

**Size and Type of Inuit Households:
Changes and Trends from 1981-2001**

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
and
Research and Analysis Directorate

Research Project Manager: Sacha Sénécal,
Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

April, 2007

The views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

Published under the authority of the
Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern
Development and Federal Interlocutor for
Métis and Non-Status Indians
Ottawa, 2007

www.ainc-inac.gc.ca

1-800-567-9604

TTY only 1-866-553-0554

QS-7092-000-EE-A1

Catalogue No.R2-473/2007E-PDF

ISBN 978-0-662-45726-8

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Services Canada

Cette publication peut aussi être obtenue
en français sous le titre : **Taille et genre des ménages inuits : changements et tendances,
1981-2001**

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1. Background

This report is the seventh in a series that looks at some of the social, demographic and economic changes experienced by Inuit in Canada over the past 20 years. Based on census information, it provides information on the characteristics of Inuit households¹ from 1981 to 2001.

This report begins with a discussion of the number, type and size of Inuit households. Information on lone-parent, multiple-family and couple households is highlighted. (For definitions of these terms and others, see the box entitled "Households and Household Types - Some Background Information"). Some figures are also shown for average household size and number of children.

Where appropriate, comparisons are made with non-Inuit households. Data for each of the four main Inuit regions are provided and, occasionally, comparisons between Inuit living in the north and south² of Canada are made.

This report is based on research initially carried out by Jeremy Hull (2002) and has been developed by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami in collaboration with the Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate (SRAD) of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

2. Number and Type of Inuit Households

The number of Inuit households increased at a rapid rate from 1981 to 1991, declined slightly from 1991 to 1996, then grew slowly from 1996 to 2001 (Table 1). This growth pattern is similar to that of the overall Inuit population and is in part due to the census capturing a somewhat different Inuit population from year to year.³ In 1981, the census did not encourage people to provide more than one response to the question on ancestry. As a result, the Inuit population included only those whose ancestors were all Inuit. However, in 1986, reporting multiple ancestries was encouraged. Those with both Inuit and non-Inuit ancestors, who had not previously been included in the counts for the Inuit population, were now included. In subsequent censuses, there were some other minor changes to the question on ancestry and changes in the way that the question was answered. These also contributed to some irregularities in the counts between 1986 and 1991.

¹ There are many ways to define an Inuit household. In this report, Inuit households are defined as those with Inuit ancestry. Another way to define an Inuit household is by looking at those that identified as Inuit. However, the identity concept was not available from the census until 1996. For further information on what constitutes an Inuit household, refer to the box in this report entitled "Households and Household Types - Some Background Information."

² For the purposes of this report, "north" includes Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, northern Québec and Labrador. The area that remains is considered "south."

³ For more information on the growth of the Inuit population, see the report in this series entitled: "Inuit in Canada: Regional Distribution and Demographic Changes from 1981 to 2001" (INAC, 2006).

Households and Household Types - Some Background Information

A **household** is a person or group of persons who live in the same dwelling.

There are two main types of household:

1. Family Households - There are two types of these:

a) **One-family Households**: These households contain one family consisting of a:

- ! married couple with or without children OR
- ! couple living common law with or without children OR
- ! lone parent living with one or more children

b) **Multiple-family Households**: These are households where two or more families live in the same dwelling.

2. Non-family Households - There are two types of these:

a) a person living alone OR

b) two or more persons who share a dwelling but who are not a family (for example, two roommates who are unrelated, or two brothers living together without any other family members in their household).

An **Inuit household** is one in which at least one of the parents (in a family household), or at least half of the household members, has some Inuit ancestry. Households that do not fit this definition are considered "**non-Inuit**" households.

In 2001, the "**couple families**" concept was introduced to the census. It refers to families of married couples and common-law couples (both opposite and same sex) (Statistics Canada, 2002).

In this report, only information on private dwellings is provided.

