

Nunavik Employment Profile and Trends at a Glance

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1. INTRODUCTION

This analysis aims to present the employment situation in Nunavik using general labour market indicators and to characterize the different segments of the labour force in this region. More specifically, our analysis seeks to highlight the distinctive employment characteristics of Nunavik by comparing its situation with that of Quebec as a whole, and to describe the main contrasts between the two in terms of the gender, age and identity of Nunavik’s labour force. The data presented here come from the Canadian census, the Kativik Regional Government and Quebec’s Ministry of Education. This analysis summarizes the principal findings of a larger report entitled *Employment in Nunavik: Profile and Trends*. That source document provides the full set of analyses and a discussion of all the methodological considerations.^[2]

2. CONTRASTS WITH THE SITUATION IN QUEBEC

In Nunavik, the level of employment within the general population is lower than that in the province as a whole. According to the most recent data, the employment rate of the Aboriginal population in Nunavik is^[3] 11.6 percentage points lower than that of Quebec, while the unemployment rate is 2.5 times higher.

Table 1

Selected indicators, Aboriginal population of Nunavik and total population of Quebec, 2016

Indicators	Nunavik	Quebec
	%	
Population without degree ¹	58.7	13.3
High school graduation rate ²	18.1	81.8
Employment rate ¹	63.9	75.5
Unemployment rate ¹	15.7	6.2
Youth unemployment rate ³	22.1	9.1
Elder employment rate ⁴	24.1	10.7

¹Population aged 25 to 64

²2011 cohort followed over seven years (2017-2018)

³Youth are defined here as the population aged 15 to 34

⁴Elders are defined here as the population aged 65 years and over

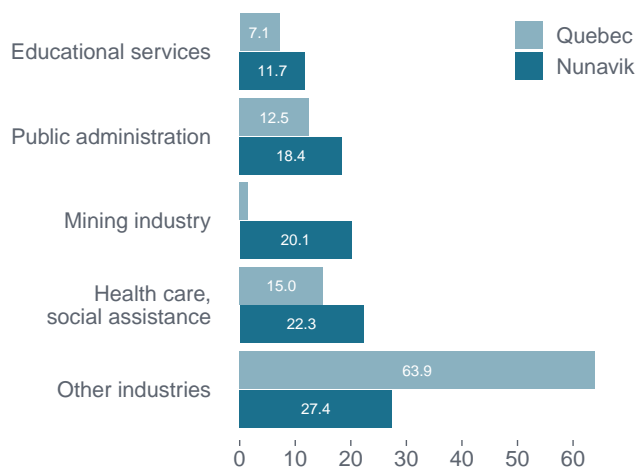
As in Quebec, the unemployment rate is higher among young people; however, the unemployment rate among 15-34-year-olds in Nunavik is 2.4 times higher than the rate observed in the province. Another notable age-related

difference is that Nunavik’s elders are proportionally 2.3 times more likely to be employed than their counterparts in Quebec.^[4]

There are also significant differences between Nunavik and Quebec in terms of formal education. According to the latest data, while more than 80% of students in Quebec graduate from high school, less than one student in five does so in Nunavik. In all, 58.7% of the people in Nunavik have no degree, a proportion 4.4 times higher than in the province as a whole.^[5]

Figure 1

Share of workers by activity sector, Nunavik and Quebec total population, 2016 (%)



A comparison of the distribution of workers by economic sector suggests that economic activity is less diversified in Nunavik than in Quebec. In Nunavik, if we calculate the proportion of jobs related to health, social services, public administration and education compared to the total number of jobs held, we see that more than half of the workers are employed in activities tied to public services, compared to just over a third of the workers in Quebec. On the other hand, the share of jobs in the mining industry in Nunavik is proportionally ten times greater than in Quebec as a whole.

3. VARIATIONS BY GENDER AND IDENTITY

In terms of gender, Aboriginal women in Nunavik are slightly more likely than men to have a post-secondary

degree. The employment rate for women is also slightly higher than it is for men, whereas the unemployment rate for men is higher than for women.

