The Conference Board of Canada
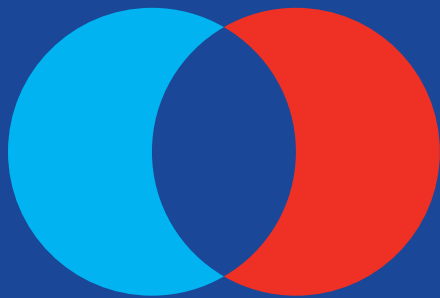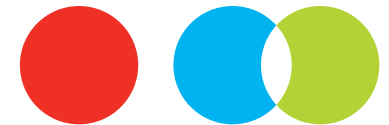
N.W.T. Labour Market Information Resource Module 2

Labour Market Overview

Contents

Key Findings

- This module reviews key characteristics of the current territorial labour force, using data that have become available since our 2016 Labour Market Information Resource. It profiles demographic forces, occupational structure, and skill levels by key factors, such as gender and group identity.

- An important facet of the territory's demographic profile is the age distribution of its Indigenous and non-Indigenous subpopulations—with the former being considerably younger than the latter.

- Compared to the overall Canadian population, the N.W.T. has a higher proportion of its employed workforce in skilled occupations requiring a post-secondary education or apprenticeship. Our analysis also gathers evidence of skills gaps and labour market segmentation between different social groups in the Northwest Territories.

- In terms of total employment, the services-producing sectors provided, on average, 84 per cent of jobs in the territory from 2015 to 2019. The top employers were public administration, trade, and healthcare and social assistance.

Looking back over five years of economic data collected by Statistics Canada, we see that, on average, the largest contributors to the N.W.T.'s real annual GDP were diamond mining (30.7 per cent), followed by public administration (all governments) at 15.3 per cent.[1]

Of these two drivers of the N.W.T.'s real GDP from 2015 to 2019, diamond mining achieved a peak of 42.1 per cent midway in 2017 and closed 2019 at 26.7 per cent, while public administration, which started at 15 per cent in 2015, peaked at 16.7 per cent in 2019.[2]

The profile of total employment, based on annual data from the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, can be disaggregated down to the two-digit level of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Here we find that oil and gas and mining, combined with fishing and forestry, provided, on average, 7.0 per cent of total employment per year during the five-year period. The top three average annual contributors to total employment in the N.W.T. from 2015 to 2019 were:

- public administration—all government levels—at 23 per cent;

- trade—including wholesale and retail—at 11 per cent;

- health care and social assistance at 11 per cent.[3]

The following sections examine key characteristics of the current territorial labour force using data that have become available since our previous Labour Market Information Resource.[4] They profile demographic forces, occupational structure, and skill levels by key factors, such as gender and Indigenous identity. Our review gathers evidence of skills gaps and labour market segmentation between different social groups in the Northwest Territories. The patterns of labour market segmentation between men and women in the N.W.T. resembles the occupational structure of the general Canadian population; yet more women in the N.W.T. are employed outside of sales and services, in occupations such as public administration, social assistance, and education. This is likely due to the important employment role played by the GNWT (as analyzed in Module 3).

1 Statistics Canada, "Table 36-10-0402-01 Gross Domestic Product."
2 Ibid.
3 Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics, "Table 102: Employment by Industry."
4 Conference Board of Canada, The, "Labour Market Information Resource."

Demographic Profile of the Labour Force

Our demographic profile draws on population data from the 2019 N.W.T. Community Survey. The Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics has conducted a community survey every five years since 1981. The survey is designed to provide community-level information on a variety of topics, including housing conditions, employment, education, language, and traditional activities. Our profile also draws on data from Statistics Canada, including the 2016 Census and the recurring Labour Force Surveys.

As of July 1, 2020, Statistics Canada estimated N.W.T.'s total population at 45,161. Just over 47 per cent (21,408) of the estimated population was Indigenous. By comparison, for July 1, 2015, the total population estimate was 44,237, of whom 50 per cent were Indigenous. Up until 2019, the balance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous remained approximately 50 per cent, after which it appears to have tipped toward a slightly larger non-Indigenous population.[5] Whether this reflects an emerging trend or not remains to be seen.

