1. Objective and Methodological Approach

The aim of this analysis is to outline the trends in the demographic evolution of the population of Nunavik over the last ten years and to compare these trends with those observed in Quebec as a whole. The main sources used for this analysis are the Statistics Canada censuses of 2006 and 2016, supplemented by other sources of demographic data, notably the Institut de la statistique du Québec.

2. Population Growth Continues

Between 2006 and 2016, the population of Nunavik grew by 2,385, an increase of 22.1% (Table 1). The main reason for this increase is in all likelihood the region’s high birth rate, which, in 2016, was 25.4 live births per 1,000 people. In comparison, the birth rate in the province of Quebec is 10.4, and population growth between 2006 and 2016 was 8.2%. Thus, if Quebec’s population had increased at the same rate as Nunavik’s over the last ten years, the province’s population would already have passed the 9 million mark. This trend among the Nunavik Inuit is also observed in other groups of indigenous people in Canada: taken together, indigenous peoples constitute the segment of the Canadian population with the highest population growth [1].

3. A Young Population

This marked difference between the birth rates in Nunavik and in Quebec as a whole results in very different population structures. Quebec’s population structure adheres to the trend observed in many so-called “western” countries: youth make up a small proportion of the population, while older people tend to occupy an increasing proportion (Figure 1). Thus, Quebec’s age pyramid looks something like a barrel; and if the aging of the population continues, it will gradually assume the form of an inverted pear under the combined effect of the shrinking proportion of young people and the increasing proportion of the elderly [2]. In Quebec, young people under the age of 15 accounted for 16% of the population in 2016, while people aged 60 and over accounted for 25% of the population. The population structure of Nunavik is altogether different; it more closely resembles that of certain “southern countries” than that of Quebec (Figure 2). The proportion of young people is much greater: one third of the population of Nunavik is under 15 years of age, while those aged 60 and over account for only 6% of the total population. Thus, owing to this youthful population and the low demographic weight of the elderly, Nunavik’s age pyramid looks more like a real pyramid.

4. Growing Villages

The population of every village in Nunavik increased between 2006 and 2016 (Table 1). The largest growth was observed in Tasiujaq (49%), followed by Kuujjuaq (29%), while the lowest growth was in Umiujaq (12.8%). The demographic data by village also show that Nunavik’s population tends to be concentrated: the five most populous villages account for two-thirds of the region’s entire population.

5. Fluctuations in the Female Population

The proportion of women in Nunavik in 2016 (49.3%) was lower than in Quebec as a whole (50.8%) (Table 1). The situation also varies from community to community:...
Umiajuk and the two most populous communities, Pu-
vimituq and Kuujjuarapik, all have a higher proportion of
women than in Quebec. But all the other communities
have a lower proportion of women than Quebec, and
the gap is widening in Aupaluk, Kangirsuk, Kuujjuarapik
and Akulivik. What’s more, the proportion of women
seems to have evolved differently from one community to
another between 2006 and 2016: it increased in the four
most populous communities but generally declined in the
smaller communities.

The differences observed in the proportion of women
between Quebec and the Nunavik communities may be
explained by several factors. One could be the difference
in life expectancy, which is higher in Quebec (81.7 years)
than in Nunavik (66.8 years) [3]–[5]. As women tend
to live longer than men, they tend to be slightly over-
represented in populations with higher life expectancy [6].
A second factor may be derive from the fact that Nunavik’s
population is young. In general, there are slightly more
boys at birth than girls, which may slightly affect the
ratio of women in Nunavik communities [7]. A third
factor could be linked to the mobility of women: female
migration patterns have been observed in some circum-
polar Arctic communities [8]–[10]. These movements are
said to be caused by several factors, but are generally
motivated by the search for better living conditions. This
may explain why the two largest communities are the
ones where the proportion of women increased the most
between 2006 and 2016: these communities also have the
lowest unemployment rates in the region [11].

6. A POPULATION IN DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION

The evolution of the population of Nunavik over the
last 10 years continues to be characterized by significant
growth compared to that of Quebec as a whole, but the
long-term trend suggests that Nunavik’s population growth
is gradually slowing down: the birth rate was 26.0 in
2006, whereas it was 25.4 in 2016 [12]. As a result,
Nunavik’s population is slowly aging, with the median
age rising from 21.8 in 2006 to 23.5 in 2016. The same
transition can also be observed in the distribution of the
population by age group: between 2006 and 2016, the
proportion of young people under 15 decreased slightly,
while the weight of other age groups increased slightly.
These observations suggest that the population of Nunavik
is gradually entering a new phase in the demographic
transition process: while the population continues to grow
under the combined effect of a high birth rate and low
mortality, that growth is slowly decreasing owing to a
decline in the birth rate [2].

NOTES AND REFERENCES

results from the 2016 Census. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/
daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm.
devie à la naissance et à 65 ans selon le sexe, Québec,
population-demographie/deces-mortalite/4p1.htm.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aupaluk</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasuujak</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaajaq</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivujivik</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umiajuk</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangirsuk</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akulivik</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuujjuarapik</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangiqsujuaq</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangiqsualujuq</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salluit</td>
<td>1,245</td>
<td>1,480</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iruujuk</td>
<td>1,435</td>
<td>1,755</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puvimituq</td>
<td>1,460</td>
<td>1,780</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuujjuarapik</td>
<td>2,135</td>
<td>2,755</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Nunavik     | 10,795              | 13,180              | 21.9%             |

Nunavik

10,795
13,180
0.1

Figure 2

Distribution of the population by five-year age groups,
Nunavik, 2016 (in hundreds)

[5] The estimate of life expectancy provided for Québec is for 2010-2012, while the estimate for Nunavik is for 2009-2013.


[11] Other factors may help explain the observed differences in the proportion of women; for smaller communities, in particular, the random rounding practiced by Statistics Canada in conformity with its privacy policy may have a greater impact on estimates.


Nunivaat Analytics is a series prepared for Nunivaat, the Statistics Program of Nunavik. Under the responsibility of Université Laval, the Nunivaat Program is sponsored by the Kativik Regional Government.