

2023 Report:
State of Entrepreneurship
in Saskatchewan

Presented by:



Land Acknowledgement

As part of our ongoing commitment to truth and reconciliation, SK Startup Institute acknowledges, that we have the privilege of working on Treaty 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 in Saskatchewan and on the Homeland of the Métis Nation. We recognize and pay our respects to this land and the people who have stewarded these lands since time immemorial. By forging positive, meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities, we reaffirm our dedication to an economy where all people thrive.

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Executive Summary

Saskatchewan is home to more than 42,000 small businesses that make up approximately 98.4% of all businesses in the province and account for more than 30% of employment. These statistics illustrate the importance and impact of entrepreneurship at home, but the effects of Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial ecosystem are also felt across the country and around the world.

The resilience and ingenuity of Saskatchewan's growing community of entrepreneurs is more apparent than ever as we navigate a fast-changing and, at times, challenging economic landscape. From worker shortages to interest rate hikes and difficulties accessing capital and training, our province's entrepreneurial ecosystem has proven its ability to successfully navigate these and other challenges while also innovating and pushing the boundaries of entrepreneurship.

Looking ahead, eight key activities will ensure our entrepreneurial ecosystem continues to thrive:

- Redefining success to allow and encourage entrepreneurs to align their business objectives with their values;
- Integrating emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and blockchain to maintain a competitive edge;
- Advocating for accessible, reliable air transportation;
- Creating opportunities for education, training, and growth at all stages of the entrepreneurial journey;
- Leveraging Saskatchewan's unique advantage for rural-urban collaboration;
- Digitizing operations and experiences to remain competitive and agile;
- Nurturing a skilled, adaptable workforce, one that feels adequately compensated and cared for; and
- Ensuring inclusion and representation across all facets of business.

The 2023 State of Entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan report summarizes challenges, barriers, trends, and opportunities in entrepreneurship across the province. This report is as much a celebration of accomplishments as it is a call for government and other stakeholders to create and support initiatives that ensure continued growth and success.

Welcome Message

On behalf of the SK Startup Institute, we are pleased to present the 2023 State of Entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan report. Inside you'll find insights, reflections, and calls to action as we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of entrepreneurship in our province. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive overview that both celebrates achievements and highlights opportunities for growth.

Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial ecosystem has undergone a significant transformation over the past few years. Owning a business comes with a unique set of challenges, but the innovation and determination of our entrepreneurs—emerging and established—has fueled creativity and resilience like no other. Despite a climate of uncertainty, Saskatchewan startups have become industry leaders and homegrown ideas have reached global markets.

SK Startup Institute has a front-row seat to the growth and potential that's right here at home. With a mission to empower, educate, and elevate Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial talent, we will continue to make the province a thriving hub for entrepreneurs and small business owners.

A special thank you to the entrepreneurs who graciously agreed to share their stories and be featured in this year's report. They demonstrate the cooperative spirit Saskatchewan is known for. Here, entrepreneurs not only seek out their success, but they also actively support and collaborate with each other. Thanks, too, to the entrepreneurship experts who joined us in roundtable discussions; your input was instrumental in shaping the outcome of this report.

We'd also like to thank the mentors, investors, policymakers, and all those who have contributed in some way to the success of SK Startup Institute. Your dedication and passion have been instrumental to the positive changes we see today.

As we look to the future, it's important to remember that entrepreneurship is not just about building businesses—it's about building a better Saskatchewan. We are committed to fostering an environment where innovation and people thrives and businesses and communities prosper.

We are collectively shaping Saskatchewan into a place with an undeniable entrepreneurial drive, a place where creativity and opportunities abound.

Stephane O'Reilly - Manager, Programs and Partnerships



About SK Startup Institute

Delivered by the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Association (SREDA) and funded by Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan), SK Startup Institute is Saskatchewan's first step for entrepreneurs.

By empowering and supporting our province's entrepreneurial talents, our goal is to drive positive change across Saskatchewan.

Our work spans five main focus areas:

- **Empowering through Education:** At the heart of what we do is a robust education platform. From workshops to custom training sessions to guides and one-on-one advising, we equip entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to navigate a competitive business landscape.
- **Building Bridges:** We believe in the power of collaboration and actively seek out opportunities for networking. The bridges built through these connections have been instrumental in overcoming barriers and facilitating strategic planning and growth for entrepreneurs.
- **Cultivating a Thriving Ecosystem:** Initiating partnerships with government and industry leaders supports an environment conducive to innovation and business development.
- **Celebrating the Entrepreneurial Spirit:** Through our events and other initiatives, we welcome and engage communities around the province as they come together to celebrate the achievements of local entrepreneurs.
- **In-depth Insights:** Research is the vehicle for better understanding the unique needs and challenges of Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial community. Our research efforts drive policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the province's business landscape.

Whether we're your first or your next step on a journey to success, we're here to offer guidance and growth.

To learn more about our initiatives, programs, and impact, visit our website (www.skstartup.ca) or schedule an appointment with our team of business advisors.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a cornerstone of economic vitality. Both in Saskatchewan and around the world, the vision and determination of entrepreneurs propels economies towards prosperity, fosters resilience in the face of challenges, and fuels a culture of creativity.

The impact of entrepreneurship is far reaching, contributing to:

- **Job creation:** New businesses generate new employment opportunities. Startups and small businesses in particular play a critical role in reducing unemployment and enhancing economic stability.
- **Innovation:** Entrepreneurship is the epicenter of innovation. From challenging the status quo to pioneering new products, services, and technologies, entrepreneurs drive industries forward in new and sometimes unexpected directions.
- **Economic resilience:** A resilient economy includes a diverse entrepreneurial landscape. Shocks and downturns are more effectively absorbed when economies aren't wholly reliant on a handful of dominant players.
- **Wealth generation:** When entrepreneurs win, everyone wins. Business owners reap the rewards of their hard work, passing those benefits on to employees and community members, while communities see increased tax revenue and standard of living.
- **Global competitiveness:** A thriving community of startups and small businesses enhance the economic ability to adapt, evolve, and compete in a global marketplace.

This report is intended both as a comprehensive analysis of the state of entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan, and a call to action.

Insights into the challenges and opportunities of today's entrepreneurs across businesses of all sizes, coupled with the economic, social, and technological factors shaping entrepreneurship, provide a foundation to empower policymakers, business leaders, and community stakeholders to make informed decisions that nurture our entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Saskatchewan's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

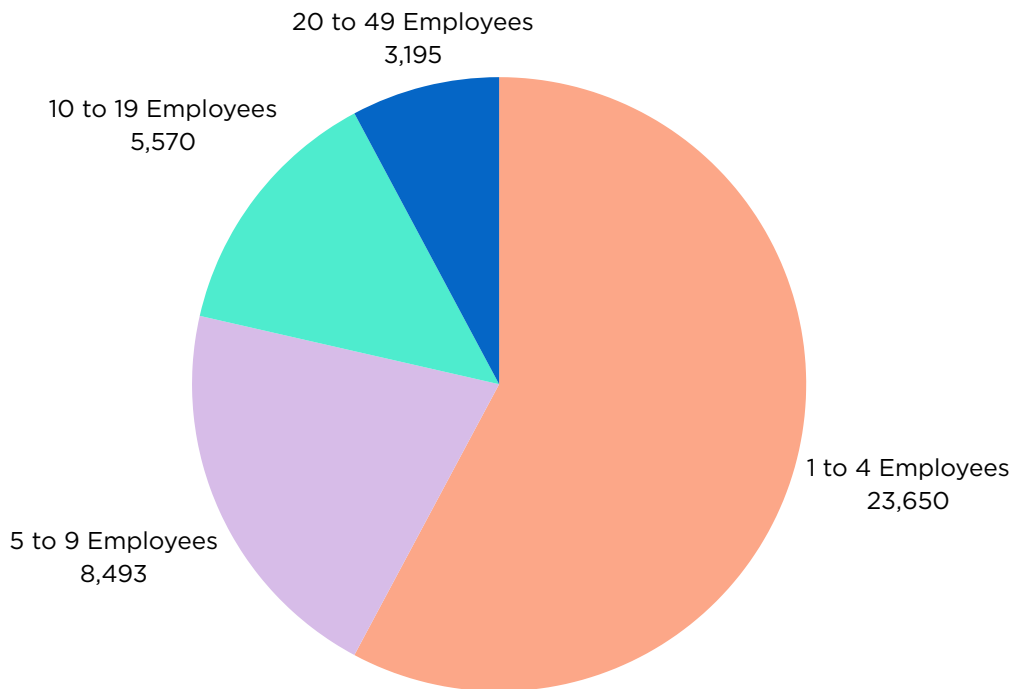
The province's entrepreneurial ecosystem is shaped by the people who live here and the programs, policies, and support organizations that makeup Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The statistics below provide an overview of our current landscape, celebrating our accomplishments and identifying opportunities for change and growth.