Information about N.W.T.'s non-Indigenous subpopulations comes solely from the 2016 Census. These subpopulations are primarily of European descent; however, about 9.6 per cent of the Census population enumerated in 2016 was a visible minority (3,050 in total).[6] The Census also shows that over 81 per cent of N.W.T.'s visible minority population is concentrated in the city of Yellowknife. As of the 2016 Census, 16.7 per cent of Yellowknife's total population had visible minority status.[7]

An important facet of the territory's demographic profile is the age distribution of its Indigenous and non-Indigenous subpopulations. The age distribution tells us what proportions among these two subpopulations are of working-age (15 years and older) or belong to cohorts that are more likely to be out of the labour force (e.g., those under 15 and those 65 and over).

Based on median age, Canada's general population is older than that of the Northwest Territories. The median age for the N.W.T. in 2020 was 35.5, whereas for Canada, the median age was 40.9.[8]

Among the subpopulations identified in this analysis, the most recent breakdown by age is available from the 2016 Census. While the non-Indigenous population's median age (at 36.8) falls within a few years of the Canadian median, the N.W.T.'s Inuit population, which constitutes the youngest group, falls well below that, with a median age of 27.2.[9]

2016 Census data indicate that the Indigenous population is considerably younger than the non-Indigenous population, with a high proportion of people under the age of 24. In fact, we find that over 40 per cent of the Indigenous population is under the age of 24. This will be significant when we discuss education and skills development outcomes for youth in Module 4.

5   Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics, "Community Population by Ethnicity."
6   Statistics Canada, "Census Profile - Age, Sex, Type of Dwelling."
7   Ibid.

8   Statistics Canada, "Population Estimates on July 1st."
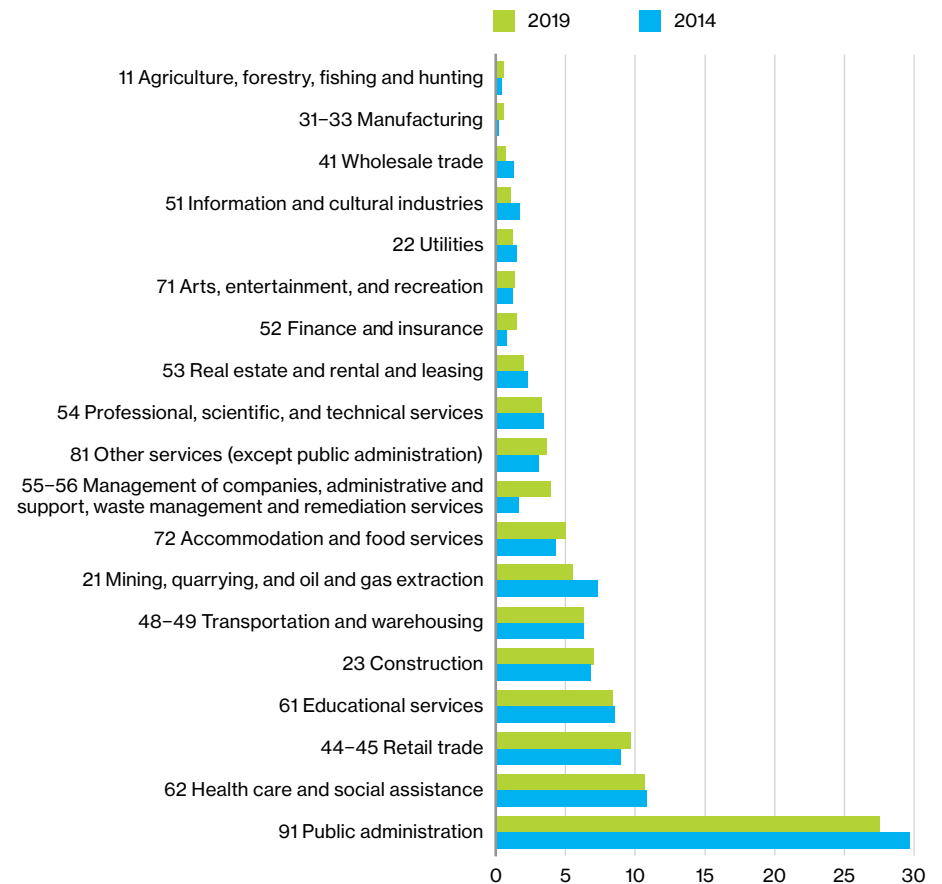9   Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal Population Profile, 2016 Census."

