

Saskatchewan

LABOUR RIGHTS

Report

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of Regina

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Abbreviations

ULP: unfair labour practices

SHRC: Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission

SINP: Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program

FWIRSA: The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act

SHRC: Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission

CERB: Canada Emergency Response Benefit

SEA: Saskatchewan Employment Act

VM: visible minority

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Labour issues in Saskatchewan

Wage Theft

5,378 successful wage recovery claims
\$13 million in wages recovered for workers

TOP 3 INDUSTRIES

-  **Construction: \$2.2M** recovered
-  **Retail: \$1.4M** recovered
-  **Food service: \$0.8M** recovered

2016 - 2022, Employment Standards Saskatchewan

Poverty Rate



All ages (Statistics Canada Table 98-10-0112-01)

Unemployment Rates



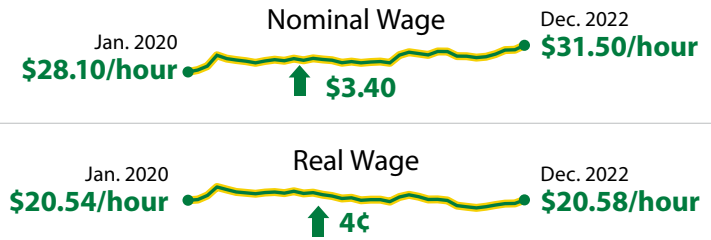
Average
4.4%

Highest Demographic
9.8% Arab

Lowest Demographic
3.9% Filipino

Prairie region, March 2022 (Statistics Canada Table 14-10-0373-01)

Wages Can't Keep Up With Inflation



Human Rights Complaints

64%  are employment related

2021-22 (SHRC)

Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP)



5374 applications processed
73% approved

April 2021 - March 2022

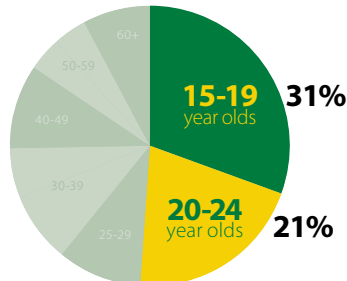
Indigenous Labour Market Participation Rate



↑ **3.5%**
 2020: **61.7%** | 2021: **65.2%**

Indigenous in Saskatchewan, 2021.

Minimum Wage Earners



All industries, Dec. 2022 (Labour Force Survey)

Minimum Wage Winners



15-16-year-old females working part-time in retail and food services & accommodations

Average wage: **\$13.81/hour**

(December 2022)

Top Industries Paying Less Than \$15/hour



Retail 38% of workers earn <\$15/hr



Food Service & Accommodations 48% of workers earn <\$15/hr

Dec. 2022 (Labour Force Survey)

Introduction

The effects of COVID-19 and the pandemic continue to resonate in Saskatchewan's labour market. After reports of labour shortages and growing wage demands dominated headlines, inflation and the threat of a global recession now loom over workers in the province and across Canada (Bank of Canada, 2023). In fact, the country's central bank continues to embark on a series of interest rate hikes in the interest of cooling the economy (Suhanic, 2023).

This brief report highlights the realities faced by the labour force in Saskatchewan. The topics covered include minimum wage, employment rates, and disparities which may exist at the industry and sociodemographic levels.

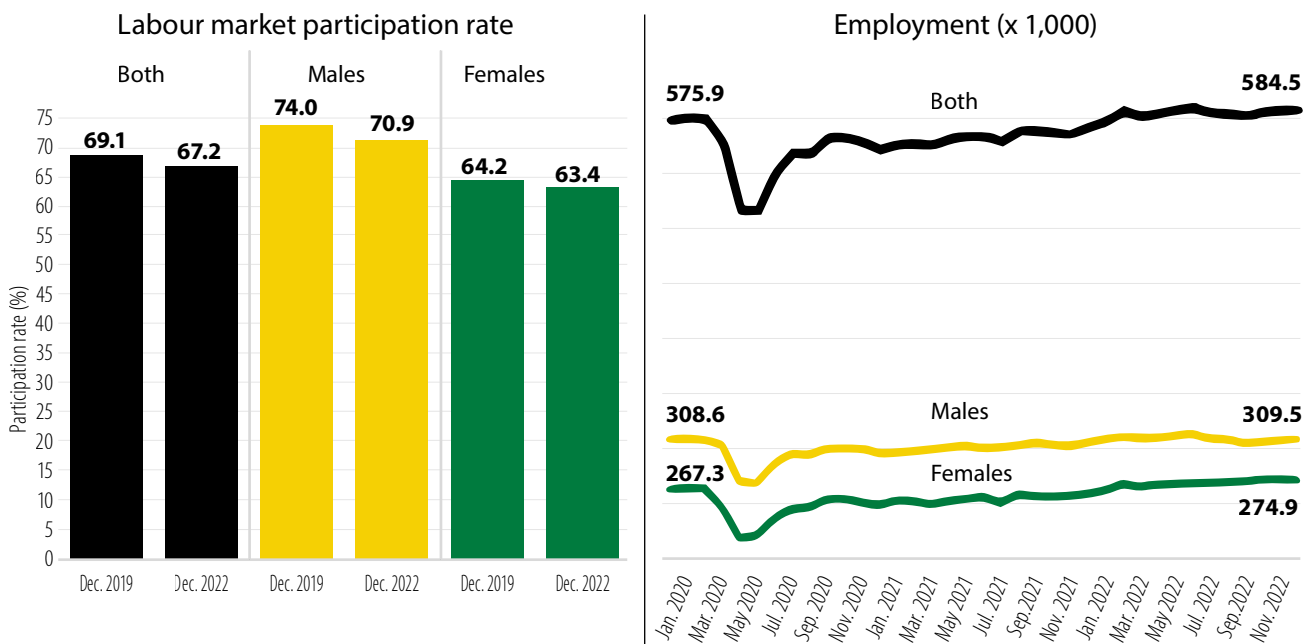


Employment

While the province boasts one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada, at 4.4%¹ in December of 2022, the overall labour market participation rate² in Saskatchewan declined throughout the pandemic from 69.1% in December 2019 to 67.2% in December 2022. Men experienced a drop of 3.1 percentage points, from 74.0% to 70.9% labour market participation rate in the same three-year period. For women, the decline was less precipitous, dropping 0.8 percentage points (from 64.2% to 63.4%) from December 2019 to December 2022.

Despite a drop in the labour market participation rate, the number of employed persons increased from 575,900 in December 2019 (308,600 male and 267,300 female) to 584,500 in December 2022 (309,500 male and 274,900 female) – an increase of 1.5% or 8,600 total employed persons. However, the male/female split in the labour force shifted slightly toward females during this three-year period, going from 53.6%/46.4% (M/F) in December 2019 to 53.0%/47.0% (M/F) in December 2022 (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

Figure 1. Labour market participation and Employment, Saskatchewan, Dec. 2019-Dec. 2022.



Source: Statistics Canada. (2022). Labour force characteristics by province, monthly, seasonally adjusted. Image created internally.

To understand the simultaneous drop in the labour market participation rate and the increase in the number of employed persons in Saskatchewan from December 2019 to December 2022, we turn to two other statistics: 1) population estimates; and 2) employment by immigrant status. While employment rose by 1.5%, the provincial population rose by 2.2% (Government of Saskatchewan, 2022c)³, which could be

1. Adjusted for seasonality

2. Labour market participation rate = workforce (working or looking for work) ÷ non-institutionalized population aged 15+. This measure gives insight into the general willingness of the population to sell its labour in the labour market. Increases or decreases in the labour market participation rate may be a symptom of changing business conditions (wage rates, working conditions) or employee interests (perceived benefits of working versus doing something else).