Small Business Count, Saskatchewan, 2023

There are more than 42,000 small businesses in Saskatchewan. This number represents 98.4% of all businesses in the province, with micro-businesses (businesses with 1-4 employees) accounting for 55.1%.

These numbers are proof that the size of a business does not limit its impact, from creating new employment opportunities to stimulating local economies. Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial spirit is what propels the province forward.

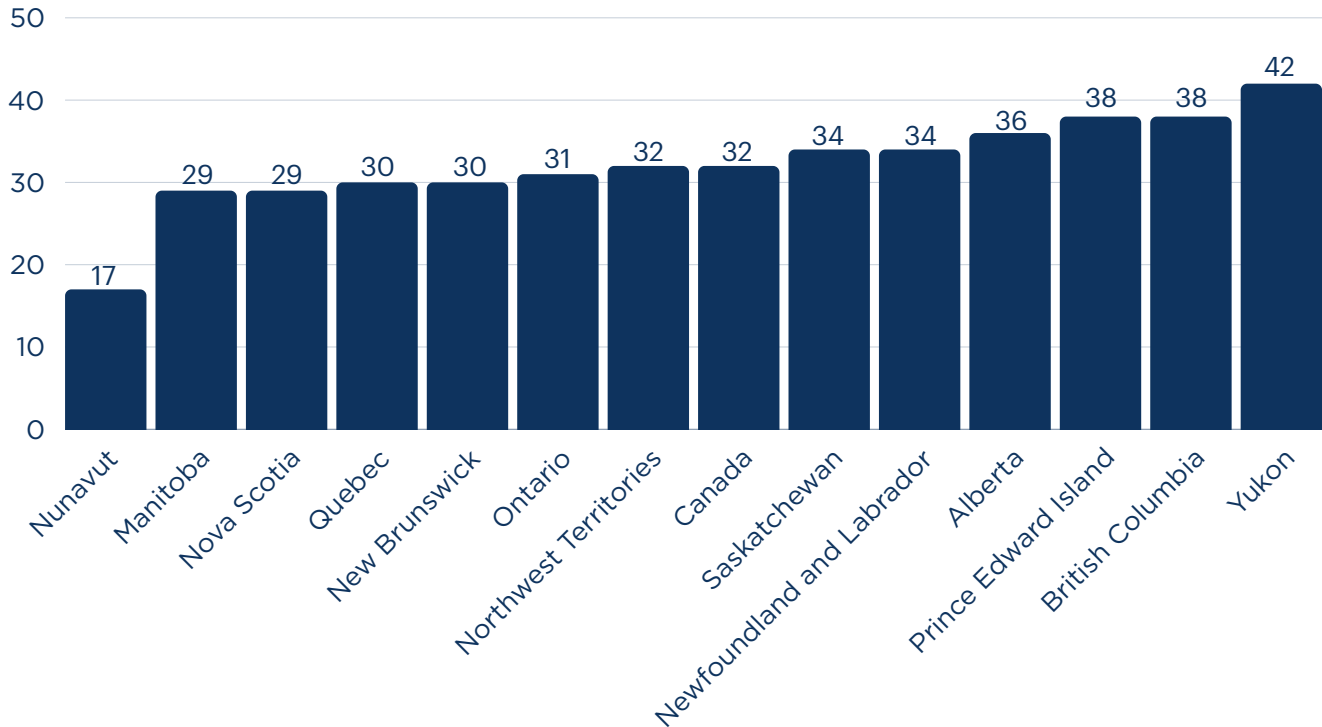


Source: Statistics Canada

Small Business Count (Province), Per 1,000 People, 2023

For every 1,000 people, 34 small businesses are serving Saskatchewan.

With a national small business density average of 32, this statistic showcases the determination, resilience, and character that defines our province. Here, ideas are transformed into thriving enterprises that contribute to the prosperity of urban centers and rural communities.



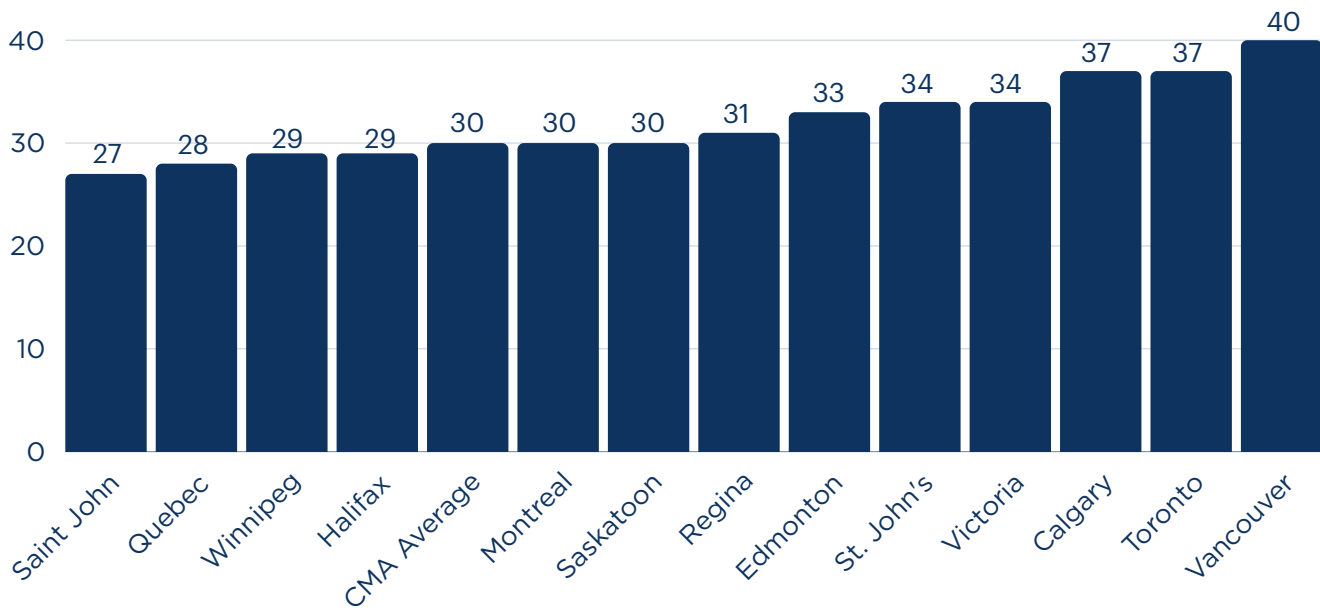
Source: Statistics Canada

Small Business Count (City), Per 1,000 People, 2023

For every 1,000 residents of Saskatoon, 30 small businesses are serving their needs. This ratio increases to 31 in the provincial capital of Regina.

Small business density in both Regina and Saskatoon exceeds the national average of 30. From family-owned shops to cutting-edge tech startups, the diversity and innovation of each city's entrepreneurial landscape is on par with other urban centers across Canada.

Locals reap the benefits of a thriving small business sector and supportive communities that value local commerce and the people who help it thrive.