Table 1
Inuit and Non-Inuit Households by Type, Canada, 1981-2001

Household Type	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
	Percent				
Inuit Households					
Couple	69.5	66.0	66.7	64.5	61.1
Female Lone-parent	9.3	11.3	11.5	12.8	12.3
Male Lone-parent	3.7	4.1	2.7	3.4	3.6
Multiple-family	6.0	4.4	3.5	3.6	7.0
Non-family	11.5	14.3	15.6	15.6	16.1
Total Number of Inuit Households	5,750	9,850	15,800	15,695	18,650
Non-Inuit Households					
Couple	66.2	63.9	62.2	59.7	58.5
Female Lone-parent	6.7	7.3	7.5	8.3	8.4
Male Lone-parent	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.9
Multiple-family	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.8
Non-family	24.8	26.2	27.7	29.0	29.5
Total Number of Non-Inuit Households	8,275,780	8,981,820	10,002,450	10,804,355	11,544,330

Table 1 also provides information on the various types of households.⁴ Over time, the proportion of couple households declined for both Inuit and non-Inuit. In 1981, 70% of Inuit households were this type, compared with 61% in 2001.⁵ There was an increase in the proportion of female lone-parent households for both groups. For Inuit, the proportion grew from 9% in 1981 to 12% in 2001. The 2001 figure for non-Inuit households was 8%.

From 1996 to 2001, the proportion of Inuit multiple-family households jumped from 4% to 7%, which may in part be attributable to housing availability or accessibility problems. Multiple-family households were much more common among Inuit than non-Inuit. In 2001, for Inuit, 7% of households were of this type, compared with 2% for non-Inuit.

Some important differences existed between Inuit households in the north and south of Canada (Table 2). For example, multiple-family households were much more common in the north than in the south (10% and 3% respectively), while non-family households were more prevalent in the south than in the north (19% and 14% respectively).

There was a larger proportion of female lone-parent households in the north. From 1981 to 2001, this type of household grew from 9% to 14% in the north. Growth in the south was slower, as the percentage of female lone-parent households edged up slightly from 10% to 11% over the 20-year period.

⁴ Between 1996 and 2001, there were some changes to the census question used to determine family and household type. Although 2001 data are not completely comparable with those from previous years, the differences resulting from this change are not large. Common-law couple households were included in the "husband-wife" category in 1996 and in the "couple household" category in 2001 along with legally married couples. Same-sex couples were included in "couple households" in 2001, but would have been either "lone-parent" or "non-family" in 1996 (depending on the presence of children). Similarly, grandchildren living with grandparents were classified as "lone-parent" in 2001, but "non-family" in 1996.

⁵ Information for individuals as opposed to households shows that Inuit were more likely to be common-law partners than non-Inuit. In 2001, 12% of all Inuit were common-law partners, compared with 8% of non-Inuit. While similar percentages of older Inuit and non-Inuit (those aged 45 and over) lived common law, young Inuit were much more likely than their non-Inuit counterparts to be common-law partners. For example, 16% of Inuit aged 15-24 were common-law partners, compared with 7% of non-Inuit in the same age group.

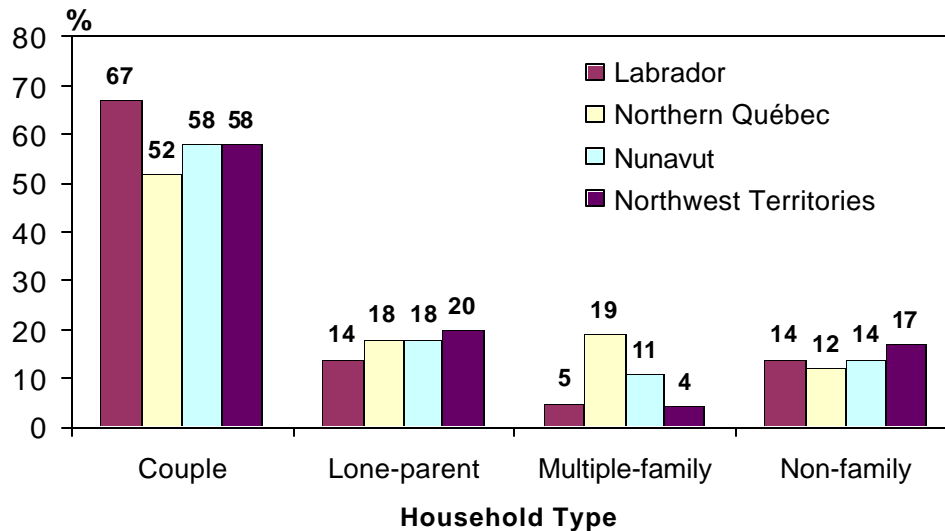
Table 2
Inuit Households by Type, Northern and Southern Canada, 1981-2001

Household Type	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
Percent					
North					
Couple	70.8	68.0	67.4	63.9	58.6
Female Lone-parent	9.2	11.9	11.9	13.2	13.5
Male Lone-parent	4.2	4.9	3.8	3.8	4.0
Multiple-family	7.6	6.0	5.4	5.1	10.3
Non-family	8.2	9.1	11.6	13.9	13.8
South					
Couple	66.4	63.5	66.2	65.6	64.5
Female Lone-parent	9.5	10.3	11.1	12.0	10.7
Male Lone-parent	2.4	2.8	1.7	2.7	3.1
Multiple-family	1.8	2.0	1.7	1.4	2.6
Non-family	19.3	21.1	19.3	18.2	19.2

In 2001, while approximately one in four Inuit lived in the south of Canada, the majority lived in one of four regions across the Canadian North. Figure 1 provides information on Inuit in Labrador, northern Québec, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.⁶ Couple households were most common in Labrador, comprising 67% of all Inuit households in the region. Lone-parent and non-family households, on the other hand, were most prevalent in the Northwest Territories. Here, 20% of households were headed by lone parents and 17% were non-family households. Northern Québec was the region containing the largest percentage of multiple-family households. In this area, 19% of all Inuit households were of this type.

⁶ With the exception of Nunavut, the northern regions referred to in this report are somewhat different from those of the four Inuit land claim regions (Nunatsiavut in Labrador, Nunavik in northern Québec and the Inuvialuit region in the Northwest Territories). The geographic units provided here are based on census delineations.

Figure 1
Inuit Household Types by Region, 2001



3. Size of Inuit Households

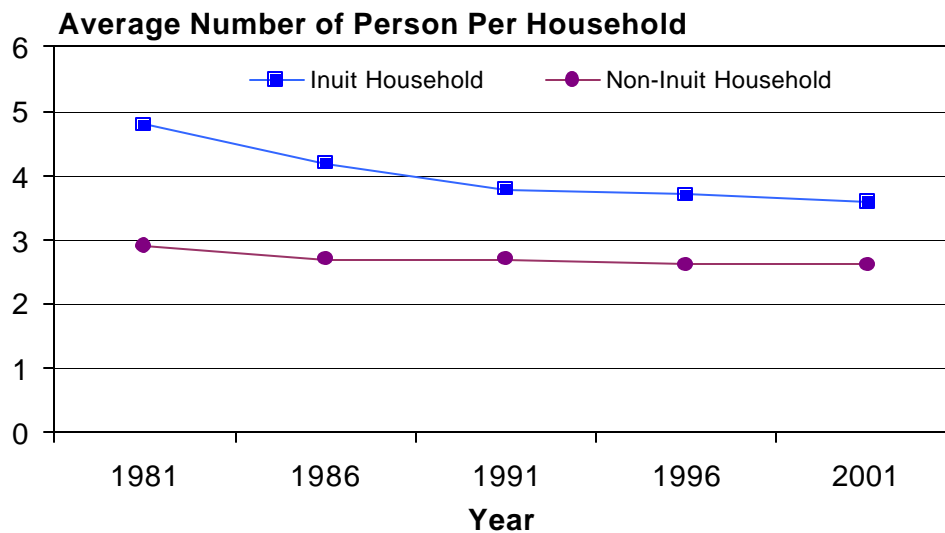
Overtime, the size of Inuit households has declined (Table 3). The average number of persons per Inuit household dipped from 4.8 in 1981 to 3.6 in 2001. This decline was evident for all family types shown in Table 3 with the exception of non-family households, where the size remained fairly constant over time.