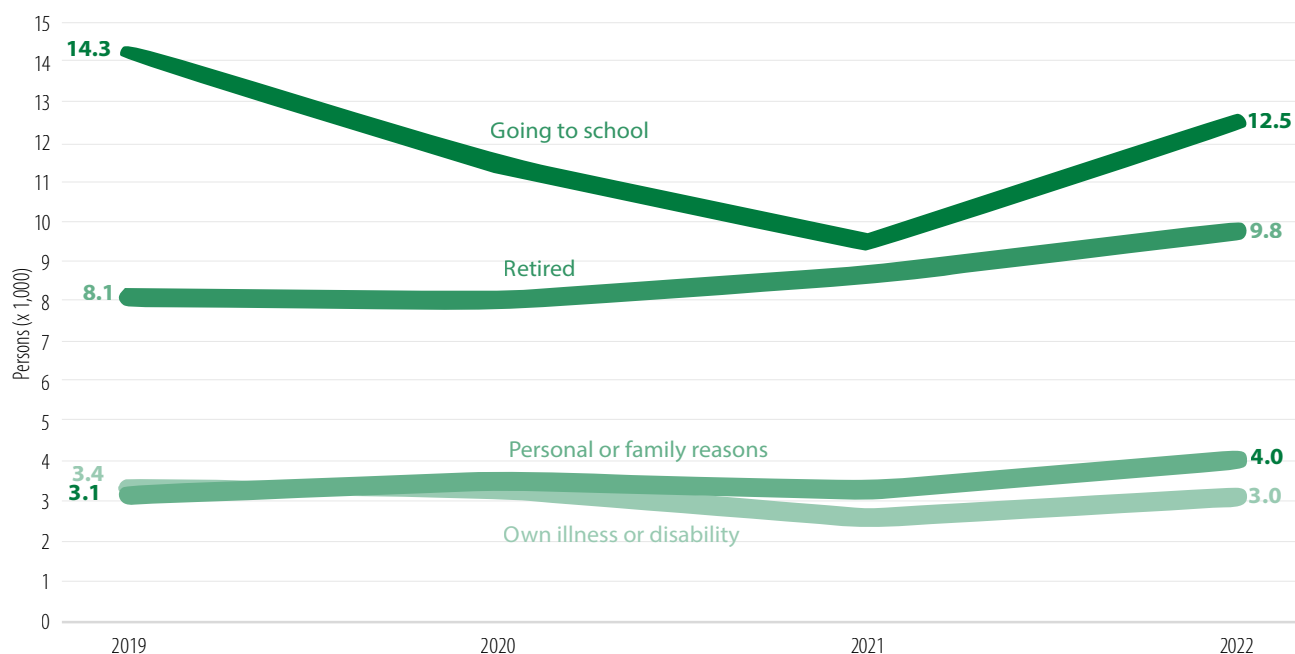
3. Population of Saskatchewan in January 2020: 1,179,135. October 2022: 1,205,119 (Government of Saskatchewan, 2022c).

the driver behind the rise in number of employed persons. Furthermore, total employment in Saskatchewan for those born in Canada fell by 3.7% (494,500 to 476,000)⁴, while it rose for landed immigrants by 24.4% (71,400 to 88,800) (Statistics Canada, 2023a). This shift in the makeup of employed persons is dramatic and significant because not only do employment numbers move in opposite directions, but it also speaks to the economy’s reliance on foreign and immigrant workers during a period of uncertainty in the labour, housing, and financial markets (2020 through 2022).

For those who reported losing or leaving their jobs in the past year, permanent layoffs were by far the leading reason, accounting for as much as 51.86% of job losses, as reported in August 2020 (Statistics Canada, 2023c)⁵. In nominal terms, permanent layoffs in Saskatchewan were highest in March 2022 at 32,400 compared to 27,000 in December 2022 (Statistics Canada, 2023c).

Although losing or leaving one’s job does not necessarily equate to a departure from the labour market (job-seekers are also part of the workforce and therefore contribute to the labour participation rate), there are a few reasons for leaving a job which imply leaving the job market: retirement, going to school, personal or family responsibilities, and own illness or disability. Of these four reasons, going to school is the most common reason: an average of 12,500 people in Saskatchewan reported in 2019 that they had left the labour market to go to school, compared to 9,800 leaving for retirement (Statistics Canada, 2023c). Although the number of people leaving their jobs for school has decreased since 2019, it increased markedly from 2021 to 2022. The average retirement rate has steadily increased through time, from an average of 8,100 in 2019 to 9,800 in 2022.

Figure 2. Four potential reasons for leaving the job market, Saskatchewan, 15 years and over.

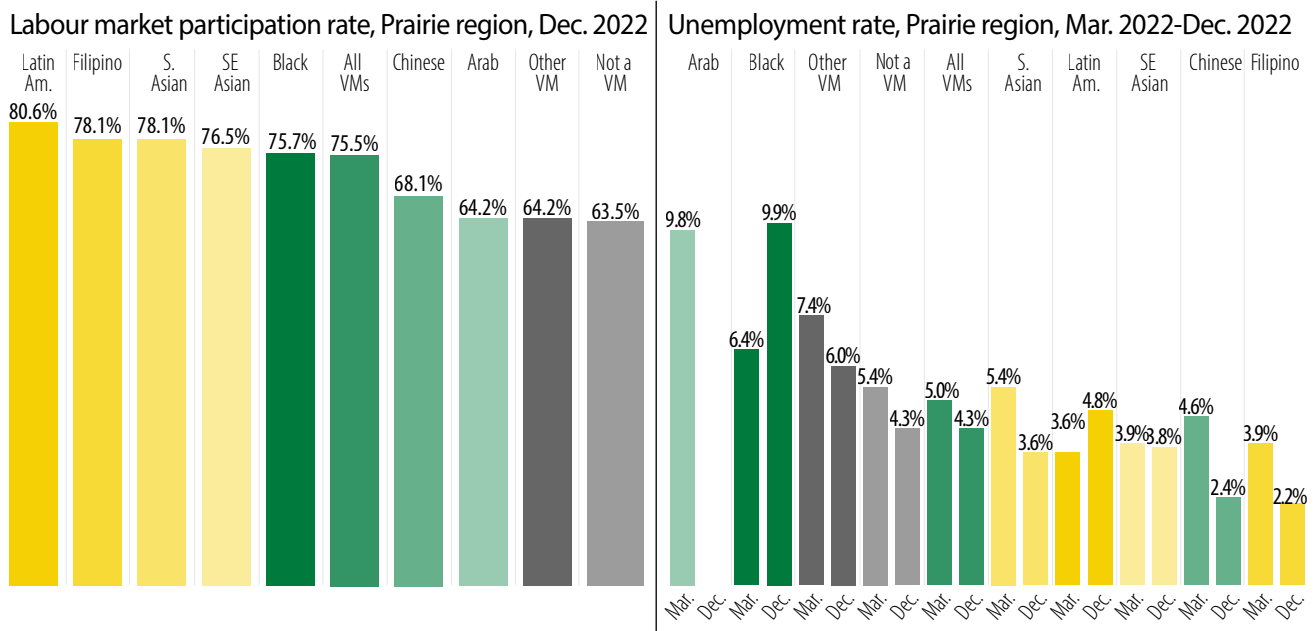


Source: Statistics Canada. (2023c). Reason for leaving job during previous year, monthly. Image created internally.

4. Unadjusted three-month moving average, in contrast to the monthly estimate in Figure 1 which is adjusted for seasonality.
 5. Data are reported monthly but refer to the reason for losing/leaving one’s job in the past year (Statistics Canada, 2023c). Annual figures are the average of the monthly figures.

