# Labour market experiences of Inuit: Key findings from the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey

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More than 8 in 10 (84%) of Inuit 15 years and older living in Inuit Nunangat had participated in harvesting activities and making handicrafts such as clothing, footwear or artwork, according to the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). One in five in Inuit Nunangat had done these activities for money or to supplement their income.

Labour market experiences are important to economic well-being, not only of individuals but also of families and communities. The APS provides comprehensive labour market information about Inuit (the number employed, not employed, not in the labour force), and also serves as a source of information about the unique characteristics and experiences of Inuit workers, including information about other labour activities that can contribute to economic well-being, such as harvesting activities.

Data from the 2017 APS are now available, marking the fifth cycle of this comprehensive national survey of Inuit, Métis and First Nations people living off reserve aged 15 and older. The APS provides data on a wide range of topics including labour, education, language, housing and health to inform policy and programming activities aimed at improving the well-being of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis, and Inuit.

A number of Indigenous organizations and people played a key role in either the development or testing of the survey over the five cycles of the APS. New content for the 2017 APS questionnaire was extensively tested with First Nations, Métis and Inuit respondents before it was finalized. Indigenous people were hired as interviewers and guides during data collection. As well, various National Indigenous Organizations worked with Statistics Canada to promote participation in the APS, and to review analytical findings.

## Employment rate is higher outside Inuit Nunangat

According to the 2016 Census, there were 65,025 Inuit in Canada. Close to three-quarters (73%) lived in Inuit Nunangat, with 46% in Nunavut, 18% in Nunavik, 5% in the Inuvialuit Region, and 4% in Nunatsiavut. The average age of Inuit in 2016 was 28 years old, significantly younger than that of the non-Aboriginal population average of 41 years.

Employment rates varied by age group, with 58% of core working age adults, 36% of youth aged 15 to 24 and 39% of adults aged 55 and older being employed.

The share of core working age Inuit (aged 25 to 54) who were employed was higher outside Inuit Nunangat (64%) than within (56%). There were also differences across the regions within Inuit Nunangat. The share of core working age Inuit who were employed ranged from 49% in Nunatsiavut and 53% in Nunavut, to 61% in the Inuvialuit Region and 64% in Nunavik.

Most employed Inuit (79%) worked a permanent job. Of the 21% that worked a non-permanent job, 4%[E] worked a seasonal job; 7% worked a temporary, term, or contract job; 9% worked a casual job; and the remainder worked a job that was not permanent in some other way.

## More than one in three self-employed Inuit owns an incorporated business

About 6% of all employed Inuit in 2017 were self-employed. More than one in three (36%) self-employed Inuit owned an incorporated business and one in four (26%) had hired employees. The leading reason Inuit chose self-employment was for the freedom or independence that came with self-employment (34%[E]).

## Over half of Inuit hunt, fish or trap

There are other labour activities that can contribute to economic well-being that may not be captured through conventional labour market measures. To collect information on these, the APS asked about hunting, fishing or trapping; gathering wild plants, for example berries, rice or sweet grass; making clothing or footwear; and making carvings, drawings, jewellery or other kinds of artwork. About three-quarters (78%) of Inuit reported participating in at least one of these activities in the past year. A larger share of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat (84%) participated in these activities, compared with those outside of Inuit Nunangat (62%).

Over half (56%) of Inuit hunted, fished or trapped in the previous year, compared with 42% who had gathered wild plants, 27% who made clothing or footwear, and 18% who made carvings, drawings, jewellery or other kinds of artwork.

Participation in some activities varied by Inuit Nunangat region. Participation in hunting, fishing or trapping was higher among Inuit in Nunatsiavut, Nunavik and Nunavut than among those in the Inuvialuit Region. Inuit in Nunatsiavut and Nunavik were more likely to have gathered wild plants than those in Inuvialuit Region and Nunavut. Inuit in Nunatsiavut were less likely to have made clothes or footwear than those in other regions. Participation in the above activities was lower among Inuit outside Inuit Nunangat than within.

About one in six (16%) Inuit aged 15 and older reported that they had participated in these activities for money or to supplement their income.

## One in five employed Inuit works part time

Some people choose to work part time by personal preference, or because they are caring for children or attending school. Others work part time because they cannot find full-time work, often due to economic or business conditions.

The 2017 APS found that about one in five employed Inuit worked part time. Youth aged 15 to 24 were the most likely to work part time (40%), followed by Inuit aged 55 and older (24%). People in the core working ages of 25 to 54 were the least likely to work part time (15%). Women (25%) were more likely to work part time than men (17%).

About half (51%) of youth working part time reported doing so because they were going to school. The majority (56%) of core working age adults working part time were doing so because full-time work was not available. This varied by Inuit Nunangat region, with a low of 43% in Nunavik and a high of 61% in the Inuvialuit Region.

