

Immigration in Nunavut: For a Healthy Welcoming of Francophone Immigrants

Update on situation and statistical data

For the past 10 years, Nunavut has seen its Francophone immigrant community grow significantly. Very often, our territory is a second Canadian location members of this community choose to live in. Yet, there is only very little evidence available on this new demographic reality and on the state of health of Francophone immigrants in remote regions. This status update aims to highlight some of the contextual elements and some data related to the immigration of Francophones in our territory.

Breakdown of Francophone immigration in Nunavut ⁱ

According to Statistics Canada's data, in 10 years, the general population of Nunavut has grown by 16,240 inhabitants, going from 19,340 in 2006 to 35,580 in 2016 which represents an increase of 84%. In this demographic migration into Nunavut, the Franco-Nunavummiut and immigrant communities have evolved significantly. Between 2006 and 2016, the number of people with French as a first official language spoken (FOLS) increased from 365 to 620, for a total increase of 255 people, or 69.9%.

Additionally, Nunavut's immigrant population doubled from 2006 to 2016, from 440 to 920. With the exception of immigrants from Cameroon, the majority of Nunavut's immigrants hail from countries where English is used more commonly than French. There are 1.5 times more immigrants with French as a first official language spoken, which is an increase from 20 people in 2006 to 50 people in 2016. In 2016, of the 620 people in Nunavut with French as a FOLS, Francophone immigrants represent 8.1% of the population.

Thus, as with Nunavut's population as a whole, the number of residents with French as a FOLS and the number of immigrants living in the territory are on the rise. Also, immigration plays a key role in ensuring the demographic growth of the Francophonie, as it does for the growth of all of Canada, and to contribute to the vitality of the Francophone communities in a minority setting.



Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Breakdown of Francophone immigration in Nunavut ⁱⁱ

Here is a general breakdown of Francophone immigration in Nunavut:

- Nunavut is not generally the first place in Canada where immigrants settle for the first time, with 9 out of 10 coming via another province before settling here;
- 63% of Francophone immigrants to Nunavut come from Africa;
- The average age is 43.8 years;
- They have more education than the general population: 58% have a post-secondary degree or diploma compared to 37% of the territory's non-immigrants, and 100% of them have a post-secondary degree or diploma in Iqaluit, according to the 2016 data;
- As for the working population, Nunavut immigrants with French as a FOLS show a 100% employment;
- With an average income of \$113,920 in 2015, Francophone immigrants have a higher income in Nunavut than in the two other territories;
- According to the results of a 2021 survey conducted by the Réseau Santé en Français au Nunavut (RÉSEFAN), a large majority of immigrants state that they are either satisfied or mostly satisfied with their employment situation in Nunavut.

Government responsibility and immigrant support in Nunavut ⁱⁱⁱ

According to the constitution, immigration in Canada is a shared responsibility between the federal, provincial and territorial governments. The federal government determines annual immigration goals. The provinces and territories can create legislation related to immigration, as long as it conforms to legislation set at the federal level.

As for the legislative assembly, as at October 2021 the prime minister is also the Minister of Immigration. Despite this responsibility, the government of Nunavut does not seem to have a ministry or secretariat dedicated to immigration.

With regard to the immigration of Francophones in minority settings, the Francophone immigration networks (Réseaux en immigration francophone [RIF]) are structures created to develop and implement strategic plans and collaborative action plans to facilitate promoting, recruiting, welcoming, integrating socio-economically and culturally, and encouraging regionalization of immigration. Each province and territory has a RIF, except for Ontario which has three, and Nunavut which has none. There are therefore a total of 14 Francophone immigration networks in Canada. The



RIFs are overseen by the Fédération des Communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada (FCFA).

Carrefour Nunavut, a not-for-profit organization, has been given a mandate by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to support immigrants settling in Nunavut.

Immigration, health care system and health care professionals ^{iv}

Studies show that, in general, immigrants are in better health than native-born Canadians at the time they arrive. What is now called the “healthy immigrant effect” has been observed via various measures, such as mortality rate, self-declared health status, and the prevalence rate of certain chronic illnesses. However, research also shows that this advantage seems to disappear with time, so that after 10, 15 or 20 years of living in Canada, the effect is no longer detectable.

Following a 2021 survey of Francophone immigrants conducted by RÉSEFAN, it is possible to ascertain that:

- 60% of Francophone respondents state that they are not comfortable or are not always comfortable with the idea of seeking help for physical health concerns in Nunavut; several mention the language barrier;
- 60% of respondents are of the opinion that access to French language services for health care in Iqaluit is insufficient or rarely sufficient to help new Francophone arrivals. This comment from a respondent places this in context: “Language is not the only barrier; there is also the culture, the customs.”

Despite the number of healthcare workers who speak French having increased from 45 in 2001 to 115 in 2016, the proportion of those who use the language during the course of their work has not increased. Thus, in 2016 in Nunavut, 115 healthcare workers know French, which represents 9.2% of healthcare workers. Of this number, only 2% use it in their work, which is 25 health care professionals.

Linguistic barriers and access to health: target groups and impacts ^v

A linguistic barrier means the difficulty of people or groups to communicate between themselves due to the use of different languages.



In Canada, four groups are likely to encounter linguistic barriers within the field of health care:

- First Nations and Inuit,
- Immigrants and refugees,
- Deaf, mute and blind people, and
- Speakers of one of the two official languages of Canada based on their place of residence.

The *Canada Health Act* states that all citizens must have equal access to health care.

In Nunavut, the two main official language communities facing language barriers are the Inuit and the Francophones.

