



Challenges and Opportunities in the gig economy in a post-COVID world

Investigating the interactions between gig workers and platforms

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An initiative by



Research partner



About the report

This report is the outcome of a research undertaken in partnership with The Asia Foundation by Sattva, during the period September 2021 to March 2022. This research aims to improve the understanding of the rapidly growing space of the platform gig economy which is estimated to triple in the next few years. Adopting a multi-stakeholder approach that includes—platforms, workers, and policymakers - the research explores the opportunities and challenges in the gig economy, especially in a post-COVID world, and highlights the myriad ways in which the key actors and decision makers can come together to solve these and enable growth of this exciting sector for sustainable and equitable job-creation.

Disclaimer

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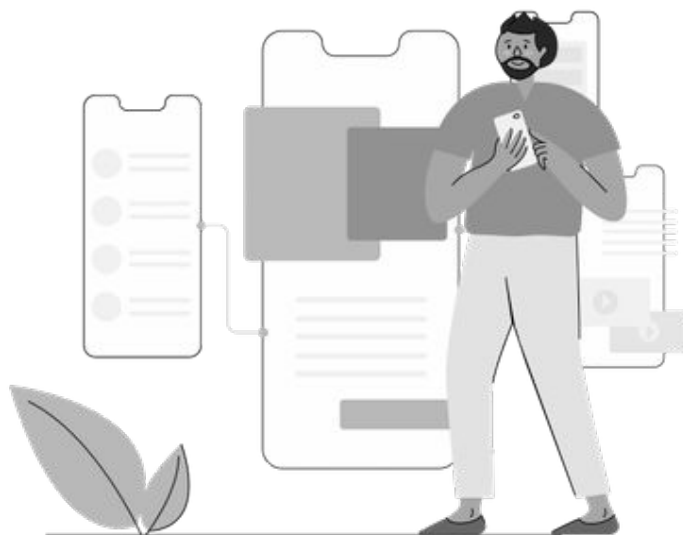
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About The Asia Foundation



The Asia Foundation

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Informed by six decades of experience and deep local expertise, its work across the region is focused on good governance, women's empowerment and gender equality, inclusive economic growth, environment and climate action, and regional and international relations. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through its network of offices in 18 Asia-Pacific countries and in Washington, D.C.

About Sattva



Sattva is a social impact research and consulting firm focused on developing scalable solutions for poverty alleviation. Over the past decade, Sattva has worked with foundations, philanthropists, companies, nonprofits, multilaterals and impact ecosystems in India, Africa, South and South-East Asia. We support clients end-to-end, covering support through rigorous research, strategy consulting, programme management, impact assessment and more, to deliver solutions at scale.





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Abbreviations

Acronym	Full Form
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CBO	Community Based Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CSS	Code on Social Security
EPF	Employee Provident Fund
ESIS	Employees' State Insurance Scheme
PoSH	Prevention of Sexual Harassment
NPS-Lite	National Pension Scheme - Lite
APY	Atal Pension Yojana
MFI	Micro-Finance Institution
NBFC	Non-Banking Financial Company
ESG	Environmental, Social, Governance
VC	Venture Capitalist
NSDC	National Skill Development Corporation

Executive Summary

One of the most noticeable transformation in today's way of working has come from the emergence of the gig- work model. Marking a transition from traditional employer-employee relationships, the gig economy has expanded rapidly and is expected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 17% by 2024.¹ Estimates suggest that the economy has the potential to employ up to 90 million people in India's non-farm economy and can contribute up to 1.25% to India's GDP.² This rapid growth in the gig economy's scope and popularity finds its basis in a range of factors that influence the behaviour of three key stakeholders—consumers, workers, and businesses.

For starters, India commands a huge demographic dividend and its young working population, like their global counterparts, is looking for increased flexibility and agency over its working style. Enabled by the upward trend of digitisation in India, a large proportion of the country's population, mostly urban is beginning to demand and access web or app-based services.³ For instance, between 2017 and 2021, the number of internet users grew from 384 million to 622 million, and is further expected to grow to 900+ million by 2025, with over 45% using internet for online transactions and 28% using it for online shopping.⁴ Along with generating a demand for these services, digitisation has also boosted the 'platform culture', with a plethora of digital platform-based companies and marketplace players to enter the gig economy. Low operational costs, tech-based onboarding and an evolving regulatory environment all further encourage growth in platform-based gig work in the country.⁵

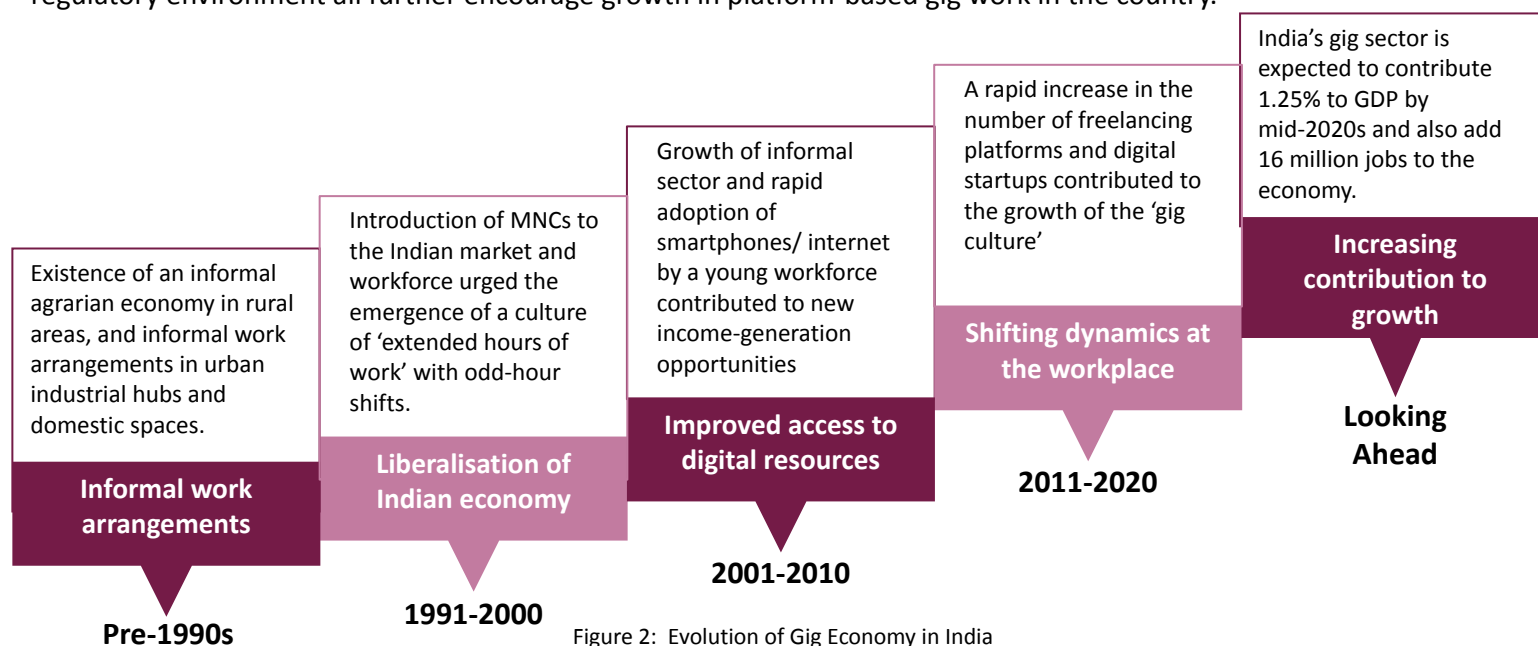


Figure 2: Evolution of Gig Economy in India

On the other hand, the gig economy has also attracted a high number of service providers—expected to be over eight million currently—who, unlike traditional employees in formal jobs, are referred to as independent contractors and are provided with flexibility and autonomy in their ways of working.⁶ Our research highlights that the possibility of higher pay than their previous job offered, as well as increased flexibility encourages workers to join the gig economy, with over 90% relying on such as their primary source of income.⁷ This reliance was only strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic, as India's unemployment rate increased from around 9% in March 2020 to over 23% in April 2020.⁸ This study also indicates that around a third of platform gig-workers joined their platforms after April 2020, largely owing to an absence of opportunities in the job market and low entry barriers in terms of skills needed.⁹

The growing nature of the gig economy and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic presented platforms and workers with not just opportunities, but also a host of challenges. To study these aspects in detail, Sattva in partnership with The Asia Foundation undertook this study to understand the challenges and opportunities for platforms and platform gig-workers especially the women workers in light of the disruption caused by the pandemic. The purpose of this study is to create an actionable knowledge product for the larger gig economy ecosystem and facilitate conversations between various stakeholders to create a more sustainable and inclusive gig work environment.

1. Sattva Consulting, [Understanding the impact of digital assets on women in the informal service sector](#), pp. 1. Accessed 9 Sep 2021.

2. IBEF, 05 May 2021, ["Emergence of India's Gig Economy"](#). Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

3. Augustinraj, Jain and et al., 30 Mar 2021, ["Unlocking Gig Economy in India"](#). Boston Consulting Group. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

4. Pathak and Jha, 1 Aug 2019, ["India: India And The Gig Economy"](#), Indus Law, Mondaq. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

5. KANTAR, June 2021, ["Internet Adoption in India"](#). 9. Ibid 6 10. Ibid 6 11. Sattva gig-workers' survey analysis 12. ["Unemployment Rate in India"](#), CMIE. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

6. Ibid 3

7. Ibid 3

8. Sattva gig-workers' survey analysis

9. ["Unemployment Rate in India"](#), CMIE. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

We identified the following key challenges faced by platforms and platform gig-workers across the life-cycle of engagement between the two entities:

