

February 2024

SURREY LABOUR MARKET REPORT

The only Surrey-focused labour market report

SURREY BOARD OF TRADE



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Surrey Board of Trade Surrey Labour Market Intelligence Report

January 2024 (including results of Statistics Canada's February 2024 Labour Force Survey)

The Surrey Board of Trade (SBOT) continues to provide the only Surrey-specific labour market data on a regular basis! This summary report compares employment changes in Surrey over the last two years, from January 2022 through to January 2024, to show the local employment impacts of the pandemic and other factors. This report is prepared by Human Capital Strategies in conjunction with the Surrey Board of Trade.

This is the first of six SBOT Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) Reports in 2024. As having moved away from using the low point of employment in 2020/21 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Surrey employment levels in 2022 are now a new benchmark or baseline with which we are comparing current levels (see Footnote 5 at the end for Methodology).

In previous reports until the end of 2022, the Labour Force Data provided by Statistics Canada was based on population counts from the 2016 Census of Population. As of the February 2023 report, the estimates have been adjusted to reflect the population counts from the 2021 Census. As a result, you will see some minor changes in numbers from LMI Reports published in 2023. All of the numbers for 2021 and beyond provided in this report have been updated based on the revised labour force data from Statistics Canada.

New Feature Profile

For the first time, in addition to a bi-monthly summary of the Labour Force Survey data related to Surrey, this year's Surrey Labour Market Intelligence Reports will include a special labour market-related area/topic of focus. See the Addendum to this report for a summary of Surrey labour market changes between 2011 and 2024, including working age population levels, employment levels and rates, unemployment levels and rates, and labour force participation levels and rates over this period.

Highlights

Employment in Surrey in January 2024 was an estimated 3.9% or 12,600 jobs above employment in January 2023; and almost 17,700 or 5.5% more than in January 2022.

Sectors

The largest industry employment sectors in Surrey in January 2024 were a combination of goods-producing and knowledge-based service-producing sectors:

1. Wholesale and retail trade (52,705 or 15.7% of total jobs in Surrey);
2. Health care and social assistance (43,239 or 12.8% of total jobs in Surrey);
3. Transportation and warehousing (33,539 or 10.0% of total jobs in Surrey);
4. Construction (31,494 or 9.4% of total jobs in Surrey); and,
5. Professional, scientific and technical services (26,672 or 7.9% of total jobs in Surrey).

The sectors with the most negative employment change in Surrey over the last 12 months are estimated to be:

1. Employment in business, building and other support services¹ again has the highest decline of 18.2% or -2,626 jobs;
2. The largest jobs sector, wholesale and retail trade, lost -1,642 of its jobs for a 3.0% drop; and,
3. Surrey's natural resource industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining and oil and gas) collectively decreased in employment by 1,241 or a large -29.5% decline.

¹ Examples: Administrative facilities and call centres; janitorial, landscaping and carpentry services for buildings; and waste and remediation services, such as garbage collection and recycling.

Over the last 12 months, besides good growth in manufacturing jobs, Surrey experienced employment growth in service-producing sectors. Those with the greatest job growth to January 2024 are estimated to be:

1. Health care and social assistance grew by almost 4,900 jobs for a healthy 12.7% increase;
2. Transportation and warehousing saw an even larger percentage growth in Surrey employment with a 15.4% gain or almost 4,500 jobs;
3. Manufacturing experienced an impressive gain with over 3,300 jobs for a 12.8% increase; and,
4. Professional, scientific and technical services employment grew by 2,253 jobs for a 9.2% increase.

Occupations

The four largest employment sectors by occupation in Surrey in January 2024 accounted for 214,676 jobs or almost 64.0% of the total employed:

1. Sales and services (79,529 or 23.6%);
2. Trades, transport and equipment operators (60,802 or 18.1%);
3. Business, finance and administration (47,160 or 14.0%); and,
4. Healthcare (27,185 or 8.1%).

