



NANTON

Economic Report

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Executive Summary

Nanton presents a mixed but fairly resilient local economy, with stable labour market engagement alongside signs of softer employment outcomes and a business base that has become more uneven. By 2021, labour force participation had recovered to its highest level of the past decade, suggesting that residents remained connected to the labour market even as the employment rate edged down over the same period. Employment still dominated the local labour force profile, but unemployment had risen and the number of people outside the labour force remained notable. Work activity adds to that more complicated picture: the largest group in 2021 consisted of people who did not work, while full-year, full-time work declined and part-year or part-time work remained substantial.

The structure of Nanton's economy is broad rather than narrowly concentrated, but several clear anchors stand out. In 2025, manufacturing was the largest source of employment and showed the strongest recent growth, while health care and retail also held important shares of local jobs. At the same time, agriculture remained a significant employer even as its job count fell over five years. That contrast is echoed in the business base. Establishments were led by agriculture, with a sizable presence in real estate, construction, retail, and other services, pointing to a small-town economy with activity spread across several sectors rather than concentrated in a single one. The number of business establishments has moved unevenly in recent years, with a sharp rise followed by a steep drop and then only modest recovery. The town's business base is also heavily weighted toward very small operations, especially nonemployer firms, while mid-sized and larger establishments are scarce.

Income patterns suggest a community with a broad middle-income household base, alongside a more modest distribution at the individual level. Household after-tax income in 2021 was concentrated in the middle and upper-middle ranges, with growth in higher-income households as well. Individual after-tax income, by contrast, was weighted more toward lower and middle brackets, and employment income was widely spread, with the largest group at the lowest end. The overall picture is of a town with a diverse but small-scale economic base, steady participation in work, and living standards shaped more by broad middle incomes than by a large concentration at the top.

Employment Rate

Nanton's employment rate was 58.4% in 2021, down from 59.3% in 2016 and 59.6% in 2011. The five-year change was -1.52%, showing a gradual decline over the decade.

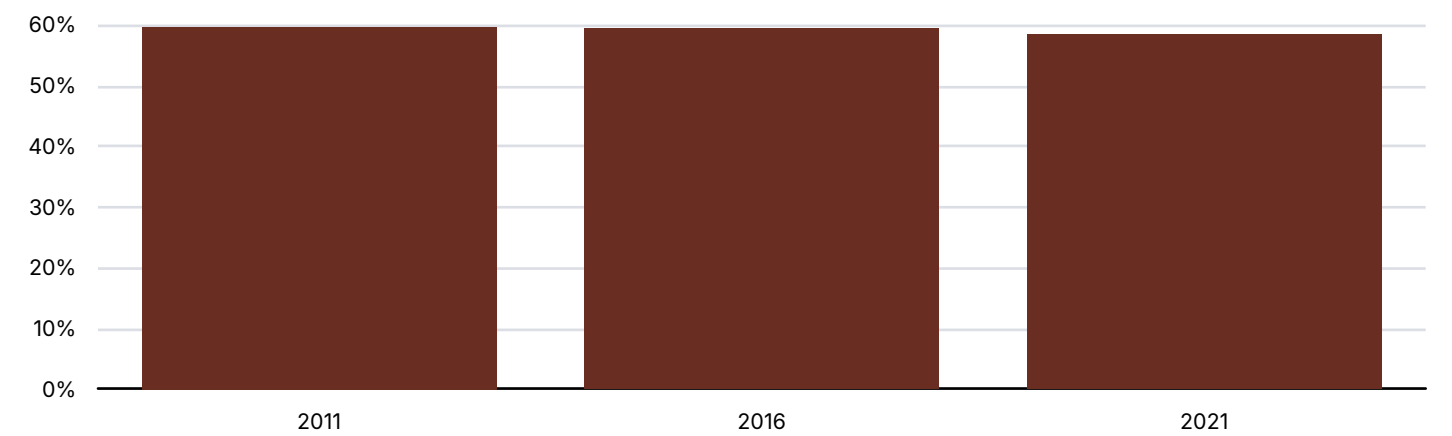


Figure 1.1: Shows the share of the working-age population that is employed. It helps indicate overall labour market health and how fully local talent is being used. (Nanton, 2011-2021)¹

Nanton's employment rate for the labour force aged 15 and over edged down over the last decade, pointing to a gradual softening in the share of residents who were employed. The rate was 59.6% in 2011, slipped to 59.3% in 2016, and fell further to 58.4% in 2021. The change was modest between 2011 and 2016, at -0.5%, but the longer span shows a larger decline of 1.5% by 2021. That pattern suggests a steady, if limited, weakening rather than a sharp shift.

Nanton's employment rate was 58.4% in 2021, a slight decline from 59.3% in 2016 and 59.6% in 2011. That puts the town above several nearby places, including Claresholm at 47.2%, Pincher Creek at 53.0%, and Magrath at 50.3% in 2021. It also sits below higher local rates such as Willow Creek No. 26 at 68.7% and Cardston County at 65.1%. The pattern suggests a relatively steady labour market, with modest softening over the decade rather than a sharp shift.