The following are some of the impacts of language barriers on patient safety and quality of care that may occur within the health care system:

- Language barriers prevent access to ambient health information;
- Patients with language barriers may be less likely to have a regular medical provider;
- Language barriers can lead to diagnostic errors, medical errors, significant delays and sometimes inappropriate medication for treating pain;
- The use of untrained interpreters on an ad hoc basis compromises privacy;
- When a patient and the interveners don't speak the same language, there is an immediate language barrier which prevents the patient of being informed of their situation and of the choices presented.

Conclusion

Immigration is a reality that many large Canadian cities “in the south”, being immigration targets, have learned to juggle with in order to culturally adapt their health and social services. The vitality of the Francophone communities in minority settings depends on the immigration of Francophones in all parts of the country.

In Nunavut, over the past few years, we have witnessed a significant increase in the number of immigrants who have enlisted public bodies, community organizations and the general community to properly enable them to respond to this reality and meet these new needs. It is a reality that transects many sectors (health, education, economic development, employability, culture, etc.). Consequently,



Nunavut's Francophone organizations join voices so that the territory's government bodies take into account the new realities of immigration when conceiving programmes and initiatives.

* This situation update was prepared with the Sociopol team.



** This project is made possible due to financial support from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, through the Société Santé en français.

ⁱ STATISTICS CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. *Immigration and Language in Canada 2011 and 2016 – 22 Nunavut*, [On line] <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/2019001/section/22-eng.htm> (page consulted on July 30, 2021).

STATISTICS CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. 2017. “Focus on Geographic Series”, 2016 Census, Nunavut, [On line] <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cd-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CD&GC=6204&TOPIC=1> (page consulted on July 30, 2021).

ESSES V, HUOT S, RAVANERA Z, THAKUR S, VANDERLOO L. *Synthesis and Analysis of Research on Immigrants to Official Language Minority Communities in Canada*, University of Western Ontario, IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, March 2016, [On line] <http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2016/11/Synthesis-OLMC.pdf> (page consulted on July 30, 2021).

FOUROT A-C and AUNG B. *Fostering welcoming communities in Moncton, Dieppe and Riverview: A report on the assets and limitations in the offer of services to new arrivals*. Simon Fraser University, IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, March 2019, [On line] https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Isabella-Aung/publication/332973550_Favoriser_des_communautes_accueillantes_a_Moncton_Dieppe_et_Riverview_un_rapport_sur_les_atouts_et_les_limites_de_l'offre_de_services_aux_nouveaux_arrivants/links/5d0bc9ce299bf1547c714ebc/Favoriser-des-communautes-accueillantes-a-Moncton-Dieppe-et-Riverview-un-rapport-sur-les-atouts-et-les-limites-de-loffre-de-services-aux-nouveaux-arrivants.pdf (page consulted on July 30, 2021).

ⁱⁱ RÉSEAU SANTÉ EN FRANÇAIS AU NUNAVUT (RÉSEFAN). 2021. *Report of data from the survey: Questions for immigrants*.

STATISTICS CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. 2020e. 2016 Census: “Table 2: First Official Language Spoken, Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration, Visible Minorities, Admission Category and Applicant Type, Place of Birth and Age for the Population in Private Households”, page 25.

STATISTICS CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. *Data table: Selected Demographic, Cultural, Educational, Labour Force and Income Characteristics (984), First Official Language Spoken (6), Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration (10), Age (8B) and Sex (3) for the Population in Private Households of Canada, Provinces and Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2016 Census – Sample Data (25%)*.



STATISTICS CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. 2020g. *2016 Census: "Table 4: First Official Language Spoken, Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration, Labour Force Status, Age and Gender"*.

STATISTICS CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. *Op. Cit., 2016 Census – Sample Data (25%)*.

ⁱⁱⁱ TARDIF C and FORTIN-DUPLESSIS S. *Seizing the Opportunity: The role of communities in a constantly changing immigration system – Report*. STANDING SENATE COMMITTEE ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES, SENATE, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, December 2014. [On line] <https://sencanada.ca/Content/SEN/Committee/412/ollo/rep/rep04dec14-e.pdf> (page consulted on July 31, 2021).

GOVERNMENT OF NUNAVUT. *Cabinet*. [On line] gov.nu.ca/node/2118 (page consulted on July 31, 2021).

COOPÉRATIVE D'INTÉGRATION FRANCOPHONE. *Francophone immigration networks in Nunavut*. [On line] <https://tonile.ca/en/reseau-en-integration-francophone-2/les-reseaux-en-immigration-francophone-au-canada-en> (page consulted on July 31, 2021).

^{iv} HEALTH CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. *Health Policy Research Bulletin – Migration Health: Embracing a Determinants of Health Approach*. December 2010, Number 7. [On line] <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/science-research/reports-publications/health-policy-research/migration-health.html> (page consulted on July 31, 2021).

RÉSEAU SANTÉ EN FRANÇAIS AU NUNAVUT (RÉSEFAN). 2021. *Report of data from the survey: Questions for immigrants*.

STATISTICS CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. May 2021. *Knowledge and use of the official language at work by healthcare workers, 2001 to 2016*. Catalogue No. 89-657-X2021005.

^v BOWEN, S. *The Impact of Language Barriers on Patient Safety and Quality of Care – Final Report Prepared for the Société Santé en français*, August 2015 [Online] https://savoir-sante.ca/en/content_page/download/256/430/21?method=view (Retrieved July 31, 2021).

OFFICE OF THE LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER OF NUNAVUT. *If you cannot communicate with your patient, your patient is not safe – Final Report*. October 2015, [On line] https://resefan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/qgh_-_final_report_en.pdf (page consulted on July 31, 2021).