As of January 2024, the growth in employment by broad occupational category in Surrey since January 2023 again reflects strong growth in service-producing sectors, including the top four job-gainers:

1. The education, law and social, community and government services sector added an impressive 5,258 new jobs for a healthy 18.6% increase;
2. Healthcare employment saw an increase of over 4,500 new positions for a sizable 20.0% increase;
3. Business, finance and administration jobs grew by over 1,200 or 2.6% over the last 12 months; and,
4. Management jobs grew by 4.8% or 948 jobs over the last 12 months.

While a relatively small growth of 484 jobs since January 2023, employment in natural resources, including agriculture, in Surrey, experienced a strong 15.8% increase over the same period.

Two key occupational categories in Surrey lost significant employment since January 2023:

1. Trades, transport and equipment operator positions in Surrey decreased by over 3,221 or -5.0%; and,
2. Manufacturing and utilities positions experienced another decrease in employment over this period, declining by 7.5% or over almost -1,000 jobs.

Synopsis

Over the last 12 months, Surrey employment has grown 3.9% or 12,600 jobs, up from 1.6% and 5,061 jobs in the previous 12-month period. This was driven by key service sectors and growth in construction. Perhaps due to a depressed real estate market and continuing remote work, the biggest job losses in Surrey in the last 12 months have been in business, building and other support services, and in natural resources (-18.2% and -29.5% respectively).

While Surrey had higher employment growth over the last 12 months (3.7%) than Canada (1.1%) and BC (2.4%), uncertainty and factors such as the continuing inflation concerns related to wages, interest rates, housing costs and availability, talent shortages, supply chain issues, government regulation (particularly related to resource sectors) and other trends continue to combine to prevent a more robust recovery since 2022. These will need to continue to be addressed by governments, sectors, communities and businesses working together in order for Surrey, the Lower Mainland and BC to realize more robust, consistent economic growth.

So far, the winter 2023/24 virus season has showed no significant signs of workforce or labour market disruption. Past experiences and learnings have created stronger resilience among the Surrey workforce and employers.

Surrey Labour Force and Workforce Trends in January 2024

Surrey Employer Employment Impacts: Estimates extrapolated from Statistics Canada's 2016 Census and 2023 Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey (February 2023).

Surrey and Metro Vancouver Changes: Labour Force Per Census 2016 and 2021²³

Over the last 12 months, Surrey employment grew by an estimated 12,600 jobs or 3.9% since January 2023. This is significant (and more than BC's growth of 2.4%), and higher than the growth in the previous 12 months (January 2022- January 2023) which was 5,061 jobs or 1.6% since January 2022.

Surrey's recent labour market growth has been significant when compared to the broader Metro Vancouver Region (Regional District, which includes Surrey). Between 2016 and 2021, the Metro Vancouver area saw a labour force growth of 112,700 or 8.3% over this 5-year period.

Surrey's labour force grew by 308,190 or a healthy 12.2%, an almost 2.5% average annual growth. As a result, Surrey's labour force in 2021 as a percentage of Metro Vancouver's grew to 21.0% from just above 20.0% in 2016. Interestingly, Surrey's labour force as a proportion of Metro Vancouver's in 2021 was relatively higher in blue collar occupations such as 30.1% in trades, transport and equipment operators, 26.9% in natural resource occupations, and 34.2% in occupations in manufacturing and utilities. The Surrey labour force was proportionately lower than Metro Vancouver's in occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport (9.9%), in senior management positions (12.0%), in natural and applied sciences (13.9%), and in education, law, social, community and government services (16.8%).

Surrey Employment Trends BY INDUSTRY – January 2022 to January 2024

Employment in Surrey in January 2024 was an estimated 3.9% or 12,600 more jobs above employment in January 2023; and almost 17,700 or 5.5% more than in January 2022. The largest industry employment sectors in Surrey in January 2024 were a combination of goods-producing and knowledge-based service-producing sectors:

1. Wholesale and retail trade (52,705 or 15.7% of total jobs in Surrey);
2. Health care and social assistance (43,239 or 12.8% of total jobs in Surrey);
3. Transportation and warehousing (33,539 or 10.0% of total jobs in Surrey);
4. Construction (31,494 or 9.4% of total jobs in Surrey); and,
5. Professional, scientific and technical services (26,672 or 7.9% of total jobs in Surrey).

Table 1 (next page) shows employment for January 2022, January 2023 and January 2024 in Surrey, by industry sector.