Table 2

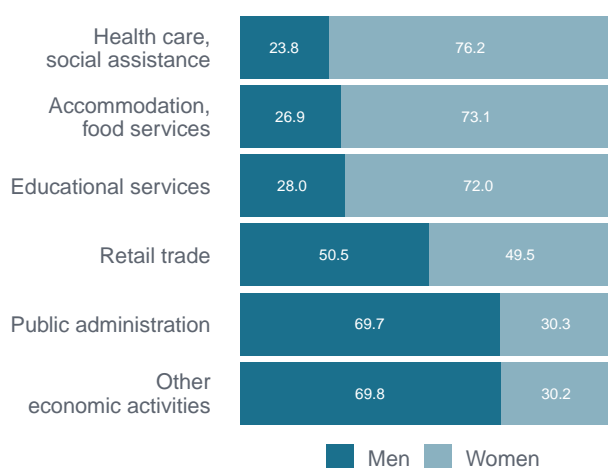
Selected indicators broken down by gender and identity, population aged 25 to 64, Nunavik, 2016

Indicators	Aboriginal			Non-Aboriginal
	Total	Female	Male	Total
	%			%
Employment rate	63.9	65.9	62.0	94.6
Unemployment rate	15.7	12.7	18.7	2.2
No degree	58.6	59.1	58.0	3.2
College or university	7.9	11.1	4.6	75.7

With the exception of retail sales, which employs as many women as men, there are also some asymmetries according to gender in the distribution of workers in the different sectors of economic activity. Women are over-represented in the areas of health and education, as well as in accommodation and food services; on the other hand, men are over-represented in jobs related to public administration and the other areas of economic activity generally.

Figure 2

Workers by economic sector and gender, Aboriginal population of Nunavik, 2016

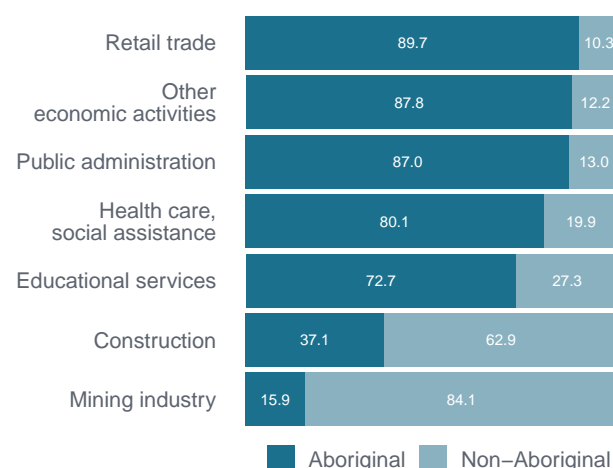


There is an important gap between Nunavik's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population in terms of education and training: nearly three-quarters of the non-Aboriginal population have a post-secondary degree and almost all the people in this group are employed.

Non-Aboriginals represent a little under one tenth of Nunavik's total population, and so non-Aboriginal workers are in the minority in most of the different sectors of economic activity. In certain areas, however, they are over-represented, including education, construction and mining-related activities.^[6]

Figure 3

Workers by economic sector and identity, Nunavik, 2016



4. TRENDS IN EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

While there was a considerable difference between the level of education in Nunavik and that of Quebec in 2016, formal education has nevertheless progressed in the region over the last two decades. From 1996 to 2016, the proportion of Nunavik's Aboriginal population without a degree decreased by 12 percentage points. Unemployment in Nunavik did not follow the same downward trend over this same period as it did in Quebec as a whole, although there was an increase in the employment rate in Nunavik from 1996 to 2016.

In the mining sector, while the number of Aboriginal employees increased, the gap between the number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees has remained generally constant.

5. DISCUSSION

By contrasting the employment situation in Nunavik with that of Quebec as a whole, this comparative analysis has made it possible to highlight certain distinctive features of the region. That said, comparing Nunavik with Quebec through the use of composite indicators such as the employment or unemployment rate has certain limitations.

