

# EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS 2009–2010 IN CANADA

## *A Dark Cloud for Aboriginals with a Silver Lining*

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### ABSTRACT

*The Canadian economy grew in 2010, compared with 2009 and employment rates increased marginally. However, the picture is different for Canadian Aboriginal peoples living off reserve, as they experienced a decline. Data is unavailable for those living on reserves. The decline in employment levels was the case for both men and women in all age categories, except for women from 15 to 24. There was also a decline in Aboriginal employment rates in seven of the ten provinces. In contrast the three territories experienced an increase. In 2010 Aboriginals had a lower employment rate than non-Aboriginals in all ten provinces and the three territories and in every age group, except for women over 55. However, a meaningfully different picture appears when employment rates are examined by educational level. The higher the educational level the higher the employment level. This applies to both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. Further, there is only a minimal difference in employment levels between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, when examined by their educational level. One conclusion is that education appears to be a path for greater employment.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Canadian economy in 2010 grew in comparison to 2009. A common measure used to assess a country or region's economic growth is its gross domestic product (GDP). In 2010 Canada's GDP grew at a rate of 3.1% (CIA World Factbook). However, an alternative measure, which may provide a better indication of how the people in that country or region are doing, is the level of employment. This article examines the rate of employment between Aboriginals living off reserve and non-Aboriginals

in Canada. The data is supplied by Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey. Unfortunately, information pertaining to those living on reserves is unavailable. By examining employment levels we are able to obtain insights into a measure of the state of the Aboriginal economy. When we analyze the employment picture by age, gender or geographically of Aboriginals living off reserve in 2010, compared to 2009, it is not encouraging. The picture is even worse when compared to non-Aboriginal employment. However, when we examine the data by educational level an entirely different picture emerges.

**TABLE 1**  
Percent Employed Across Canada's 10 Provinces

|            |                   | <i>Non-Aboriginal</i> |             | <i>Aboriginal</i> |             |
|------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
|            |                   | <i>2009</i>           | <i>2010</i> | <i>2009</i>       | <i>2010</i> |
| Both sexes | 15 years and over | 61.7                  | 61.8        | 56.6              | 53.7        |
|            | 15–24 years       | 55.8                  | 55.3        | 46.0              | 44.9        |
|            | 25–54 years       | 80.6                  | 80.9        | 68.5              | 65.8        |
|            | 55 years and over | 32.8                  | 33.7        | 34.5              | 30.3        |
| Men        | 15 years and over | 65.3                  | 65.6        | 59.9              | 56.0        |
|            | 15–24 years       | 54.0                  | 53.7        | 48.0              | 45.3        |
|            | 25–54 years       | 83.7                  | 84.3        | 72.7              | 69.7        |
|            | 55 years and over | 38.3                  | 39.5        | 37.2              | 30.4        |
| Women      | 15 years and over | 58.2                  | 58.1        | 53.6              | 51.6        |
|            | 15–24 years       | 57.7                  | 57.0        | 44.1              | 44.6        |
|            | 25–54 years       | 77.5                  | 77.4        | 64.8              | 62.1        |
|            | 55 years and over | 27.9                  | 28.6        | 32.0              | 30.4        |

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

### EMPLOYMENT BY AGE AND GENDER

In analyzing employment the population of those 15 years and older is used. In 2010 the percent of non-Aboriginals employed was marginally higher than it was in 2009. In 2010 it was 61.8% in comparison with 2009, when it was 61.7%. With an increasing population and a larger percent working, the growing Canadian economy appears to be benefitting more and more people. However, the picture is markedly different when we look at employment for Aboriginals living off reserves. In 2010 the percent employed was 53.7%, while in 2009 it was 56.6%. The fact that employment of Aboriginal people is significantly lower than for non-Aboriginals may not be surprising to those familiar with this issue. However, the fact that it is getting even worse may be contrary to what some may have been expecting.

The decrease in 2010 in the percent of Aboriginals employed occurred for each age group and for both men and women, with one exception. The exception is the employment of Aboriginal women in the 15- to 24-year-old age group, which increased from 44.1% in 2009 to 44.6% in 2010. This was opposite to the trend

for non-Aboriginal women in this age group, which was 57.7% in 2009, but went down to 57.0% in 2010. The highest percent of employment is in the 25- to 54-year-old age group. Here, Aboriginal employment decreased from 68.5% to 65.8% from 2009 to 2010, while for non-Aboriginals it increased from 80.6% to 80.9% for this period. The decrease for Aboriginals 55 years and older was the worst of these three age groups. The percent of Aboriginals employed in 2009 was 34.5%, but dropped to 30.3% in 2010. This is in comparison to non-Aboriginals, where employment increased from 32.8% to 33.7%. The decline in Aboriginal employment for men 55 and over was the most dramatic, dropping from 37.2% to 30.4%. The percent employed by age and gender across the ten Canadian provinces are shown in Table 1.

### EMPLOYMENT BY PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES

When the data is examined by province or territory, there are areas of improvement. The employment picture for Aboriginals improved in Nova Scotia, Alberta and each of the three terri-

tories. However, in the other eight provinces the percent of Aboriginals employed decreased from 2009 to 2010. Nova Scotia had the greatest increase in the percent of Aboriginals employed. It is also the province where the percentage of

employed non-Aboriginals and Aboriginals is the closest. The employment percent increased from 51.1% to 56.7% for Aboriginals and decreased from 58.6% to 58.3% for non-Aboriginals from 2009 to 2010 in Nova Scotia.

