

Community Profile Series: Regina, Saskatchewan Spring 2020

This series looks at communities across Canada and highlights key labour market statistics and the role that immigration has played or could play to help these communities flourish. It is important to note that predicting future labour market demand can be challenging, as economies are always evolving. This profile uses current population and labour market trends to give a profile of how immigration might play a role in this community.

Ensuring Regina continues to be a growing urban hub in western Canada: the role of immigration

The Regina urban region has been one of the most successful in Canada over the past decade, as measured by economic and population growth and the number of new jobs created. However, like most urban centres across Canada, there has been a significant increase in the number of people retiring, and many more are set to retire in the near future.

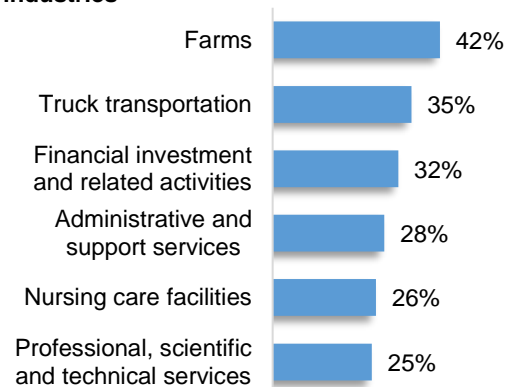
According to Statistics Canada's annual Labour Force Survey, about 21% of the people in the Regina urban centre workforce are over the age of 55. In the 2016 Census, more than 40% of everyone living in the Regina area and working in farming was over the age of 55.

Figure 1 shows a number of sectors where at least 25% of workers were over the age of 55 at the time of the Census. In total there are now 27,500 in the workforce over the age of 55. Ensuring a strong pipeline of workers for the future will be very important to the community in the years ahead.

Regina: one of Canada's fastest growing metropolitan areas

The Regina urban centre (population 262,000)¹ is the capital city of Saskatchewan. The population in the region increased by 24% between 2009 and 2019, third fastest among the large urban centres across the country. Much of this growth has come from the expansion of services-based industries such as professional, scientific and technical services. Employment in this sector has increased by 39% in the past decade. Accommodation and food services employment has risen by 37%, health-care employment is up 50% and educational services up 36% (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Share of the Regina region's workforce over the age of 55 – selected industries



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census.

¹ The Regina census metropolitan area includes the City of Regina, the towns of Balgonie, Lumsden, Pense Pilot Butte, Regina Beach and White City, as well as several other smaller municipalities.

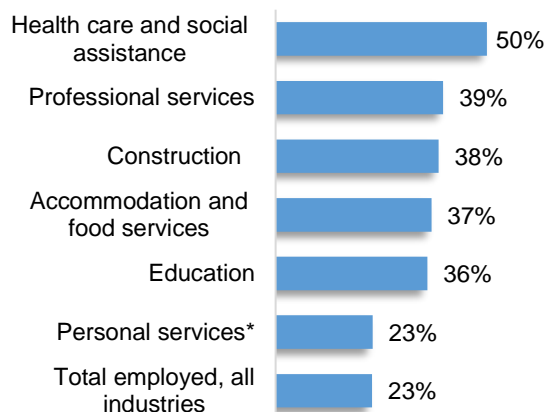
Immigration has been critical to Regina’s growth

In 2007, the Regina census metropolitan area (CMA) attracted 839 immigrants, equivalent to 40 per 10,000 population. The economy at the time was growing rapidly and an effort was made to attract more immigrants to help address growing labour demand across the province.

From 2008 onward, the number of immigrants settling in Regina rose strongly and in the past 4 years has averaged nearly 5,000 per year, or around 200 immigrants per 10,000 population (Figure 3). In recent years the community has consistently had one of the top immigration rates among urban centres large and small across the country (Figure 4).

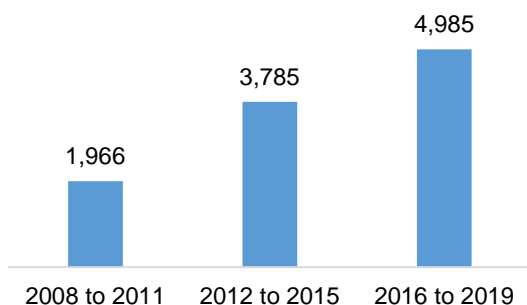
Retention of immigrants has been somewhat of a challenge. Net interprovincial migration in the past 4 years has averaged a negative 2,300 people, meaning that 2,300 more have moved out of the province each year to elsewhere in Canada than have moved in.