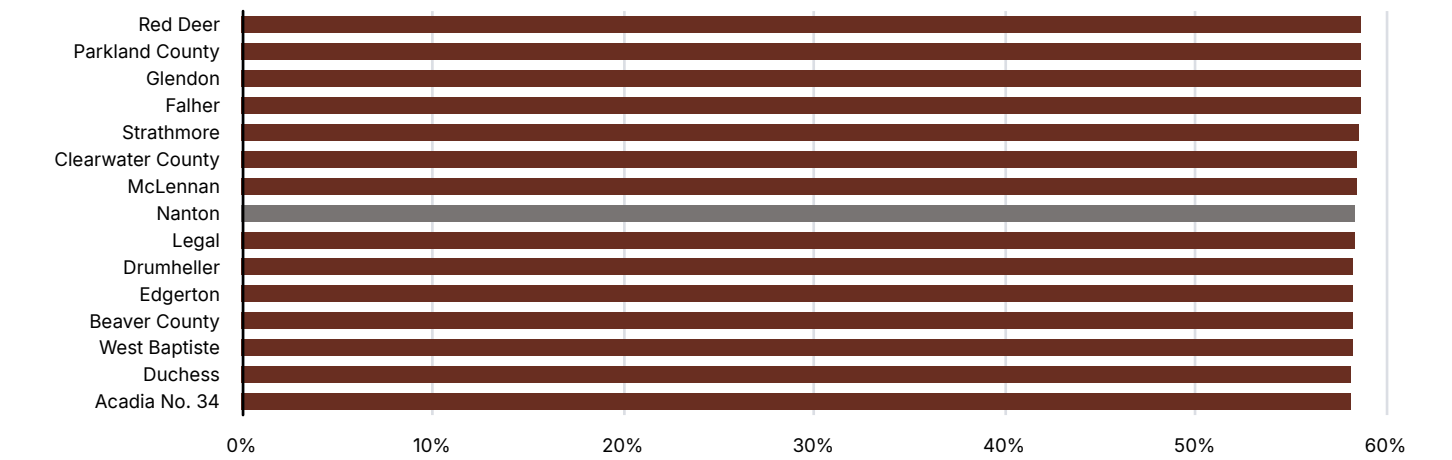


Figure 1.2: Comparison of Employment Rate with other locations (Nanton, 2021)¹

Business Establishments

Nanton had 644 business establishments in 2025, up 0.9% from 2024. That remains 7.6% below 2020 levels, after falling from 800 in 2022 to 614 in 2023 and then recovering slightly.

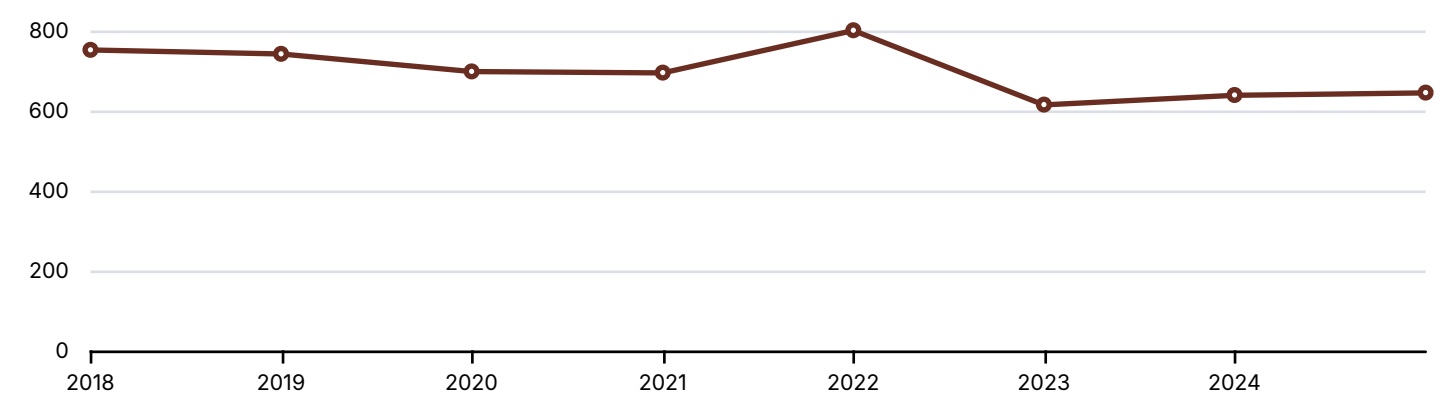


Figure 2.1: Shows the total number of active business establishments in the area, including those without employees. It helps indicate the scale and diversity of the local business base. (Nanton, 2018-2025)²

Nanton had 644 active business establishments in 2025, a small increase from 638 in 2024. The count has moved unevenly since 2018, when it stood at 751 businesses. After declining to 694 in 2021, the total jumped to 800 in 2022 before dropping to 614 in 2023. That was the low point in the series and left the 2023 level 18.2% below 2018. The latest figures show modest recovery, but the base remains smaller than at the start of the period.

Nanton had 644 active business establishments in 2025, down from 751 in 2018 but slightly above 2024’s 638. The series shows a sharp rise to 800 in 2022, followed by a steep drop to 614 in 2023 and a modest recovery since then. Against nearby places, Nanton sits in the middle of the group: below Pincher Creek’s 978 and Claresholm’s 739, but well above Hill Spring’s 66 and Piikani 147’s 19. That pattern suggests a business base that is sizable for a small town, but still below the larger regional centres.

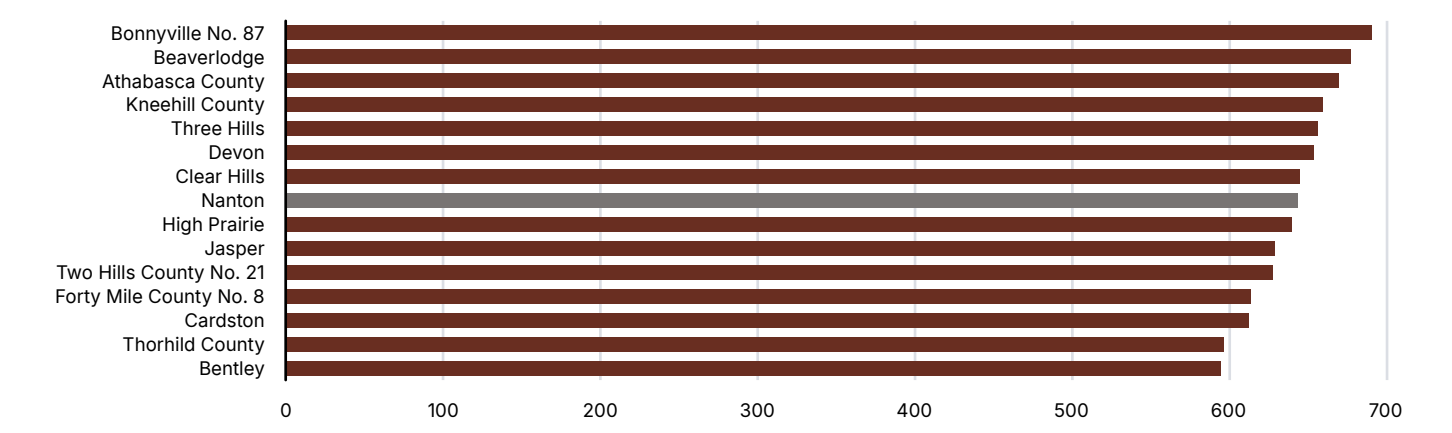


Figure 2.2: Comparison of Business Establishments with other locations (Nanton, 2025)²

Employment by Sector

Manufacturing led employment in Nanton in 2025 with 199 people, up 89.5% from 2024 and 158.4% from five years earlier. Health care and social assistance followed with 143 people.