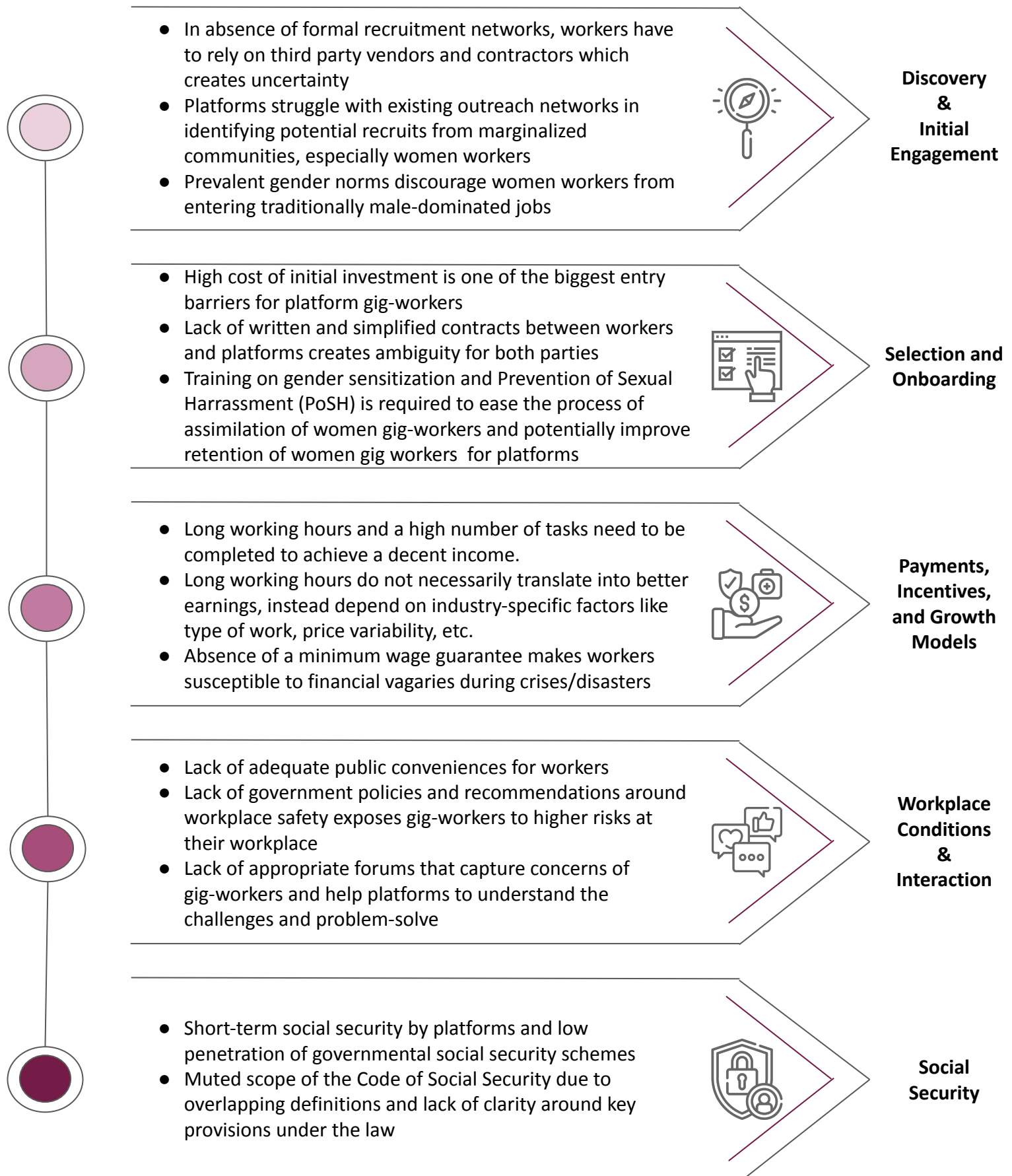


Figure 3: Challenges across different stages of a platform gig-workers life cycle

To address the challenges called out in this study, we have identified a few recommendations which would require collaboration from diverse stakeholders, while some of them may need further deliberation. These recommendations should be considered as opportunities for key stakeholders to provide a more sustainable gig economy with greater inclusion and facilitate the setting up of a level playing field for all stakeholders, which can accelerate the economy's growth by providing safe income opportunities to gig workers and by providing platforms with access to newer markets and consumer groups.

Overall Recommendations

Enabling platforms in overcoming challenges	Stakeholders involved in implementation	Proof of concept
Enable monetary incentives (tax, subsidies, grants, etc.) and preferential business to platforms that hire more women workers	Governments, Platforms	Atmanirbhar Package 3.0 ¹⁰
Enable platforms to partner with RWAs to provide sanitation facilities to platform workers under the Swachh RWA Guidelines to ease the burden on platforms	RWAs	Swachh RWA Guidelines, ¹¹ New York Bill ¹²
Inculcate an ESG lens in the investment process, incentivising more practices to improve workplace conditions will encourage innovation among platforms for easing working conditions of gig workers	Civil society, VCs, investors	Nordea's STARS strategy to enable sustainable investing ¹³
Liaison with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to connect women with platforms to overcome the challenges in recruiting women platform workers	Philanthropies, CBOs, NGOs	Even Cargo identifies women from poor families and provides necessary training and equipment
Adopt gender-inclusive language and imagery in advertisements and external communication to normalize participation of women platform gig-workers enabling platforms to expand markets and attract more women customers	Platforms	Urban Company features women in its advertisements
Facilitate onboarding of workers onto the e-shram portal through CSCs and CBOs to improve the workers' access to and adoption of existing government schemes and reduce the burden on platforms to provide social security	CSOs, CBOs	Haqdarshaq helped over 10,000 workers register on e-Shram
Localize services to eliminate the risks of safety and the lack of public amenities that act as a challenge to workers' well-being in the gig economy	Platforms, CBOs, NGOs	Even Cargo, Urban Company

Table 1: Enabling platforms in overcoming challenges

10. Ghosh, M., 12 Nov 2020, "[Govt Will Give Incentives For Hiring Employees: Rs 3 Trillion Emergency Loan For 26 Sectors Announced](#)", [trak.in](#). Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

11. "[Swachh RWAs: Standard Operating Procedures](#)", Ministry of Urban Development. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

12. "[New York City Council Passes Six Bills Protecting Gig Economy Delivery Workers](#)", 30 Sep 2021, [Ogletree Deakins](#). Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

13. Jenssen, H., "[Sustainable Investing in the Gig Economy The Gig Economy is good for business, but is it good for giggers?](#)", Nordea Asset Management. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

Enabling workers in overcoming challenges	Stakeholders involved in implementation	Proof of concept
Remove the ambiguity in and clarify the definitions of ‘platform workers’, ‘platform gig workers’, and ‘unorganised workforce’ in the Code on Social Security, 2020	Policymakers, Governments	Gig and Platform workers have been included in Code of Social Security, 2020
Provide relevant financing options and concessional capital to workers in the form of micro-financing schemes and shared subsidy programs	Banks, MFIs, NBFCs	KarmaLife, ¹⁴ Portify ¹⁵
Leverage platform worker data to register workers active on platforms	Government, Worker Unions, Platforms	Employers auto enrolling workers on mandatory schemes like EPF
Consider piloting women-to-women services in male dominated sectors to incentivise more women to take up the role, enabling platforms to expand markets and attract more women customers	Platforms	Urban Company has women workers to cater to women customers
Provide platform gig workers with fair and simple contracts in local languages, elaborating financial and ethical clauses clearly to reduce worker stress and improve better workers perception of platforms	Platforms	Swiggy and Zomato’s multilingual contracts ¹⁶
Explore community-based training to help lower barriers for women platform gig-workers, while solving for biased social norms, thus aiding platforms in hiring women workers	CSOs, Nonprofits	Even Cargo ¹⁷
Supplement video-based training methods with relevant explanations and a feedback loop for query redressal to help workers gain improved clarity	CSOs, skilling organizations	Even Cargo ¹⁸
Institutionalise additional training modules, like those on gender sensitization and PoSH in the workplace, thus improving the interactions between gig-workers, especially between men and women gig workers	Platforms, CSOs, Nonprofits	Uber and Manas Foundation ¹⁹
Conduct refresher trainings on a regular basis to improve worker earnings, while making them employable for the long-term	Platforms	Uber’s refresher training on soft-skills ²⁰
Provide more information on payments, incentives, and commission modalities with the workers to create a transparent work environment	Platforms, Workers’ Rights’ Groups	-
Transition more platform gig-workers to a ‘fixed pay plus algorithm-driven-incentive’ model	Platforms, Investors, Philanthropies	Even Cargo, Rapido
Establish ‘weekly login hours’-based milestones instead of ‘daily task’-based payments to provide income stability to workers	Platforms, Investors, Philanthropies	Zomato premium fleet delivery pilot ²¹
Strengthen flexibility and the element of choice in available service offerings to successfully attract and retain more women workers	Platforms	Even Cargo, ²² Urban Company ²³

Table 2: Enabling workers to overcome challenges

14. Anand, M., 23 Jun 2020, “[Meet KarmaLife, bringing financial services to gig-workers in India](#)”, Catalyst Fund. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

15. Palmer, M., 13 May 2019, “[Fintech for gig-workers is the next big untapped market](#)”, Sifted. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

16. “[Fairwork India Ratings 2021: labor Standards in the Platform Economy](#)”, Fairwork. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

17. Saxena, A., 11 Mar 2022, “[Delivering Equality! Delhi-Based Startup Becomes India’s First All-Women Logistics Company](#)”, The Logical Indian. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

18. Ibid

19. “[Uber to impart gender sensitization to one lakh drivers by 2021-end](#)”, 8 Mar 2021. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

20. “[Platform-Led Upskilling](#)”, Caribou Digital. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

21. Salman S.H, 17 Dec 2020, “[Exclusive: Zomato Tests New Compensation Model For Delivery Partners With Minimum Guarantee Pay](#)”, Inc42. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

22. Saxena, A., 11 Mar 2022, “[Delivering Equality! Delhi-Based Startup Becomes India’s First All-Women Logistics Company](#)”, The Logical Indian. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

23. BW Online Bureau, 24 Aug 2020, “[85% Women Feel Flexibility And Autonomy Are The Most Attractive Features In Gig Economy](#)”, Business World. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

About the Study

Research Background, Objectives and Scope

India's gig economy is set to triple, in terms of employment, over the next three to four years to 24 million jobs from the existing eight million.²⁴ Amidst shifts in ways of working with the young workforce looking for flexibility and agency over their way of working, digital platforms have emerged as the new enablers for employment creation.²⁵ Gig work, is moreover, also providing increased opportunity to women workers due to the flexibility to schedule their work hours, and offering work in geographies of choice. Recent studies suggest that this digital revolution will address the inefficiencies of the unorganized sector, formalize work engagements and increase employment/income-generation opportunities for all. The future of work involves remote, digitized interactions, and non-traditional working arrangements with Gig work making it a reality.²⁶

Having said that, gig-work, although flexible and attractive, has its limitations like access to skills and technical know-how necessary to advance in a job, the undefined or uncertain nature of employment, unstable policy support, lack of social security, etc. Therefore, to build ecosystem knowledge of the existing policy landscape and the manner in which it either hampers or enables gig-work, from the perspective of both platforms and platform gig-workers, Sattva, in collaboration with The Asia Foundation conducted a landscape study. The key objectives were framed as follows:

- Understand the ways in which the current policy, regulatory, and social security landscape impacts the sustainability and growth of platforms and platform gig-workers in post-COVID India.
- Identify ways to accelerate safe, sustainable and inclusive growth of the gig economy, while also ensuring dignified income generation opportunities for platform gig-workers, including women.