Occupational Structure by Gender and Indigenous Identity

To understand the breakdown of territorial employment by occupation, we rely on new data from the 2019 N.W.T. Community Survey and the 2016 Census, as well as data from our previous Labour Market Information Resource.[10] These datasets profile the industries in which people are working, as well as the kinds of jobs they are doing.

A comparison of territorial labour market information from 2014 and 2019, using the NAICS, shows that employment by industry has not changed dramatically over the past few years. (See Chart 1, as well as Table 1(2) and Chart 1(2) in the data download.)

With two exceptions (55-56—Management of companies, administrative and support, waste management and remediation services; and 91—Public administration), the proportion of employment by category has remained relatively constant, with changes amounting to just over 2.0 per cent of total employment. This suggests that the distribution of employment by industry is relatively constant within the territory. As suggested by our analysis, the top employing industries are "91—Public administration," "62—Health care and social assistance," "44–45—Retail trade," and "61—Educational services."[11]

Chart 1
Northwest Territories' Labour Force, by NAICS
(per cent of total employment)

Legend: 2019, 2014

Categories (top to bottom):
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting
31–33 Manufacturing
41 Wholesale trade
51 Information and cultural industries
22 Utilities
71 Arts, entertainment, and recreation
52 Finance and insurance
53 Real estate and rental and leasing
54 Professional, scientific, and technical services
81 Other services (except public administration)
55–56 Management of companies, administrative and support, waste management and remediation services
72 Accommodation and food services
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction
48–49 Transportation and warehousing
23 Construction
61 Educational services
44–45 Retail trade
62 Health care and social assistance
91 Public administration

X-axis: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30

Note: The corresponding NOCS codes are included for each category.
Sources: N.W.T. Community Survey; The Conference Board of Canada.

10 Conference Board of Canada, The, "Labour Market Information Resource."
11 "NAICS 61 – Educational services" does not include child daycare services.

We further our examination of occupations in the territory using information from the 2014 and 2019 N.W.T. Community Surveys coded by the National Occupational Classification (NOC) system. The NOC aggregates occupational data into four skill levels. The most general level consists of 10 occupational categories (from 0 to 9), which altogether contain 40 major groups that are further subdivided into 140 minor groups. The minor groups then include 500 occupational unit groups. According to Statistics Canada, "Occupational unit groups are formed on the basis of the education, training, or skill level required to enter the job, as well as the kind of work performed, as determined by the tasks, duties, and responsibilities of the occupation."[12]

A comparison of employment by the NOC system in 2014 and 2019 is provided in Chart 2. (See also Table 2(2) and Chart 2(2) in the data download.) Occupational categories are provided at the highest (i.e., one-digit level), and therefore show the overarching themes of each employment category.

As shown, there has been little change in the composition of employment over the period—in fact, almost all the categories show less than a 2.0 per cent change in the proportion of total employment. The exceptions include the "0—Management" occupations, which had a 3.5 per cent decrease, and the "1—Business, finance, and administration" occupations, which had a 2.5 per cent decrease in the proportion of total employment between 2014 and 2019, while the "7—Trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupations" had a 2.1 per cent increase over that period.

This change is quite small, indicating, once again, that there has not been much movement in the proportion of employment by occupational category in the last few years. What changes there have been might also be accounted for by differences in sampling and methodology, but this cannot be said concretely without a more in-depth comparison of the two surveys.