Figure 2: Employment growth by selected industry, Regina CMA (2009 to 2019)



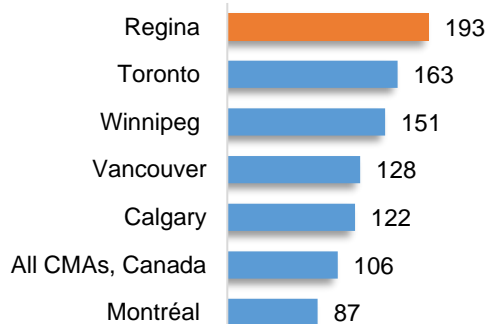
*Other services (excluding public administration).
Source: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0098-01.

Figure 3: Average annual immigrants per year, Regina CMA



Source: Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0136-01.

Figure 4: New immigrants in 2019 per 10,000 population



Source: Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0135-01.

The significant number of (net) immigrants each year—combined with a positive natural growth rate (more births than deaths) and a positive interprovincial migration rate (people moving in from elsewhere within the province)—results in a strong overall population growth rate for the community.

The aging workforce could be a potential risk for the economy

In general, the population of the Regina CMA is younger than many of its peer communities. But the workforce over the age of 55 is still growing much faster than other segments of the workforce. The number of people in the workforce over the age of 55 increased by 27% between 2013 and 2019. There are now 27,500 people in the workforce who are heading towards retirement in the next decade or so. The total number of adults over the age of 55 not participating in the workforce increased by 46% between 2013 and 2019, and is set to rise further.

What is the risk to the economy if there are not enough workers to meet labour demand?

If Regina is to continue growing its economy, it will need to ensure there is a talent pipeline to meet both the replacement demand for those who are retiring and the demand for new jobs created in the economy.

The provincial [labour demand outlook](#) for 2019 to 2023 forecasts 98,200 job openings in just this 5-year period across Saskatchewan, with 76% due to replacement demand (mostly worker retirements). While this forecast is not specific to Regina, there is no doubt the urban centre will be the location of tens of thousands of these job openings. Economic Development Regina Inc. is [actively recruiting people](#) to move to the region to fill labour market demand.









What industries are at risk if labour market demand cannot be addressed?

Table 1 reveals some of the industries for which Regina has a much higher concentration of employment compared to the rest of the country.

Because it is the capital of Saskatchewan, there is a very high concentration of provincial public administration. In addition, the community has important manufacturing sectors (primary metal, petroleum products) and service industries, including insurance. Regina has 2.4 times as many people employed in the insurance carrier sector, as a share of the total workforce, than the country overall. Health care is another important industry, with a much higher concentration of workers compared to the average level across the country.

If labour demand can't be addressed in the coming years, it may impede the growth of these strategically important industries.

Table 1: Regina's dominant industries—employment share compared to the national economy*

 Primary metal manufacturing—2.2 times as many	 Hospitals—43% more
 Petroleum and coal product manufacturing—over 7 times more	 Insurance carriers—2.4 times more
 Electric power generation, transmission and distribution—nearly twice as many	 Telecommunications—2.5 times more
 Finance and insurance—36% more	 Provincial public administration—3 times as many

*For example, adjusted for size, the Regina urban centre has 36% more people employed in finance and insurance compared to the national economy. Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census.

Regina's aging entrepreneurs

The community's entrepreneurs and small business owners are also getting older, which is an additional challenge for the local economy. Across all industries, 36% of persons who are self-employed are over the age of 55. In total, there are more than 4,400 business owners who will be heading into retirement in the near future.

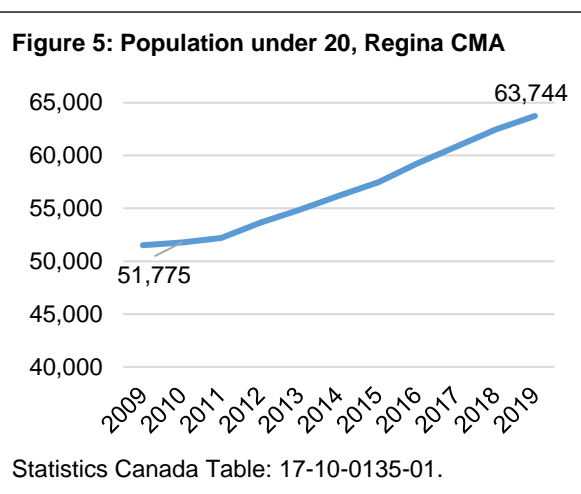
Based on these statistics, Regina could benefit from a new generation of entrepreneurs to replace those who retire and to help drive growth in important industries such as professional services and tourism. The good news is that immigrants can help address this challenge, as they are nearly 50% more likely to be self-employed compared to those in the workforce who were born in Canada.