Over the span of seven months (Sept 2021 - March 2022), the research team conducted desk based research, key informant interviews (with key stakeholders in the space ranging from platform representatives, workers' rights' groups, to ecosystem and policy experts), and a round table discussion with distinguished experts in the field to share initial research findings. Additionally, we also executed a mixed-methods survey with over 600 platform gig-workers across the cities of Bangalore (tier-1) and Lucknow (tier-2), specifically focusing on workers in three industries:

- Transport and Logistics Services
- Food and Beverage delivery Services
- Personal and Homecare Services

24. Boston Consulting Group, [Unlocking the Potential of the Gig Economy in India](#), pp. 24. Accessed 9 Sep 2021.

25. Moonga, P. 16 Jan 2020, "[Gig Economy – Shaping the Future of Work](#)", Invest India. Accessed 9 Sep 2021.

26. World Economic Forum. (2020, October). [The Future of Jobs Report 2020](#). Accessed 9 Sep 2021.

Framework and Methodology

The research framework adopted here takes off from the lifecycle of a platform and gig-worker's interaction—from identifying potential platforms/ workers, to the on-boarding process, to finally, payments/ remunerations incentives and relevant benefits. This framework is summarised below:

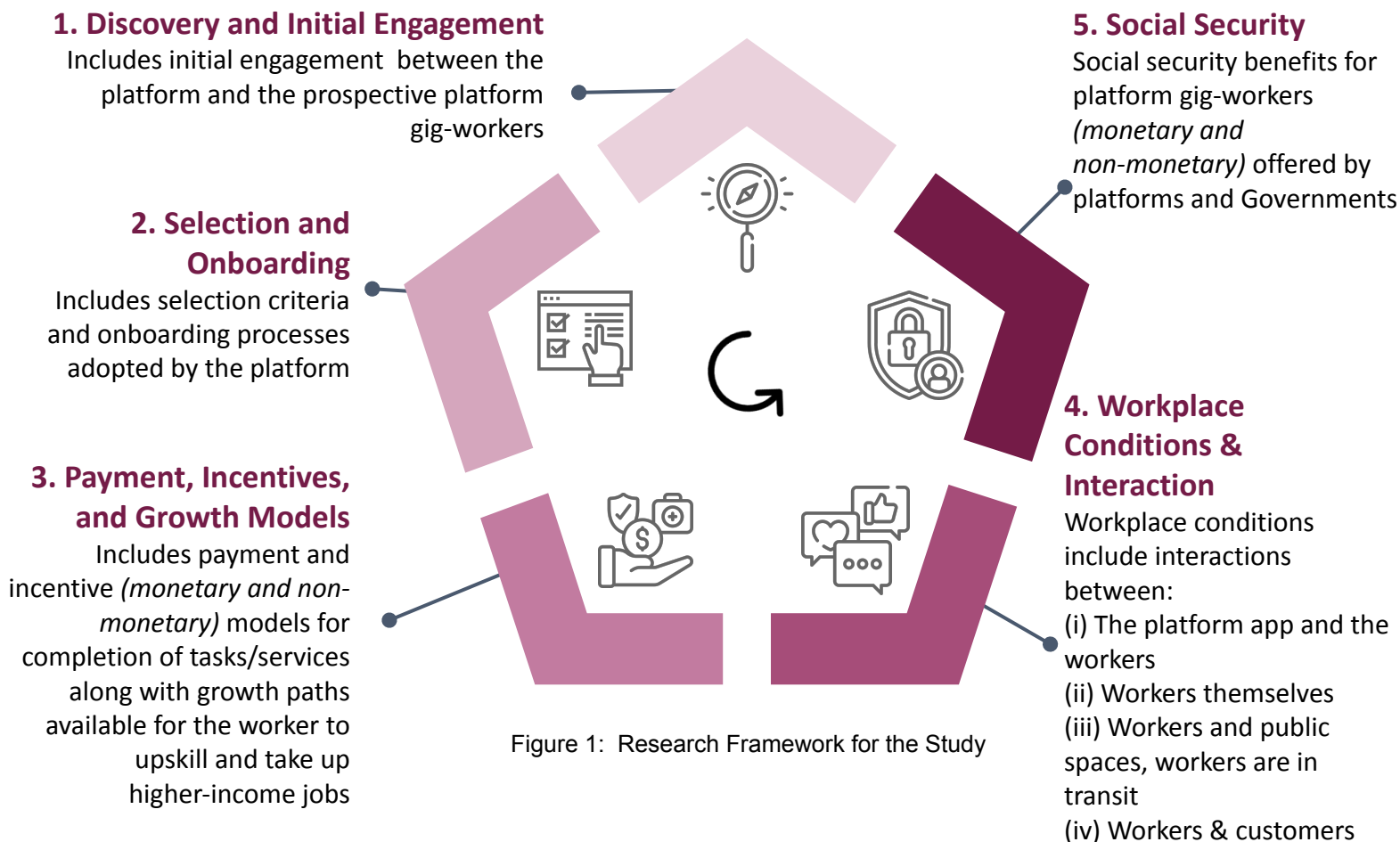


Figure 1: Research Framework for the Study

Study Methodology

The research used a combination of primary and secondary methods to collect and synthesize data across the range of stakeholders through qualitative and quantitative inputs. The research methodology included:

- **Secondary research** on the structure of the gig economy, dominant industries/sectors, operating models, growth and adoption trends, market trends in the economy, potential and opportunities for growth, gaps and the impact (short-term and long-term) of COVID-19 on each stakeholder (platform gig-workers, platform owners, service providers/ partners and policy framers/ implementers), the policy ecosystem and its shortfalls, the potential for increased integration of women and other identified marginalised communities (emerging during the course of the study), etc.
- **Desk review** of private sector and civil society initiatives to enable platform gig-workers; policies and schemes that enable platform gig-workers to overcome identified challenges.
- **Primary research**, conducted through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Mixed-Method Surveys using structured qualitative and quantitative questionnaires to collect data from both platforms and platform gig-workers.

Data collection approach

The study focuses on **three gig economy sectors, selected based on the existing literature review:**

Personal & Homecare Services	Transport & Logistics Services	Food & Beverage Delivery Services
Eg: Urban Company, Housejoy	Eg: Uber, Ola, Blowhorn, Even Cargo	Eg: Swiggy, Zomato, Dunzo, Zepto

Rationale for selection: Sectors that require similar skill sets, have labor-intensive work and usually include a similar socio-economic profile of workers were selected. Also, the motivations to join and challenges faced are similar across these sectors. This allows a greater generalizability of findings, which translate into richer insights and recommendations that are meaningful to the wider ecosystem.

Sampling and stakeholders engaged

A multi-stakeholder approach was adopted to capture diverse perspectives and voices. Through the course of this study, **13 Key Informant Interviews** were conducted with gig platform representatives, workers’ rights’ groups, Civil Society Organizations, policy experts and industry experts. Further, the study conducted quantitative surveys with **618** platform gig-workers working across the selected sectors. Additionally, Sattva held **1 closed roundtable discussion with various stakeholders** to validate initial findings and strengthen recommendations emerging from the study.

Primary data sources		Participants	Quantitative survey sampling split		
Understanding workers’ challenges	618 Quantitative Surveys	Male and female workers across (i) Transport and Logistic Services (ii) Food and Beverage Delivery Services (iii) Personal and Homecare Services	Geography	Bangalore	57%
	2 In-depth interviews	Workers’ Rights groups and Worker unions		Lucknow	43%
Understanding opportunities for workers, platforms and the overall gig economy	10 In-depth interviews	Platform representatives, industry experts, policy experts	Gender	Transport and Logistics Services	
	1 Round-table	Platform representatives, industry experts, policy experts, workers’ rights groups		Male	94%
				Female	6%
	Food and Beverage Delivery				
	Male	99%			
	Female	1%			
Personal and Homecare Services					
Male	50%				
Female	50%				

Limitations of the study’s sampling -

- Only four platforms were involved in our in-depth interviews and only one platform connected us with their gig-workers, which limited our access to women workers in the Food and Beverage Delivery Services sector and Transport and Logistics Services sector.
- ~87% of women respondents in the survey work in the Personal and Homecare Services sector; around 10% of them work in the Transport and Logistics industry; and the remaining in the Food and Beverage Delivery industry.

Parameters used to analyze opportunities

Data and information from these primary survey was then collated and analyzed to distil insights and highlight challenges for different stakeholders in the economy as well as identify opportunities for different actors. Furthermore, in order to provide more insights on these opportunities, we have assessed them against three parameters, essentially evaluating them in terms of actionability (gauged by the '**Proof of Concept**' parameter), need (gauged by the '**Criticality**' parameter), and feasibility (gauged by the '**Time to Implement**' parameter).

Parameters	Definition	Approach
Proof of concept	Under this parameter, the actionability of the recommendation was evaluated by identifying relevant case studies in the ecosystem, implemented by businesses, governments, nonprofits, etc.	Using secondary research, we identified instances that substantiated the opportunities' feasibility and highlighted models for key actors to build upon.
Criticality	Under this parameter, the need and urgency of implementing the recommendation was measured and graded on a three-point scale of high, medium and low.	Using secondary research and expert conversations, we marked the recommendation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● High if it was for an urgent, but unaddressed, area that required immediate intervention;● Medium if it was for an area that had supporting structures in place but required attention; and● Low if it was for an area that is currently being addressed and only requires additional hands-on-deck.
Time to implement	Under this parameter, the time commitment required to implement the recommendation was measured and graded on a two-point scale of high and low.	Using secondary research and expert conversations, we marked the recommendation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● High if it was expected to take over two years to be implemented● Low, if it was expected to take less than two years to be implemented

Chapter 1: Introduction

Evolution of the Gig Economy

While ‘gig work’ is a fairly popular term now, the idea of performing short-term work by delivering on certain specific tasks is rooted in the early 20th century. More specifically, post the Great Depression in the United States, limited availability of job prospects gave rise to ‘temp agencies’ offering to match workers with employers on a short-term basis.²⁷

Fast forward to the invention of the internet and the dot-com boom, with websites such as Craigslist transforming this idea of ‘temp work’. The term ‘gig’ is often used to encapsulate a wide range of activities, ranging from part-time employment to ‘contract’ labor and on-demand services. Over the past few decades, several ‘types’ of online platforms have emerged catering to both businesses and customers directly, offering different type of ‘gig’ services. Despite the varying range of definitions, the number of people using ‘gig work’ for part-time and full-time employment continues to rise across the world every year.

In India, the gig economy has its roots in informal work arrangements in the rural agrarian economy, urban industrial hubs and domestic spaces. Rapid adoption of smartphones and the internet, and emergence of platforms that connect workers to work opportunities has contributed to such alternative income-generation streams.