Chart 2
Northwest Territories' Labour Force, by NOCS
(per cent of total employment)
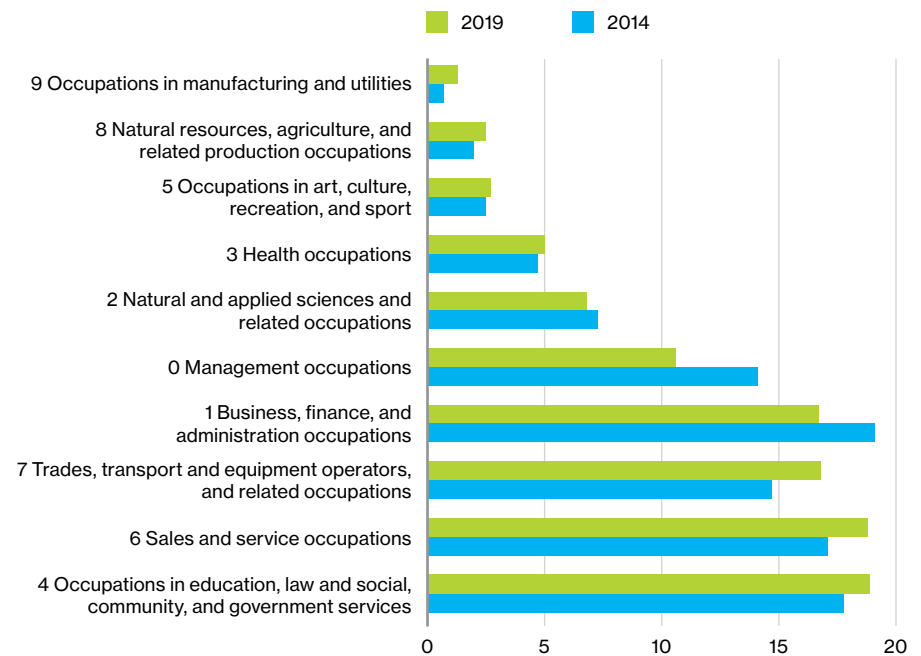
Note: The corresponding NOC codes are included for each category.
Sources: N.W.T. Community Survey; The Conference Board of Canada.

12 Statistics Canada, *Portrait of Canada's Labour Force*, 16.

Compared to the overall Canadian population, the Northwest Territories has a higher proportion of its employed workforce in skilled occupations (skill level A and skill level B).
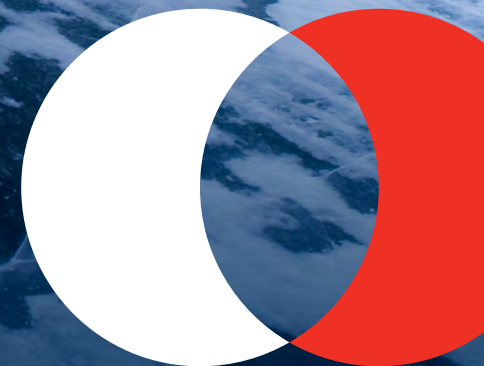
Labour Market Segmentation by Gender

An analysis of data from the 2014 and 2019 N.W.T. Community Survey presents a picture similar to the distribution of employees by industry. In 2019, the territorial government ranked first among all sectors in terms of its share of total employment, with 15.4 per cent. For Canada as a whole, all public administration ranked eighth, while the health care and social assistance sector ranked first, with 11.7 per cent in 2016. Health care and social assistance ranked second in the N.W.T. in 2019, with 10.2 per cent of the employed population, followed closely by retail trade, with 8.5 per cent. In Canada, retail trade ranked second, with 11.6 per cent, while manufacturing ranked third, at 8.7 per cent. (See Table 3(2) in the data download.) In the territory, manufacturing employed only 0.6 per cent of the workforce in 2019. (See Table 1(2) in the data download.)

The 2014 and 2019 N.W.T. Community Survey data also provide some evidence of labour market segmentation by gender, particularly after we break down public administration to the two- and three-digit NAICS levels. (See Table 4(2) in the data download.) The top employer for males and females in both 2014 and 2019 in N.W.T. was the territorial government.[13]

In 2014, the second and third top employers for females in the N.W.T. were health care and social assistance (18.6 per cent) and educational services (12.7 per cent). In contrast, the second and third top employers for males in the N.W.T. were construction (11.9 per cent) and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (11.6 per cent). The labour market segmentation pattern in 2019 for females in the N.W.T. was similar to 2014. The second top employer for females was health care and social assistance (17.2 per cent), while the third top employer was educational services (12.5 per cent). In contrast, there was some change in the labour market segmentation for males between 2014 and 2019. In 2019, construction (11.4 per cent) remained the second top employer, but this time retail trade was the third top employer (10.3 per cent). Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction moved down to the fifth spot (8.7 per cent) in 2019.