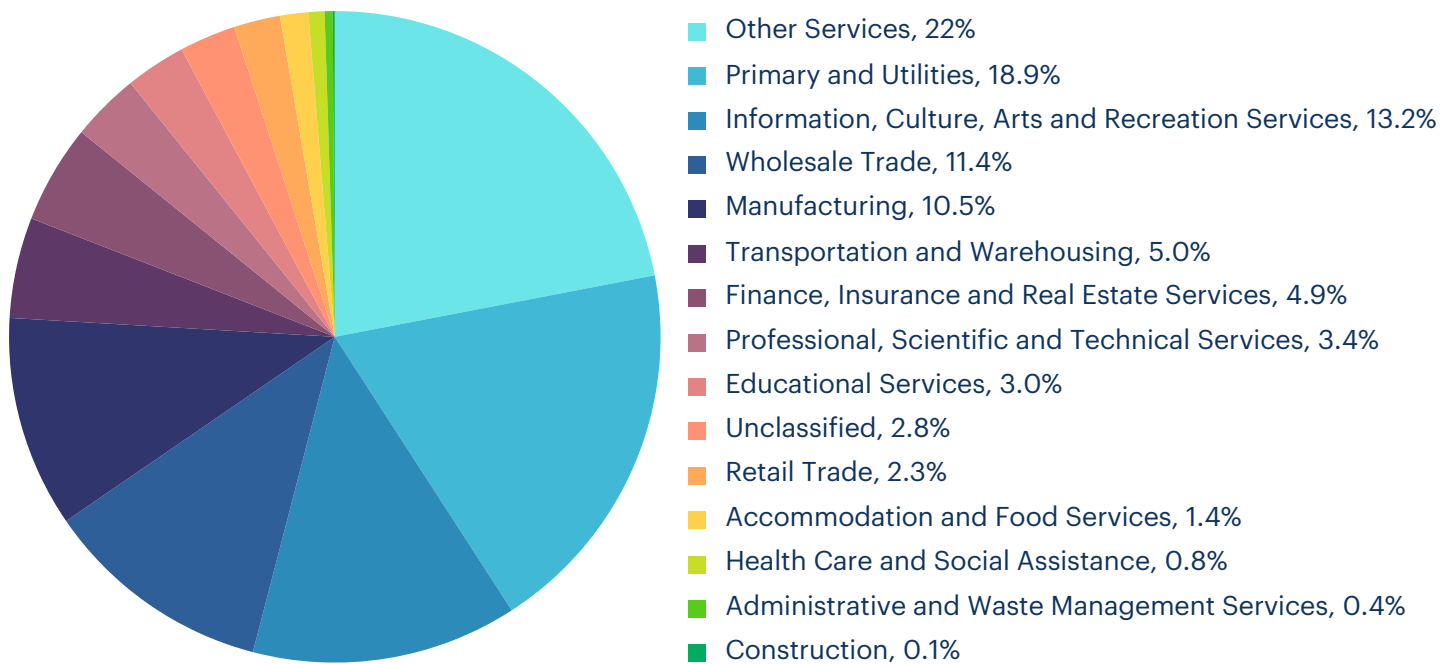
Source: Statistics Canada

Small Business by Industry, Saskatchewan, 2023

Approximately 54% of Saskatchewan small businesses cluster into four categories: Primary and Utilities; Information, Culture, Arts and Recreation Services; Wholesale Trade; and Manufacturing.

In a world marked by global uncertainty and evolving market demands, economic diversification isn't just a strategic choice—it's a necessity.

Saskatchewan's commitment to diversification has helped the province face challenges and change head on. Entrepreneurs here know how to quickly pivot to respond to changing consumer preferences; they aren't afraid to explore untapped markets. From family-owned farms expanding into agritourism to local manufacturers embracing sustainable business practices, calculated risks like these collectively enrich Saskatchewan's economy.



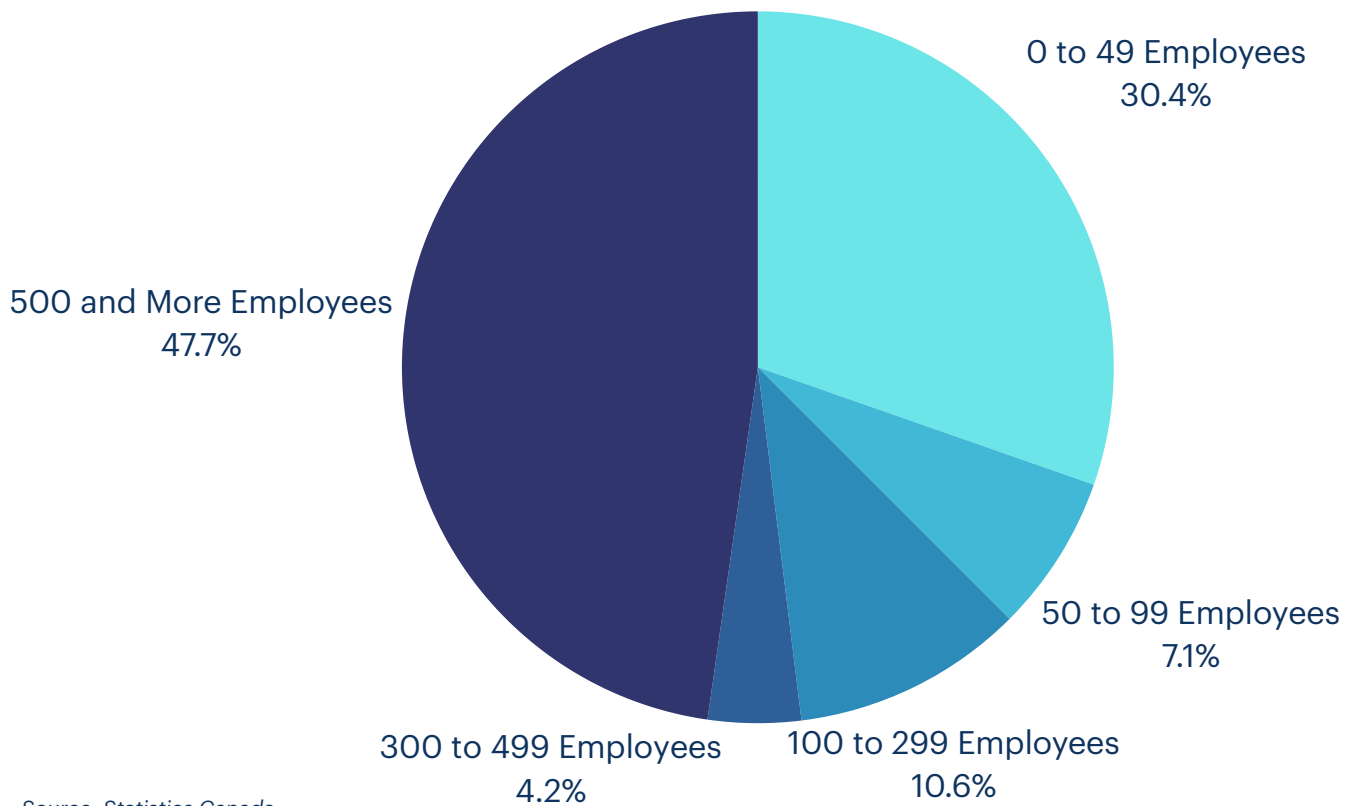
Source: Statistics Canada

Employment by Enterprise Size, Saskatchewan, 2022

Small businesses account for approximately 30% of employment in Saskatchewan.

Beyond job creation, small businesses are engines of opportunity, supporting the livelihoods of skilled tradespeople, creative professionals, and practically everyone in between.

The impact of small businesses is felt in areas other than employment. Entrepreneurial ventures often become beloved neighbourhood anchors that enhance community wellbeing. From sponsoring local events to supporting charitable causes, our small businesses and their owners are an integral part of the fabric of Saskatchewan’s social and cultural life. More than economic entities, small businesses are important community pillars.



Source: Statistics Canada

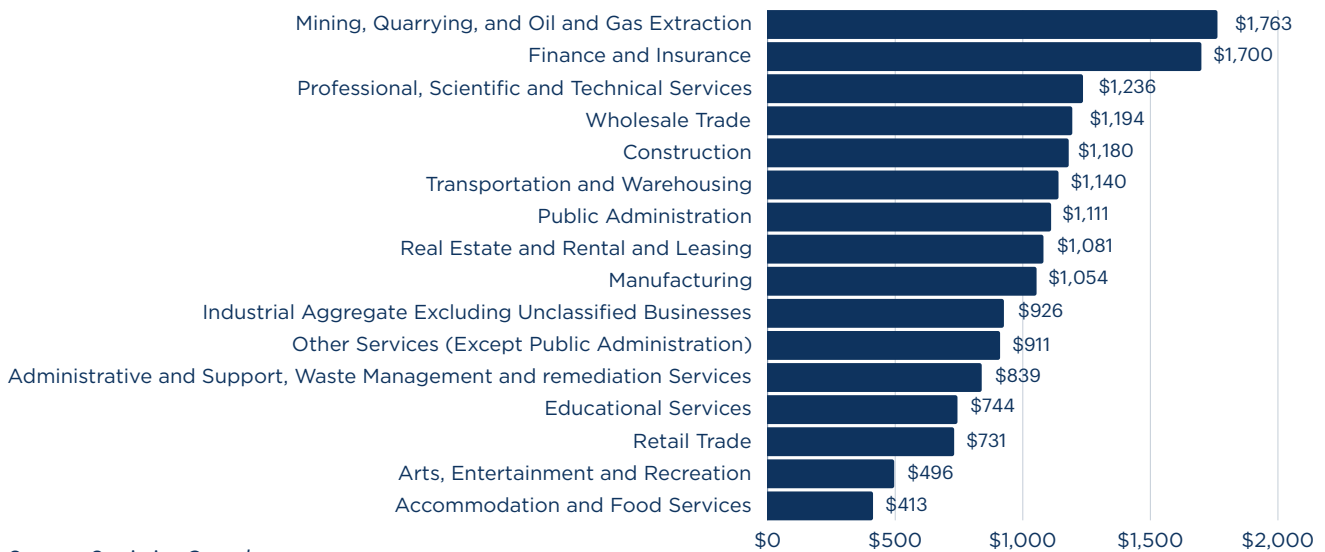
Saskatchewan Small Business Average Weekly Earnings by Sector, 2022

There is a wide variety of earning opportunities thanks to entrepreneurship. For example, weekly earnings in the Accommodation and Food Services sector average \$413, while Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction average \$1,763.