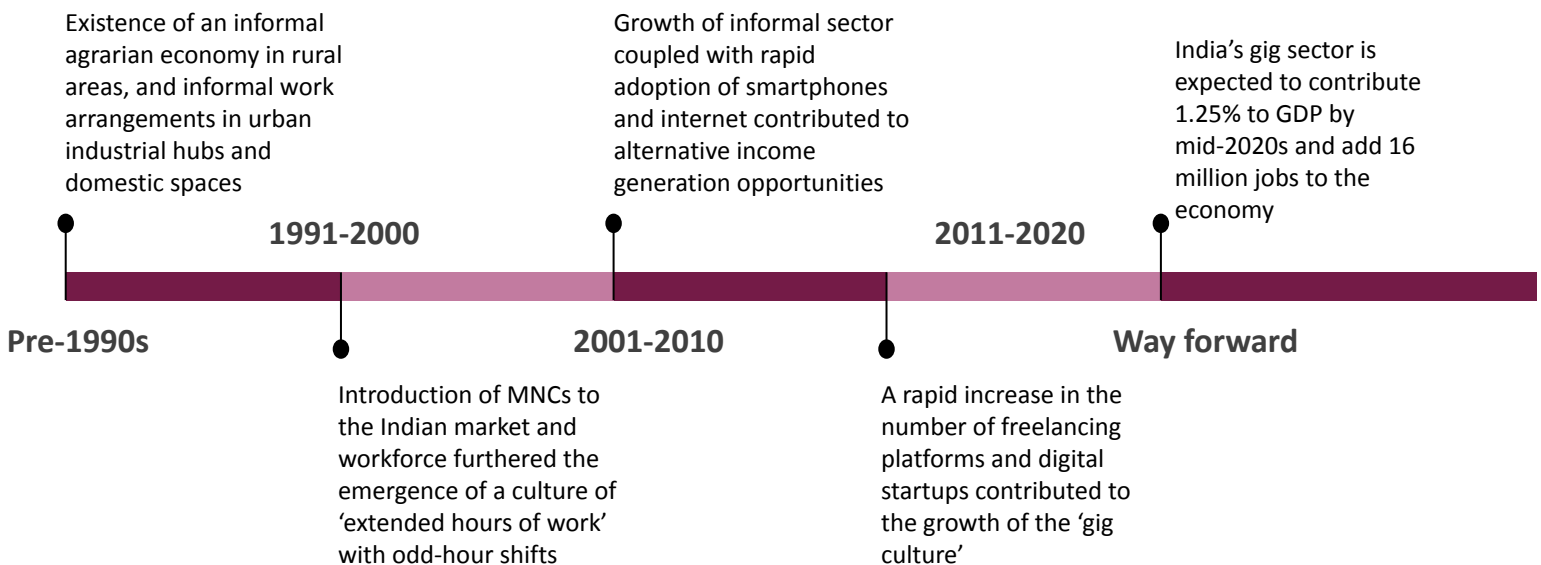


Figure 4: Evolution of Gig Economy in India

Over the past decade, a rapid increase in the number of freelancing platforms and digital startups contributed to the growth of the ‘gig culture’. As of 2021, India has emerged as the 5th largest country for gig work, with the gig economy expected to grow at a CAGR of 17% by 2024.^{28 29} Gig work in India is projected to triple over the next three-four years by adding over 16 million jobs to the non-firm sector from the existing 8 million, whose workers largely rely on ‘gigs’ as their primary source of income.^{30 31} In the long term, the economy is expected to employ up to 90 million people and contribute up to 1.25% to the country’s GDP.³² In India, the most visible spaces of activity have been in the transport, last-mile delivery, and at-home personal services industries.

Amidst the pivot of the work format, digital platforms have emerged as enablers for employment creation, especially in urban areas. In these geographies, during the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown, consumer behavior shifted towards increased dependence on online platforms to get the required products and services. It is expected that this digital revolution will address the inefficiencies of the unorganized sector and increase employment/income-generation opportunities for all, especially for women by granting them flexibility of time and mobility. These new jobs are likely to be dominated by the platform gig economy workforce, attracting both demand and supply-side players.

27. Bali, G., 14 Feb 2022, “India’s rising tryst with gig economy and opportunities in direct selling for ambitious millennials”, The Economic Times. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

28. Ibid

29. IBEF, 05 May 2021, “Emergence of India’s Gig Economy”. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

30. Nanda, P., 31 Mar 2021, “Gig economy could create 24 mn jobs in next 3-4 years”, Hindustan Times.

31. Sattva gig-workers’ survey analysis

32. Augustinraj, Jain and et al., 30 Mar 2021, “Unlocking Gig Economy in India”. Boston Consulting Group. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

Key Definitions

Term	Definition
Gig Economy	An economy which encompasses all platforms (online and offline) that hire independent contractors, consultants, and workers in different sectors on a temporary basis. It involves the existence of a temporary or part-time workforce instead of a conventional workforce. ³³
Gig work	Gig work consists of temporary or project-based economic activities outside of standard, long-term employer-employee relationships. This is an umbrella term to a large group of temporary work which can be either offline or online. ³⁴
Platform gig work	Platform gig work specifically refers to the use of digital platforms (websites, apps, etc.) to enable discovery and onboarding of interested gig-workers, and to further provide them with specific kinds of gig work.
Platform gig-workers	‘Platform gig-workers’ is the term used to denote individuals who are engaged in gig work through digital platforms (websites, apps, etc.).
Gig work platforms (or gig platforms)	Gig work platforms refers to business that own specific digital platforms (websites, apps, etc.) that can be used to provide work opportunities to gig-workers. These businesses manage the central platform and also work to expand the gig-workers’ access to consumers. For example, Swiggy, Urban Company, Zomato, Ola, Rapido, etc.
Crowd work	Crowd work is a form of gig work where an online platform enables organizations to outsource tasks to a large pool of online workers in exchange for payment. For example, Amazon’s MTurk, Fiverr, etc. ³⁵
On-demand gig work	On-demand work is a form of gig work comprising tasks performed within a specified geographical limit, within stipulated time, that is orchestrated by an online platform. For example, Zomato, Ola, Swiggy, etc. ³⁶
Asset-based sharing	Asset-based sharing is a form of gig work where temporary sharing of assets is facilitated by an online platform. For example, AirBnB, WeWork, etc. ³⁷
Transport and Logistics industry	Gig platforms that enable the service of transporting individuals (through cab-sharing models) or goods (through home delivery and trucking models) form the transport and logistics industry. Platform gig-workers in this industry work as drivers, providing this service to consumers. Platforms such as Uber, Ola, and Rapido are a part of this industry.
Food and Beverage Delivery industry	Gig platforms that enable the delivery of prepared food and beverages from food outlets (restaurants, hotels, dhabas, etc.) to consumers form the food and beverage delivery industry. Platform gig-workers in this industry work as delivery intermediaries between outlets and consumers. Platforms such as Swiggy and Zomato are a part of this industry.
Personal and Homecare Services industry	Gig platforms that enable the provision of services related to one’s personal and home well-being (such as grooming, cleaning, painting, plumbing, etc.) form the Personal and Homecare Services industry. Platform gig-workers in this industry usually work as providers of specific services, visiting consumers’ houses for the same. Platforms such as Urban Company and HouseJoy are a part of this industry.
Philanthropies	Philanthropies (or philanthropic institutions) is an overarching term used for individual and institutional donors who fund and enable social change across various sectors.
Social Security	For the purposes of this study, the term ‘social security’ refers to both government-provided welfare support and employer-provided employee benefits, such as insurance schemes, retirement support, healthcare, etc.

Table 4: Key Definitions

33. ASSOCHAM, [Gig Economy: Aligning Consumer Preferences—The Way Forward](#). Accessed 9 Sep 2021.

34. Gig Economy Data Hub, [“What is a gig-worker?”](#). Accessed 9 Sep 2021.

35. Duggan, Sherman and et al., 12 Sep 2019, [“Algorithmic management and app-work in the gig economy: A research agenda for employment relations and HRM”](#), Wiley Online Library. Accessed 9 Sep 2021.

36. Dazzi, D., 2019, [“Gig Economy in Europe”](#), Italian labor Law e-Journal. Accessed 9 Sep 2021.

37. Ibid.

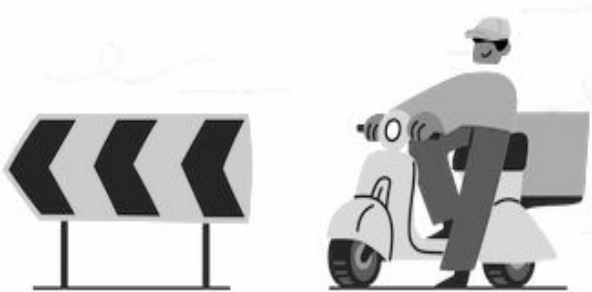


Chapter 2: The Composition

Who works in the gig economy?

Who works in the Food and Beverage Delivery Industry?

The Food and Beverage Delivery industry provides delivery services for immediate essentials like food and groceries that are ordered online, either through a website or an app platform. As of September 2019, Swiggy and Zomato, the two most prominent gig platforms in this industry, have over 400,000 ‘delivery partners’ providing this service between them.^{38 39} These platform gig-workers take part in manual work that typical involves them driving up to servicing restaurants, picking up the required order, and driving to the customer’s location to drop it off.



99% of platform gig-workers in this industry who were a part of our study were men and the remaining were women. Our limitation in locating and identifying women platform gig-workers in this space is also indicative of their actual proportion in the workforce. Our estimates through secondary research and KIs with industry leaders and experts also suggest that only about 1-2% of workers in this industry are women, with the remaining 98-99% being men. Our survey with the workers from this industry highlighted a range of behavioural and demographic features, helping us construct a typical archetype of a worker in the food and beverage delivery industry.

For starters, over 60% (N=209) of platform gig-workers in this industry are under 30 years of age, highlighting a significant adoption by younger individuals. In fact, only 6% of them are over the age of 40. Additionally, of all the three industries, the proportion of married individuals in this industry was the least, with over 38% of the workforce being unmarried. Moreover, their contribution to their household expenses was also minimal - only 63% (N=209) did so, against over 85% (N=216) for workers in the transport and logistics industry. This could, indeed, be due to the low proportion of married individuals in this sector. In fact, 80% of married gig-workers in this industry (N=130) claimed to be contributing to their household expenses themselves, against only 35% of unmarried gig-workers (N=79). Moreover, over 70% of platform gig-workers in this industry (N=209) earn INR 1000 on a daily basis, a feature they share with their peers in the transport and logistics industry.

Over 90% of food and beverage delivery platform gig-workers rely on gig work as their primary source of income. Additionally, the typical onboarding process for platform gig-workers in this industry is not expensive; only 4% of them invest over 5000 rupees in procuring initial equipment, as compared to 60% (N=216) of those in the Transport and Logistics industry and 74% (N=201) of those in the Personal and Homecare services industry.

These investments are generally used to procure items like delivery bags/hot boxes and branded t-shirts. While the former makes the process of delivering food and beverages easier for them, the latter helps establish a sense of credibility among consumers, while also providing gig platforms with widespread marketing.

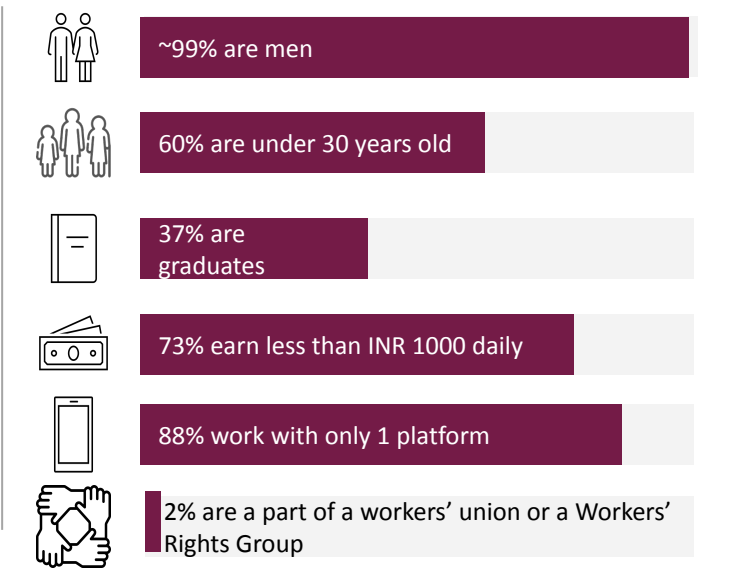


Figure 5: Demographics of participants from the Food and Beverage Industry

Our study reveals that the average platform gig-worker in the food and beverage industry is a young unmarried individual, most likely a man, who generally works for only one platform and is not extremely burdened with helping out with the household’s expenses.