13   A further breakdown of the territorial government is provided in Module 3.

In 2019, health care and social assistance employed approximately 3.5 females for every male (2,128:597), while the educational services sector employed just under three females for every male (1,546:595) and finance and insurance employed over three females for every male (290:90). Furthermore, in the last few years there has been a shift in occupations, such that females now fill a lower proportion of health care and social assistance jobs than in 2014. At the same time, there has been an increase in female employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector. In 2014, there were roughly 1.5 males employed for every female in arts, entertainment, and recreation (148:105). This switched in 2019 when roughly two females were employed for every male in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector (226:129).

In 2019, gender equality was prominent in several industries: public administration; retail trade; real estate and rental and leasing; other services. Conversely, in 2019, construction employed over five males for every female (1,496:290); mining, quarrying, and oil and gas employed roughly 4.5 males for every female (1,147:247); and utilities employed just under three males for every female (224:75). Worth noting, while males still dominate the construction industry, the number of females in this industry almost doubled between 2014 and 2019. In 2014, there were nine males employed for every female in the construction industry (1,293:143).

Labour Market Segmentation by Gender and Occupational Classification

In 2019, there continued to be evidence of labour market segmentation by gender and a concentration of N.W.T. employment in services-producing sectors, such as public administration and retail. Table 5(2) in the data download provides an occupational profile of the N.W.T. workforce, as captured by the N.W.T. Community Survey in 2014 and 2019.

In 2019, females made up slightly less than half of the territory's employed labour force at 49 per cent. Among the 10 broad occupational categories, N.W.T. females aged 15 years and over were most likely to be employed in business, finance, and administration (26 per cent); education, law, and social, community, and government services (24.3 per cent); and sales and service occupations (21.4 per cent). The top three occupations for N.W.T. females remain unchanged from 2014.

This differs from the general Canadian pattern found in the 2016 Census. (See Table 6(2) in the data download.) While the top three occupations were the same, females in the Canadian population were most likely to be employed in sales and service occupations (27.7 per cent), followed by business, finance, and administration (23 per cent), and occupations in education, law, and social, community, and government services (16.8 per cent).

In 2019, N.W.T. males of the same working-age cohort were most likely to be employed in trades, transport and equipment operator, and related occupations (29.8 per cent), sales and service occupations (16.5 per cent), and occupations in education, law, and social, community, and government services (13.9 per cent). This distribution has changed little since 2014. (See Table 5(2) in the data download.)

This also differs from the general Canadian pattern found in the 2016 Census, where males were most likely to be employed in trades, transport and equipment operator, and related occupations (26.3 per cent), sales and service occupations (19.3 per cent), and management occupations (13.1 per cent). (See Table 6(2) in the data download.)

Skill Levels of Occupations in the Territory

The National Occupational Classification (NOC) system also makes it possible to sort occupations into distinct skill levels. This schema involves the following four occupational skill levels:

• Skill level A:
  – Management occupations
  – Professional occupations

• Skill level B
• Skill level C
• Skill level D

(See Appendix A for a full breakdown of the skill levels.)

Since 2014, there has been no change in the distribution of skill levels among the N.W.T.'s employed population aged 15 and over. (See Table 7(2) in the data download.) In 2019, skill level A (32.9 per cent) and skill level B (32.5 per cent) were the two most prevalent groups in the territory. Together, skill level A and skill level B accounted for nearly two-thirds of the employed population aged 15 and older. Skill level C occupations represented 23.6 per cent of workers, while skill level D occupations represented 10.9 per cent. Compared with the Canadian population, the N.W.T. has a higher proportion of its employed population in skilled occupations (skill levels A and B). (See Table 8(2) in the data download.)

In terms of labour market segmentation between territorial subpopulations, a higher proportion of non-Indigenous people (38.9 per cent) are working in skill level A occupations, compared with Indigenous people (22.4 per cent). (See Table 9(2) in the data download.) However, splitting skill level A, we see that this difference exists mainly at the professional level, where 25.6 per cent of non-Indigenous people are working in professional occupations, while only 12.4 per cent of Indigenous people are working in the same occupations. At the same time, a higher proportion of Indigenous people are working in skill level C and D occupations. Altogether, there has been little change in the labour market composition between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the N.W.T. since 2014.