This data provides some context to available employment numbers. Data from the 2021 census provides a snapshot in the disparity across demographics in the provinces. Figure 3 shows that the three-month average labour force participation rate for Filipinos in the Prairie region⁶ was 78.1% in December 2022, compared to 63.5% for non-visible minorities (VMs). While Filipinos also have the lowest unemployment rates, Black residents have the highest, at 9.9% in December 2022. In March 2022, Arabs had the highest unemployment rate at 9.8% in the Prairie region, with the Black population at a much lower 6.4%; however, the December 2022 unemployment rate for Arabs in the Prairie region was suppressed for confidentiality reasons (Statistics Canada, 2023e).

Figure 3. Labour market participation and unemployment rate by visible minority (VM).

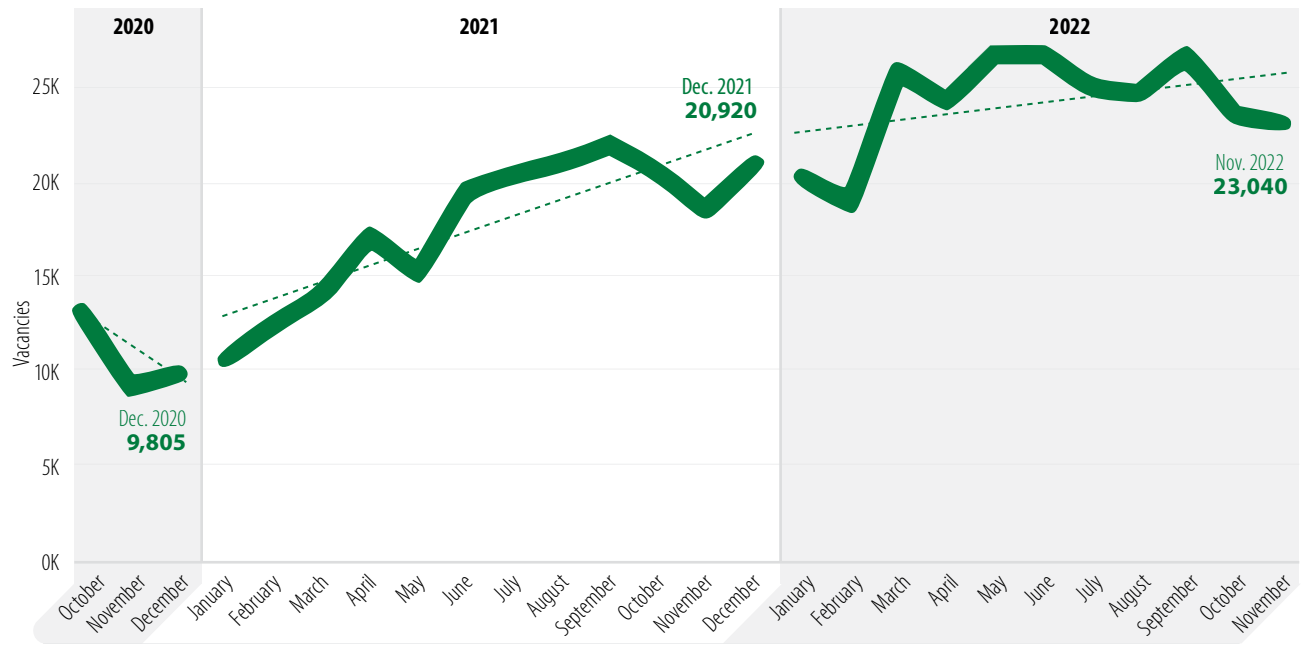


Source: Statistics Canada. (2022). Labour force characteristics by visible minority group, three-month moving average, monthly. Image created internally.

6. Not explicitly available for Saskatchewan alone.

Job vacancies in Saskatchewan rose steadily for the majority of 2021 and the first half of 2022, as pictured below. In December 2019, there were 9,805 job vacancies in Saskatchewan; in November 2022, this figure had more than doubled to 23,040 – an increase of 135%. The job vacancy rate was at 4.6% in November 2022, compared to 1.9% in December 2019 (Statistics Canada, 2023d). A job vacancy exists if: 1) a specific position exists; 2) work could start within 30 days; and 3) the employer is actively seeking an employee from outside the organization (Statistics Canada, 2015).

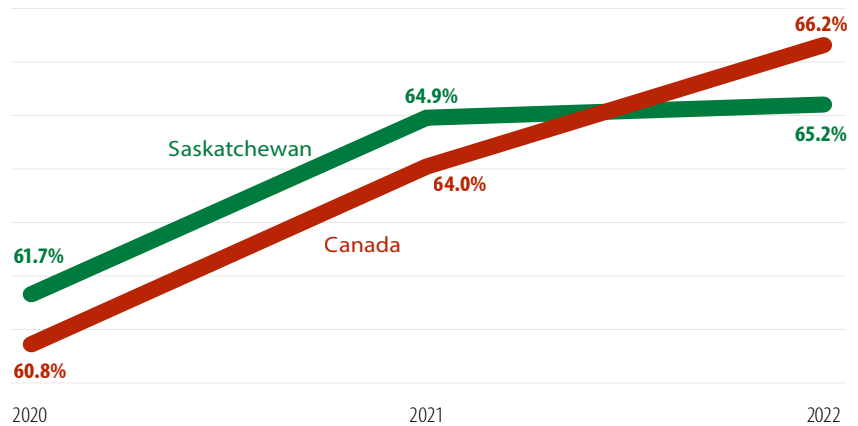
Figure 4. Job vacancies in Saskatchewan.



Source: Statistics Canada. (2023). Job vacancies, payroll employees, and job vacancy rate by provinces and territories, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality. Image created internally.

Trends for Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan also improved slightly, with the labour market participate rate increasing to 65.2% in 2021 compared to 61.7% in 2020, before the pandemic. A similar trend can be witnessed across Canada, with the participation rate of Indigenous populations increasing from 60.8% to 66.2% in the same period (Government of Canada, 2022).

Figure 5. Labour market participation rate, Indigenous population.