Figure 4

Highest educational attainment, Aboriginal population of Nunavik aged 15 years and over, 1996-2016

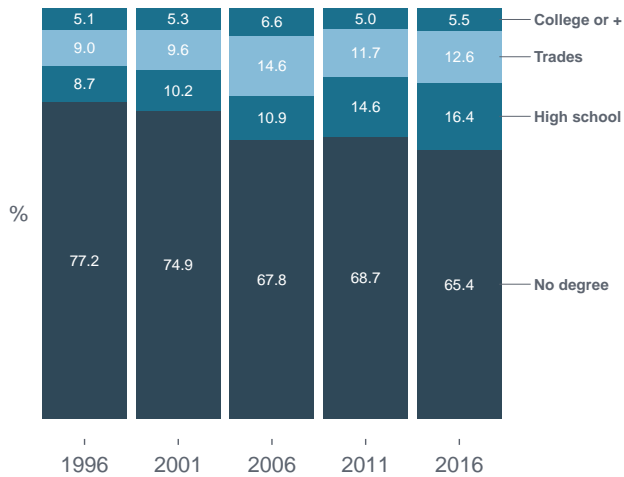
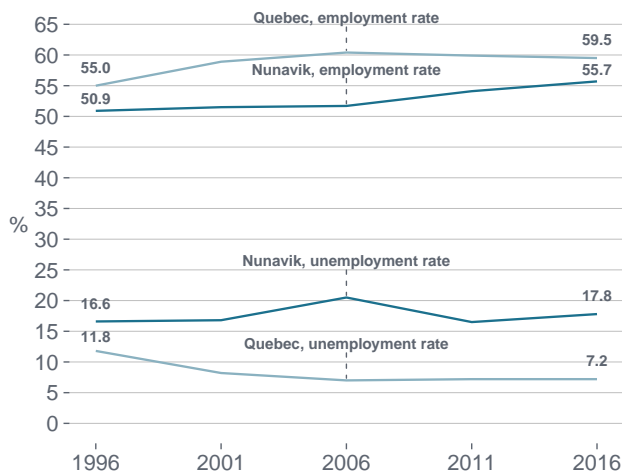


Figure 5

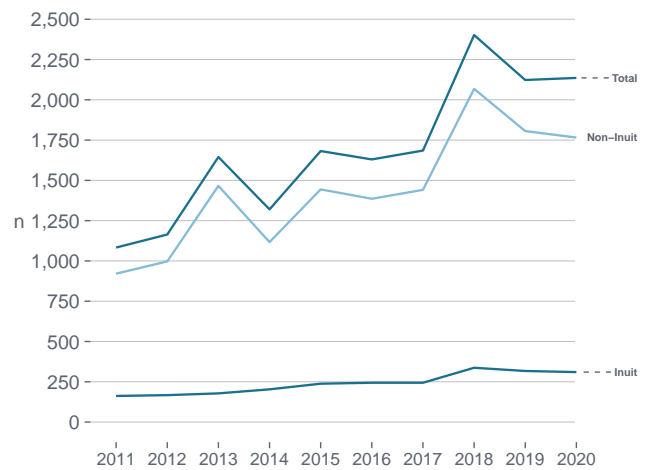
Employment and unemployment rate, Aboriginal population of Nunavik and Quebec, population aged 15 years and over, 1996-2016



Certain socio-demographic characteristics of Nunavik's population may help to explain the differences observed with the province as a whole. The high birth rate and the significant demographic weight of younger people result in a level of demographic dependency that is higher in Nunavik than in Quebec: the dependency ratio is 65% in Nunavik compared to 50% for Quebec as a whole.^[7] This means that for every 100 people of working age among Nunavik's population, there are 65 people who are "dependents", i.e. who are either not or no longer of working age. This demographic structure can have an

Figure 6

Workers by identity, Nunavik mining sites workforce, 2011-2020



impact on the level of employment of the population. Large households, particularly those with many young children, can affect the level of employment in the region, seeing that the economic indicators exclude various forms of unpaid work. As a result, these measures do not take into account the domestic work or the traditional production activities that many Nunavimmiut engage in.^[8] The high proportion of young adults in the population also has an impact on these measures, since their integration into the workforce is generally more precarious than the rest of the labour force.^[9]