Saskatchewan’s entrepreneurial landscape truly has something for everyone. While income potential varies between sectors, each business plays a different but important role in keeping our communities and economies vibrant and healthy.

As a province rich with natural resources, there is significant earning opportunity in industries including mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction. Stable employment and substantial compensation reflect the value of the skills and expertise required for these critical industries.

In sectors like accommodation and food services, weekly earnings are on the lower end of the spectrum. However, this should not be read as the sole measure of a sector’s significance. Accommodation and food services are essential to tourism, a major contributor to social and cultural vitality, and often an entry point for people new to the workforce. Entrepreneurs must remain competitive while simultaneously navigating challenges such as seasonality and staff turnover and shortages.

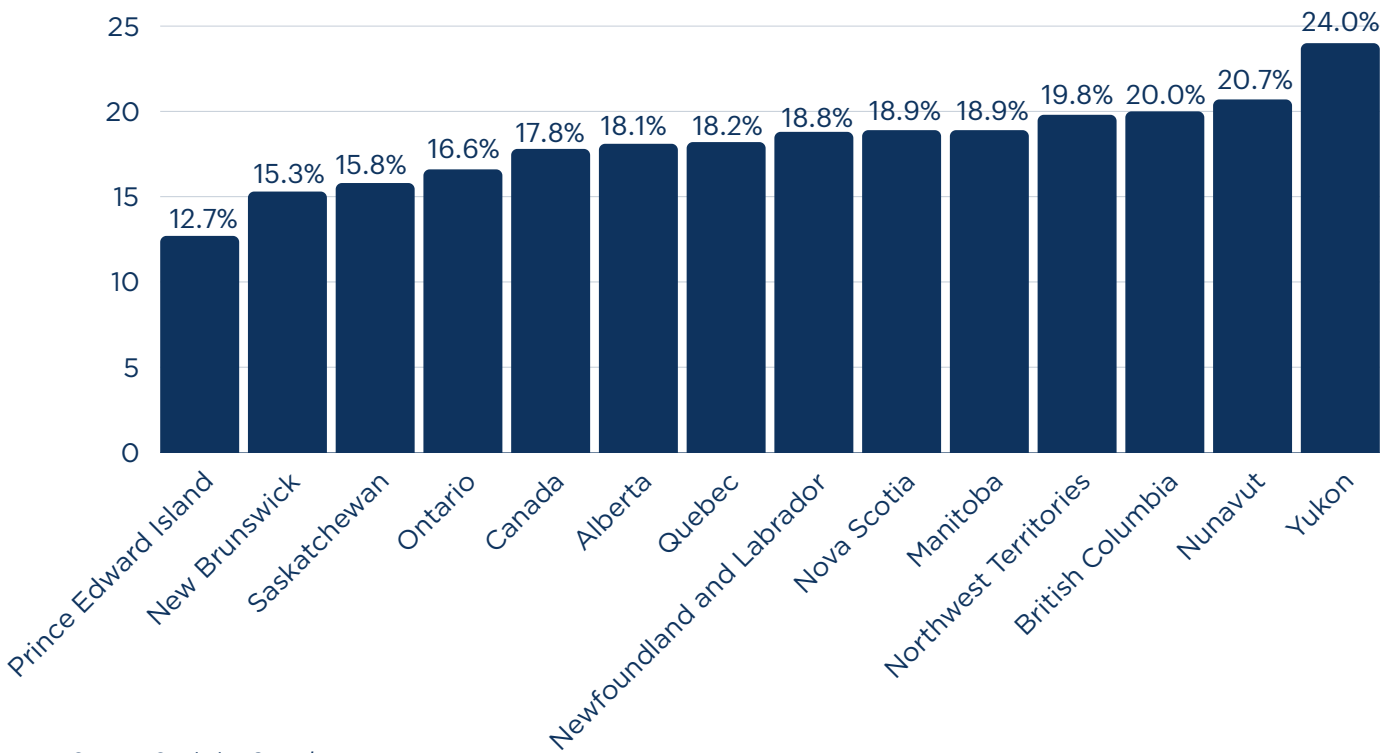


Source: Statistics Canada

Private Sector Business Count, Majority Ownership, Women, 2023

Saskatchewan’s women-owned businesses make up 15.8% of the entrepreneurial landscape, falling below the national average of 17.8%.

At only 15.8%, Saskatchewan ranks among the lowest in Canada for businesses majority-owned by women. Although organizations like WESK and the Women’s Business Hub have made significant strides in educating and empowering women entrepreneurs, these statistics underscore a need for additional initiatives that support this work.

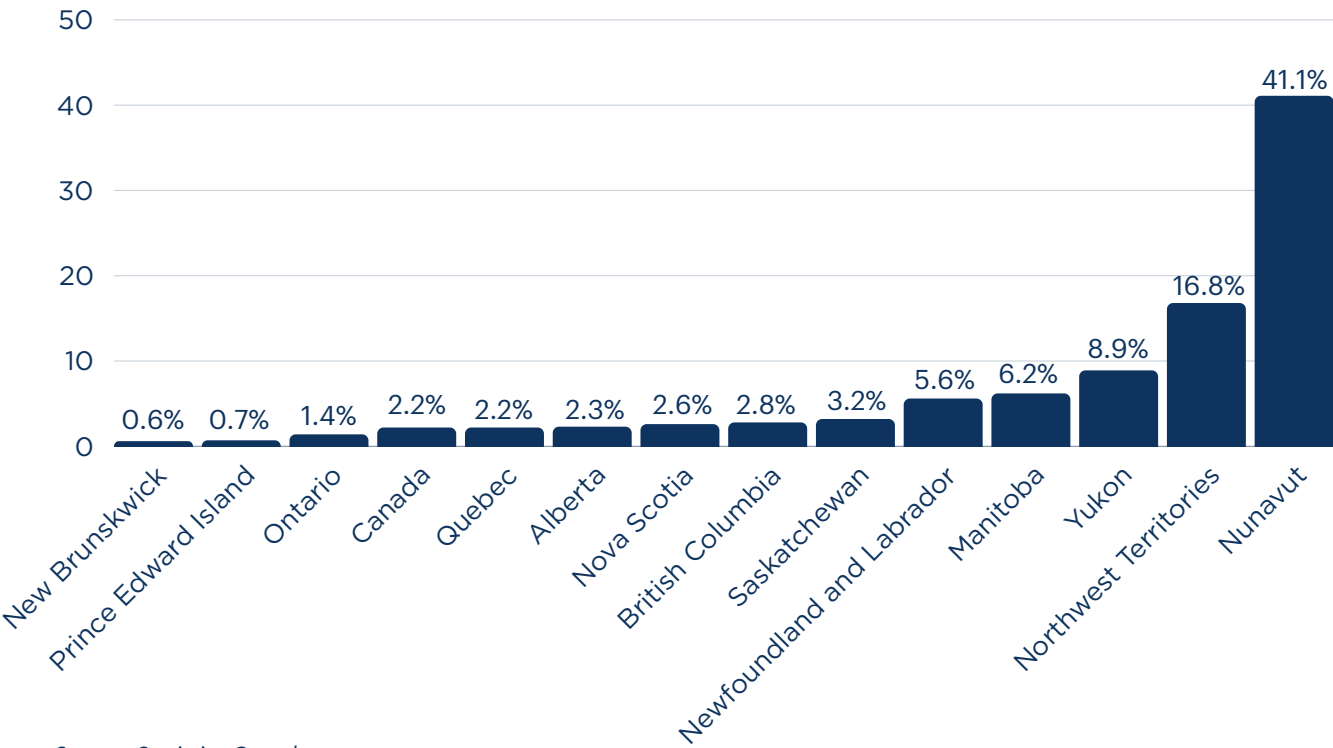


Source: Statistics Canada

Private Sector Business Count, Majority Ownership, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, 2023

Businesses predominantly owned by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples account for 3.2% of Saskatchewan’s entrepreneurial ecosystem, slightly above the national average of 2.2%.