The sectors with the most negative employment change in Surrey over the last 12 months are estimated to be:

1. Employment in business, building and other support services⁴ again has the highest decline of 18.2% or -2,626 jobs;
2. The largest jobs sector, wholesale and retail trade, lost -1,642 of its jobs for a 3.0% drop; and,
3. Surrey's natural resource industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining and oil and gas) collectively decreased in employment by -1,241 or a large -29.5% decline.

Other sectors either had marginal decreases in jobs or gains (see below).

² Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released February 8, 2023.

³ Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0379-01.

⁴ Examples: Administrative facilities and call centres; janitorial, landscaping and carpentry services for buildings; and waste and remediation services, such as garbage collection and recycling.

Table 1: Estimated Employment by Industry in Surrey⁵ – January 2022 through January 2024
Adapted from Table 14-10-0379-01, Statistics Canada⁶

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	Employment January 2022	Employment January 2023	Employment January 2024	Change January 2023 to January 2024	
				Jobs	%
Total Employed (all industries)	319,074	324,135	336,735	12,600	3.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas	4,646	4,213	2,972	-1,241	-29.5%
Utilities	1,122	1,656	1,454	-202	-12.2%
Construction	24,233	31,920	31,494	-426	-1.3%
Manufacturing	32,036	25,781	29,092	3,311	12.8%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	59,318	54,347	52,705	-1,642	-3.0%
Transportation & Warehousing	31,340	29,072	33,539	4,467	15.4%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	15,061	15,598	16,800	1,202	7.7%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	22,925	24,418	26,672	2,253	9.2%
Business, Building & Other Support Services	10,711	14,402	11,777	-2,626	-18.2%
Educational Services	17,283	20,290	20,476	186	0.9%
Health Care & Social Assistance	41,003	38,361	43,239	4,878	12.7%
Information, Culture & Recreation	12,406	12,641	13,303	662	5.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	20,439	20,316	20,295	-21	-0.1%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	11,718	12,810	12,537	-273	-2.1%
Public Administration	13,278	13,672	14,913	1,241	9.1%

Reference: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0379-01

Over the last 12 months, besides good growth in manufacturing jobs, Surrey experienced employment growth in service-producing sectors. Those with the greatest job growth to January 2024 are estimated to be:

1. Health care and social assistance grew by almost 4,900 jobs for a healthy 12.7% increase;
2. Transportation and warehousing saw an even larger percentage growth in Surrey employment with a 15.4% gain or almost 4,500 jobs;
3. Manufacturing experienced an impressive gain with over 3,300 jobs for a 12.8% increase; and,
4. Professional, scientific and technical services employment grew by 2,253 jobs for a 9.2% increase.

⁵ Estimates based on Surrey share of Metro Vancouver (Census Metropolitan Area) by Industry in 2021.

⁶ Employment by Industry, three month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality.

Surrey Employment Trends BY OCCUPATION – January 2022 to January 2024

Table 2 shows employment trends by occupation in Surrey over the last 12 months. The four largest employment sectors by occupation in Surrey in January 2024 accounted for 214,676 jobs or almost 64.0% of the total employed:

1. Sales and services (79,529 or 23.6%);
2. Trades, transport and equipment operators (60,802 or 18.1%);
3. Business, finance and administration (47,160 or 14.0%); and,
4. Healthcare (27,185 or 8.1%).

Table 2: Estimated Employment by Occupation in Surrey – January 2022 through January 2024
Adapted from Table 14-10-0430-01, Statistics Canada

National Occupational Classification	Employment January 2022	Employment January 2023	Employment January 2024	Change January 2023 to January 2024	
				Jobs	%
Total Employed (all occupations)	319,074	324,135	336,735	12,600	3.9%
Management	15,996	19,860	20,808	948	4.8%
Business, Finance & Administration	49,950	45,954	47,160	1,206	2.6%
Natural & Applied Sciences	22,393	22,379	22,852	473	2.1%
Health	25,593	22,650	27,185	4,534	20.0%
Education, Law & Social, Community & Government Services	27,972	28,342	33,600	5,258	18.6%
Art, Culture, Recreation & Sport	5,653	7,455	7,524	69	0.9%
Sales & Services	80,705	79,258	79,529	271	0.3%
Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators	57,310	64,023	60,802	-3,221	-5.0%
Natural Resources Agriculture & Related Production	3,981	3,067	3,551	484	15.8%
Manufacturing & Utilities	15,048	13,270	12,278	-992	-7.5%