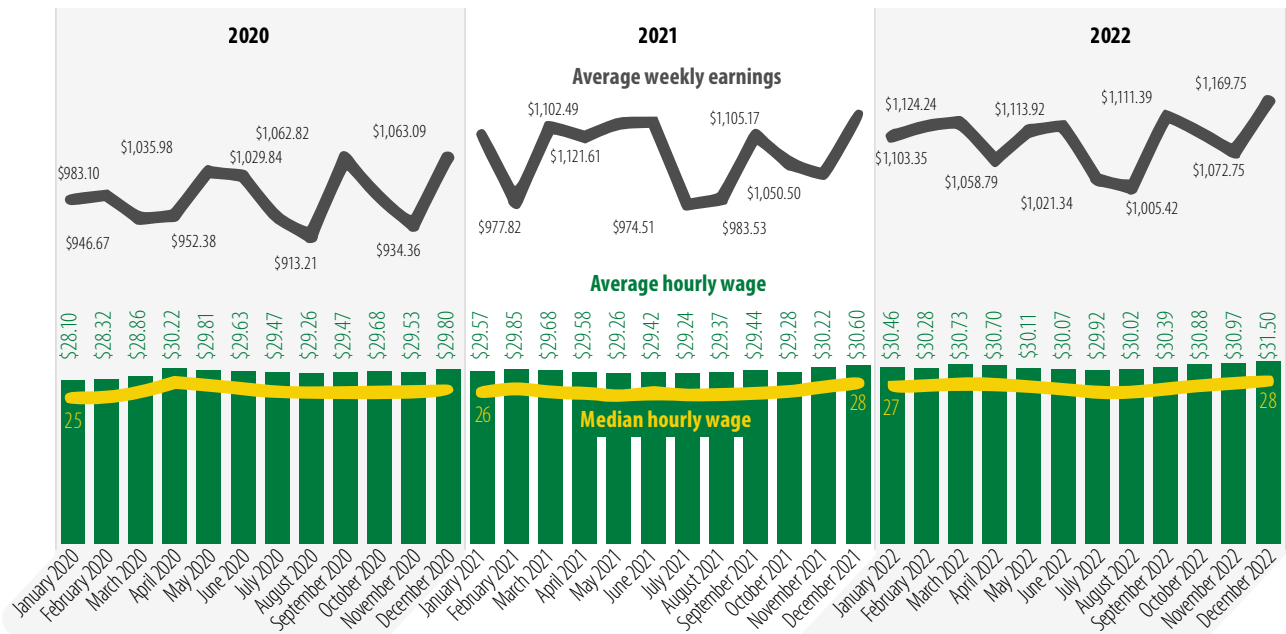


Source: Statistics Canada. (2022). Labour force characteristics by province, region and Indigenous group. Image created internally.

Wages

Saskatchewan workers have experienced a continued increase in average and median hourly wages and weekly earnings coming out of the worst of the pandemic. Weekly earnings in Saskatchewan were \$1,169.75 as of December 2022, compared to \$983.10 per week in January 2020 and a low of \$934.36 per week in November 2020. Average wages in Saskatchewan were \$31.50 per hour in December 2022 (median \$28) compared to \$28.10 per hour in January 2020 (median \$25).

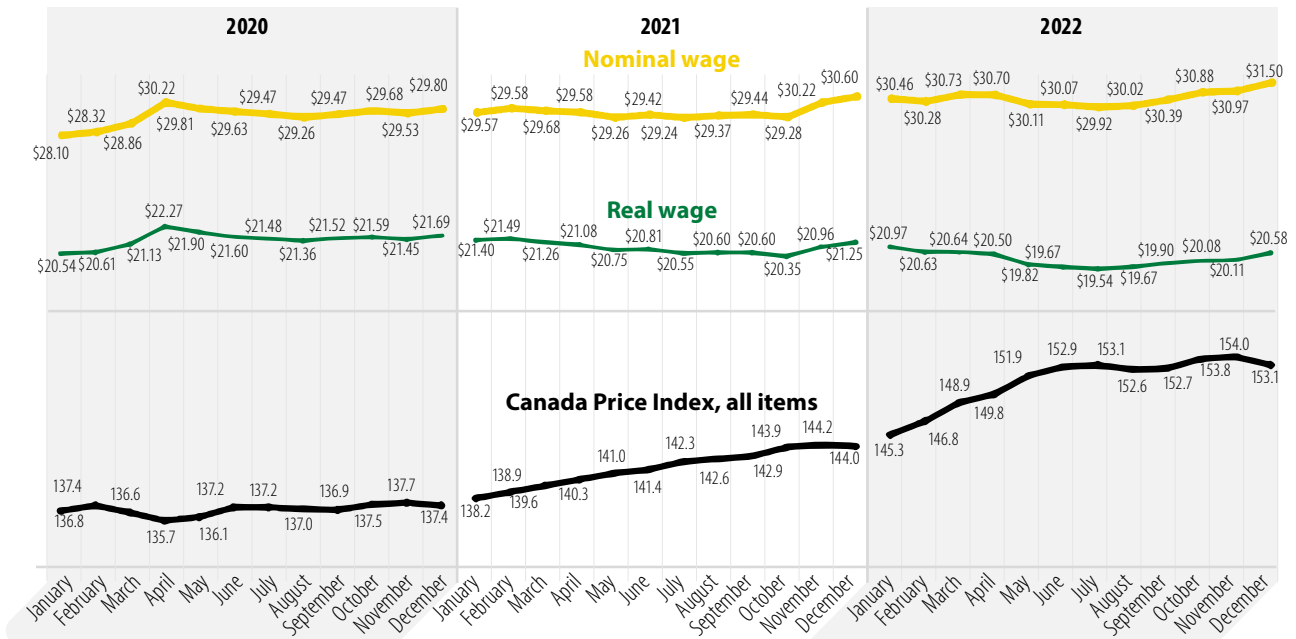
Figure 6. Weekly earnings and average wages, all industries, Saskatchewan.



Source: Labour Force Survey. Image created internally.

Unfortunately, the gains in earnings and wages are being eroded by increases in the cost of living. The figure below makes this clear: while the nominal wage (top, blue line) is relatively steady, the Consumer Price Index (CPI, a measure of inflation) increased markedly through 2021 and 2022 (bottom, red line), going from below 140 to over 150 (2002=100). The real wage (middle, yellow line) can be thought of as “inflation-adjusted” and is the nominal wage divided by the CPI. After adjusting for inflation, it is clear to see that real wages fell in 2021 and especially in 2022 as prices of goods and services (measured by the CPI) rose steadily beginning in early 2021.

Figure 7. Nominal and real wages in Saskatchewan.



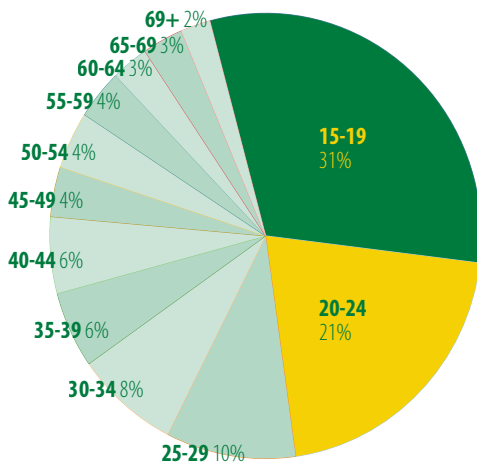
Sources: Labour Force Survey and Consumer Price Index (Statistics Canada). Image created internally.

The Saskatchewan government’s decision to increase the hourly minimum wage to \$15 by 2024 should provide a benefit to the lowest-paid workers in Saskatchewan. Approximately 2.1% of workers in Saskatchewan are currently earning the basic minimum wage (\$13.00 per hour), up from 0.1% a year earlier (November 2021, one month after the minimum wage increased to \$11.81 per hour). In the wake of this increase, the number of people earning exactly \$11.81 almost quadrupled (680 to 2,654)⁷ from September 2021 to October 2021, suggesting that when the minimum wage increases, so too do many people’s wages. The minimum wage is set to increase to \$14.00 per hour effective October 1, 2023.

In December 2022, approximately 6.2% of workers in Saskatchewan earned less than \$15 an hour. These workers are mostly younger: 31% are aged 15 to 19, 21% are aged 20 to 24, and 10% are aged 25 to 29, for a total of 62% below

age 30. The remaining ages (30+) make up 38% of all workers who earn less than \$15 per hour.

Figure 8. Earners <\$15/hr by age, all industries, Saskatchewan, Dec. 2022.