Although Saskatchewan trails the three territories, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Manitoba in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit business ownership, the province ranks above the national average of 2.2%. There is considerable opportunity and potential to nurture and enhance Indigenous entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan.

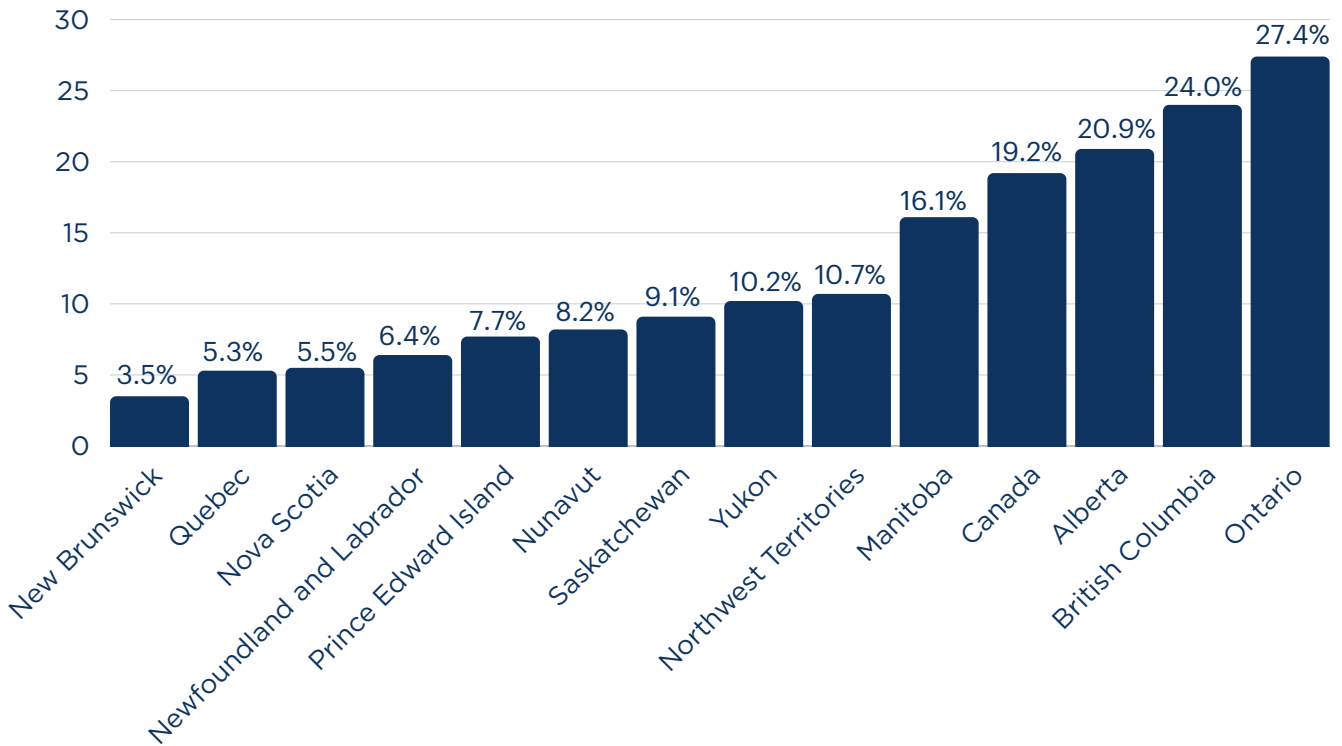


Source: Statistics Canada

Private Sector Business Count, Majority Ownership, Visible Minority, 2023

A total of 9.1% of Saskatchewan private sector businesses are owned by visible minorities, well below the national average of 19.2%.

People from all parts of the world proudly call Saskatchewan home. Unfortunately, however, this pride of place is not reflected to its fullest potential in the province's entrepreneurial ecosystem. This statistic highlights an ongoing need to actively pursue avenues to support entrepreneurs from visible minority communities.



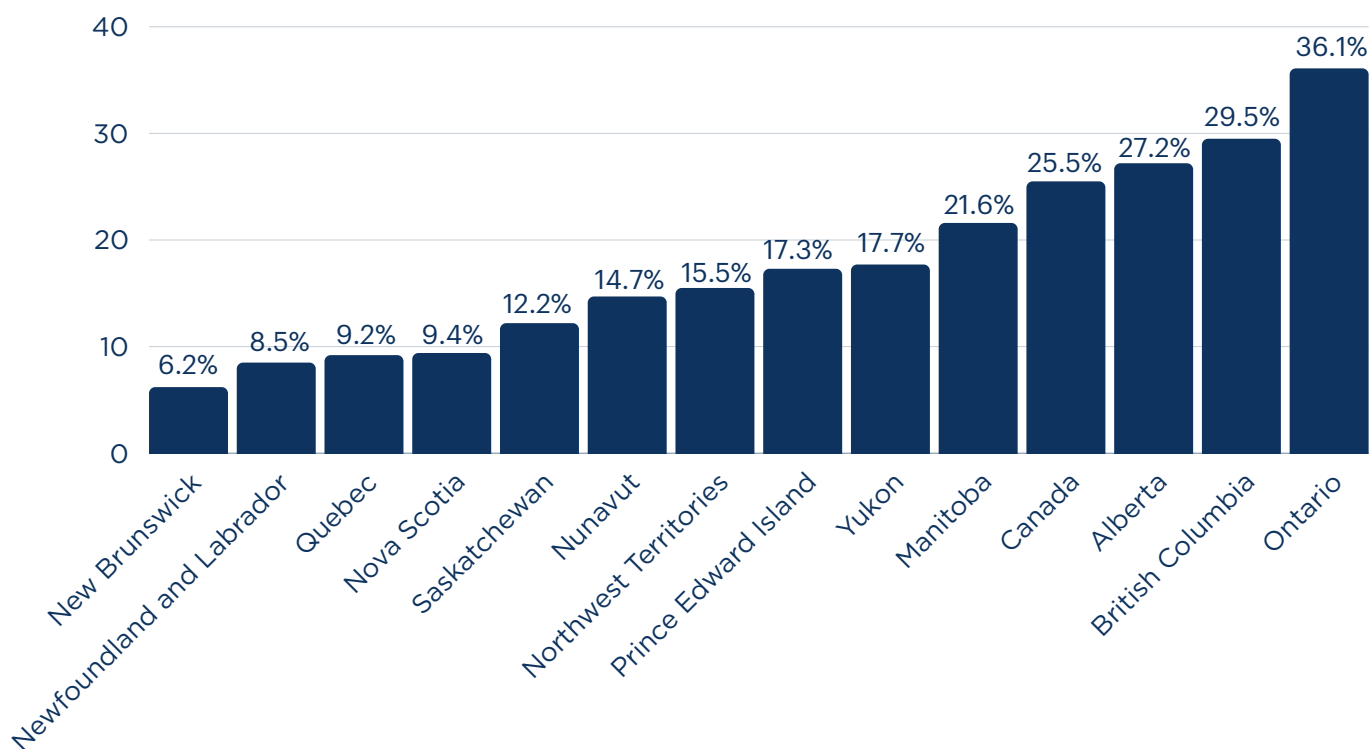
Source: Statistics Canada

Saskatchewan Private Sector Business Count (Majority Ownership, Immigrants to Canada, 2023)

Immigrant-owned businesses represent 12.2% of private sector businesses in Saskatchewan, ranking below the national average of 25.5%.

Immigrant entrepreneurs bring a different level of entrepreneurial spirit and a richness of perspectives than other entrepreneurs. Driven by wanting a better life for their families, these entrepreneurs are applying their experiences and unique skills and are fostering innovation and creativity in business. Immigrant entrepreneurs often identify and address unmet needs and challenges, leading to the development of niche markets. Moreover, these entrepreneurs contribute to cultural diversity and collaboration, serve as vital pillars of communities, and enhance understanding and cooperation between diverse cultures, contributing to a more interconnected and vibrant global economy.

With the representation being 12.2% compared to Canada's 25.5%, Saskatchewan has the opportunity and responsibility to make concerted efforts to foster immigrant entrepreneurship in the province.