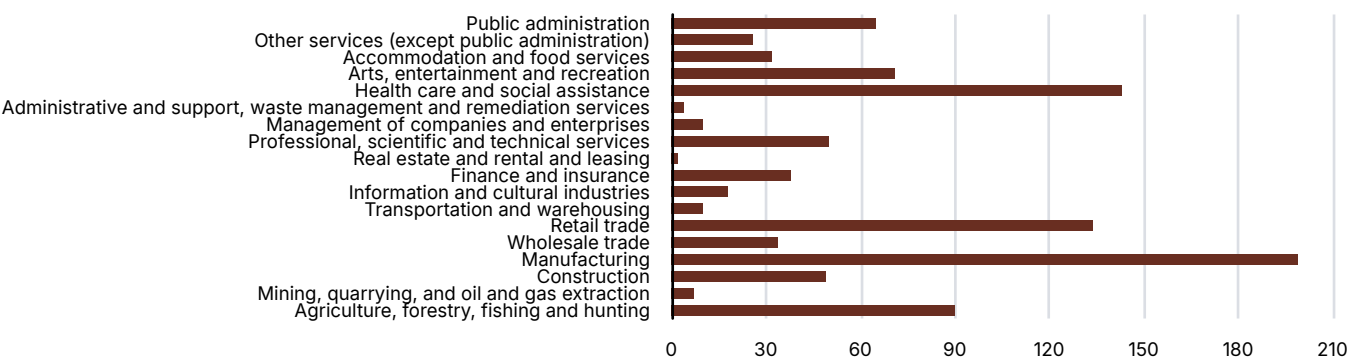


Figure 3.1: Shows how employment is distributed across industry sectors. It helps indicate which sectors account for the largest share of local jobs. (Nanton, 2025)³

In 2025, Nanton’s employment was spread across a broad mix of sectors, with manufacturing the largest at 199 people. Health care and social assistance followed at 143, and retail trade at 134. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting still employed 90 people, but it was down 48.0% from five years earlier. Manufacturing rose 158.4% over the same period, while health care and social assistance increased 95.9%, showing a marked shift in the local employment mix.

In 2025, employment in Nanton was spread across a few clear anchors, with manufacturing and health care standing out in the local mix. Manufacturing led with 199 jobs, followed by health care and social assistance at 143 and retail trade at 134. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting remained sizable at 90 jobs, while public administration accounted for 65. The pattern suggests a workforce that is not concentrated in one sector, but is anchored by a small set of larger employers. Manufacturing also showed the strongest recent growth, rising 89.5% in one year and 158.4% over five years.



Figure 3.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Manufacturing (Nanton)³

Establishments by Sector

Nanton’s largest sector remained agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 157 establishments in 2025, unchanged from 2024 but down 12.8% over five years. Construction rebounded to 59, while health care reached 20.

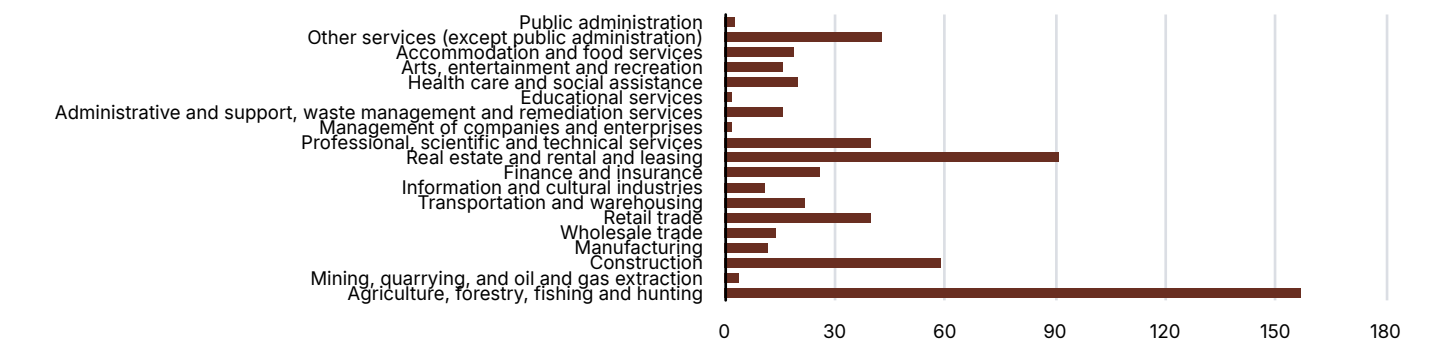


Figure 4.1: Shows how business establishments are distributed across sectors. It helps indicate the sector mix of the local business base. (Nanton, 2025)²

Nanton’s business establishments in 2025 are concentrated in a few sectors, led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. The local mix also includes a sizable real estate presence, alongside retail, construction, and professional services. Agriculture accounts for 157 establishments, followed by real estate and rental and leasing with 91, construction with 59, and other services with 43. Recent changes are mixed: construction rose 20.4% over one year, while retail fell 9.1% and transportation and warehousing declined 8.3%. The pattern points to a small-business base that is diverse but uneven, with some sectors expanding even as others softened.

Nanton’s business base in 2025 is led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 157 establishments. Real estate and rental and leasing follows at 91, while construction and retail trade each account for 40 or more businesses. The mix points to a broad local economy with clear concentration in primary activity and property-related services. Several other sectors are smaller but still visible: other services has 43 establishments, construction 59, and accommodation and food services 19. By contrast, mining has 4, educational services 2, and management of companies 2. Source: Statistics Canada, Business Register.

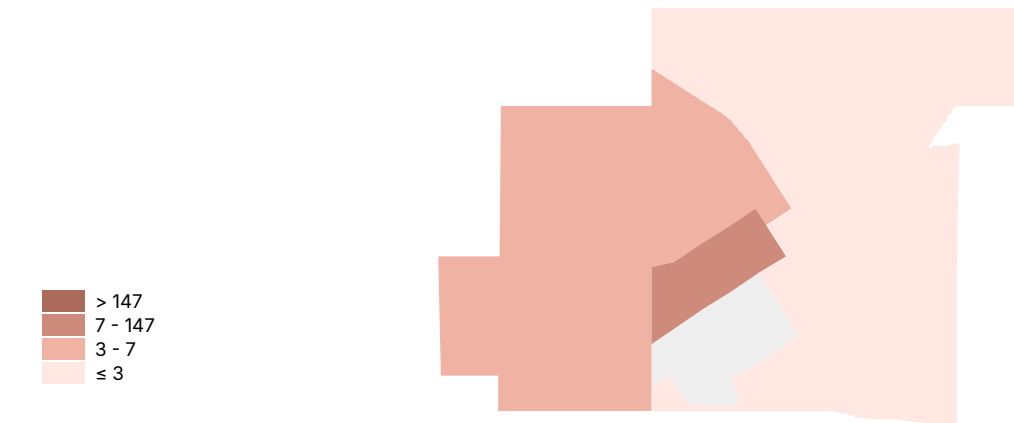


Figure 4.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Nanton)²

Establishments by Size

Nanton’s business base remained concentrated in establishments without employees, at 497 in 2025, down 0.4% from 2024 and 7.1% from 2020. Firms with 1 to 4 employees totaled 88, while 50 to 99 employees numbered 3.