Reference: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0430-01

As of January 2024, the growth in employment by broad occupational category in Surrey since January 2023 again reflects strong growth in service-producing sectors, including the top 4 job-gainers:

1. The education, law and social, community and government services sector added an impressive 5,258 new jobs for a healthy 18.6% increase;
2. Healthcare employment saw an increase of over 4,500 new positions for a sizable 20.0% increase;
3. Business, finance and administration jobs grew by over 1,200 or 2.6% over the last 12 months in Surrey; and,
4. Management jobs grew by 4.8% or 948 jobs over the last 12 months.

While a relatively small growth of 484 jobs since January 2023, employment in natural resources, including agriculture, in Surrey, experienced a strong 15.8% increase over the same period.

Two key occupational categories in Surrey lost significant employment since January 2023:

1. Trades, transport and equipment operator positions in Surrey decreased by over 3,221 or -5.0%; and,
2. Manufacturing and utilities positions experienced another decrease in employment over this period, declining by -7.5% or over almost -1,000 jobs.

Over the last two years since January 2022, sectors that led the way in Surrey's job growth were (in descending order) construction, professional/technical/scientific services, educational services and transportation and warehousing – contributing almost 16,500 new jobs over this period.

Also contributing approximately 16,000 new jobs over the last two years were the occupational categories of (in descending order) education, law and social, community and government services, management, trades and transport and arts, culture, recreation and sport jobs.

Over the same two-year period, the biggest decreases in employment by sector were in wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing and natural resources – collectively declining by over 11,000 jobs. The biggest decreases in jobs by occupational category over the same period in Surrey were in business, finance and administration (-4,500) and manufacturing and utilities – for total job loss of approximately 5,600.

Over the last 12 months, Surrey employment has grown 3.9% or 12,600 jobs, up from 1.6% and 5,061 jobs in the previous 12 months. This was driven by key service sectors and growth in construction. Perhaps due to real estate and continuing remote work, the biggest job losses in Surrey in the last 12 months have been business, building and other support services, and natural resources (-18.2% and -29.5% respectively).

Surrey's employment rate (64.6% in January 2024) is down by 1.2 percentage points since January 2022, while unemployment is up by half a percentage point for an unemployment rate of 5.1% in January 2024. Of those that are employed, 80.2% are employed full-time, while 19.8% are employed part-time. As a percentage of total employment, full-time employment in Surrey has remained steady, increasing from 79.8% in January 2022 to 80.2% in January 2024.⁷

While Surrey had higher employment growth over the last 12 months (3.7%) than Canada (1.1%) and BC (2.4%), uncertainty and factors such as the continuing inflation concerns related to wages, interest rates, housing costs and availability, talent shortages, supply chain issues, government regulation (particularly related to resource sectors) and other trends continue to combine to prevent a more robust recovery since 2022. These will need to continue to be addressed by governments, sectors, communities and businesses working together in order for Surrey, the Lower Mainland and BC to realize more robust, consistent economic growth.

So far, the winter 2023/24 virus season has showed no significant signs of workforce or labour market disruption. Past experiences and learnings have created stronger resilience among the Surrey workforce and employers.

⁷Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0445-01: Labour force characteristics, selected census subdivisions, three-month moving averages, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality.

Sources:⁸

Statistics Canada. [Table 14-10-0379-01 Employment by industry, three-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality \(x 1,000\)](#)

Statistics Canada. [Table 14-10-0381-01 Employment by occupation, three-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality \(x 1,000\)](#)

More Information:

Source: BC Stats – Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, November 2023. Released, February 9, 2024.