**TABLE 2**  
Employment by Province and Territory

|                           |                                  | <i>Percent Employed</i> |             |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
|                           |                                  | <i>2009</i>             | <i>2010</i> |
| Canada (Ten Provinces)    | Non-Aboriginal                   | 61.7                    | 61.8        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 56.6                    | 53.7        |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | Non-Aboriginal                   | 50.1                    | 51.8        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 50.0                    | 46.9        |
| Prince Edward Island      | Non-Aboriginal                   | 59.3                    | 60.4        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 66.7                    | 55.6        |
| Nova Scotia               | Non-Aboriginal                   | 58.6                    | 58.3        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 51.1                    | 56.7        |
| New Brunswick             | Non-Aboriginal                   | 58.6                    | 57.8        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 60.7                    | 48.9        |
| Quebec                    | Non-Aboriginal                   | 59.8                    | 60.3        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 55.6                    | 45.1        |
| Ontario                   | Non-Aboriginal                   | 61.2                    | 61.4        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 55.3                    | 49.9        |
| Manitoba                  | Non-Aboriginal                   | 66.1                    | 66.6        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 61.1                    | 58.4        |
| Saskatchewan              | Non-Aboriginal                   | 67.4                    | 67.2        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 54.3                    | 53.5        |
| Alberta                   | Non-Aboriginal                   | 69.8                    | 68.4        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 59.3                    | 60.9        |
| British Columbia          | Non-Aboriginal                   | 60.7                    | 60.8        |
|                           | Aboriginal (living off reserves) | 55.6                    | 53.6        |
| Yukon                     | Non-Aboriginal                   | 76.9                    | 76.4        |
|                           | Aboriginal                       | 43.5                    | 46.2        |
| NorthWest                 | Non-Aboriginal                   | 84.2                    | 83.1        |
|                           | Aboriginal                       | 46.7                    | 50.6        |
| Nunavit                   | Non-Inuit                        | 88.9                    | 89.5        |
|                           | Inuit                            | 43.6                    | 46.0        |

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

**TABLE 3**  
Percent Employed Across Canada's Ten Provinces by Educational Level

|                                    | <i>non-Aboriginal</i> |             | <i>Aboriginal living off reserves</i> |             |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|
|                                    | <i>2009</i>           | <i>2010</i> | <i>2009</i>                           | <i>2010</i> |
| Total, all education levels        | 61.7                  | 61.8        | 56.6                                  | 53.7        |
| Less than high school              | 34.2                  | 33.7        | 34.6                                  | 32.2        |
| High school graduate               | 61.7                  | 61.7        | 62.1                                  | 60.0        |
| Completed post-secondary education | 73.0                  | 72.7        | 73.0                                  | 68.4        |
| Bachelor's degree                  | 75.6                  | 75.3        | 83.6                                  | 76.2        |
| Above bachelor's degree            | 76.3                  | 75.4        | 79.0                                  | 80.2        |

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

Alberta was the province with the highest percent of Aboriginals employed in 2010, which was 60.9%, an increase from 59.3% in 2009. Similar to Nova Scotia, the percent of non-Aboriginals employed decreased in Alberta. It declined from 69.8 % in 2009 to 68.4% in 2010. This is in marked contrast to the pattern in Ontario and Quebec where the percent of non-Aboriginal employment increased slightly from 61.2% to 61.4% and from 59.8% to 60.3%, respectively. But the employment percentages decreased considerably for Aboriginals. In Ontario it decreased from 55.3% to 49.9% and in Quebec it decreased from 55.6% to 45.1%. Thus, there are markedly different patterns of employment growth and decline, depending on the province. An unfavorable aspect of Aboriginal employment is that it was lower in every province and territory in 2010 than it was for non-Aboriginals. This is shown in Table 2 on page 137.

### EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

A different pattern emerges when we examine employment based upon educational level. The higher the education level, the higher is the percent of those employed. This applies for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. This is highly significant. When we looked at employment patterns by age, gender or geographically, Aboriginal employment percentages were lower than

they were for non-Aboriginals. However, when we examine employment patterns by educational level we see that there is very little difference in employment percentages. In 2009 Aboriginal employment percentages were somewhat higher in each of the five educational levels than they were for non-Aboriginals. In 2010 this changed and employment percentages were larger for non-Aboriginals who completed a post-secondary education, completed high school and for those who did not complete high school. In 2010 Aboriginals with a bachelor's degree or higher still had a larger employment percentage than non-Aboriginals.

For those who did not graduate from high school, approximately only 1 in 3 are employed, regardless of whether they are Aboriginal or not. In comparison, approximately 6 out of 10 of those who graduated from high school are employed; approximately 7 out of 10 who completed a post-secondary education and approximately 3 out of 4 with a bachelor's degree or higher are employed, for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. The percent employed by educational level is shown in Table 3.

### CONCLUSION

The data shows that as educational levels increase, the percent of those employed increase. The conclusion is that education appears to be a path for greater employment and which implies enhanced economic well-being. There are many

challenges facing Aboriginal communities and individuals living on as well as off reserves. One of these challenges appears to be to create the conditions that will encourage staying in school and achieving higher levels of education. There are numerous strategies that may be applied to achieve this. The task facing those committed to facilitating long-term employment growth and

economic development is to implement the appropriate strategies.

#### REFERENCES

- CIA The World Factbook Canada — CIA — The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world.../geos/ca.html>  
Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey