

Study: Measuring the gig economy in Canada using administrative data

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Using data from the Canadian Employer-Employee Dynamic Database and the 2016 Census of Population, a new study found that the share of gig workers among all Canadian workers aged 15 and older increased from almost 1 million workers (5.5%) in 2005 to about 1.7 million workers (8.2%) in 2016. The study was motivated by an often-expressed concern that technology and globalization are rapidly changing the nature of employment and work, and these changes manifest themselves in the growing number of individuals in non-traditional work arrangements. The study introduced a definition of gig workers in Canada based on various Canadian administrative sources, including individual and corporate tax returns.

Gig workers are defined as unincorporated self-employed workers who enter into various contracts with firms or individuals to complete a specific task or to work for a specific period of time. This includes unincorporated self-employed freelancers and on-demand workers hired for jobs mediated through online platforms such as Uber, TaskRabbit, Upwork, Fiverr and Freelancer.

The share of gig workers among all workers increased sharply twice from 2005 to 2016. The first increase corresponded to the 2008/2009 recession. The second increase was observed around 2012/2013. The study noted that this increase could be related to the proliferation of online platforms in Canada that started around that time.

The percentage of gig workers increased among both those who earned no wages or salaries and those who combined gig work with wages or salaries. More than half of all gig workers in 2016 combined gig work with wages or salaries from another job.

The estimated annual income of a typical gig worker was usually low. The median net gig income in 2016 was \$4,303. Roughly half of the people who entered gig work in a given year were not involved in this type of work the following year. However, about one-quarter remained gig workers for three or more years.

In 2016, 9.1% of all female workers and 7.2% of all male workers were identified as gig workers. The prevalence of gig workers in British Columbia was higher than in other regions of Canada. Workers in the bottom 40% of the annual income distribution were about twice as likely to be involved in gig work as other workers. Gig work was also more prevalent among immigrants than among Canadian-born workers.

The share of gig workers was the highest among workers whose main occupations were in arts, entertainment and recreation. The lowest share of gig workers was observed among workers whose main occupations were in manufacturing and utilities.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3901](#) and [5228](#).

The research paper "[Measuring the Gig Economy in Canada Using Administrative Data](#)," which is part of the *Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series* ([11F0019M](#)), is now available.

Also released today is an infographic titled, "[Canadian gig workers, 2016](#)," which is part of the series *Statistics Canada – Infographics* ([11-627-M](#)).

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca).

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