Retrieved from https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/employment-labour-market/lfs_data_tables.pdf

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⁸ Methodology: Census Profile data, using 2021 Census data, for both Surrey (Census Subdivision) and Vancouver (Census Metropolitan Area). The Census Profile for each geographic area, provides a count of the population for the labour force aged 15 years and over, by occupation (broad category) and by industry sectors. Then we take that data and calculate the percentage of the total Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area that Surrey (as Census subdivision) accounted for. In some cases, the Labour Force Survey data combines multiple industries when providing employment data (for example, counts for the Wholesale Trade industry and the Retail Trade industry in the Census Profile are separate, but employment is reported for "Wholesale and Retail Trade". In those cases, we calculate the count for the industries that were combined by geography and then compare the two to get the proportion for Surrey of the total of Vancouver.

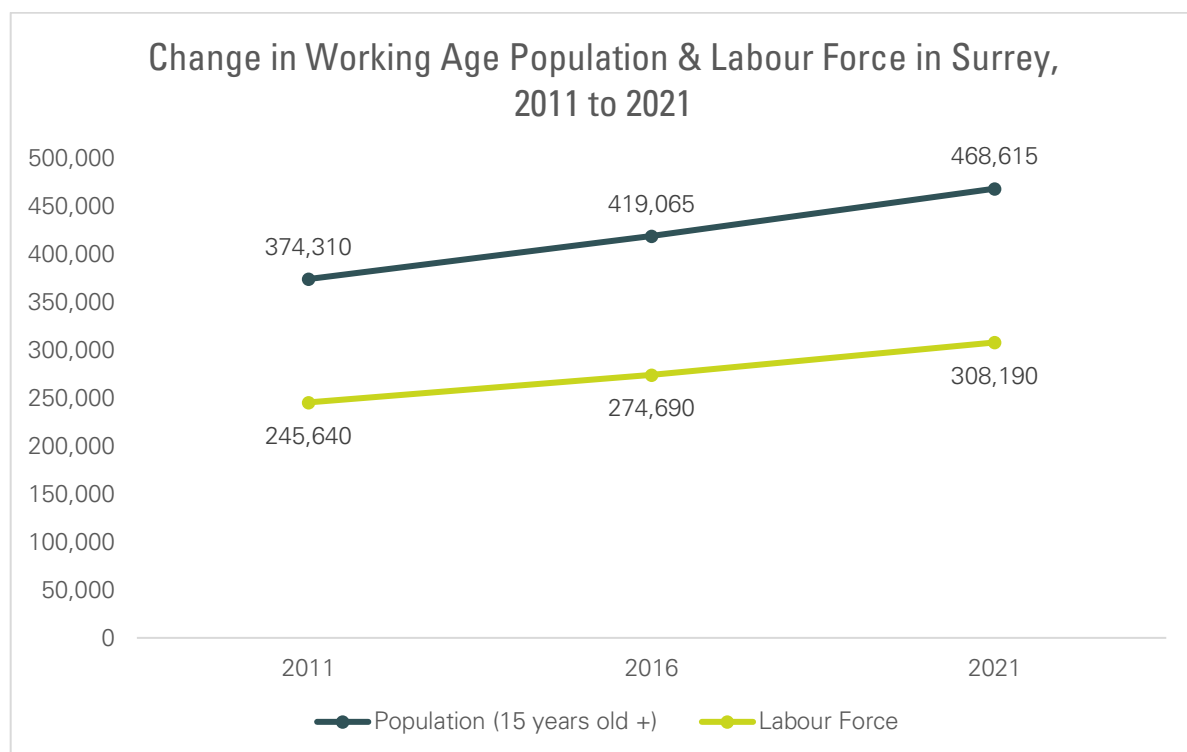
Surrey Labour Force Changes – 2011 to January 2024

This is the first of special profiles on labour market topics in Surrey to be published along with the regular Labour Force Survey results in Surrey. This one focuses on key population, labour force, employment and unemployment metrics for Surrey and changes in them since 2011.

	2011	2016	2021	January 2024*	Change 2016 to 2024	
Population (15+ years old)	374,310	419,065	468,615	433,900	14,835	4.0%
Labour Force	245,640	274,690	308,190	293,200	18,510	7.5%
Employment	226,150	256,875	281,715	277,000	20,125	8.9%
Unemployment	19,490	17,815	26,470	16,100	-1,715	-8.8%
Unemployment Rate	7.9%	6.5%	8.6%	5.5%	-1.00%	
Participation Rate	65.6%	65.5%	65.8%	67.6%	2.10%	
Employment Rate	60.4%	61.3%	60.1%	63.8%	2.50%	

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0445-01 Labour force characteristics, selected census subdivisions, three-month moving averages, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality; Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population; Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population; Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-012-X2011055.