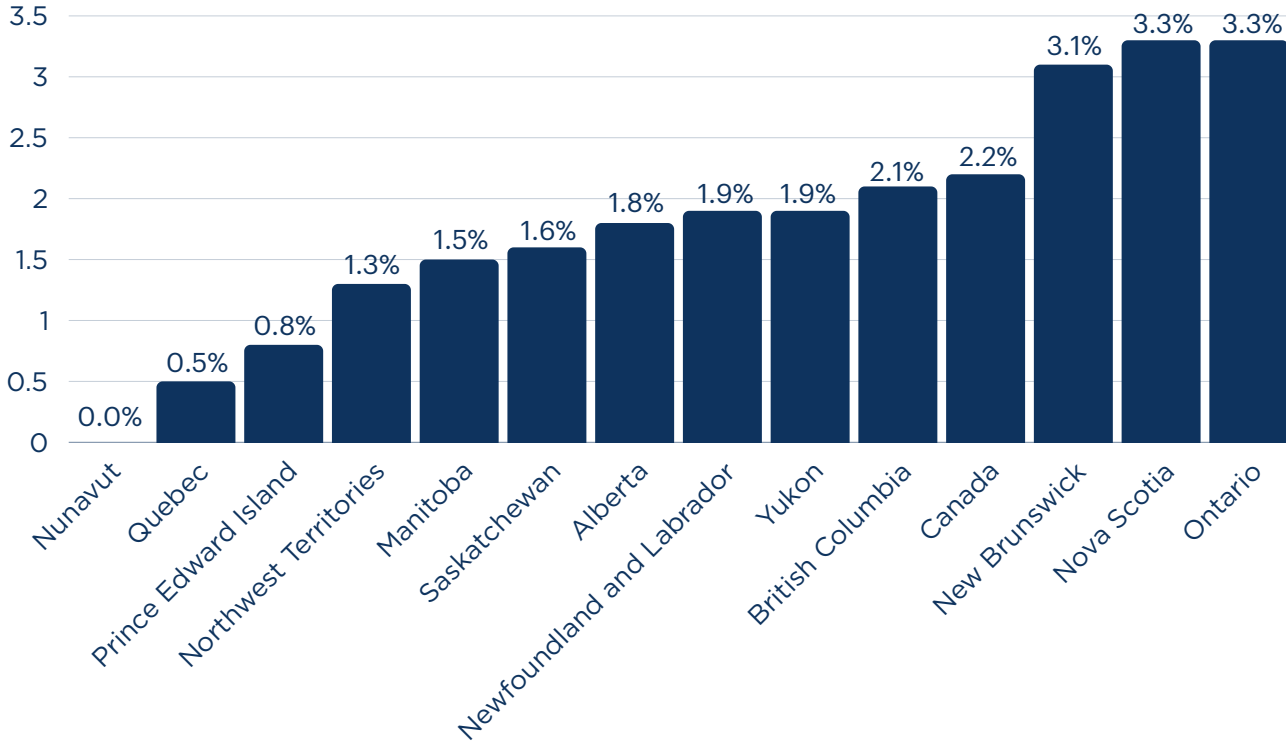


Source: Statistics Canada

Saskatchewan Private Sector Business Count (Majority Ownership, Persons With a Disability)

Entrepreneurs with a disability make up a tiny fraction of private sector businesses in Saskatchewan, 1.6% to be exact, falling below the national average of 2.2%.

Entrepreneurs with abilities, not disabilities, seen and unseen, are unlike most entrepreneurs. They face a completely different set of challenges and difficulties, including ones that all entrepreneurs face, but they also possess a set of strengths that are different from other entrepreneurs. Through innovative solutions that support economic stability, mobility, and prosperity, entrepreneurs with abilities are breaking down barriers and making work environments and the world better for all, and ones that are more resourceful and easier to navigate.

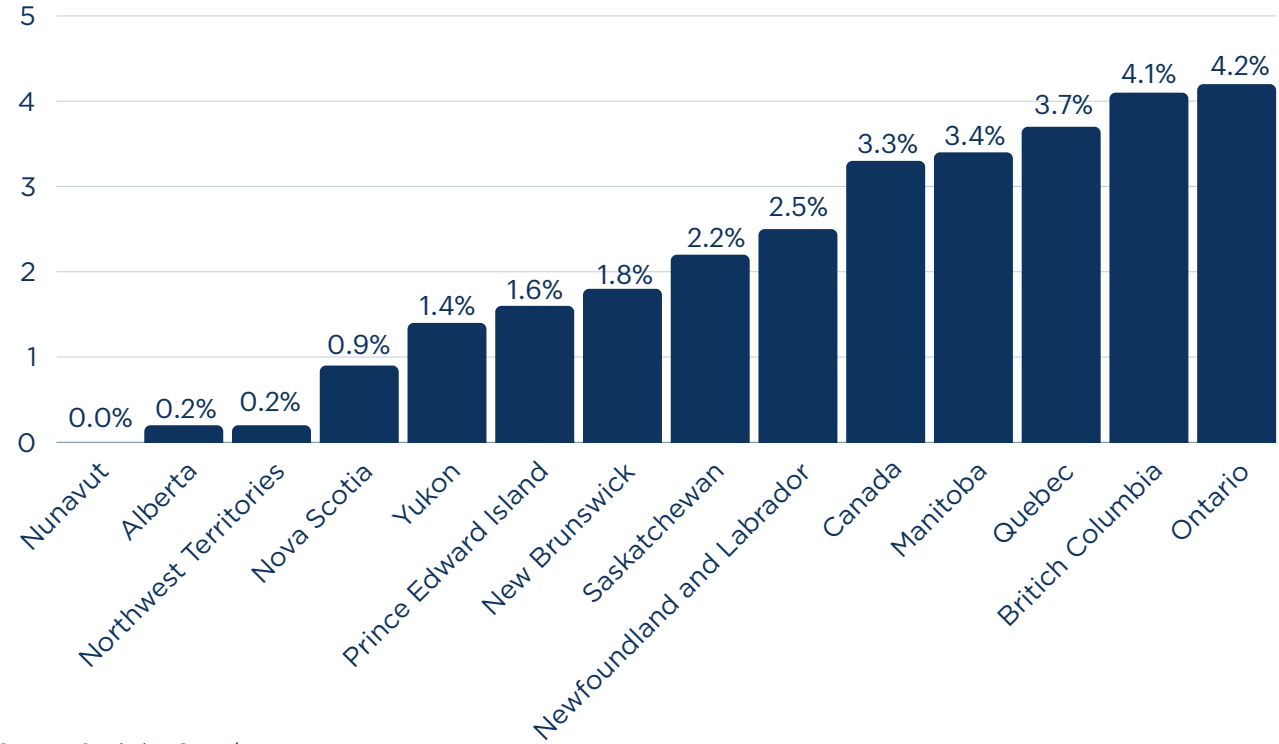


Source: Statistics Canada

Saskatchewan Private Sector Business Count (Majority Ownership, Member of 2SLGBTQI+ Community, 2023)

2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs account for 2.2% of private sector businesses in Saskatchewan, also below the national average of 3.3%.

Entrepreneurs within the 2SLGBTQI+ community bring unique perspectives that drive innovation, creativity, and the development of products and services tailored to diverse markets. Beyond the economic impact, these entrepreneurs challenge stereotypes, promote social progress, and advocate for inclusive policies. Extending further, 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs foster a more competitive and innovative global economy while aligning their values with equity, representation and corporate social responsibility.



Source: Statistics Canada

Industry Trends in Entrepreneurship

Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial landscape is influenced by a number of local and global economic trends. As part of SK Startup Institute's mission and mandate, we monitor emerging patterns across and within industries.

Seven industries have shown tremendous growth and promise in recent years:

Cleaning and Sanitization Services:

The COVID-19 pandemic brought hygiene and sanitation to the fore. New and established businesses in this sector have been quick to adapt and innovate, offering specialized services for residential, commercial, and industrial spaces.

With a surge in demand for eco-friendly and sustainable cleaning solutions, there is significant opportunity for environmentally-conscious entrepreneurs to make their mark.

Food Services and Culinary Ventures:

Saskatchewan's culinary industry has evolved well beyond traditional dining experiences. Startups are embracing the rise of food delivery and online ordering platforms, catering to a convenience-seeking consumer base. These startups are also leveraging technology (e.g., scheduling, supply chain) to enhance customer engagement and streamline operations.

Conceptually, a growing interest in farm-to-table and locally sourced food perfectly aligns with Saskatchewan's rich agricultural heritage and bounty.