38. Tandon and Bansal, 18 Sep 2019, “The loneliness of the delivery man”, Livemint. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.
39. Katri, B., 6 Sep 2019, “Zomato Witnesses Growth In Delivery Partners But Here’s How Much They Were Paid”, Inc42. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

Who works in the Transport and Logistics Industry?

Gig-workers in the Transport and Logistics industry provide for transportation of individuals or large-ticket items, either through courier or e-commerce websites. Additionally, platforms in this industry seem to be onboarding many more gig-workers with Ola sharing that it worked with over 2.5 million 'driver partners' in 2020⁴⁰ and Rapido working with over 1.5 million workers in 2021.⁴¹ Our research suggests that over 88% of platform gig-workers in this industry rely on gig work as their primary source of income.⁴² Their job includes responding to cab-hailing requests by consumers and transporting them to their destination. For workers associated with logistics platforms, their work includes traveling to a central warehouse and dropping packages at pre-decided locations.



Similar to the food and beverage delivery industry, only about 6% of respondents from this industry who were a part of our study were women. While this was, in part, due to a general difficulty in locating women platform gig-workers, our estimates using existing literature and through KIIs with industry leaders and experts, also suggest an overall dearth of women in this industry, who form only about 4-5% of the overall workforce. Their absence across both transport and logistics and food and beverage delivery industries highlights the influence of socio-cultural biases, which lead to a dip in their participation in male-dominated professions.

Platform gig-workers in this industry are significantly older than their counterparts in the other two sectors. Over 70% (N=216) of them are over the age of 30. However, surprisingly, this industry has the least presence of workers from SC/ST communities (15%, N=216) as compared to the other two (24%; N=209 for F&B and 17%; N=201 for Personal and Homecare Services (PHC). Additionally, while their daily earnings are not significantly higher than their peers in the food and beverage delivery industry, 86% of the former contribute to their household expenses.

Over 60% (N=216) of platform gig-workers in this industry spend more than INR 5000 while being on-boarded. This high cost either comes from acquiring vehicles or from costs of documentation, which most transport and logistics platforms demand while onboarding. With similar earning levels as their peers in the food and beverage delivery industry, on-boarding for platform gig-workers in this industry is a relatively costly affair.

Moreover, only 50% (N=216) of them feel that they are 'respectfully treated' in their workplaces, as compared to 70% (N=209) of food and delivery platform gig-workers and 89% (N=201) of personal and homecare workers. Predictably, then, this industry also sees the highest proportion of worker collectivisation. About half of our survey respondents from this industry are affiliated with a union or a rights group.

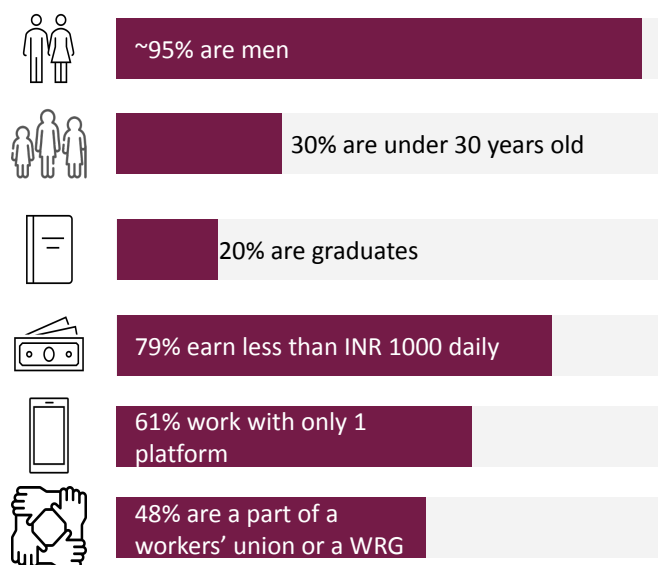


Figure 6: Demographics of participants from the Transport and Logistics Industry

The average platform gig-worker in this industry is an older married individual, most likely a man, who works for 1-3 platforms at one time. A history of collectivisation, combined with low returns on initial costs and a comparatively less 'respectful' workplace, are additional key features of this industry.

40. Singh, J., 10 Feb 2020, "Numbers tell the story of Ola vs Uber rivalry in India", Entracker. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

41. Livemint, "Rapido launches care programme for its driver partners". Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

42. Sattva gig-workers' survey analysis

Who works in the Personal and Homecare services Industry?

Unlike the Food and Beverage Delivery industry and Transport and Logistics industry, the Personal and Homecare industry provides consumers with a range of offerings. These include services such as home-cleaning, grooming and salon, massage therapy, appliance repair, home painting, disinfection and pest control, etc. Consequently, gig platforms in this industry are expected to spend more capital and time in training the on-boarded platform gig-workers and skilling them on specific offerings. The size of the gig workforce in this industry is also estimated to be smaller than the others. For instance, Urban Company, one of the leading platforms in this sector, has around 30,000 gig-workers, and Helpr, another popular platform, has over 23,000 gig-workers.^{43 44}



Given the diverse nature of offerings in this industry, some of which—such as grooming and massage therapy—are gender specific, the proportion of women platform gig-workers in this industry is higher than the other two sectors. As a result, our study’s survey also included a higher proportion of women. Among our respondents from this industry, about 50% are women, as compared to under 5% for the other two industries. According to our KILs with industry leaders and experts, the presence of women-specific offerings plays a key role, since women platform gig-workers in this industry might not have to fight mainstream prejudices with respect to “doing a man’s job” in taking up a job in this sector.

About half of the platform gig-workers in this industry are under the age of 30, and over 70% (N=201) of them are married. Additionally, over 34% (N=201) of them have graduate degrees, with 25% even holding a postgraduate qualification, which makes this industry’s workforce highly educated. However, our survey also suggests that over 90% of them rely on gig work as their primary source of income. Additionally, around three-quarters of them plan to work for a long time with their current platform, with over 50% (N=201) looking to start their own businesses afterwards. This number is comparable across other industries as well, about 42% (N=209) of food and beverage delivery workers and 41% (N=216) of transport and logistics workers also plan to start their own businesses.

Across all the three industries, platform gig-workers in personal and homecare services, invested most capital in procuring initial equipment. Over 74% (N=201) of platform gig-workers in this industry spend more than INR 5000 while being on-boarded, as compared to only 60% of transport and logistics platform gig-workers. Most of this initial cost comes from buying professional kits that are needed from them to conduct their services. In fact, over 88% (N=201) of platform gig-workers in this industry had to buy professional kits while on-boarding against ~2% of those in the other industries.

A majority (54%; N=201) of them work for 7-10 hours, which is converse to the other two sectors where most platform gig-workers work for over 10 hours. Additionally, 89% (N=201) of them also claimed being treated respectfully at their workplaces, a proportion which was as little as 50% for transport and logistics platform gig-workers.

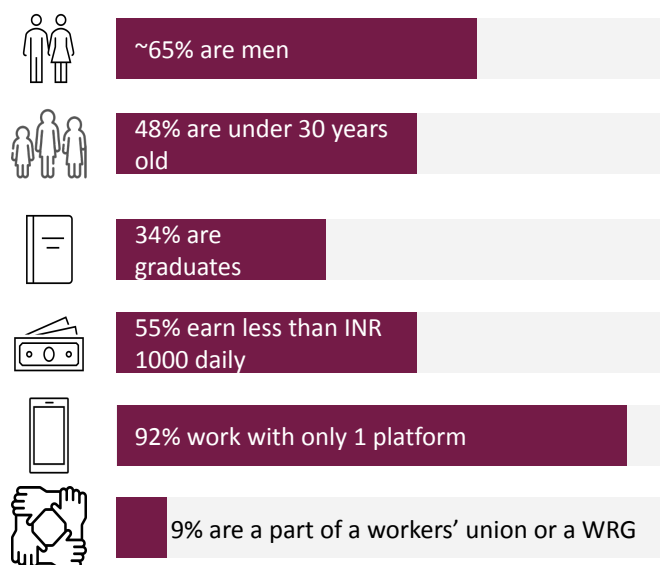


Figure 7: Demographics of participants from the Personal and Homecare services Industry

Our research suggests that an average platform gig-worker in the personal and homecare services industry is quite likely to be a young and also married—either a man or a woman. Their working conditions seem to be better than those in the other two industries—with quick grievance redressal and comparatively higher earnings.

43. Abrar, P., 27 Apr 2021, “Urban Company raises \$190 mn at \$2-bn valuation, joins unicorn club”, Business Standard. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

44. Helpr, “Why Choose Us”. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



Chapter 3: Discovery and Initial Engagement

How do gig-workers and platforms find each other?

Introduction

At present about 700,000 platform gig-workers are registered on the e-SHRAM portal.⁴⁵ However, the actual size of the platform gig workforce could be at least three times this number. The sheer size of India's labor market has ensured that Indian platform gig-workers account for 20% of all platform gig-workers in the world.⁴⁶ The magnitude of the platform gig workforce suggests that the discovery process is highly vulnerable to different kinds of challenges. Consequently, platforms use various tactics to connect with prospective platform gig-workers which includes traditional tactics such as advertising in local newspapers and pamphlets.

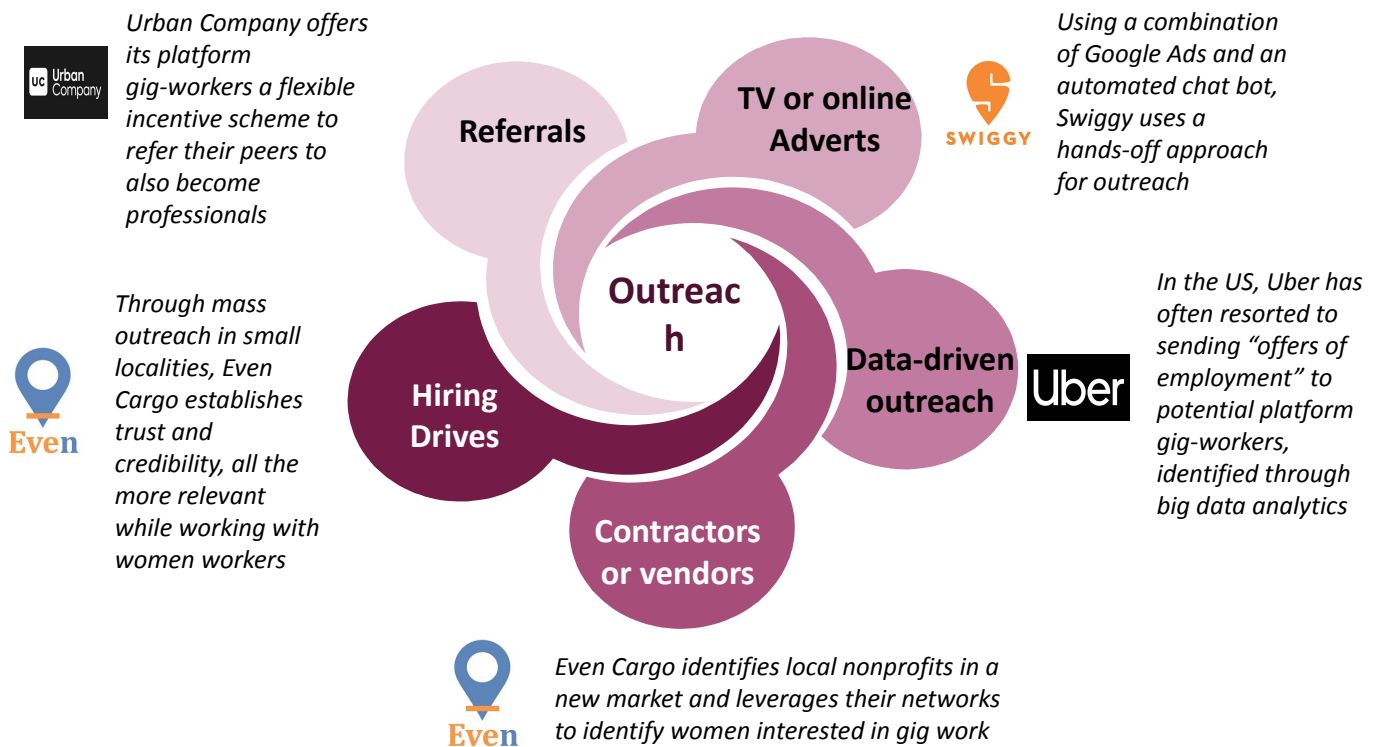


Figure 8: Best practices used by platforms to connect with prospective platform gig-workers