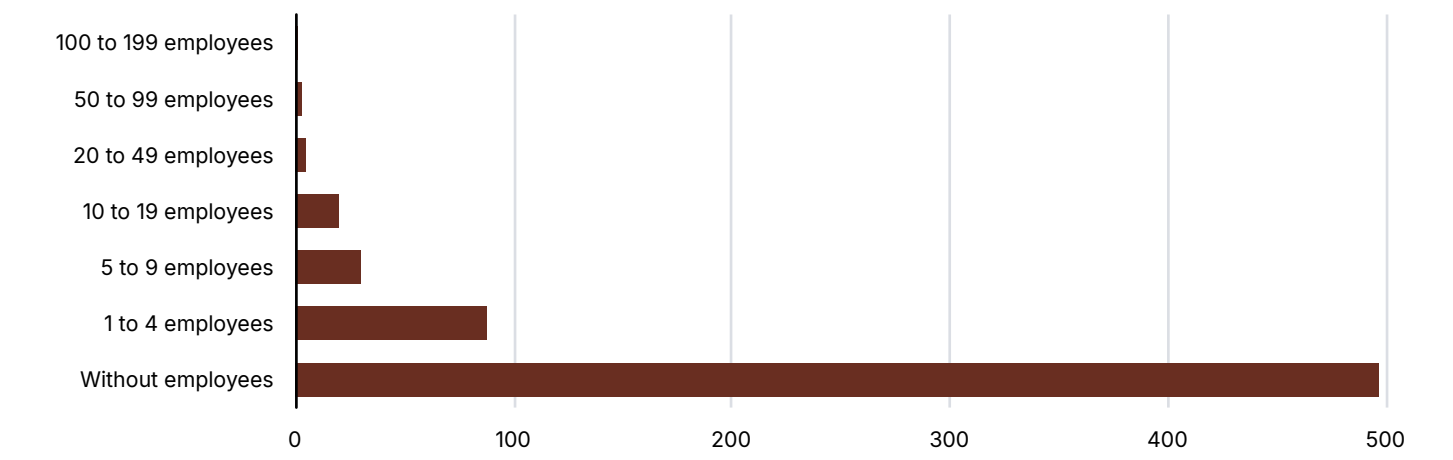


Figure 5.1: Shows how businesses are distributed by number of employees. It helps indicate whether the local economy is dominated by very small, small, or larger firms. (Nanton, 2025)²

Nanton’s business establishment profile in 2025 is dominated by very small firms, especially those with no employees. The town had 497 establishments without employees, far more than any other size group, alongside 88 with 1 to 4 employees. Smaller employer categories were much thinner: 30 establishments had 5 to 9 employees, 20 had 10 to 19, and 5 had 20 to 49. Only 3 establishments had 50 to 99 employees, and 1 had 100 to 199. Recent change was mixed. Nonemployer establishments edged down 0.4%, while 1 to 4 employee firms rose 14.3%. Larger groups mostly fell over five years.



Figure 5.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Business Establishment Size - Without employees (Nanton)²

Household After-Tax Income

In Nanton, the \$70,000 to \$79,999 group was largest in 2021 at 90 households, while under \$5,000 doubled to 10. Higher-income groups also grew, including \$150,000 and over, up 55.6% to 70 households.

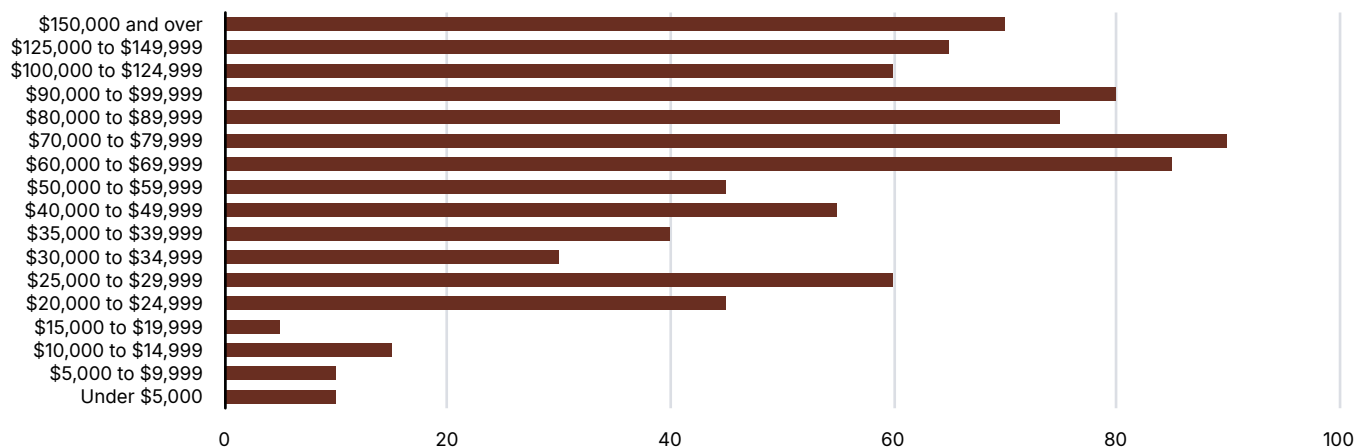


Figure 6.1: Shows household income after taxes across income groups. It helps indicate the resources households have available for day-to-day living after taxes are paid. (Nanton, 2021)¹

In 2021, Nanton's household after-tax income profile was spread across many income groups, with the largest counts in the middle and upper-middle ranges. The biggest categories were \$70,000 to \$79,999 at 90 households, \$60,000 to \$69,999 at 85, and \$90,000 to \$99,999 at 80. Lower-income groups were smaller, including 10 households each under \$5,000 and from \$5,000 to \$9,999. At the top end, 70 households were in the \$150,000 and over group, while \$125,000 to \$149,999 had 65. The pattern suggests a fairly broad distribution, with notable presence in both middle and higher income bands.