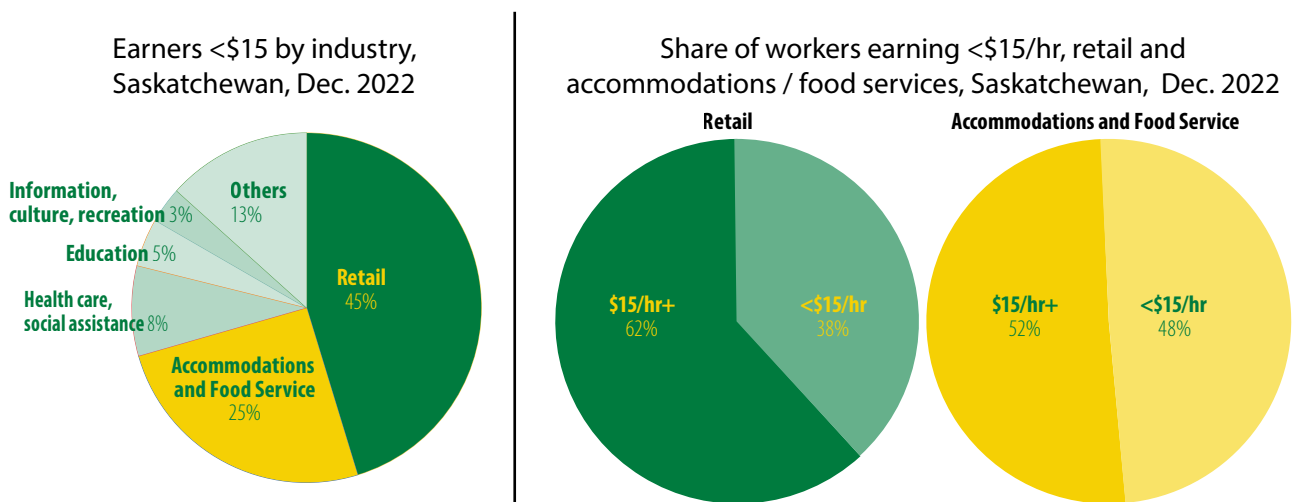
Source: Labour Force Survey. Image created internally.

7. Weighted values from the Labour Force Survey Public Use Microdata Files (PUMFs), 2021. PUMFs are downloaded, merged into a dataset, and analysis performed internally.

The largest slice of the pie above (the 31% aged 15 to 19) can further be broken down by sex and age. Females aged 15 to 16 are the lowest earners in Saskatchewan in December 2022, earning an average of \$13.81 per hour. Males of the same age earn slightly more: \$14.13 per hour. By December 2022, both males and females aged 17 to 19 were earning more than \$15 per hour. However, in the first half of 2022, females aged 17 to 19 were, on average, earning less than \$15 per hour, representing 71% of all working females in this age group, whereas males of the same age earned more than \$15 per hour on average almost every month in 2022.

As pictured below, nearly half of all employees earning less than \$15 per hour in Saskatchewan in December 2022 were in retail (45%), followed by accommodation and food services workers at 25%. Combined with the above breakdown by age and sex and the fact that 63% are part-time workers, this suggests that the clear “winners” from a minimum wage floor at \$15 will be 15-to-16-year-old females working part-time in retail and food services or accommodations. Nearly half (48%) of all food services and accommodations workers earn less than \$15 per hour, regardless of age; in retail, this share is 38%.

Figure 9. Earners < \$15/hr by industry, Saskatchewan, Dec. 2022.

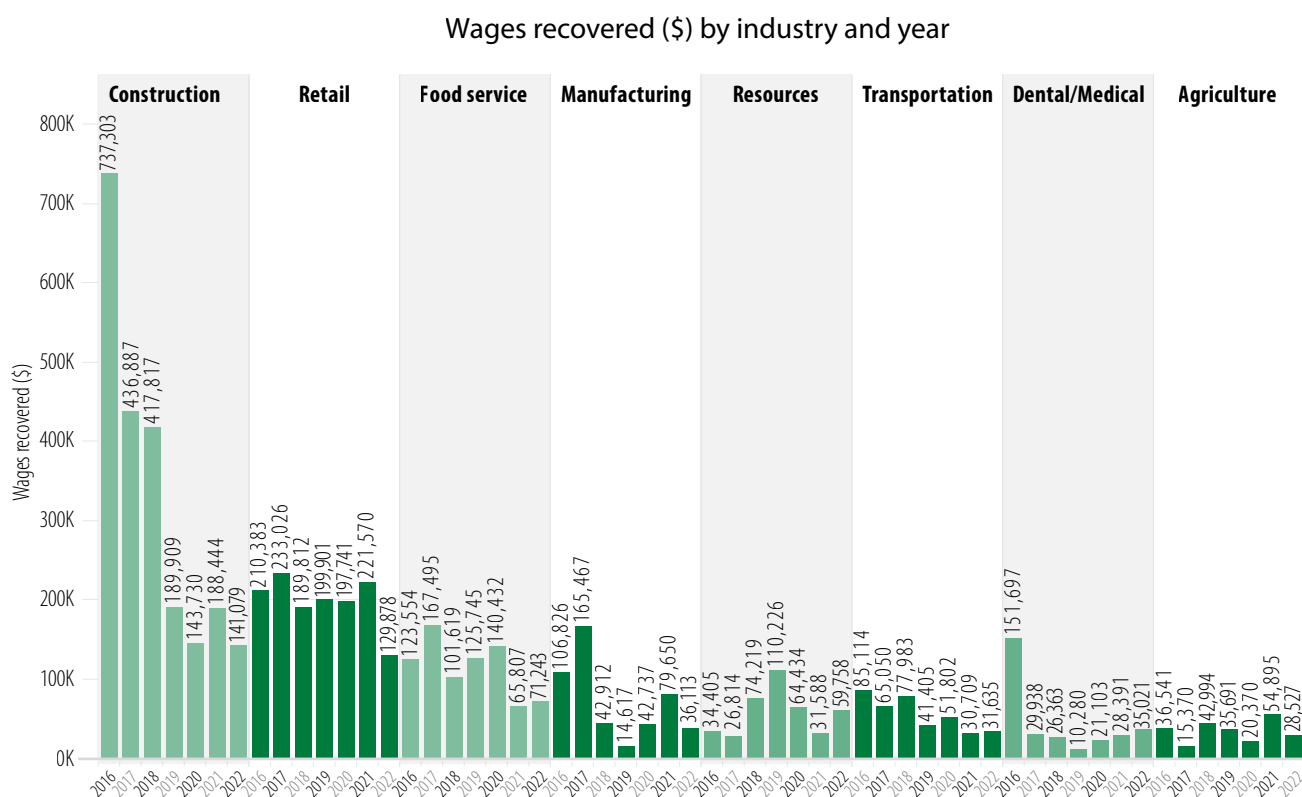


Source: Labour Force Survey. Image created internally.

“Wage theft” in Saskatchewan

“Wage theft” is not an uncommon occurrence in Canada. Defined by scholars as the “phenomenon of employees not being paid the wages and other monetary benefits to which they are legally entitled,” incidents of wage theft must typically be pursued in Canada through government compliance measures that follow a complaints-based enforcement system (Vosko et al., 2017). Research suggests that wage theft is particularly acute in industries populated by lower-wage, non-unionized, precarious work, such as the food services and accommodations industry. In non-unionized workplaces, most workers must pursue claims of unpaid wages through their respective provincial agencies, leading scholars to conclude that the available data on employment standards violations might underestimate the actual number of incidents. This is recognized as the “enforcement gap” (Tucker et al., 2019; Vosko, 2020; Vosko & Thomas, 2014). Between 2016 and 2022, Saskatchewan’s Employment Standards office helped recover \$13 million in owed earnings for Saskatchewan workers.⁸ Most of these wage theft claims were concentrated in the construction, retail, food services, manufacturing, and resources (oil, mining, and logging) industries.

Figure 10. The construction industry is the leader in terms of wages recovered in Saskatchewan (\$).