In addition to this, they undertake targeted messaging on social media websites and mobile phones to recruit workers. They offer monetary incentives to workers for providing references. Platforms organize hiring drives and registration camps in community centers, where migrant workers and other domestic workers usually reside. They also rely on NGOs, third-party vendors and labor contractors to supply manpower for their workforce.⁴⁷

Challenges in Discovery and Initial Engagement

The ecosystem faces the following challenges in connecting workers to opportunities on the platforms:

- **Gender norms**
Prevalent gender norms discourage women from entering occupations towards jobs that are traditionally male-dominated. Moreover, women have to bear the additional burden of conducting unpaid work in households, which affects their working potential and also impacts the platform's potential in entering women centric markets.
- **Absence of women gig-workers**
Existing outreach networks struggle to identify potential recruits from marginalized communities, especially women workers. Women platform gig-workers have occasionally been found to be hesitant to reveal their work identity to others in society which limits their access to job opportunities.
- **Sub-contracting**
Platforms have to rely on sub-contracting of workers in the absence of formal recruitment channels, especially when they enter new markets or try to access trained workers. However, utilising third-party vendors or contractors can lead to uncertainty for gig-workers, creating ambiguity about their job role and affecting the platforms' smooth operations.

⁴⁵ "Fairwork India Ratings 2021: Labor Standards in the Platform Economy", Fairwork. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

⁴⁶ Jha, S., 23 Feb 2021, "India Largest Supplier Of Workers On Digital Platforms: ILO", Bloomberg. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

⁴⁷ Sattva's Key Informant Interview



Prevalent gender norms discourage women workers from entering jobs that are traditionally male-dominated and impact platform's ability to increase market share among women customers

Platform gig work is attractive for women as it provides them with flexibility in terms of working hours and requires less initial investment with better earning opportunities. Research has proven that women's livelihoods can have far-reaching benefits related to health and educational outcomes for the entire household.⁴⁸ According to Employment Outlook HY 2018-19 by Teamlease Services, women platform gig-workers earn higher customer ratings, display lower attrition rates, and showcase better productivity in warehouses.⁴⁹

However, the overall proportion of women platform gig-workers has remained low. Based on of our conversations with on-ground data collectors, platform gig-workers and platform representatives, and using publicly available data captured during the literature review phase, we find that women platform gig-workers form 4-5% of the platform gig workforce in the transport and logistics services and 1-2% of the workforce in the food and beverage delivery services.^{50 51 52 53 54 55 56}

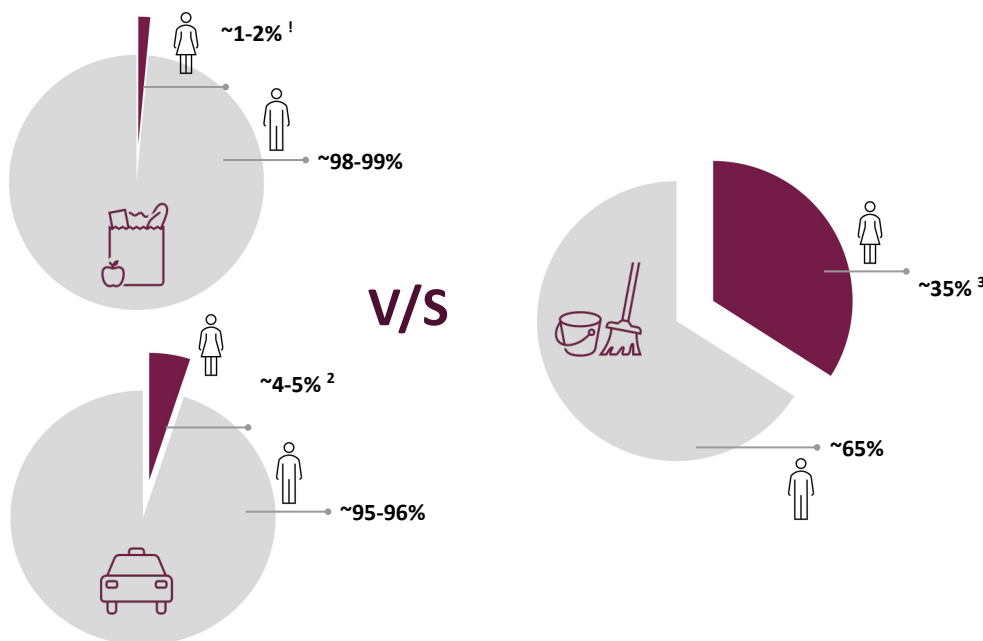


Figure 9: Representation of female and male platform gig-workers in the selected sectors

As a result of the prevalent gender norms, women tend to choose occupations that they have traditionally been engaged in, with a result that there are far fewer women in the transport and logistics and food and beverage delivery services, than personal and homecare services sector. In addition to this, the demand for unpaid work in households also restricts women's working hours in the sectors in which they are engaged. For instance, while working long hours to earn a decent income is not ideal, our survey data shows that over 30% of male gig-workers in the personal and homecare services industry spend over 10 hours on their platform, on average (N=101).

In contrast, only 5% of women gig-workers in this industry (N=100) work for over 10 hours every day. This is, in part, due to their domestic responsibilities and an imposition thrust onto them to 'choose' between unpaid housework or paid platform work. While proportion of women platform gig-workers remains high in personal and homecare services at 35%, their lack of participation in transport and logistics sector is directly impacting the platform's ability to increase market share in women customer segment.

How many hours do workers spend in a day on platforms?

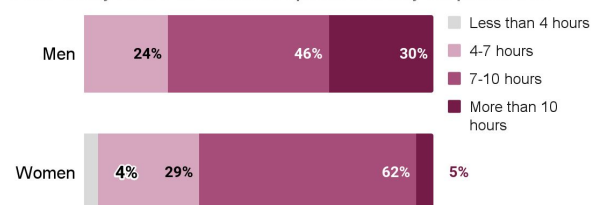


Figure 10: Hours spent by platform gig-workers on platforms

48. Katz, West Jr and et al., 2007, "The impact of a small steady stream of income for women on family health and economic well-being", Pub Med. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

49. "Employment Outlook Report", 2018, Indian Staffing Federation. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

50. Chakravarti, A., 26 June 2021, "Zomato to get more women delivery partners by the end of this year", India Today. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

51. "2000 women food delivery personnel will soon join Swiggy to create an inclusive workforce", 14 Nov 2018, India Today. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

52. Bansal, P., 3 Aug 2021, "No Woman's Land: Female Cab Drivers On Indian Roads", Outlook India. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

53. ETtech, 3 Jun 2021, "India to have 900 million active internet users by 2025", The Economic Times. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

54. Thomala, L., 10 Jun 2021, "Internet penetration rate in China by 2020, by gender", Statista. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

55. Abrar, P., "2 Jun 2021, "Urban Company crosses \$2.1 bn valuation, plans international expansion", Business Standard. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

56. "Urban Company Impact", Urban Company. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



Existing outreach networks that platforms rely on struggle with identifying potential recruits, especially women workers

Our survey of platform gig-workers shows that most connected with platforms through employee referrals. The prevalence is especially higher in personal and homecare services compared to both the other industries. TV/Online advertisements as well as text messages highlighting earning potential from platform gig work too were important methods through which workers connected to platform gig opportunities.

How did the workers come to know about an opportunity at their platforms?
(As a percentage of all workers in an industry)

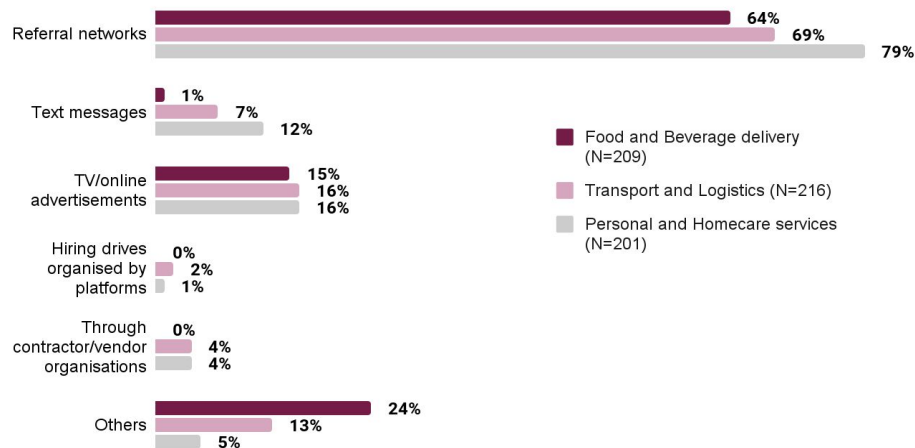


Figure 11: Modes of publicity for platforms to reach out to potential platform gig-workers

Our in-depth interviews suggest that the employee referral process does not work in attracting women platform gig-workers as women are generally hesitant to share their work identities due to discriminatory societal constructs and attitudes. Additionally, male workers are not keen to recommend their women acquaintances to platform recruitment teams due to their own gendered biases against the latter's capabilities and temperament.

Gig work is a bright spot in urban labor markets in India and it is important to ensure that women are enabled and supported to access growing economic opportunities it offers.

CSOs have been supporting women's livelihood programs in rural as well as urban areas in occupations such as tailoring, home production of goods, agriculture, livestock management (in rural areas specifically), etc. Their portfolio of livelihood programs in urban areas can be expanded to include gig work across various sectors. We have found various examples of such organizations connecting women with gig work.

"With women, the referral network doesn't work, because they don't share their professional identity in their localities because that can cause male members of other families to come and create a scene."

- Leading logistics vendor that works extensively with women drivers

For example, Even Cargo has been engaging women from resource poor households, training them and providing them employment opportunities in the logistics delivery sector.⁵⁷ Mumbai's HeyDeeDee established an all woman parcel delivery service in 2016 to deliver parcels for e-commerce companies and supermarkets.⁵⁸

This research also found that some platforms adopt certain tactics in attracting women platform gig-workers, especially in the personal and homecare services where participation from women platform gig-workers is high because of gender norms. These platforms have modalities where women provide gig service to female customers and men platform gig-workers provide personal services to male customers. They specifically advertise women platform gig-workers in their advertisements. These activities, if undertaken by a wide range of platforms, especially in other feasible sectors, like short-distance transport, can go a long way in normalizing women in gig workforce.