Figure 6.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Income Group Household - \$70,000 to \$79,999 (Nanton)¹

Nanton's 2021 household after-tax income profile is concentrated in the middle and upper-middle ranges, with fewer households at the lowest income levels. The largest groups are \$70,000 to \$79,999 at 90 households, \$60,000 to \$69,999 at 85, and \$90,000 to \$99,999 at 80. At the top end, \$150,000 and over rose 55.6% over five years, while \$15,000 to \$19,999 fell 83.3%. This mix suggests a broad middle-income base with some recent gains in higher-income brackets.

Individual After-Tax Income

In Nanton in 2021, the largest income group was \$20,000 to \$29,999 with 725 people. Counts then fell across higher brackets, to 55 in \$100,000 to \$124,999, before edging to 75 at \$125,000 and over.

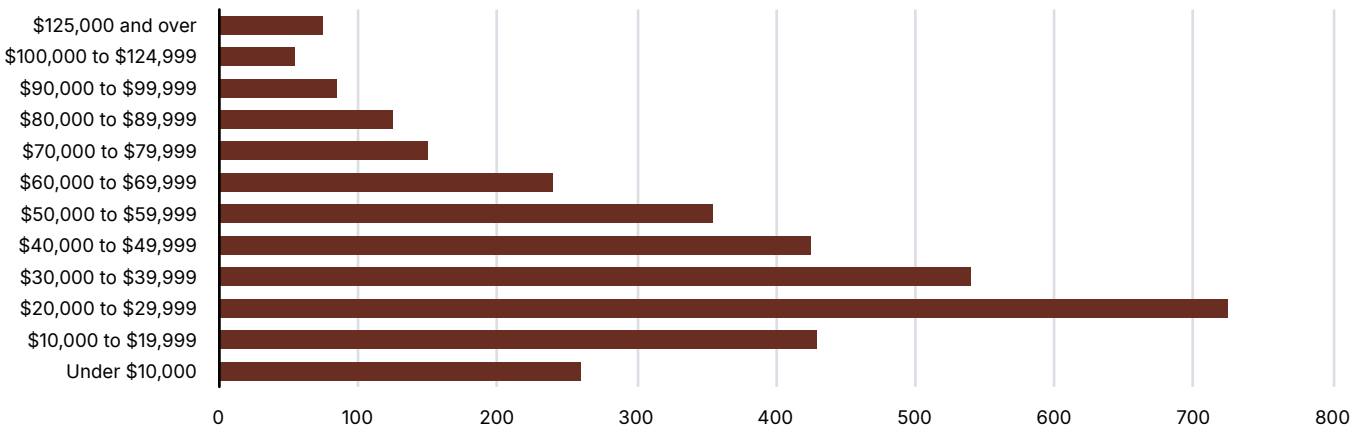


Figure 7.1: Shows individual after-tax income across income groups. It helps indicate the level of disposable income people have after taxes are paid. (Nanton, 2021)¹

Nanton's individual after-tax income profile in 2021 is concentrated in the lower-middle ranges, with the largest group in the \$20,000 to \$29,999 band. The distribution thins steadily at higher incomes, suggesting a modest income spread among residents age 15 and over in private households. The \$20,000 to \$29,999 group includes 725 people, followed by 540 in \$30,000 to \$39,999 and 430 in \$10,000 to \$19,999. At the upper end, only 55 people are in \$100,000 to \$124,999 and 75 in \$125,000 and over. Taken together, the counts add up to 3,465 people across the listed income groups. The pattern is balanced toward lower and middle incomes rather than the top end, with fewer residents as income rises.



Nanton's 2021 individual after-tax income profile was concentrated in the middle income bands for people aged 15 and over in private households. The largest group was \$20,000 to \$29,999, with 725 people, followed by \$30,000 to \$39,999 at 540 and \$10,000 to \$19,999 at 430. Higher incomes were less common, with 55 people in the \$100,000 to \$124,999 band and 75 at \$125,000 and over. This pattern suggests a modest income distribution, with the strongest weight in lower-to-middle ranges.

Figure 7.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Income Group Individual - \$20,000 to \$29,999 (Nanton)¹

Individual Employment Income

Nanton’s largest individual income group in 2021 was under \$5,000, with 400 people. Counts then tapered through higher brackets, reaching 90 in the \$125,000-and-over group and 75 in the \$90,000 to \$99,999 range.

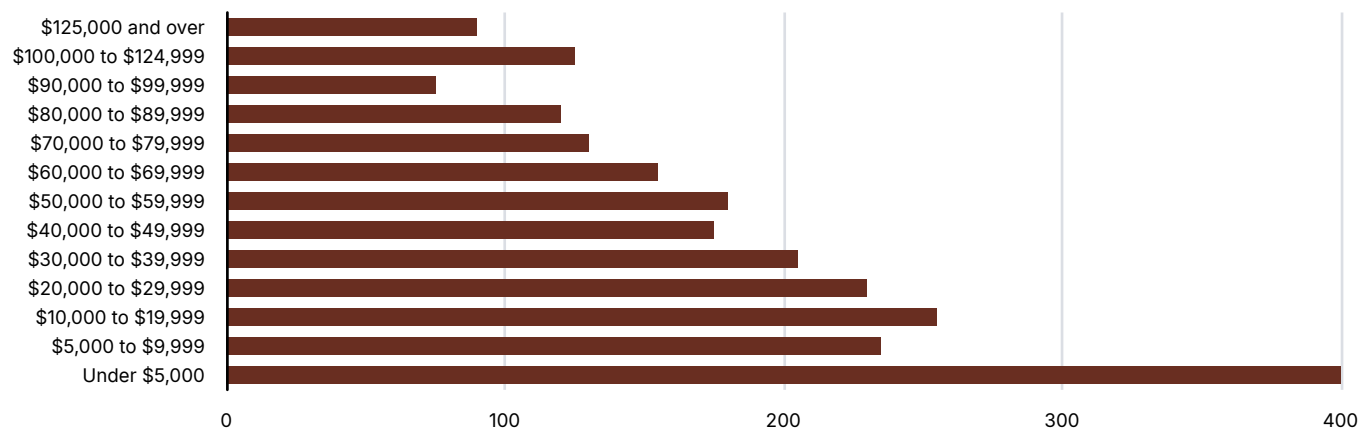
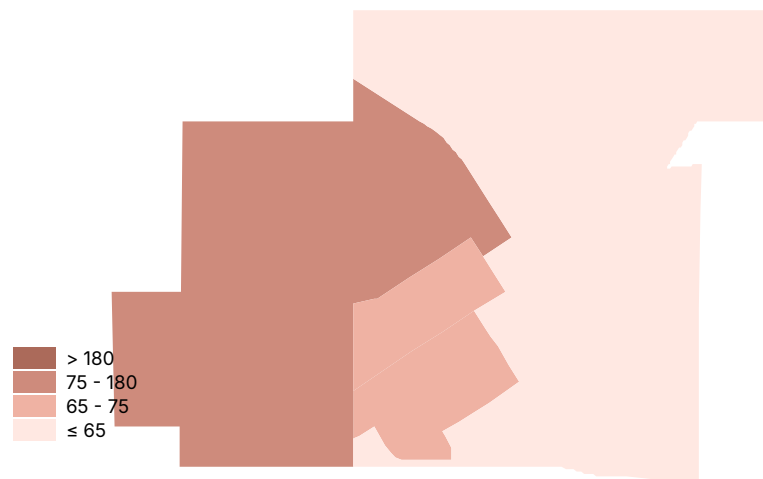