Table 3
Average Number of Persons Per Inuit Household by Household Type, 1981-2001

Household Type	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
Couple	5.1	4.6	4.2	4.2	4.0
Female Lone-parent	4.2	3.8	3.5	3.3	3.0
Male Lone-parent	3.8	4.0	3.6	3.3	2.9
Multiple-family	8.5	8.3	7.4	7.4	6.8
Non-family	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3
All Households	4.8	4.2	3.8	3.7	3.6

The average size of non-Inuit households also declined over the past two decades (Figure 2). From 1981 to 1991, the size of the gap between Inuit and non-Inuit households narrowed significantly. From 1991 to 2001, however, the gap remained relatively unchanged, with the size of Inuit households still exceeding that of non-Inuit households. In 2001, the average size of Inuit households was 3.6 persons, as previously mentioned, compared with 2.6 for non-Inuit.

Figure 2
Average Number of Persons Per Inuit and Non-Inuit Household, Canada, 1981-2001



As can be seen in Figure 3, there were some significant regional differences in household size. The largest Inuit households were found in northern Québec. Here, the average size was 4.8 persons, compared with 3.3 in Labrador, the Inuit region with the smallest households. In southern Canada, the Inuit household figure was 3.0. Non-Inuit households in all regions were smaller than their Inuit counterparts. The difference was greatest in Nunavut, where the average Inuit household was 4.1 persons, compared with 2.1 for non-Inuit households in the territory.

Figure 3
Average Number of Persons Per Inuit and Non-Inuit Household by Region, Canada, 2001

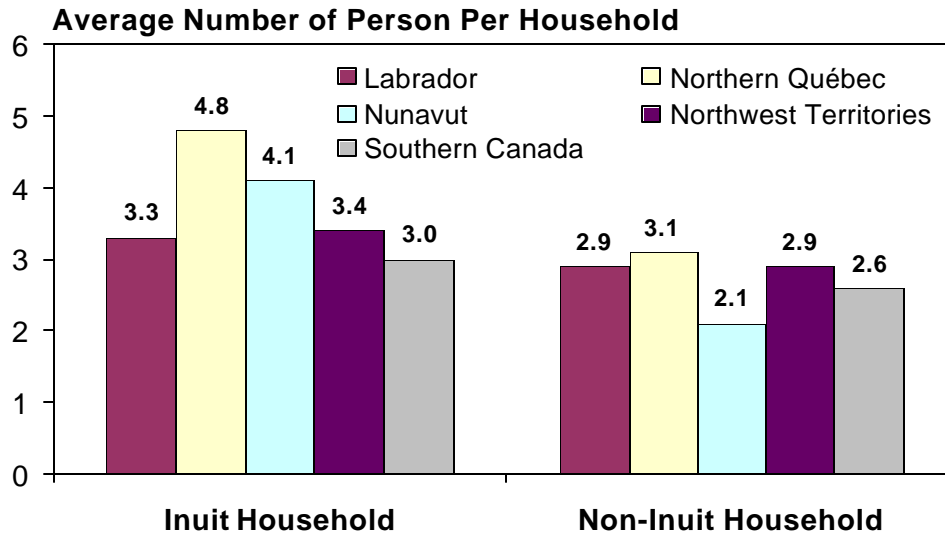


Figure 4 shows Inuit and non-Inuit households by the number of persons living in them. Non-Inuit households in the south were the smallest, with three-quarters (75%) comprising only one to three persons. On the other hand, nearly one-quarter (22%) of Inuit households in the north of Canada were made up of six or more persons.