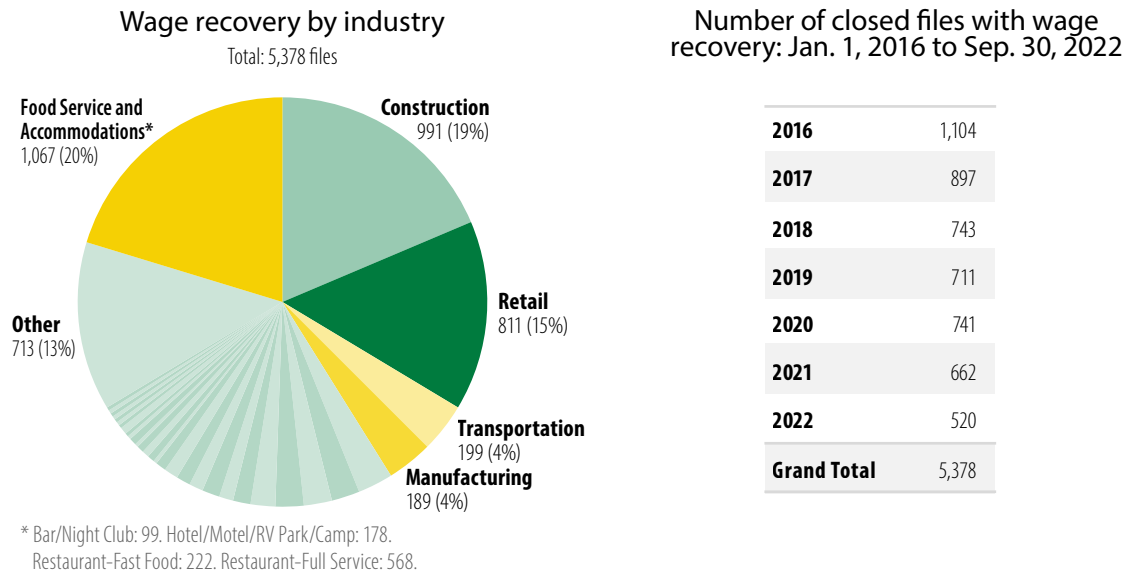


Source: Employment Standards Saskatchewan. Image created internally.

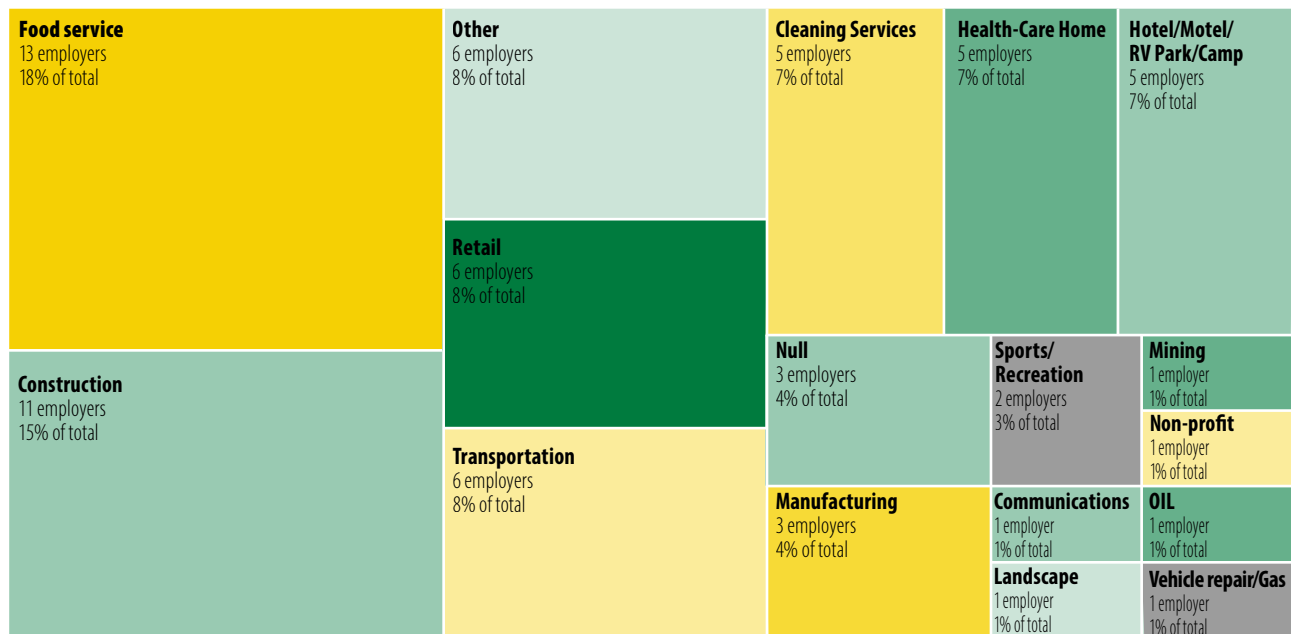
8. All dollar values refer to wages recovered through all types of intervention, such as voluntary payment, prosecution, or through the formal wage assessment process.

A total of 5,378 wage recovery files were concluded in Saskatchewan from 2016 to 2022 for which an amount was recovered. Food service and accommodations accounted for 1,067 cases, or 20% of the total, followed by construction with 991 files (19% of the total) and retail with 811 files (15%). High-claim and previously warned employers are concentrated in food services and construction.⁹ Evidence shows that reported claims under review have been declining since 2016 in most industries.

Figure 11. 5,378 cases of wage recovery occurred in Saskatchewan from 2016-2022.



High-claim and previously warned employers (total: 71 employers)



Greater detail is provided in Appendix A: Wages recovered (breakdown by employer, etc.). Source: Employment Standards Saskatchewan. Image created internally.

9. "Previously warned" means the employer was formally warned that further non-compliance may lead to prosecution. "High-claim" employers refers to businesses that had five or more formal complaints or compliance review files closed in the previous three fiscal years (April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2021). Starting with the employers with the highest number of claims, Employment Standards then reviews the files for consistent patterns of issues, such that a compliance audit would solicit a wider spread of compliance issues. Other factors considered in refining the list of "high-claim" employers includes: the higher number of claims, whether or not the employer is in business, the relationship between claims (i.e., overtime), are they regarding a particular job or unrelated to each other, etc.

Migrant workers

Saskatchewan’s population continues to increase despite slight stagnation during the pandemic (Saskatchewan, 2022). Efforts to recruit foreign health care workers and other professionals are being advanced by the provincial government (Government of Saskatchewan, 2023a). This continues a long tradition of growing our province’s population through Canada’s migration regime, which includes the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, International Mobility Program, and the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP), among other streams (Fraser, 2021). Indeed, international migration to Saskatchewan continues to drive population growth in the province (Government of Saskatchewan, 2023b). During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts by employers to recruit workers from abroad increased, despite business closures and a spike in unemployment. Employer registrations through Saskatchewan’s foreign worker program increased from 876 in 2017-18 to 1124 in 2021-2022 – an increase of 28% over four years. Formal complaints, in accordance with the *Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act (FWRISA)*, have declined since 2017 but went up slightly in the early pandemic (see Stevens, 2022 for a background on *FWRISA*, the SINP, and an analysis of the province’s migrant rights regime).

Table 1. Number of Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) applications processed, 2021-22 fiscal year.

Year	Month	Processed	Approval Rate
2021	April	508	70%
2021	May	467	70%
2021	June	385	67%
2021	July	488	61%
2021	August	441	65%
2021	September	311	67%
2021	October	368	75%
2021	November	312	81%
2021	December	329	81%
2022	January	536	77%
2022	February	537	75%
2022	March	692	83%
2022	April	276	77%

Data retrieved through access to information, Saskatchewan Ministry of Labour Relations and Ministry of Immigration and Training, 2022.