Critical to sustained economic growth: ensuring there is a talent pipeline

Regina needs to focus on ensuring there is a strong pipeline of workers to address growing labour demand. From boosting the student population to attracting more immigrants, there are a number of ways the community can expand the number of available workers in the years ahead:

- **Ensure there is a large pipeline of K-12 students**

This is an area where Regina has an advantage. Unlike most urban centres, the population under the age of 20 has been rising strongly in recent years, up 24% between 2009 and 2019 (Figure 5). This growth coincided with the increase in immigrants settling in the community that began a little more than a decade ago. In addition, the urban centre's post-secondary education institutions are attracting thousands of international students each year. There were nearly 5,100 international study permits issued in 2018 for the Regina area, up by 56% since 2015. Regina has a strong local talent pipeline.



- **Encourage more people to join the workforce**

The tightening labour market creates employment opportunities for people who previously struggled to participate in the labour market, such as women re-entering the workforce or those with disabilities. The older population not currently participating in the workforce could be enticed back in by employers offering flexible work options and by increasing benefits. There are more than 9,000 Indigenous people in the Regina workforce. At the time of the 2016 Census, the Indigenous workforce had an unemployment rate of 14%. This segment of the workforce provides an additional potential source of talent. Finding ways to strengthen employment opportunities for the Indigenous population will be important.

- **Attract people from outside the region**

There is no doubt that the biggest opportunity to boost the talent pipeline involves continuing to attract young people and families. Immigrants have been critical to the growth of the Regina workforce in recent years. Between 2011 and 2016, over 13,000 immigrants and non-permanent residents were added to the Regina workforce and their contribution cuts across almost all industries as shown in Figure 6. Over 2,900 of those who arrived in Canada between 2011 and 2016 work in the accommodation and food services sector, and nearly 1,500 in the health-care sector. Immigrants and non-permanent residents who arrived in Regina between 2011 and 2016 make up 14% of the transportation and warehousing workforce and 11% of the manufacturing workforce.

Helping to grow the local economy

Attracting more immigrants in the coming years would create new demand for local products and services. Every 1,000 new immigrant families with an average household income could directly generate over \$88 million worth of new household expenditures, much of this spending in the local community².

² Assumes the new household spending conforms to the current spending pattern in Saskatchewan.

Statistics show that these 1,000 immigrant families would spend:

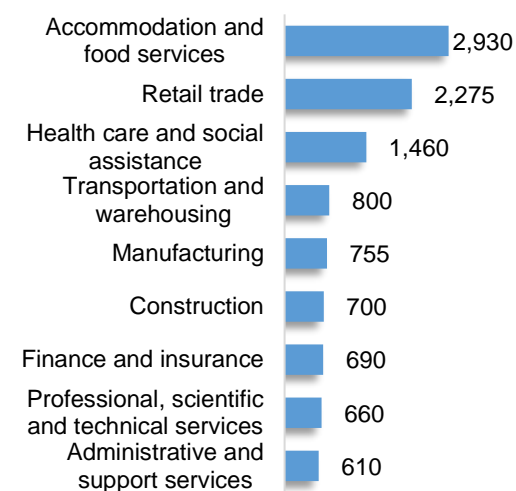
- \$1.8 million per year on housing, such as mortgage payments, electricity and property taxes
- \$1.3 million each year on transportation, such as vehicle purchases and maintenance
- \$9 million on food at local grocery stores and restaurants

These 1,000 new families could also generate about \$22 million worth of taxes per year for local, provincial and federal governments.

Other positive effects

Continuing to attract immigrants to Regina helps support a vibrant economic and social life in many other ways. Civic and business groups have a growing pool from which to draw members. Youth sports clubs and leagues around the region benefit from an increasing population of young residents.

Figure 6: Number of new immigrants in the workforce (arriving between 2011 and 2016), selected sectors, Regina CMA



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census.

Helping to sustain high quality public services

There is a direct relationship between economic growth and provincial and local government capacity to provide high quality public services and public infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals. A growing economy and population in Regina leads to a greater public investment in services and infrastructure.

Older residents play an important role in the community

Residents of all ages contribute to the well-being of their communities and their province by working, paying taxes and giving back through volunteer and charitable activities. As residents of Regina retire and move into a new stage in life, it creates new economic opportunities in health care, personal services and recreation industries. In the years ahead, the community can and should benefit from the economic opportunities arising from more retirees, as well as the opportunities arising from attracting and growing the younger workforce.

Regina in 2035

What will Regina look like in 2035? Will there be enough workers and new entrepreneurs to ensure the region can both meet workforce demand and take advantage of growth opportunities?

Economic Development Regina Inc. is [working to attract firms](#) in manufacturing, food processing, finance and insurance, as well as the mining and oil and gas supply chain. Growing these sectors will depend on the community's ability to supply a skilled workforce. Immigration could continue to play an important role in the region's economic growth and prosperity.

For more information on how immigration matters across Canada, visit canada.ca/immigration-matters.