There is also evidence of labour market segmentation between males and females in the 2019 N.W.T. workforce. (See Table 10(2) in the data download.) Roughly 55 per cent of managers are male, while nearly 60 per cent of skill level B employees and 54 per cent of skill level D employees are male. In contrast, women make up about 60 per cent of skill level A employees at the professional level. For skill level C occupations, there is a comparable number of males and females. This 2019 segmentation between males and females is similar to 2014.

Compared with the Canadian employed population, we see that a higher proportion of women in the N.W.T. are working in skill level A occupations. At the same time, a higher proportion of men in the N.W.T. are working in skill level B occupations. (See Table 8(2) in the data download.)

There is also evidence of labour market segmentation between sub-regions of the N.W.T.—namely, Yellowknife, regional centres, and smaller communities. (See tables 11(2), 12(2), and 13(2) in the data download.) Generally, a higher proportion of individuals are employed in skill level D occupations in the smaller communities than in the regional centres and in Yellowknife. In contrast, Yellowknife and the regional centres have a higher proportion of people who are employed in skill level A professional occupations than do the smaller communities. There is a strong correlation between education and employment, and smaller communities tend to have less access to post-secondary education, which contributes in part to the employment composition. These patterns have changed little since 2014. (See also our analysis of education attainment and related issues for small communities in Module 4.)
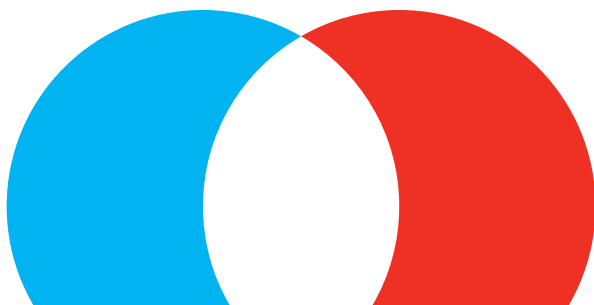
Migration

Each year, more people move out of the N.W.T. than move into the N.W.T. In 2019–20, 2,141 people left the N.W.T., while only 1,832 migrated to the N.W.T. (See tables 14(2) and 15(2) in the data download.)

Interprovincial Migration

Each year between 2008 and 2019, Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario had the highest amount of interprovincial migration with the N.W.T. In 2019–20, 70 per cent of the people who left the N.W.T. for another province or territory moved to one of these provinces—Alberta (36 per cent), British Columbia (18 per cent), or Ontario (16 per cent). Similarly, in 2019–20, 67 per cent of the people moving into the N.W.T. came from one of those same three provinces: Alberta (32 per cent), Ontario (20 per cent), or British Columbia (15 per cent).

Immigration

In 2016, the proportion of immigrants in the N.W.T. population was lower than the proportion of immigrants in Canada. Nine per cent of the N.W.T. population were immigrants, compared with 22 per cent of the Canadian population. Still, there was an increase in immigration to the N.W.T. from outside Canada between the periods of 2006–2010 and 2011–2016. Between 2011 and 2016, 815 individuals emigrated to the N.W.T. from outside Canada.

These recent immigrants represented 2.0 per cent of the total population in the N.W.T. over that period. Between 2006 and 2010, 625 people immigrated to the N.W.T., representing 1.5 per cent of the N.W.T. population.[14] (The demographics of immigrants to the N.W.T. between 2011 and 2016 can be found in Table 16(2) in the data download.)

Eighty-five per cent of the immigrants to the N.W.T. between 2011 and 2016 settled in Yellowknife. During the same period, 71 per cent of recent immigrants to the N.W.T. were between the ages of 25 and 64, with a median age of 34. At the same time, approximately 68 per cent of recent immigrants to the N.W.T. had been born in Asia. This was followed by Africa, at 14 per cent, and Europe and the Americas, both at 8.5 per cent. While recent immigrants to the N.W.T. between 2011 and 2016 speak a range of non-official languages at home, 23 per cent speak Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino).

14 Statistics Canada, "Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census - Northwest Territories."

Appendix A

Methodology

This research project applied a mixed-methods approach that includes qualitative analysis, cross-sectional data analysis, historical time series, and forecasting.