Table 2. Certificates of registration* and complaints filed under The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act (FWRISA), Saskatchewan

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Employer registrations	876	994	877	864	1124
Suspended employer registrations	33	8	15	13	0**
Formal complaints	13	12	24	29	19
Anonymous/Informal complaints and third-party referrals	97	66	49	26	36
Cancelled employer registrations	0	0	3	3	2
Suspended recruiter and immigration consultant	0	1	0	1	0
Cancelled recruiter and immigration consulting licenses	0	0	1	0	0

Data retrieved through access to information, Saskatchewan Ministry of Labour Relations and Ministry of Immigration and Training, 2022.

*A certificate of registration (COR) must be obtained before an employer may hire foreign workers.

** Explanation of Suspended Employer Registrations: Most employer suspensions were due to non-response for information during an audit or renewal. When an employer does not respond to an audit, their certificate is suspended for one year. In 2021-22, the compliance audit process was changed so that it occurs during registration renewal (every two years). Now, an employer's non-response will lead to the refusal of a renewal rather than a suspension.

Human rights

Approximately 64% of the total number of complaints received by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) in 2021-2022 occurred in the realm of employment (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2022). In partnership with post-secondary institutions, businesses, and community organizations, the SHRC has participated in the advancement of the Enough Already initiative which aims to prevent workplace sexual harassment in Saskatchewan. These and other initiatives aim to educate and confront incidents of sexual harassment, violence, and discrimination in the workplace.

Unfair labour practices

Between 2016 and 2022, unfair labour practices (ULPs) constituted 25% of all cases heard by the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board (270/1045), second only to certifications, at 28% of all cases brought before the Board (295/1045) (Government of Saskatchewan, 2021, 2022a). Under the *Saskatchewan Employment Act* (SEA), ULPs are typically efforts to “interfere with, restrain, intimidate, threaten, or coerce and employee” in the exercise their rights to unionize or bargain collectively; unions are similarly bound by this section of the SEA. Unfair labour practice allegations are largely submitted by unions against an employer. Out of the 270 ULPs submitted to the Board, all but 27 were advanced by labour organizations.¹⁰

Poverty

Saskatchewan’s poverty rate, particularly amongst children and the Indigenous population, has long surpassed national averages (Sanchez, 2021). In 2020¹¹, Saskatchewan’s overall poverty rate was 8.4%, higher than the national rate of 8.1%; it was nearly double in Saskatchewan’s Indigenous population at 15.1%. This was despite a decrease in the poverty rate in Saskatchewan since the previous census (2015), when the poverty rate was 12.7%, lower than the national average of 14.5%. Saskatchewan’s Indigenous population also fell over the same time period, from 29.5% in 2015. A similar trend is revealed in the province’s two major urban centres of Regina and Saskatoon where poverty rates fell by 4.2 percentage points in each city.

The poverty rate among 0-to-17-year-olds fell in Saskatchewan by 8 percentage points; in Regina, by 8.4 percentage points; and in Saskatoon, by 7.2 percentage points. For Saskatchewan’s Indigenous population, the decrease was 20.3 percentage points, bringing the poverty rate to 17.8% in 2020, above the provincial average of 10.2 for 0-to-17-year-olds.

Poverty across Saskatchewan remains high among young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 relative to other youth and adult age groups. Saskatoon’s 18-to-24-year-olds have the highest poverty rate (18.3%), followed by children aged 6 to 10 (12.5%). In Regina, the second-highest poverty rate is in children aged 0 to 5 (11.3%); the highest is in 18-to-24-year-olds at 18.2%. For the Indigenous population in Saskatchewan, the highest poverty rate is in 0-to-5-year-olds at 21.0%, followed by 18-to-24-year-olds at 20.8%.

10. Nine were submitted by individual union members and 18 were submitted by employers against a labour organization.

11. Poverty data published in the 2016 and 2021 Censuses refer to the actual years of 2015 and 2020.

Table 3. Poverty rates, 2015 to 2020.

	Canada			Saskatchewan			SK Indigenous			Regina			Saskatoon		
	2015	2020	Change*	2015	2020	Change*	2015	2020	Change*	2015	2020	Change*	2015	2020	Change*
All ages	14.5%	8.1%	-6.4%	12.7%	8.4%	-4.3%	29.5%	15.1%	-14.4%	12.6%	8.4%	-4.2%	14.0%	9.8%	-4.2%
0 to 17 years	18.0%	8.5%	-9.5%	18.2%	10.2%	-8.0%	38.1%	17.8%	-20.3%	18.6%	10.2%	-8.4%	18.9%	11.7%	-7.2%
0 to 5 years	19.2%	9.1%	-10.1%	20.3%	11.3%	-9.0%	43.1%	21.0%	-22.1%	21.3%	11.3%	-10.0%	20.1%	12.3%	-7.8%
6 to 10 years	18.6%	8.5%	-10.1%	18.9%	10.5%	-8.4%	38.6%	18.3%	-20.3%	18.5%	10.9%	-7.6%	19.7%	12.5%	-7.2%
11 to 17 years	16.6%	7.9%	-8.7%	15.6%	9.1%	-6.5%	33.1%	15.0%	-18.1%	15.9%	8.6%	-7.3%	17.3%	10.5%	-6.8%
18 to 24 years	20.9%	14.0%	-6.9%	18.6%	15.1%	-3.5%	32.2%	20.8%	-11.4%	19.7%	18.2%	-1.5%	22.2%	18.3%	-3.9%
18 years and over	13.6%	8.0%	-5.6%	11.1%	7.9%	-3.2%	24.3%	13.6%	-10.7%	10.8%	7.8%	-3.0%	12.6%	9.2%	-3.4%
65 years and over	8.1%	4.7%	-3.4%	7.5%	4.0%	-3.5%	14.2%	6.5%	-7.7%	6.9%	3.3%	-3.6%	8.3%	4.8%	-3.5%

* In percentage points, not percent change from 2015 to 2020.

Sources: Statistics Canada. (2022). Individual Market Basket Measure poverty status by Indigenous groups and demographic characteristics: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=9810011701>

Statistics Canada. (2022). Individual Market Basket Measure poverty status by demographic and economic family characteristics of persons: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts. [Table 98-10-0112-01]. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=9810011201>.

Available data suggests that the decline can be attributed, in part, to income support measures, such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), introduced during the height of the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2022d; Statistics Canada, 2022e). As such the census data reveals only part of the story. Income inequality has similarly slowed in Canada, with households in the lowest three income quintiles experiencing the biggest increases in net worth over the last five years (Burkinshaw et al., 2022). However, rising costs (Government of Saskatchewan, 2022b) and escalating interest rates imposed by the Bank of Canada have since eroded real wages, suggesting that the 2021 Census data (representative of the actual state in 2020) may not accurately represent living conditions and poverty rates in 2022. Recent data shows that over one-third (35%) of Canadians reported

difficulties in meeting their financial needs due to concerns over the price of food, gas, housing costs, and rent. Adults between 35 and 44 years are reported to be struggling the most (46%) (Statistics Canada, 2023). In addition, certain demographics and family types, such as lone-parent families, remain more vulnerable to poverty (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Both Saskatoon and Regina have witnessed a growth in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness based on the most recent point in time (PiT) counts undertaken in these respective municipalities (Flow Community Projects, 2020; Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership, 2022). With food bank usage on the rise, official job and wage data fails to describe the scope of lived realities facing residents – both employed, unemployed, and underemployed – in Saskatchewan (Food Banks Canada, 2021; Kliem, 2022).