Figure 8.1: Shows individual employment income across income groups. It helps indicate how earnings from work are distributed among residents. (Nanton, 2021)¹

In 2021, individual employment income in Nanton was spread across a wide range of income groups, with more residents clustered at the lower end than at the top. The pattern is a snapshot rather than a trend, since only one year is provided. The largest group was under \$5,000, at 400 people. Other sizable groups included \$10,000 to \$19,999 at 255 and \$5,000 to \$9,999 at 235. Counts generally eased upward through the middle brackets, then thinned in the higher ranges, with 90 people at \$125,000 and over. This distribution suggests a broad income mix rather than concentration in a single bracket. Without another year for comparison, the main takeaway is the uneven spread across income levels in 2021.



In Nanton in 2021, individual employment income was spread across a wide range, with the largest group in the under \$5,000 bracket at 400 people. The next largest groups were \$10,000 to \$19,999 at 255 and \$5,000 to \$9,999 at 235. Counts then generally eased as income rose, though 125 people were still in the \$100,000 to \$124,999 range.

Figure 8.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Income Group Individual - Under \$5,000 (Nanton)¹

Labour Force Participation Rate

Nanton’s labour force participation rate was 64.2% in 2021, up from 62.6% in 2016 and 63.2% in 2011. The five-year gain was 2.56%, indicating a higher share of working-age residents engaged in the labour market.

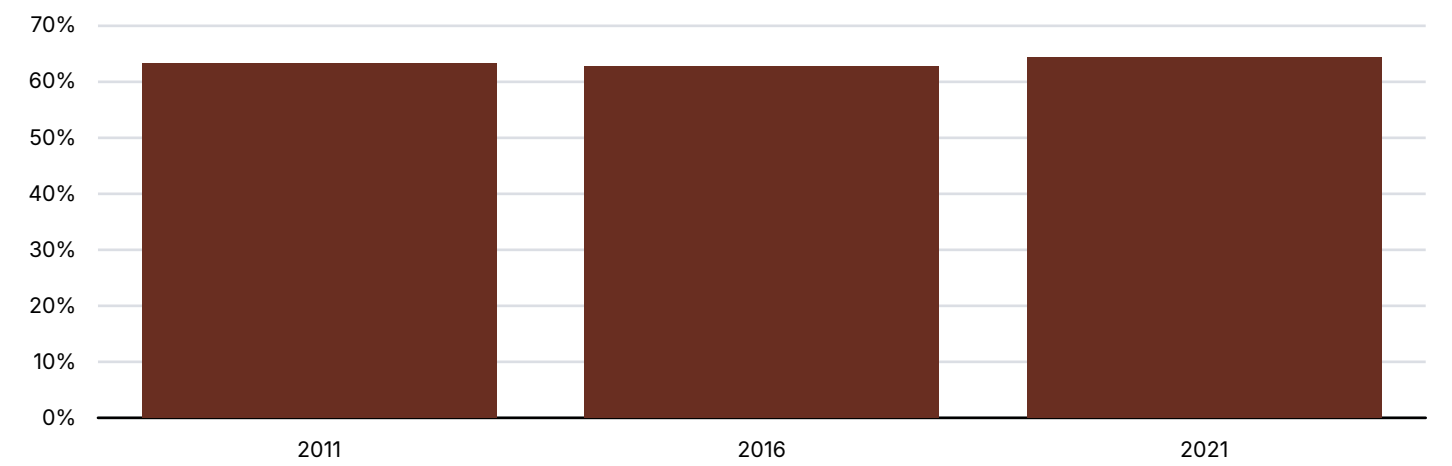
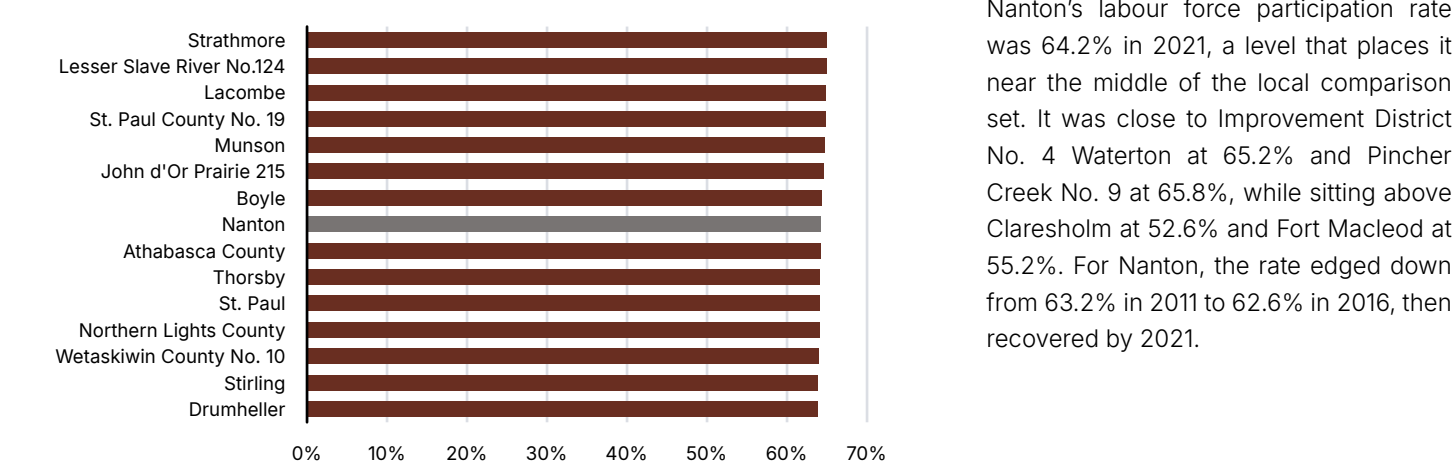


Figure 9.1: Shows the share of the working-age population that is employed or actively looking for work. It helps indicate the level of labour market engagement. (Nanton, 2011-2021)¹

Nanton’s labour force participation rate was fairly steady across the 2011 to 2021 period, with only a small dip before a modest recovery. In 2011, the rate stood at 63.2%, edging down to 62.6% in 2016. By 2021, it had risen to 64.2%, the highest of the three Census years shown. That means the rate was 1.6 percentage points above its 2016 level and 1.0 point above 2011. The pattern suggests labour market engagement in Nanton remained stable over the decade, with a recent upward move after a slight mid-period decline.