Moreover, the analyses presented here reveal a situation in Nunavik that may stem, at least in part, from other factors of a more structural nature than the demographics alone. The distribution of workers among the different sectors of activity shows that economic activity is less diversified in Nunavik than elsewhere in Quebec, with public administration, public services and the mining sector accounting for the majority of the region's economic activity.^[10] Thus, communities in Nunavik do not show the same diversity of economic activity, nor do they offer the same range of job opportunities that can be found in urban centres in the south. Indeed, a substantial proportion of jobs in Nunavik are found on mining sites outside the region's communities. As the latest cycle of the Aboriginal Peoples Survey shows, Nunavimmiut frequently point to the shortage of jobs as a significant barrier to employment.^[8] The high level of unemployment among the Aboriginals of Nunavik contrasts sharply with the low level of unemployment among the Aboriginals of the region. This contrast is also indicative of another structural dimension to the situation observed: many of the positions

available in the mining sector and the various public services require post-secondary training; the mismatch between the available positions and the general level of formal education of the local population may help to explain the presence of a highly qualified non-Aboriginal population that is almost fully employed.

The trends presented in this analysis also provide evidence of changes, most notably a decrease in the number of people without a degree and an increase in access to the labour market. But discrepancies between Nunavik and the rest of the province continue to exist, in addition to those between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. Challenges remain in ensuring that Nunavimmiut have access to the resources they require in order to develop a greater *capacity*^[11] to act according to their values and feel freer in choosing their own way of living. But in a context where access to an adequate standard of living depends largely on access to employment and sufficient income, access to formal education is a key issue. In the context of Nunavik, several barriers to education have been documented, such as the need to create a culturally appropriate learning space,^[12] the high turnover rates of teachers from outside the region, inappropriate teaching methods for second language learners,^[13] the traumas that can be traced to colonialism, the federal day schools^[14] and the residential schools,^[15] and other obstacles that result from the limited availability of post-secondary education within the region.^[16]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- [1] Nunivaat analyst, research professional, Canada Research Chair on Comparative Aboriginal Condition, and corresponding author.
Email: sebastien.levesque.11@ulaval.ca.
- [2] Sébastien Lévesque (under the direction of Gérard Duhaime). 2021. *Employment in Nunavik: Profile and Trends*. Canada Research Chair on Comparative Aboriginal Conditions, Quebec. 77 p. Available on "nunivaat.org/research/publications/".
- [3] In this analysis, unless otherwise stated, the population of Nunavik refers to the region's Aboriginal population.
- [4] Sébastien Lévesque and Gérard Duhaime. 2020. *Eldesters of Nunavik – A Snapshot of the Socio-Economic Situation*. Canada Research Chair on Comparative Aboriginal Conditions, Quebec. 4 p. Available on "nunivaat.org/research/publications/".
- [5] Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur. 2019. *Diplomation et qualification par commission scolaire au secondaire, édition 2019*. Gouvernement du Québec, Quebec. 27 p.
- [6] Since the Canadian census surveys residents of Canada at their primary address, these data underestimate the population of Nunavik that comes from outside the region. The census data were aggregated with data from the Kativik Regional Government in order to get a more accurate idea of the size of the workforce employed on mining sites. But the number of non-Aboriginal workers is probably underestimated in other sectors. See *Employment in Nunavik: Profile and Trends* for more information.
- [7] The dependency ratio is the ratio between the number of dependents (persons aged under 15 or over 64) and the working-age population (persons between 15 and 64). The data are presented as the proportion of dependents per 100 people of working age. The World Bank. 2021. *Metadata Glossary, Age Dependency Ratio*. <https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/gender-statistics/series/SP.POP.DPND>.
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- [11] Capacity not understood as an individual's abilities or competence, but in the broader sense that Sen confers on the term: in short, the capacity to choose and to act; the freedom of the individual to lead the kind of life he or she desires, and this, in spite of contingent circumstances, whether these be personal, social, environmental or other. Amartya K. Sen. 1997. From Income Inequality to Economic Inequality. *Southern Economic Journal*, 64(2):384–401.
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- [13] Tatiana Garakani. 2016. The Education of Inuit Youth in Nunavik: Teachers' and Students' Perspectives. *Études inuit. Inuit studies*, 40(2):25–46.
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in Nunavik. *Journal of Comparative Social Work*, 7(1):18–35.

- [16] Marise Lachapelle (under the direction of Frédéric Laugrand). 2017. *La négociation d'un parcours d'intégration : expériences postsecondaires d'Inuit du Nunavik*. PhD Thesis, Université Laval, Québec. 356 p.

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