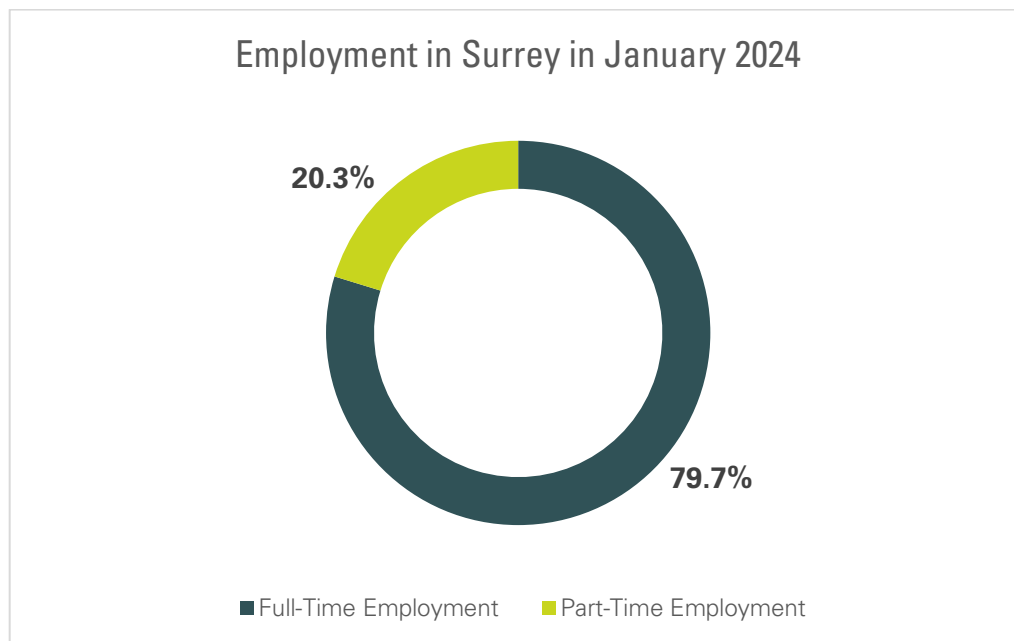
In January 2024, the number of persons of working age (15 years old and over) is estimated to be 433,900 and growing – which is a 4% increase since 2016. The labour force, which Statistics Canada defines as the ‘number of civilian, non-institutionalized persons 15 years of age and over who, during the reference [period], were employed or unemployed’, however, has increased at almost twice the rate of working age population, when compared to 2016. Though overall, Surrey’s population is expected to significantly grow by the end of the decade, according to Statistics Canada estimates, the working age population and labour force numbers have dipped slightly since 2021 but are on a growth trajectory.



The participation rate (defined as 'the number of labour force participants expressed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over') is the highest in January 2024, at 67.6% when compared to Surrey City Census data for 2011, 2016 and 2021. Similarly, the employment rate ('the number of persons employed expressed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over') is also the highest in January 2024 when compared to Census data from 2011, 2016 and 2021 at 63.8%. The unemployment rate in January 2024 was estimated by Statistics Canada at 5.5%, which is 3.1% lower than the 2021 Census.

Of those that are employed, 79.7% are employed full-time (which is defined by Statistics Canada as 'employment consisting of persons who usually work 30 hours or more per week at their main or only job'), while 20.3% are employed part-time ('employment consists of persons who usually work less than 30 hours per week at their main or only job'). Full-time employment is up from the 77.2% reported in the 2021 Census.

Further, the 2021 Census reported that 84.7% of workers are employees, while 15.3% are self-employed.



The above labour market metrics for Surrey, despite small dips in growth, show a robust labour market and growth in population, labour force and employment. Also, full-time employment – an indicator of a solid economy – is continuing to grow in Surrey.