Conclusion

Official job and employment numbers present a limited picture of the realities facing workers. As census data for Saskatchewan shows, employment prospects and outcomes diverge across sex, race, and ethnicity. This should be a concern for policy makers. That Black and Arab residents experience lower levels of participation in the labour market than visible minorities in general, and a higher rate of unemployment than any other group (visible minority or not), must be a point of concern. Economic growth, in the conventional sense, is not equitably distributed. This is particularly important when we consider Saskatchewan's effort to increase the recruitment of foreign workers and expand immigration to the province.

A rights-based framework is of equal significance here. The prevalence of "wage theft," for instance, points to the importance of a robust, employment rights enforcement mechanism – especially for precarious workers in lower-wage sectors of the economy. The same holds true for newcomers, who are vulnerable to exploitation by employers, recruiters, and immigration agencies. Saskatchewan's FWRISA was established for this reason (Stevens, 2022). The efficacy of Saskatchewan's employment rights enforcement regime merits further comparative analysis.

We also know that the pandemic years of 2020 through 2022 left an indelible mark on the labour market, with shifts in the labour force (toward immigrants) and a noticeable effect on reasons for leaving the labour market. Furthermore, real wages have stagnated due to the increasing cost of living as the economy recovers from the pandemic. And while the available census data shows that poverty has been decreasing over the last four years, it stops short of capturing what inflation and the clawing back of pandemic income supports has meant for marginalized workers and members of the community. This merits further examination. Food bank usage and an increase in homelessness provides a snapshot of what is unfolding in Saskatchewan. Simple employment figures fail to capture this reality.

While this brief report focused on Saskatchewan, available research from other provinces illustrates similar patterns. Governments must do better by providing a comprehensive socio-economic picture of "growth" beyond job numbers, housing starts, investment, and GDP – and to ensure that economic development is inclusive.

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Appendix A: Wages recovered by employer

The table below lists the top 10 employers in Saskatchewan by wages recovered from 2016 to 2022.

There were 5,378 instances of wage recovery from 2016 to 2022 in Saskatchewan distributed over 4,034 distinct companies for a total recovery of \$13,863,984. 753 companies had two or more instances of wage recovery; 232 had three or more.

Notably, food service and accommodation establishments comprise eight of the top 14 businesses with the highest number of wage recovery claims: Mr. Mikes Steakhouse (9 claims from 2016 to 2022), Tim Hortons (8), Best Western, Boston Pizza, Famoso Neapolitan Pizzeria, Montana’s, Subway, and the Canadian Brewhouse (6 each).

Table 4. Top ten employers by total wages recovered, 2016-2022.

1	Northern Lights School Division #113	Wages recovered	\$360,092
		Claims	2
2	Concept Electric	Wages recovered	\$157,651
		Claims	2
3	Lifestyle Cabinetry Inc	Wages recovered	\$140,975
		Claims	1
4	RII North America Inc	Wages recovered	\$91,755
		Claims	2
5	Bravo Target Safety Services Ltd.	Wages recovered	\$83,709
		Claims	1
6	Northern Natural Processing LP	Wages recovered	\$83,490
		Claims	4
7	Covertite Eastern Ltd.	Wages recovered	\$74,100
		Claims	1
8	TNT Diagnostics Ltd.	Wages recovered	\$69,872
		Claims	1
9	Saskatoon Motor Products	Wages recovered	\$68,874
		Claims	4
10	Reliable Integrated Solutions Ltd.	Wages recovered	\$64,717
		Claims	2

Source: Employment Standards Saskatchewan

Table 5. Employers with 6 or more wage recovery claims, 2016-2022.

1	Mr Mikes Steakhouse Casual	Wages recovered	\$7,842
		Claims	9
2	Tim Hortons	Wages recovered	\$11,991
		Claims	8
3	Langman Contracting Inc.	Wages recovered	\$8,280
		Claims	7
4	Alliance Health	Wages recovered	\$3,746
		Claims	6
5	Best Western Marquis Inn & Suites	Wages recovered	\$6,608
		Claims	6
6	Boston Pizza	Wages recovered	\$13,215
		Claims	6
7	Famoso Neapolitan Pizzeria	Wages recovered	\$5,700
		Claims	6
8	Four Corners Roofing	Wages recovered	\$8,634
		Claims	6
9	Jonese Property Maintenance Solutions	Wages recovered	\$23,178
		Claims	6
10	Montana's BBQ & Bar	Wages recovered	\$16,970
		Claims	6
11	Motion Fitness	Wages recovered	\$29,847
		Claims	6
12	Subway	Wages recovered	\$18,270
		Claims	6
13	The Canadian Brewhouse	Wages recovered	\$51,240
		Claims	6
14	Winmar	Wages recovered	\$14,279
		Claims	6

Source: Employment Standards Saskatchewan

Appendix B: Number of closed files by employer category with wages recovered Jan 1 2016-Sep 30 2022

Employers Category	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Grand Total
Accountants/Payroll	2	1	3	2	2	3	3	16
Agriculture	9	5	16	7	8	7	9	61
Banking/Insurance/Investment	0	1	5	2	0	1	0	9
Bar/Night Club	12	24	26	15	9	6	7	99
Bingo Halls	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Caretakers/Maintenance	3	3	3	1	4	2	1	17
Cleaning Services	21	19	35	33	13	14	15	150
Communications	4	7	3	6	7	1	1	29
Construction	320	185	126	96	93	96	75	991
Courier	0	17	1	2	1	4	2	27
Daycare	13	11	8	3	1	11	7	54
Dental/Medical/Health	19	12	16	11	22	28	19	127
Domestic/Care Providers	6	0	1	2	3	5	2	19
Farming/Hog Barns	2	1	0	0	4	4	4	15
Government	1	4	5	2	2	4	2	20
Hair Salon/Barber	31	26	11	13	8	8	6	103
Health-Care Home	13	11	13	11	28	28	7	111
Hotel/Motel/RV Park/Camp	29	32	20	36	28	14	19	178
Insurance/Real Estate	4	4	2	2	7	0	1	20
Landscape	3	8	4	5	12	20	16	68
Logging/Forestry	2	3	3	2	3	4	3	20
Manufacturing	77	28	15	8	23	25	13	189
Mining	4	1	4	5	2	1	2	19
Non-Profit Organizations	3	4	4	4	7	12	6	40
Oil	1	0	5	14	16	10	18	64
Other	115	119	90	110	104	95	80	713

Private Residence	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
Professional	7	0	3	3	7	6	0	26
Religious	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	5
Restaurant-Fast Food	30	33	32	41	23	28	35	222
Restaurant-Full Service	141	98	86	78	82	45	38	568
Retail-Convenience Store	10	11	1	5	10	6	6	49
Retail-Other	89	95	63	86	87	77	61	558
Retail-Vehicle Sales/Service	34	26	34	28	39	34	9	204
Rural Municipalities	0	4	0	2	2	4	2	14
School	3	0	1	1	1	3	1	10
Security Guards	7	7	25	18	2	1	6	66
Social Services	1	2	1	4	3	1	3	15
Sports/Recreation	15	21	11	11	3	8	1	70
Technology/Computers	2	4	6	1	11	2	2	28
Telemarketing	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Temporary Service	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Transportation	39	41	32	22	28	22	15	199
Utilities	3	6	2	1	3	2	5	22
Vehicle Repair/Gas Stations	20	14	18	12	24	15	14	117
Warehousing	3	3	4	1	2	1	0	14
Wholesale	3	4	5	2	3	4	4	25
Grand Total	1104	897	743	711	741	662	520	5378

Source: Data retrieved from the Saskatchewan Employment Standards Division (January 2023).