Nanton’s labour force participation rate was 64.2% in 2021, a level that places it near the middle of the local comparison set. It was close to Improvement District No. 4 Waterton at 65.2% and Pincher Creek No. 9 at 65.8%, while sitting above Claresholm at 52.6% and Fort Macleod at 55.2%. For Nanton, the rate edged down from 63.2% in 2011 to 62.6% in 2016, then recovered by 2021.

Figure 9.2: Comparison of Labour Force Participation Rate with other locations (Nanton, 2021)¹

Labour Force Status

In Nanton, employed residents remained the largest labour force group at 1,045 in 2021, up from 1,000 in 2016. Unemployment nearly doubled to 105, while those not in the labour force edged up to 640.

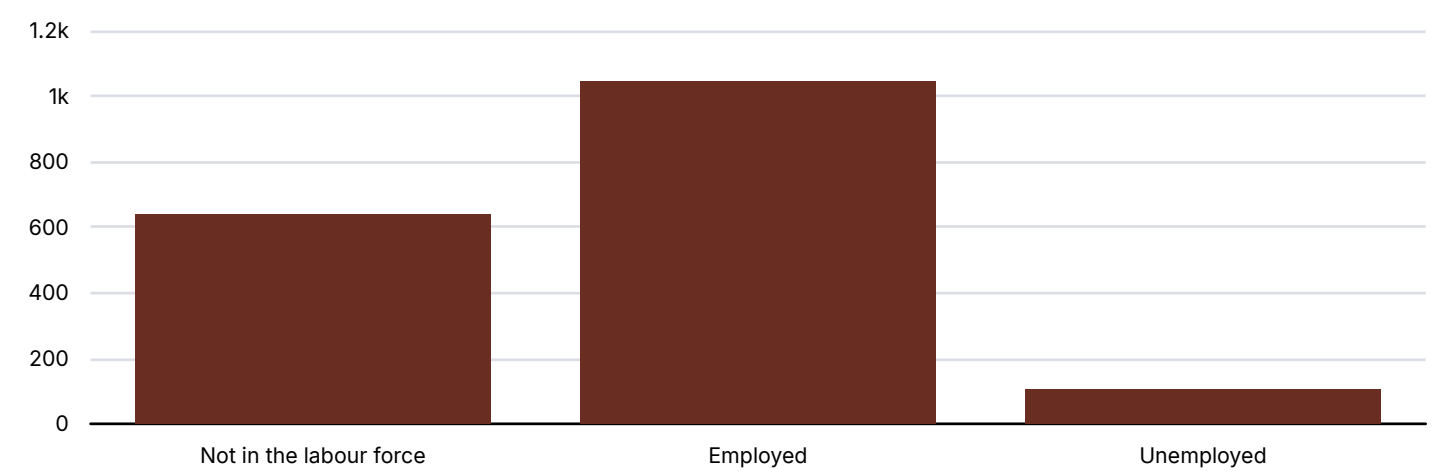


Figure 10.1: Shows whether residents are employed, unemployed, or not in the labour force. It helps indicate how people are participating in the labour market. (Nanton, 2021)¹

In 2021, Nanton’s labour force status profile for residents aged 15 and over was dominated by employment. There were 1,045 employed people, compared with 640 who were not in the labour force and 105 who were unemployed. The gap between employed residents and the other two groups was substantial, with employment accounting for the largest share of the local labour market picture. With only one year of data, no time trend can be shown here. The snapshot suggests a labour force that was active, while a smaller group remained outside it and a limited number were seeking work. Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profile.

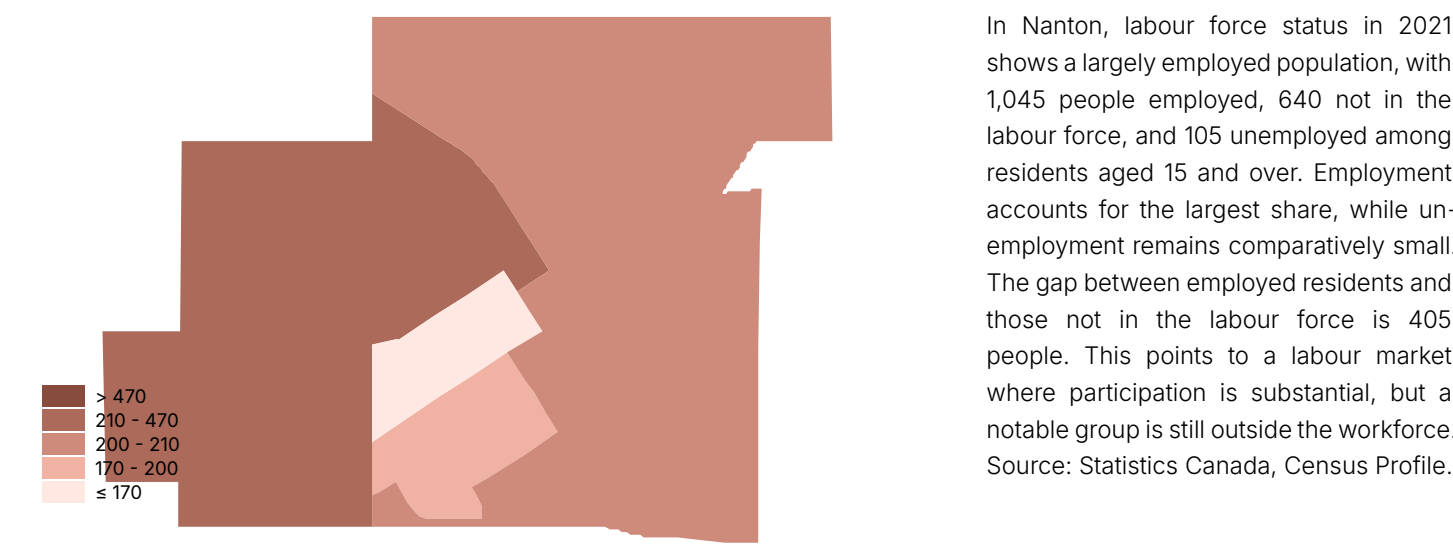


Figure 10.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Labour Force Status - Employed (Nanton)¹

Work Activity

In Nanton, the largest group in 2021 did not work, at 695 people, up 31.1% from 2016. Those working part year and/or part time numbered 585, while full-year full-time workers fell to 515.