Figure 4
Distribution of Households by Household Size, Inuit and Non-Inuit Households, Northern and Southern Canada, 2001

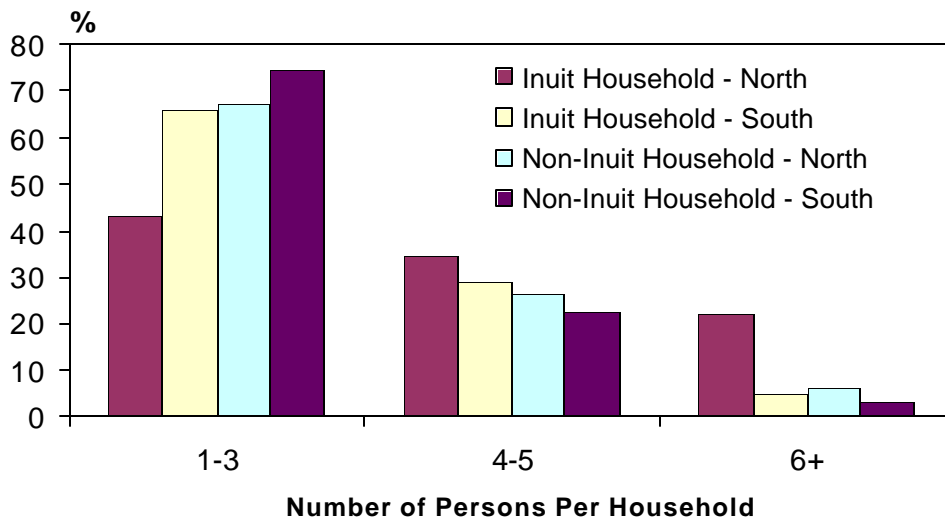
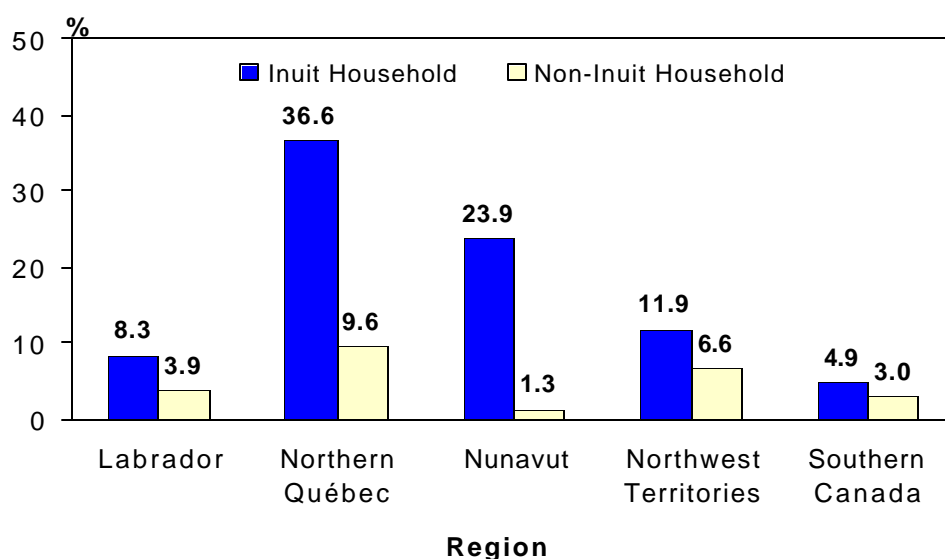


Figure 5 provides a more detailed look at large (made up of six or more persons) Inuit households by region. Clearly, there were significant differences from one region to the next, with 8% of Inuit households in Labrador comprising six or more persons, compared with 37% in northern Québec. In southern Canada, only 5% of Inuit households were made up of six or more persons. In all regions, especially northern Québec and Nunavut, there was a much smaller percentage of non-Inuit households with six or more people/persons.