Our analysis of factors shaping the contemporary Northwest Territories labour market combined quantitative and qualitative research activities. These activities included a collaboration with the Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics and engagement with Education, Culture, and Employment and other Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) stakeholders to access relevant internal reports and administrative data. Specific research activities included:

• A review of academic and grey literature (public policy, industry, etc.) on key labour market issues in the territory and Northern economies. The review included over 400 documents from academic, public (federal, territorial, and Indigenous governments), and private sector sources.

• A review of data sources, including databases maintained by Statistics Canada and relevant federal and territorial government departments.

– An exploratory analysis of data sets from Statistics Canada, including custom data from the National Household Survey, Census, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Labour Force Survey, and Canadian Business Patterns.

– An exploratory analysis of custom data sets from the Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics (linked to the N.W.T. Community Survey), as well as program data from ECE.

The Conference Board of Canada's Territorial Forecasting Model (TFM) was used to produce three sets of economic forecasts up to the year 2040. The model relies on a core set of consistent assumptions formed from our global, Canadian, and provincial forecasts, in addition to ongoing monitoring of international, national, and territorial events. Specific territorial forecasting assumptions were then developed through engagement with the GNWT, industry experts, and through research of publicly available information on the status of project plans and capital investments in the territory. The forecasts were completed on June 15, 2021.

Definitions

National Occupational Classification System (NOCs) 2016 Version 1.0 Classification System

NOCs Skill Level Criteria

Each skill level represents the type and/or amount of education or training required to enter into and work in an occupation.

Skill level	Education/training required
Skill level A:	These occupations can be classified as either "management occupations" or "professional occupations."
Management occupations	These occupations are characterized by a high level of responsibility, accountability, and subject matter expertise. Expertise can be acquired either through formal education or extensive subject matter expertise.
Professional occupations	These occupations require a university degree (i.e., a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate).
Skill level B: College/apprenticeship training	These occupations usually require college education or apprenticeship training.
Skill level C: Occupational training	These occupations usually require secondary school and/or occupation-specific training (up to two years).
Skill level D: On-the-job training	These occupations usually revolve around on-the-job training.

NOCs Skill Type

Each skill type refers to the type of work performed in an occupation or the field of study needed to enter into an occupation.

Skill type	Description
Management occupations	These occupations are considered to be at the top of the organizational hierarchy of workplaces or businesses. Decision-making that affects the organization as a whole, or departments within organizations, is undertaken by management.
Business, finance, and administration occupations	This category contains occupations that are concerned with providing financial and business services, administrative, and regulatory services and clerical supervision and support services.
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	This category contains professional and technical occupations in the sciences, including physical and life sciences, engineering, architecture, and information technology.
Health occupations	This category includes occupations concerned with providing health care services directly to patients and occupations that provide support to professional and technical staff.
Occupations in education, law, and social, community, and government services	This skill-type category includes a range of occupations that are concerned with law, teaching, counselling, conducting social science research, developing government policy, and administering government and other programs.
Occupations in art, culture, recreation, and sport	This skill-type category includes professional and technical occupations related to art and culture, including the performing arts, film and video, broadcasting, journalism, writing, creative design, libraries, and museums. It also includes occupations in recreation and sport.

(continued...)

NOCs Skill Type

Skill type	Description
Sales and service occupations	This skill-type category contains sales occupations, personal and protective service occupations, and occupations related to the hospitality and tourism industries.
Trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupations	This skill-type category includes construction and mechanical trades, trades supervisors and contractors, and operators of transportation and heavy equipment. These occupations are found in a wide range of industrial sectors, with many occurring in the construction and transportation industries.
Natural resources, agriculture, and related production occupations	This category contains supervisory and equipment operation occupations in the natural resource-based sectors of mining, oil and gas production, forestry and logging, agriculture, horticulture, and fishing. Most occupations in this category are industry specific and do not occur outside of the primary industries.
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	This category contains supervisory and production occupations in manufacturing, processing and utilities.

Note: We did not include the occupations in manufacturing and utilities category in our analysis. In all but one year, there were no GNWT employees in these occupations.
Source: Statistics Canada, "Introduction to the National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2016 Version 1.3."

Appendix B

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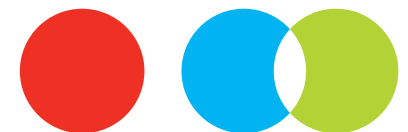
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