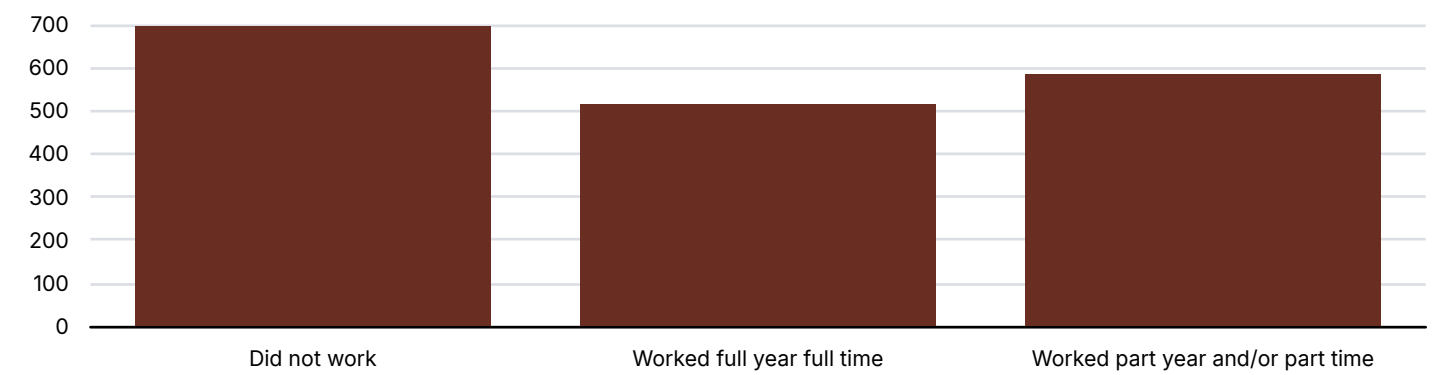


Figure 11.1: Shows the amount of work activity people had during the reference period. It helps indicate attachment to work over the year, not just at a single point in time. (Nanton, 2021)¹

In Nanton, work activity in 2021 shows a shift away from steady full-year, full-time employment and toward either limited work or no work at all among people aged 15 and over. The number who did not work reached 695, up 31.1% over five years. Those who worked full year full time fell to 515, down 11.2%. The part year and/or part time group was 585, edging up 0.9%. The pattern points to weaker attachment to full-time work over the period.

In Nanton, 2021 work activity among people aged 15 and over was split fairly evenly across the three categories, with no-work status the largest group. 695 people did not work, 515 worked full year full time, and 585 worked part year and/or part time. Over five years, not working rose 31.1%, while full-year full-time work fell 11.2%. That pattern points to a local profile with a sizable share outside full-time year-round employment, alongside a substantial group with some work attachment. The data suggest work activity in Nanton was mixed rather than dominated by one single pattern.



Figure 11.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Work Activity - Did not work (Nanton)¹

Employed Residents by Occupation

In Nanton, trades, transport and equipment operators remained the largest occupation group at 275 people in 2021, while natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations grew fastest, reaching 115 people, up 187.5% since 2016.

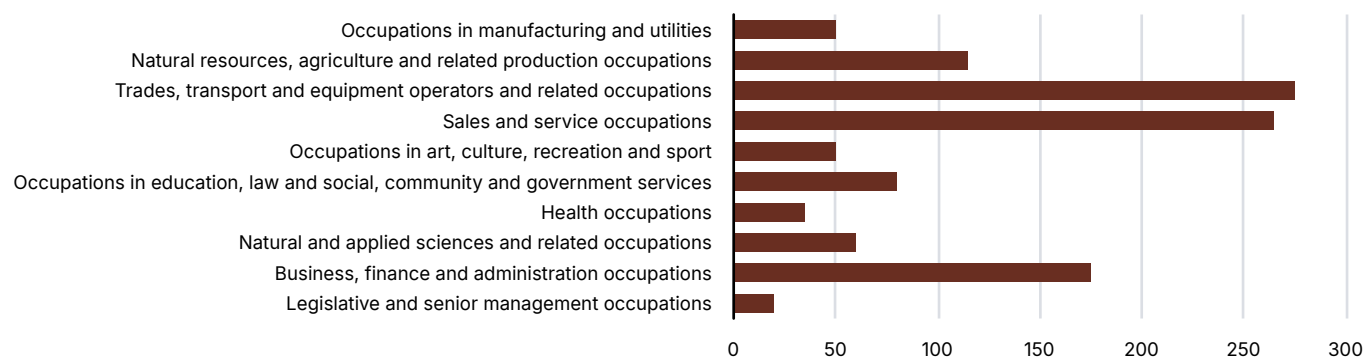


Figure 12.1: Shows the occupations held by employed residents. It helps indicate the community's skill mix and the kinds of work people do. (Nanton, 2021)¹

In 2021, Nanton's employed residents were concentrated in trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations, at 275 people, and sales and service occupations, at 265. Business, finance and administration occupations followed at 175. The strongest five-year gains were in natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations, up 187.5%, and natural and applied sciences, up 140%, while legislative and senior management occupations fell 88.6%.

In Nanton, employed residents in 2021 were concentrated in trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations, at 275 people, and in sales and service occupations, at 265. Business, finance and administration followed with 175, while natural resources, agriculture and related production accounted for 115. The mix suggests a workforce anchored in practical service and trade roles, with smaller shares in management, health, and manufacturing. Over five years, agriculture and sciences grew fastest, while senior management declined sharply.



Figure 12.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Occupation - Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations (Nanton)¹

Data Sources

1. Statistics Canada, Census Profile. Published in Dec 15, 2022.
2. Statistics Canada, Business Register. Published in Jun 1, 2025.
3. Statistics Canada, Business Register; Localintel, Employment by Industry Estimates of Census Areas. Published in Mar 13, 2026.

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