## A shortage of jobs the most commonly cited barrier to finding employment

When asked about various barriers to employment, 83% of unemployed Inuit reported that a shortage of jobs had caused them difficulty in finding work. More men (88%) cited a shortage of jobs as a barrier to finding work than women (78%). Within Inuit Nunangat, a smaller share in Nunavut reported a shortage of jobs (83%) than in Nunatsiavut (96%) and the Inuvialuit Region (93%). More than half (52%) of unemployed Inuit also said that not having enough education or training for available jobs had caused them difficulty. This was higher in Nunavut (60%) and the Inuvialuit Region (56%) than in Nunatsiavut (35%) and Nunavik (40%).

When asked what would help them most to find a job, 40% of unemployed Inuit reported that an increase in available work (more jobs) would help them most. Education and training were also identified as key facilitators to finding work, with 18% reporting that skills training would help them most, and 13% reporting more education.

## Inuit in Inuit Nunangat are more likely to look for work through community radio and bulletin boards than by searching the Internet

Among those looking for work, 63% reported that they had looked for work by contacting potential employers directly and 30% reported that they had searched the Internet for work. It is important to note that a smaller percentage of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat (68%) than outside Inuit Nunangat (91%) had Internet access at home.

Within Inuit Nunangat, use of community boards or radio was more common than searching the Internet. For example, more than half (52%) of unemployed Inuit in Nunatsiavut and 33% of those in Nunavik indicated looking for work using community bulletin boards or community radio.

## One in five Inuit out of the labour force wants to work

People who are not employed and not actively looking for work are considered to be out of the labour force. People may be out of the labour force because they are retired, are going to school, are caring for children or other family members, or have a chronic illness or disability. Others may not be in the labour force because, while they want to work, they are not actively looking for work as they believe no work is available. The main reasons given by Inuit for not being in the labour force despite wanting to work included believing no work was available (24%), caring for their children (13%[E]), and having an illness or disability (13%[E]).

In 2017, 37% of Inuit were out of the labour force, 23% of whom wanted to work. Of those, one-quarter believed that no work was available. Inuit in small communities were more than twice as likely as those in large communities to believe that no work was available (35% versus 16%[E]). Among Inuit women who said they would like to work but did not look for work, 22%[E] did so because they needed to care for their children. A larger share of core working age women (29%[E]) reported this than young Inuit women (17%[E]).

When asked what would help most to find a job, 44% reported that an increase in the number of available jobs would help most; 35% said skills training; and 26% said more academic education. Close to one in five (19%) Inuit women said child care assistance would help them find work.

## Most Inuit help out in their community at least once per month

Seven in ten (72%) Inuit said they had helped out in their community at least once per month in the past 12 months. One in four (25%) Inuit aged 15 and older had volunteered for a group or organization at least once per month. In addition, two-thirds (68%) reported helping people out on their own, not on behalf of an organization, for example, by caring for someone's home, driving someone to an appointment, visiting the elderly, shovelling snow or doing unpaid babysitting.

### *Note to readers*

*This article features analysis based on data from the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) found in the booklet "Labour market experiences of Inuit: Key findings from the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey." The APS is a national survey of the Aboriginal identity population aged 15 and older living in private dwellings, excluding people living on Indian reserves and settlements and in certain First Nations communities in Yukon and the Northwest Territories. The APS response rate was 76%, yielding a sample of approximately 24,000 Aboriginal respondents.*

*Estimates with coefficients of variation greater than 16.6% but less than or equal to 33.3% should be interpreted with caution. These estimates are presented with an "E" throughout the text.*

*The 2017 APS also included the Nunavut Inuit Supplement (APS-NIS). The 2017 APS–NIS was designed to learn more about the availability, interest and level of preparedness for government employment of Inuit enrolled under the Nunavut Agreement (also known as Nunavut Inuit). Its target population was Nunavut Inuit aged 15 years and older living in private dwellings and comprised a large supplementary sample as well as an additional set of questions. The APS-NIS was released as a separate analytical file from the APS due to its different target population, objectives, sampling design and weighting strategies.*

**Available tables: 41-10-0012-01 to 41-10-0019-01 .**

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3250.**

The booklet "Labour market experiences of Inuit: Key findings from the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey" is now available as part of the publication *Aboriginal Peoples Survey* (**89-653-X**). The infographic "Harvesting and handicraft activities among Inuit: Findings from the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey" and the data visualization product "Labour market experiences of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit, Canada, 2017: Methods used to look for work, reasons for difficulty finding work, and things that would help find work" are also now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; **STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca**) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; **STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca**).