Daycares and Early Learning Centres:

The demand for quality, secure child care services continue to grow. This, along with increasing workforce participation and the Government of Saskatchewan's \$10 per day flat fee for regulated daycare providers, has opened a wealth of opportunities for entrepreneurs in this space. Startups have been instrumental in providing innovative, safe, flexible, and development-focused daycare and early learning solutions, from Montessori education to technology-based learning and inclusive operations.

Long-Term Care Facilities and Senior Services:

An aging Saskatchewan population has spurred significant growth in the long-term care sector. Startups are exploring models of senior care and assisted living facilities that emphasize personalized care, technology integration, and, ultimately, an improved and optimal quality of life for seniors.

This sector presents social and economic opportunities for entrepreneurs ready to make a positive impact on the well-being of our province's older generations—one with a ripple effect spanning entire communities.

Import and Export:

Saskatchewan's location and abundance of natural resources position the province as a hub for import and export businesses. Entrepreneurs are capitalizing on this advantage by facilitating the trade of agricultural products, minerals, and other resources.

There is also a growing interest in exporting Saskatchewan's expertise in renewable energy and sustainable technologies. Startups in this sector have and will continue to play a key role in expanding the province's international trade footprint.

Consulting Services:

Consulting services are an integral part of Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial landscape, offering specialized expertise across a variety of domains. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent rise in online and remote work has seen a rise in independent consultants, putting their knowledge and expertise to work to support clients with everything from digital marketing strategy to workplace inclusivity and business planning.

Consulting firms support businesses as they navigate market challenges and changes, offering tailored solutions and strategic guidance for sustained growth and success.

Information Technology (IT) and App and Software Development:

Saskatchewan's IT startups have done a terrific job of responding to a dynamic and rapidly evolving technological landscape. These businesses provide essential services, including IT support, software development, and addressing digital needs in a way that streamlines operations and enhances efficiency.

IT entrepreneurs are also exploring and applying emerging technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence, Internet of Things) in new and interesting ways. Their work has made significant contributions to Saskatchewan's economic and technological advancement.

As these industries continue to grow and others gain momentum, Saskatchewan will benefit from a thriving economy and thriving communities.

Challenges and Barriers

To fully understand Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial landscape, we must acknowledge and address the challenges and barriers our entrepreneurs face. In doing so, we can identify opportunities and strategies to persevere through and even overcome them.

Limited Access to Capital:

An often-cited barrier for entrepreneurs is accessing capital. Limited access can hinder business startup and growth, preventing entrepreneurs from stepping into their full potential.

What can be done? The government should continue to create and support programs offering grants, low interest loans, and venture capital to startups. Encouraging partnerships with private investors and financial institutions may also enhance access to funding, as well as increasing the number of venture capital firms in Saskatchewan and providing instruments to help rebuild credit health.

High Interest Rates and Inflation:

While the effects of increasing interest rates and inflation are felt by all Saskatchewan residents, this is especially true for entrepreneurs who must contend with an increased cost of borrowing and increased operational costs.

What can be done? Both provincial and federal governments can work with financial institutions to develop policies to lower interest rates for small businesses. Loan extensions and other measures to control inflation may also help to stabilize costs for entrepreneurs.

Skilled Labour Shortage:

At least 1 in 3 Saskatchewan small businesses struggle to recruit and retain the workforce needed to maintain operations. Startups in specialized industries with high-skilled jobs (e.g., technology, life sciences) have been hit especially hard by labour shortages.

What can be done? Investing in local workforce development programs, collaboration with educational institutions to align curriculum with industry needs, and providing incentives for skilled professionals to live and work in Saskatchewan are all strategies that can help bridge the skills gap.

Regulatory and Administrative Requirements:

The burden of excessive regulatory and administrative requirements often slows business growth, stifling innovations and initiatives.

What can be done? Streamlining regulations, simplifying permit processes, and offering online resources to help entrepreneurs navigate bureaucracy make it easier to start and maintain a business. Encouraging interagency cooperation may also reduce redundancy.

Real Estate:

Varying and sometimes limited availability and affordability of retail, commercial, and industrial real estate make it difficult for businesses to secure suitable locations for their operations.

What can be done? Providing incentives (e.g., tax breaks, financial support) for property owners to offer their spaces at affordable rates, expanding shared workspace facilities with mentoring and support services, fostering public-private partnerships for affordable co-working spaces and business hubs, streamlining zoning and land use policies, and offering real estate grants to offset renovations costs are all initiatives that can improve or offset real estate challenges.

Access to Scaling:

Scaling a business (e.g., transitioning from a pilot facility to full-scale manufacturing) presents a number of challenges including, but not limited to, access to resources, infrastructure, and other support to grow operations.

What can be done? Establishing dedicated scaling support programs and incubators, providing financial incentives or grants to businesses interested in expanding, fostering partnerships between major corporations and startups, and offering tailored mentoring and training programs all facilitate a smoother scaling process. Improving access to venture capital and investment opportunities and offering infrastructure development and regulatory assistance may stimulate local manufacturing growth in the region.

Innovation and Technology Uptake:

Keeping pace with technological advancements while simultaneously fostering innovation can be challenging for entrepreneurs.

What can be done? Supporting innovation hubs, offering grants for research and development, and promoting technology adoption through training and other incentives can provide entrepreneurs the time and tools needed to innovate.

Access to Mentorship and Networking:

While there is a growing number of mentoring and networking opportunities throughout the province, often these are clustered to a few regions.

What can be done? Establishing mentorship programs with accessibility for both urban and rural entrepreneurs, hosting networking events, and facilitating partnerships with industry associations and chambers of commerce ensure Saskatchewan entrepreneurs remain supported and connected.

Education and Training:

A lack of education and training opportunities can hinder Saskatchewan entrepreneurs' ability to acquire the essential knowledge and skills necessary to remain competitive and enjoy continued business success and growth.

What can be done? Providing financial incentives reduces the financial burden of attending workshops, conferences, and trade shows. Additionally, collaborating with educational institutions to tailor offerings and subsidies for entrepreneurs will improve access to educational materials. Moreover, mentorship programs and tax incentives for training employees engenders a culture of learning and support. Regularly evaluating and adapting these initiatives to ensure they remain aligned with the ever-evolving needs of entrepreneurs is important to drive the success and growth of Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Entrepreneurial Success Stories

Despite challenges and barriers, the entrepreneurs that proudly call Saskatchewan home demonstrate a strength and resolve that characterizes our province. The stories of Christine Marie of Awāsis Boutique, Dr. Christine Beck of Waggle Mail, and Martin Nguyen of Crème Café and Pâtisserie are excellent examples of how hard work, innovation, and the right resources can take vision into reality.

Christine Marie

Christine Marie, a Filipino/Métis mother of two, is the creative visionary behind Awāsis Boutique—the first Indigenous-inspired baby and kids fashion shop in Western Canada. A teacher by trade, Christine graduated from Gabriel Dumont Institute’s Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) with specializations in Indigenous Studies and Home Economics. Although she is no longer in the classroom, she continues to apply her education daily, transforming the lives of children and families on an even bigger scale.



What began as an online boutique entirely managed by Christine has evolved into a small but mighty team growing a national brand beloved for its products, mission, and impact. More than just clothing, Awāsis Boutique exists to educate about and celebrate Indigenous culture. To date, Christine has donated nearly \$100,000 back into the community, partnering with everyone from lifestyle influencers to sports teams to amplify Awāsis’ message. Christine has persevered through struggles with impostor syndrome and discrimination to arrive where she is today. She credits this perseverance to an unwavering passion for the work she does, the products she creates, and the mission she serves.

Christine is both inspired and encouraged to see a growing number of businesses taking action towards truth and reconciliation, creating a more inclusive and welcoming entrepreneurial landscape. She encourages aspiring entrepreneurs to give themselves grace, to never stop learning, and to not be afraid of asking for help.

“I started Awāsis Boutique during a dark and difficult season in my life. With a toddler at my hip and a baby in my arms, I had no idea what was ahead for us, but I had hope that everything would work out. After noticing a lack of Indigenous-inspired baby and kids apparel, I decided to take a risk and see if I could tackle this gap. Today, we create products that help everyone from babies to adults feel proud of who they are, all while strengthening Indigenous communities and spaces.”

- Christine Marie

Dr. Christine Beck

A registered veterinarian and CEO of pet tech startup Waggle Mail, Dr. Christine Beck's entry into entrepreneurship was not so much a conscious decision as it was a product of her ability to identify problems and desire to take action. Witnessing firsthand the effects of a critical shortage of veterinarians and a saturated market of products and information often overwhelming for pet parents, Christine created Waggle Mail with a vision to become the first all-in-one platform to offer everything necessary to support happier, healthier dogs.