Figure 5
Households With Six or More Persons, Inuit and Non-Inuit Households, 2001



4. Children⁷ in Inuit Households

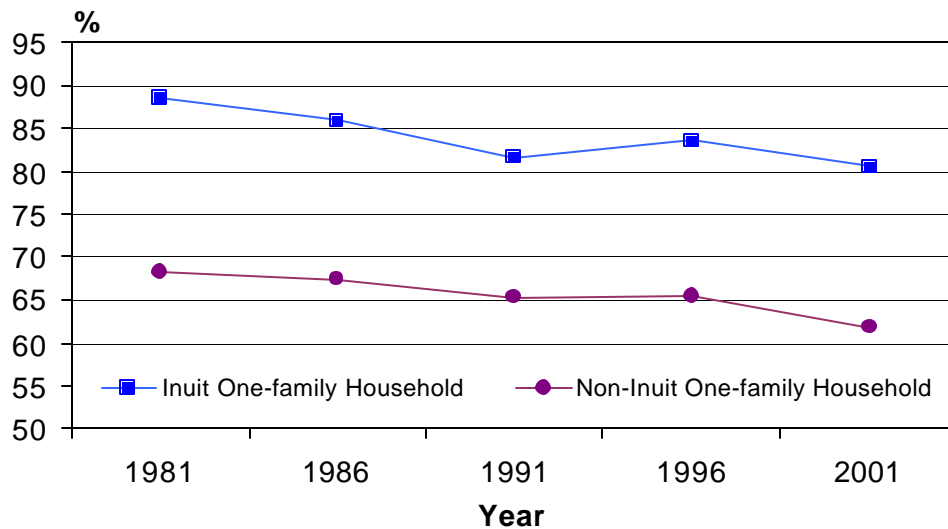
Information in this section of the report focuses on never-married sons and daughters living in **one-family** households. It is important to note that Inuit children living in multiple-family households are not included in this analysis. As previously mentioned, multiple-family households are those where two or more families live in the same dwelling. This type of household is common in Inuit communities, due largely to a chronic housing shortage.⁸ However, data on the number of multiple-family households with children was not available for this analysis.

⁷ Unless mentioned otherwise, figures are for never-married sons and daughters living in the household with their parents. While the majority of these sons and daughters were children, these figures also include adult sons or daughters who had never been married and who were living with their parents.

⁸ Further information on the housing situation for Inuit can be found in the housing section of the document by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami at the following internet address:
<http://www.itk.ca/roundtable/pdf/canada-aboriginal-roundtables.pdf>.

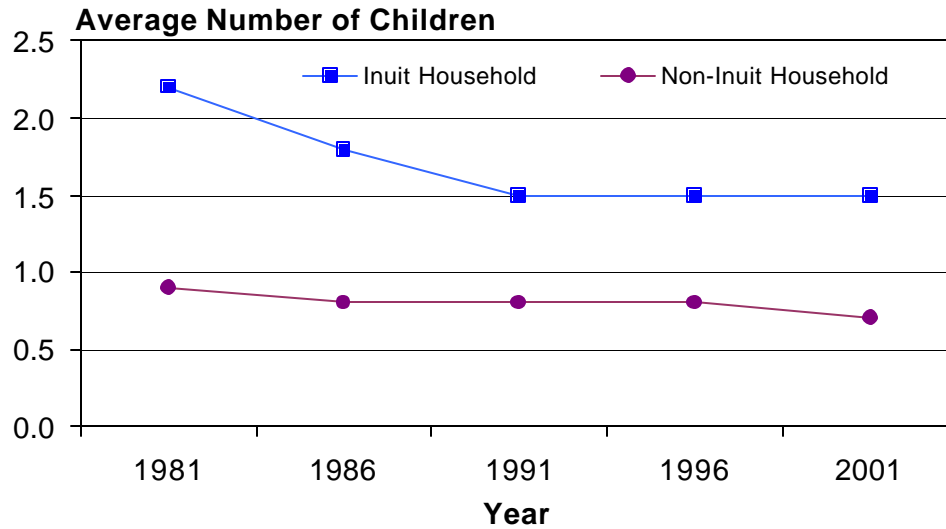
The proportion of one-family households with children declined from 1981 to 1991 and then increased slightly from 1991 to 1996. The proportion then declined again from 1996 to 2001 (Figure 6). While there was a similar pattern for both Inuit and non-Inuit family households, there was a consistent difference between the two of about 18 percentage points over the 20-year period. For example, in 2001, 81% of Inuit one-family households had children, compared with 62% of non-Inuit households.

