18, 2022) [Alberta Utilities Commission Approves Vulcan County Wind Farm](#)

¹² RMOToday (February 15, 2022) [Operating, capital budget set for MD of Bighorn](#)

¹³ CTV News (February 23, 2022) [Red Deer finally sees Alberta make \\$1.8B commitment to expand hospital](#)

¹⁴ MyMcMurray (February 7, 2022) [Fort McMurray International Airport to receive federal funding](#)

¹⁵ DailyHive (January 25, 2022) [16 companies hiring for more than 350 jobs in Calgary this February](#)

¹⁶ Cochrane Now (February 28, 2022) [Budget includes \\$473.6 million over the next three years for SR1](#)

¹⁷ Edmonton Journal (February 15, 2022) [Covenant Health unveils plans for a new wellness community in southeast Edmonton](#)

¹⁸ Transport Canada (February 7, 2022) [Government of Canada supports Edmonton International Airport with new funding for critical infrastructure projects](#)