Waggle Mail puts data science, machine learning, and Christine's veterinary expertise to work to deliver what she calls "curation at scale." Her first step towards connecting dog parents with the resources they need to take the best care of their dogs came in 2020 with the release of the Waggle Mail dog subscription box, a quarterly vet-curated collection of health, lifestyle, and other specialty products. The box has quickly become a national favourite, challenging the traditional "one size fits all" approach while still delivering a fun, exciting experience for dogs and their humans.

Since then, Christine has introduced a second business line: Waggle Mail Puppy, a monthly subscription service designed to support pet parents through their puppy's first year. Product replenishment, further customization, and an even more personalized platform are all on the horizon for this fast-growing business and ambitious entrepreneur.

Christine credits Waggle Mail's steady growth to focus, determination, listening to and learning from her growing subscriber base, and the support she's received from fellow entrepreneurs and especially Saskatchewan's tech community. She participated in the Co.Labs tech incubator and actively seeks out opportunities to mentor aspiring entrepreneurs, always advising them to dream big and believe in themselves.

"I often joke that I'm a vet turned tech entrepreneur by accident. With every challenge comes opportunity, and in this world, you will have to navigate a plethora of challenges. But every time you dig into a new challenge, you will build self-trust and a willingness to experience discomfort; this is necessary for growth and change." Dr. Christine Beck

Martin Nguyen

One of Regina's newest dining experiences, Crème Café and Pâtisserie offers a contemporary twist on classic French pastries, from croissants and entremets to the café's most popular menu item: buttery, flavourful choux pastry.

Martin's story of entrepreneurship is a global affair: growing up on a coffee farm in Vietnam, becoming a chocolatier in Singapore, and training as a pastry chef in Toronto each have profoundly influenced the food he prepares and the heart he pours into the process. He and his family now call Regina home, and have felt warmly welcomed by both the business and larger community.



Like many entrepreneurs, Martin's journey hasn't been without struggle. Accessing capital and optimizing business operations to ensure efficiency and sustainability have been among his top challenges, but a desire to humbly serve his community motivated him to persevere.

With plans to open additional locations as he inches closer to realizing his goal of Crème becoming a premier dessert destination, Martin exemplifies the entrepreneurial spirit. He encourages aspiring entrepreneurs to take action and believes that as you progress and demonstrate commitment towards a goal, people will take notice and be more inclined to support you along the way. An openness to new ideas and ways of working has also been instrumental in Martin achieving the level of success he enjoys today.

"Crème is an opportunity to bring my unique vision and creativity to the world of desserts. I infuse my background, identity, and personality into every dessert I create. This creative freedom and the chance to leave my mark on the culinary world is what motivated me to embark on this entrepreneurial journey." Martin Nguyen

What's Ahead for Saskatchewan Entrepreneurs

Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial ecosystem can be described as vibrant, resilient, and forward-thinking.

Eight activities will ensure this continues into the future:

Redefining Success:

Gone are the days of success solely defined by financial metrics. This definition must expand beyond economic prosperity to incorporate social impact, environmental sustainability, and community engagement. In doing so, we create a more inclusive and adaptive framework that reflects the diverse goals and aspirations of entrepreneurs across industries, business sizes, and demographics. This kind of openness encourages entrepreneurs to align their business objectives with their values, leading to a more vibrant, resilient ecosystem.

Innovation and Technology Integration:

Saskatchewan's entrepreneurs will remain at the forefront of innovation by integrating technologies like automation, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and the Internet of Things (IoT). Innovation and technology integration enhance business operations, drive efficiencies, and create new opportunities for growth and competitive edge.

Accessible and Reliable Air Transportation:

Living in a hyperconnected world means entrepreneurs need access to global markets, networks, and resources to remain competitive and responsive to changing market demands. Reliable air travel puts business opportunities, investors, and new customers within entrepreneurs' reach and makes it easier to attend and make valuable connections at conferences, trade shows, and meetings. Furthermore, efficient air transportation facilitates the movement of goods, reducing supply chain costs and increasing market reach. Ultimately, advocating for and ensuring accessible, reliable air transportation drives business growth for entrepreneurs in all parts of the province.

Education and Training:

Education and training, before and throughout the entrepreneurial journey, are key elements of a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem. Opportunities to learn and grow foster a culture of curiosity, innovation, and development.

Early education and training provide future generations of entrepreneurs the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to navigate the complexities of starting and growing a business. This not only empowers individuals to confidently pursue their entrepreneurial dreams, but also reduces barriers to entry into the business world.

Ongoing education and training are equally important to keep pace with evolving market dynamic, technologies, and business strategies. Continually reskilling and upskilling enhances adaptability, problem-solving ability, and innovation—all vital for sustained success.

Rural-Urban Collaborative Ecosystem:

The cooperation and collaboration between rural and urban parts of the province plays a significant role in the success and differentiation of Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Also unique to the province is the capacity to leverage the strengths of both urban centers and rural communities.

With Saskatchewan's expansive landscapes and diverse resources, this collaborative approach unites a wide range of expertise and resources and ultimately enhances support for entrepreneurs. Fusing strengths promotes equitable economic development and embodies the resilience that characterizes Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial spirit.

Digitization:

Digital transformation will continue to be a driving force for small business success. Digitization ensures long-term competitiveness and sustainability by streamlining operations, improving customer experiences, and being able to quickly respond to market changes.

Talent Development and Retention:

Nurturing a skilled, adaptable workforce will remain paramount. Entrepreneurial ventures that prioritize talent development, reskilling, and upskilling will play a crucial role in meeting the evolving demands of the job market, retaining local talent, and fostering economic growth. Moreover, a supported and committed workforce serves as a catalyst for continuous innovation and sustained development.

Inclusivity and Diversity:

Embracing diversity and inclusion is strategically beneficial for sustained entrepreneurial success. A diverse team brings varied perspectives, fostering innovation and informed decision-making. This inclusivity attracts top talent and ensures the business is well-positioned to understand and meet the diverse needs of a global market. Diversity isn't just a social responsibility; it's a key driver of success in today's dynamic and competitive business landscape.

Moreover, to bolster the state of entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan, it is imperative to cultivate an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem that actively supports and empowers majority-owned businesses led by women, Indigenous peoples, visible minorities, immigrants, 2SLGBTQI+, and entrepreneurs with disabilities, fostering a diverse and thriving entrepreneurial landscape for sustained prosperity.

As we step into the future, collaboration between SK Startup Institute and the province's entrepreneurial community will continue to be the driving force behind Saskatchewan's economic growth and prosperity.

Startup and Small Business Support Organizations

From business planning and mentorship to creating and advancing opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs, the list of startup and small business support organizations is on the rise.

A full list of organizations is available on the SK Startup Institute website at <https://skstartup.ca/how-we-help/sk-business-support-directory/>.

For questions about these and other supports available for entrepreneurs, connect with one of our business advisors by emailing info@skstartup.ca or booking an appointment through our website.

APPENDIX: Entrepreneurship Service Provider Roundtable Participants

To achieve a thorough understanding of the entrepreneurial landscape in Saskatchewan, this report was developed in collaboration with several key entrepreneurship service providers committed to supporting the province’s entrepreneurial ecosystem.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the below roundtable participants whose input facilitated a productive and insightful discussion.

Participants:

- BDC - Laurence Zaharia
- Clarence Campeau Development Fund - Steve Danners, Kendall Horan
- Community Futures & Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program - Susan Bater
- Creative Saskatchewan - Megan Folden
- Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre, FEAD Program - Kendra Wack, Nafisa Mahabub
- Futurpreneur - Caroline Ksiazek, Noah Wilson
- Gabriel Dumont Institute - Brendon Demerais
- Prairies Economic Development Canada - Ginette LeBel
- Opus - Jenelyn Santos Ong
- Regina & District Chamber of Commerce - James Taylor
- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies - Ryan Jimmy
- Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce - Margot Orr
- StartupTNT - Mike Wolsfeld
- Saskatoon Open Door Society, Women’s Business Hub - Frances Meyer, Reggie Ramlochan
- Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan - Alauna Whelan
- SK Startup Institute - Stephane O’Reilly
- SREDA - Sarah Wolensky, Tyler Nguyen





Every success story begins with a single step.

SK Startup Institute is your first step as an entrepreneur looking to get a head start with access to expert guidance and critical research data.

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