Figure 6
One-family Household With Children, Inuit and Non-Inuit Households, Canada, 1981-2001



Information on the average number of children aged 0 to 15 is also available from the census. From 1981 to 1991, there was a sharp decline in the average number of Inuit children in family households, while there was no change from 1991 to 2001, as can be seen in Figure 7. For all years, Inuit single-family households had a higher average number of children than non-Inuit family households. However, the difference in the average number of children between Inuit and non-Inuit households declined from 1981 to 2001. In 1981, Inuit family households had more than twice as many children per household as non-Inuit families. While the number of children declined for both groups, it declined more dramatically for Inuit. In 2001, Inuit family households had an average of 1.5 children, compared with 0.7 for non-Inuit family households.

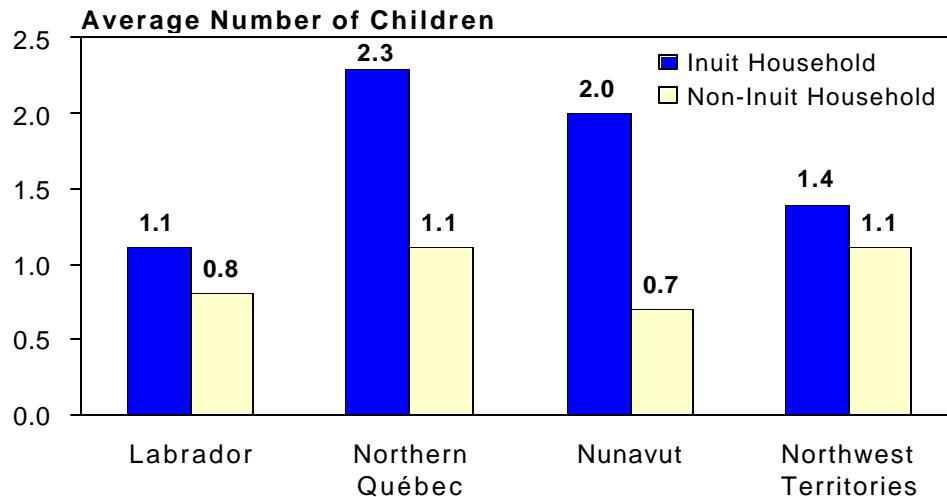
Figure 7
Average Number of Children Aged 0-15 Per Family Household, Inuit and Non-Inuit Households, Canada, 1981-2001



As can be seen in Figure 8, there were differences in the average number of children across Arctic regions. For example, in Northern Québec, the average number of children aged 0 to 15 living in family households was 2.3, compared with 1.1 in Labrador.

In all regions, Inuit households had more children on average than non-Inuit households. The difference was greatest in Nunavut and northern Québec, where the average number of children in Inuit households was more than twice that in non-Inuit households.

Figure 8
Average Number of Children Aged 0-15 Per Family Household, Inuit and Non-Inuit Households by Region, 2001



5. Summary

The total number of Inuit households increased over the 1981-2001 period. While the percentage of couple households declined, the figures for female lone-parent households increased. In 1981, 9% of Inuit households were headed by female lone parents, compared with 12% in 2001.

From 1996 to 2001, there was an increase in the percentage of multiple-family households among Inuit - from 4% in 1996 to 7% in 2001. Households of this type were much more common for Inuit than non-Inuit. Among Inuit, multiple-family households were the most common in northern Québec, where they represent 19% of households.

While the size of Inuit households had been declining with time (from an average of 4.8 persons in 1981 to 3.6 in 2001), Inuit households remained larger than those of non-Inuit. The largest Inuit households were found in northern Québec, while southern Canada was home to the smallest Inuit families. In northern Québec, the average household size for Inuit was 4.8 persons, compared with 3.0 in the southern regions of Canada.

From 1981 to 1991, there was a significant decline in the average number of Inuit children (aged 0 to 15) in one-family households, while there was no change from 1991 to 2001. Over the 20-year period, the average number of children in Inuit family households fell from 2.2 to 1.5. Of the four Inuit regions, northern Québec had the highest average number of children, while Labrador had the lowest (2.3 and 1.1 children respectively).

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