Utilising third-party vendors or contractors can lead to uncertainty, creating ambiguity for platforms and workers, with respect to role clarity

The subcontracting industry in gig work is on the rise in Europe. Platforms have started outsourcing delivery work to external staffing companies.⁵⁹ In India too, it is common for platforms to work with third-party vendors or contractors to hire gig-workers at scale. Major platforms such as Swiggy, Amazon, Flipkart and Housejoy have been using sub-contractors to hire their gig-workers.⁶⁰

Our in-depth interviews have brought up cases where third parties have further sub-contracted to a fourth or a fifth party to supply workers to platforms. In such cases, workers do not have any clarity on who to hold responsible in answering any queries they might have, related to their contract, grievances, social security etc. This, in turn, also impacts the platforms' smooth operations, as well.

Our conversations with policy experts suggests that including platform gig-workers in the Code of Occupational Health, Safety and Working Conditions can help assign the responsibility of various aspects and facets of employment to the contractor and principal employer. However, there is a need to update the definition of platform gig-workers for such a policy move to have positive impact on the ground.

57. "About Us", Even Cargo. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

58. "Hey Deedee: India's First All -female Last-mile Delivery Startup Transforming the Life of Thousands", CEO Insights. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

59. Meaker, M., 17 Jan 2022, "gig-workers Were Promised a Better Deal. Then They Were Outsourced", Wired. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

60. "Fairwork India Ratings 2020: labor Standards in the Platform Economy", Fairwork. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

Recommendations

Challenges in the discovery phase of platform gig-workers are related to finding effective strategies to bring more women to platform gig work and bringing transparency in hiring practices when platform gig-workers are hired through third parties. While these challenges impact workers directly, they also affect the platforms, by way of reduced market size and increasing transaction costs. In our research we have identified four key recommendations, catered to various stakeholders in the ecosystem that can help platforms and platform gig-workers overcome various challenges.

These include measures such as liaisoning between platforms with CBOs and NGOs to connect women to gig work opportunities, gender inclusive messaging in external communications, women-to-women services in specific sectors of the gig economy and inclusion of platform gig-workers in the four labor codes.⁶¹ For each recommendation, we provide a proof of concept in the form of similar activities already taking place in the ecosystem. We have prioritized recommendations based on their criticality. Some recommendations are identified as areas of immediate interventions under the criticality column. A detailed list of opportunities for different stakeholders are listed in Table 5 below.

Recommendations for key actors	Implementing stakeholders	Type of opportunity	Proof of concept	Criticality	Time to implement
Liaison with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to overcome the challenges in recruiting women platform workers	Platforms, CBOs, NGOs	Operational/ Programmatic change for NGOs, CBOs	Even Cargo identifies women from resource poor families to train in the logistics sector and provide employment for.	High	Low
Adopt gender-inclusive language and imagery in advertisements and external communication to normalize participation of women platform gig-workers enabling platforms to expand markets and attract more women customers	Platforms	Operational /Programmatic Change for platforms	Urban Company has been featuring women in its advertisements	High	Low
Consider piloting women-to-women services in male dominated sectors to incentivise more women to take up the role	Platforms	Workflow change for platforms	-	Low	Low
Update the definition of platform gig-workers and add them in all existing labor codes	Government	Policy Change	Gig and Platform workers have been included in the Code of Social Security, 2020	Low	Low

Table 5: Recommendations for the discovery stage

61. Singh S, 24 Nov 2020, "[Explained: The four labor codes and what they mean for India's workforce](#)", Money Control. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



Chapter 4: Selection and Onboarding

How do gig-workers and platforms initially engage with each other?

Introduction

After identifying and connecting with the platform gig-workers, the next step for the platforms is to onboard them onto the relevant product or application (i.e. platform). Across industries, a successful onboarding program usually includes five key practices:

1. **First-mile alignment on work requirements** where platform representatives contact potential recruits to share the scope of their roles and the tasks that they are required to perform.
2. **Document submission and verification** of relevant documents (such as driving license, Aadhaar card, vehicle papers, etc.) that are submitted by workers to the platforms, which are then verified by the latter using internal and external mechanisms.
3. **Contracting and alignment on terms & conditions** which usually includes a work contract that might be shared with the workers, highlighting financial, ethical, and work-related modalities.
4. **Acquiring of platform-specific equipment** by platform gig-workers, including platform merchandising and tools specific to the services that they will offer.
5. **Training sessions and piloting of work** which includes training of platform gig-workers on multiple fronts such as on usage of apps, execution of their services, interaction with consumers, and on systems and processes of the company.

Across these practices, innovation by platforms has led to low overhead costs and efficient processes, lowering barriers to workers' entry into the economy.

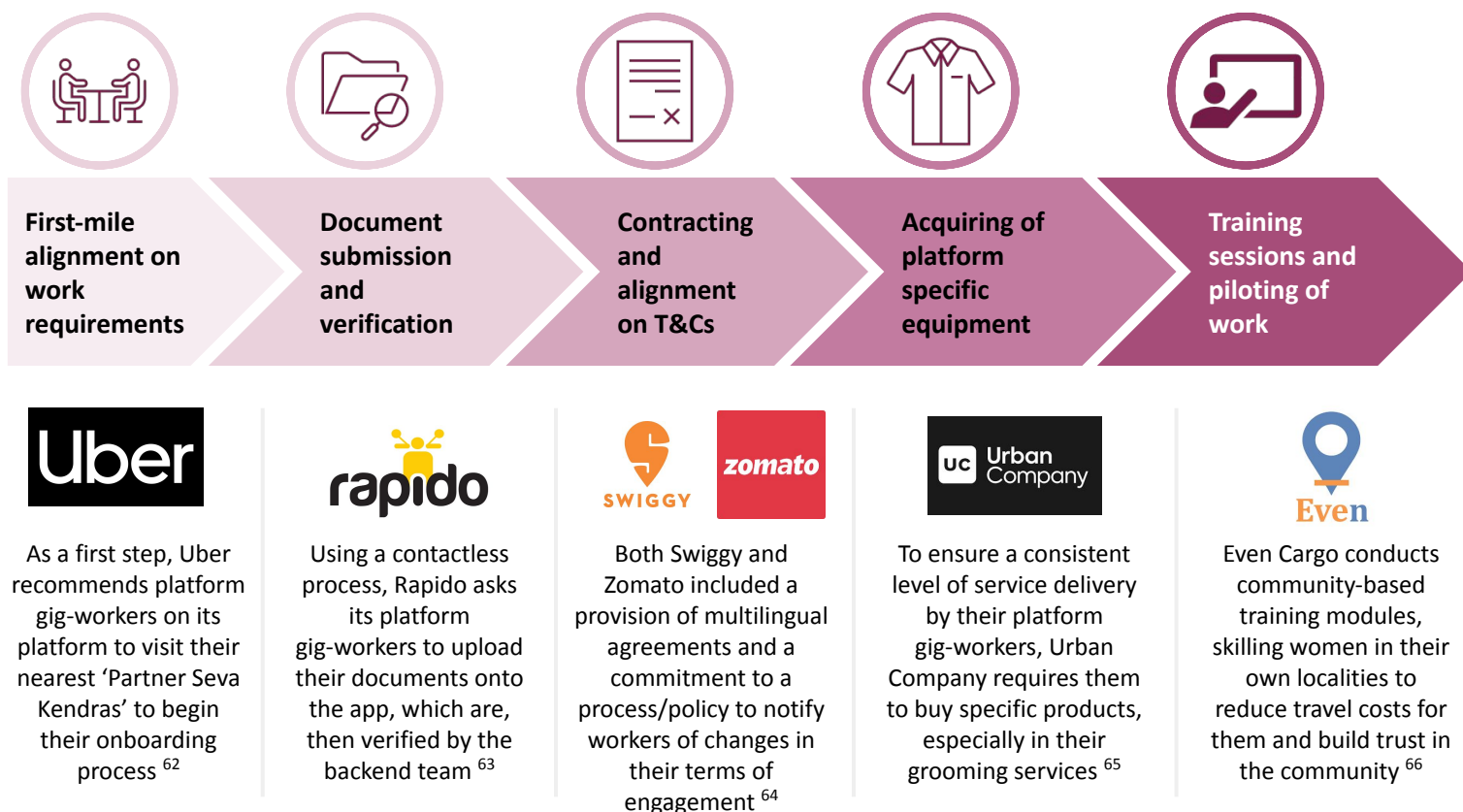


Figure 12: Onboarding process for a platform gig-workers

While platforms, governments, and CSOs continue to improve the current practices in the ecosystem, there are still gaps that stakeholders need to address.

62. "Here's what you need to sign up", Uber. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

63. Sattva Key Informant Interview

64. "Fairwork India Ratings 2021: labor Standards in the Platform Economy", Fairwork. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

65. Ibid 62.

66. Ibid 62.

Challenges in ‘Selection and Onboarding’

Across the hiring and onboarding process, there are three major challenges that significantly disrupt the gig economy’s sustainability and growth. These challenges affect the interactions between workers and platforms during their onboarding process, either leading to:

- (i) An increase in barriers to the workers’ entry; or
- (ii) An impact on the equitability of the existing power structures between the two parties, during all kinds of negotiations:

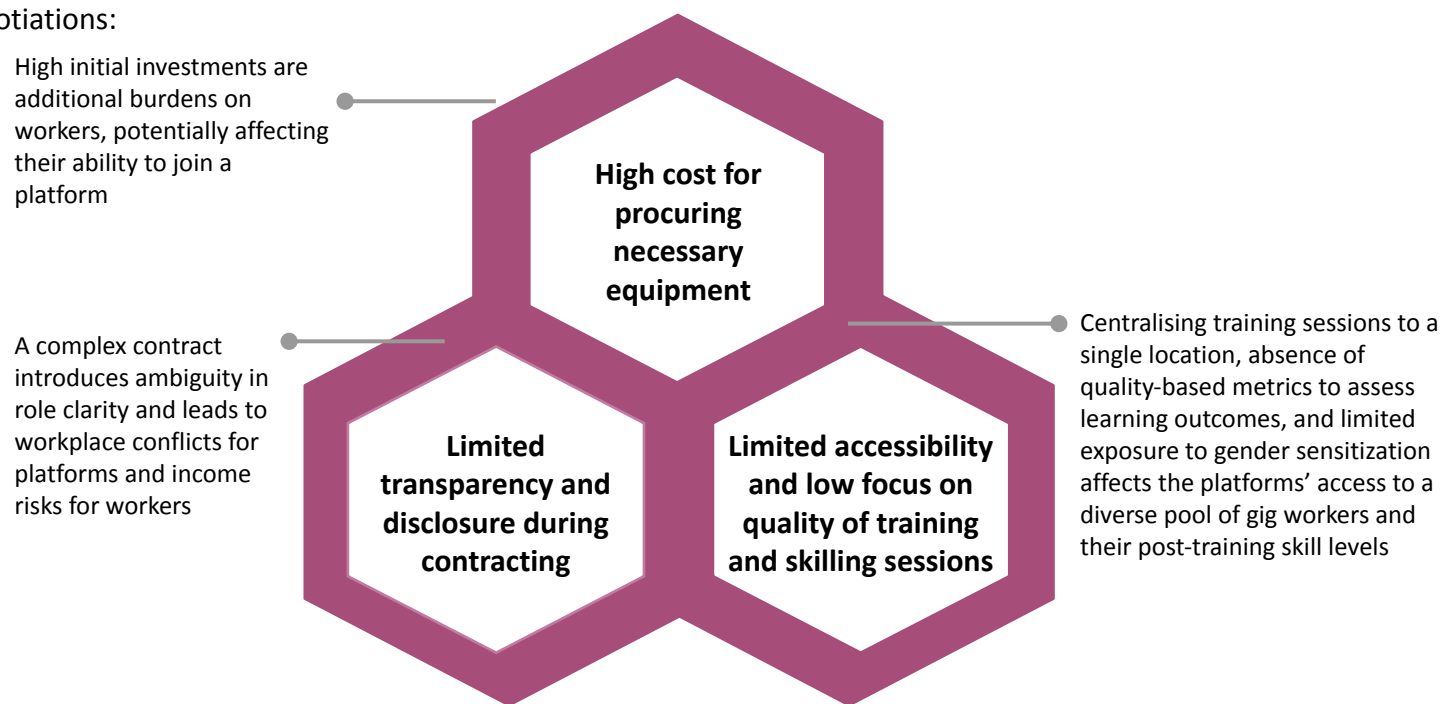


Figure 13: Challenges in the selection and onboarding process

- **High cost for procuring necessary equipment**

A critical aspect of gig work, which makes it a highly lucrative opportunity for low and medium income households in urban areas, is its low barrier to entry. For instance, workers in the food and beverage delivery industry only require a two-wheeler and an internet-enabled smartphone. However, obligating workers to invest in a certain kind of equipment can rack up initial costs, making it difficult for some of them to join the platform at all, especially due to the absence of alternative financing options. This is especially true for the personal and homecare services industry where workers might be mandated to use a certain brand of products, which while ensuring consistent quality, can also limit workers’ onboarding onto platforms.⁶⁷

- **Limited transparency and disclosure during contracting**

Absence of a written and ‘easy to understand’ contract makes it difficult for workers to understand and comply with existing rules and regulations. This also affects the role clarity between platform gig-workers and gig platforms, often leading to instances of conflict between the two. Along with establishing elaborate awareness mechanisms that help explain key elements of the contract to platform gig-workers, using simple vocabulary in the workers’ regional languages while preparing contracts can substantially solve for this risk and challenge.

- **Limited accessibility and low focus on quality of training and skilling sessions**

Along with spending capital on procuring equipment, platform gig-workers also have to spend time and money to attend training sessions provided by the platforms. Decentralizing these training sessions can prove advantageous to them on both fronts—time and money. Additionally, shifting the focus of these sessions to more quality-based metrics (such as retention, or learning outcomes, etc), while expanding into more novel forms of training, such as those on gender sensitization or PoSH awareness, can also improve the work environment for both platforms and workers.

67. Sharma, S., 12 Feb 2022, “Urban Company’s Full-Stack Business Model”, The Strategy Story. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



High cost of initial investments is one of the biggest hindrances for platform gig-workers who wish to join the economy and for platforms to expand their pool of workers

How much do gig workers pay while acquiring platform-specific products?

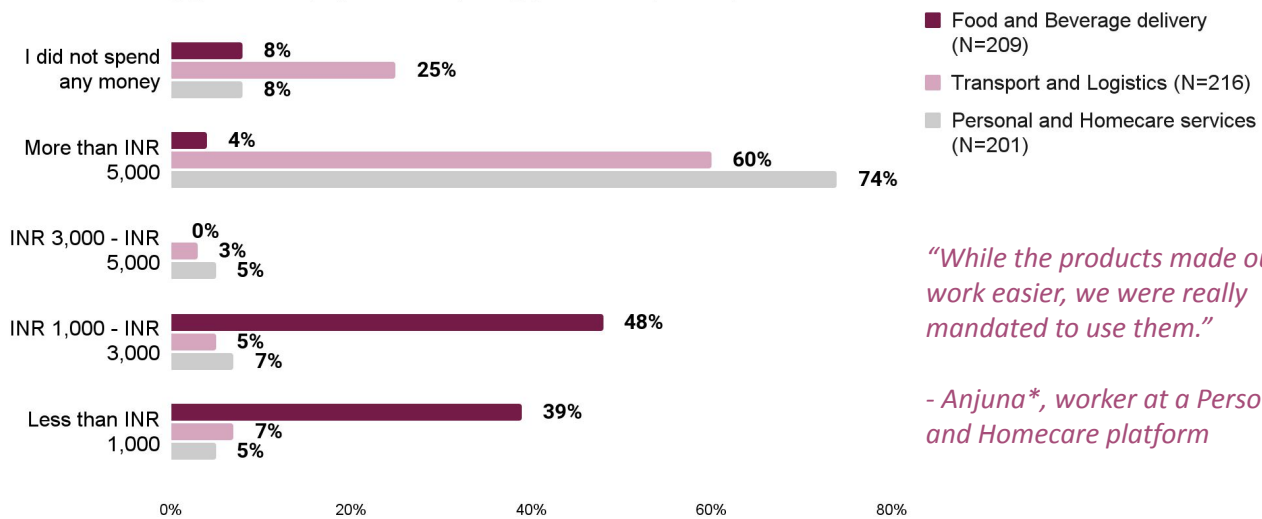


Figure 14: Average cost incurred by workers on platform specific equipments

"While the products made our work easier, we were really mandated to use them."

- Anjuna, worker at a Personal and Homecare platform*

Across all the workers surveyed in our research, only 9% (N=618) said that they did not need to buy any specific equipment for their work. Additionally, about half of the respondents claimed spending over INR 5000 to procure this equipment, a figure that jumped up to 60% (N=216) for workers in the Transport and Logistics industry and up to 74% (N=201) for those in the Personal and Homecare services industry. Even between men and women workers in the Personal and Homecare services industry, 58% of the former paid over INR 5000 for equipment, as compared to over 89% of the latter, highlighting that the tools required for salon or grooming services offered by women, tend to be costlier than tools for the tasks performed by men.

For comparison, about 70% (N=618) of all the respondents make less than INR 1000 every day, which, when offset by daily costs, yields them low returns. In fact, over 90% of workers run out of their salaries before the end of month.⁶⁸ Although the equipment provides workers with certain benefits, this low return-on-investment can act as a significant entry barrier for newer recruits. For industries such as Personal and Homecare Services and Transport and Logistics, this barrier can become even more rigid. For instance, Rapido, a bike-taxi booking service, requires its potential recruits to own a bike, a valid bike insurance, and two helmets.⁶⁹ Similarly, in response to the recent protests against the platform, Urban Company had even proposed reducing the product-based costs that it charges to its platform gig-workers by 10%.⁷⁰

The position of 'platform gig workers as micro-entrepreneurs', which forms the basis of the gig economy, needs to be provided appropriate support to make it more lucrative for gig-workers to take part in this model. Consequently, this demand creates an opportunity for key actors in the space—philanthropists, platforms, governments, and civil society organizations—to step in and provide financing solutions to budding platform gig-workers, thus reducing the entry barrier and making it more profitable for them to be on-boarded onto the platforms.

"Gig work is essentially entrepreneurial in nature. When workers receive training for working on platforms, they invest their capital (platform specific equipment) and assess if they will be able to generate a return on investment. They need to factor in other costs such as costs of fuel, demand of their service, time spent in reaching customers or in completing the task, the platform's rating system, etc."

- Leading policy expert working at the intersection of technology, trade, migration, and urbanization

* The name of the respondent has been changed to maintain their anonymity.

68. Sarkar, B., 1 Mar 2022, "Almost 90% of gig-workers run out of their salaries before month-end: Survey", Economic Times. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

69. "How to become a captain on Rapido's fleet: Steps", India Today. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

70. Bhalla, T., 15 Oct 2021, "Urban Company cuts levies to pacify angry gig-workers", Livemint. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



Written and simplified contracts between the workers and the platform are rare, often leaving room for ambiguity and the subsequent challenges in role clarity

Absence of a written contract between platforms and gig-workers is common in the gig economy, leading to bureaucratic hiccups for the platforms and lack of role clarity among both the platforms, as well as the workers. This usually takes the form of ambiguity among workers in terms of who to contact for a diverse set of concerns during their day-to-day working. For instance, over 76% (N=618) of workers in our survey received no contract from the platforms they work for, with the number shooting up to 91% for those based in Bangalore. Of those who did receive the contract (N=142), 44% found its English language too difficult to comprehend, and 39% found it too complex to understand.

In fact, only four out of 11 major platforms assessed by FairWork appear to inculcate comprehensibility and ease of understanding, including the use of multi-lingual agreements and a commitment to notify workers of any changes prior to implementation.⁷¹ This ambiguity in role clarity can often lead to conflicts between the involved parties, affecting both productivity and smooth operations.

How many workers have written contracts with their platforms?
(As a percentage of all workers in an industry)



Figure 15: Provision of contract by the platforms

“Platform gig-workers have a hard time reading the contract, which is written in legalese and can contain upto 40 pages. Most platform gig-workers also do not understand English, which makes it harder for them to understand the contract fully.”

- Worker Rights’ Group



Conducting training sessions in a single location limits accessibility for workers who cannot afford to spend money traveling to the training site, in turn, limiting market competition and potentially affecting platforms’ outputs

A significant proportion of workers (above 86%) surveyed in our research attended training (N=618), which was a common trend across both Bangalore and Lucknow. In fact, for the Personal and Homecare services industry, the number was as high as 91% for women workers and 96% for men workers.

In such a scenario, conducting these sessions in a single location can force the workers to weigh the costs over the benefits for something as essential as training. Especially for workers belonging to marginalized or low-income groups, this can be an additional economic burden that further deters them from attending these sessions, thereby failing to upgrade their skill set. Additionally, on the flip side, this trend can also limit the platforms’ access to a diverse set of gig workers, thereby, hindering their growth.

“A decentralized and localized training model can help reduce the economic burden for women in the community, making it easier for them to attend these sessions.”

- Leading logistics vendor that works extensively with women drivers

71. Fairwork India Ratings 2021: [Labor Standards in the Platform Economy](#), FairWork, pp. 3. Accessed 16 March, 2022.



There is growing anxiety in the ecosystem regarding a hands-off training approach that often leads to ‘over-simplification and over-quantification’ of skilling initiatives

In recent years, especially during COVID-19, some platforms have adopted app-based training models that have provided workers with some flexibility. This practice enables the platforms to share training content in the form of short-duration videos. Our conversations with industry experts and platform personnel revealed that many platforms now use a hands-off approach while training platform gig-workers. As a result, the workers then either merely skim through the videos or are left without recourse, as a channel to voice their concerns and queries.

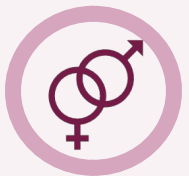
While using videos to train workers solves for the economic burden that comes with centralized training, it has led to concerns regarding ‘over-simplification and quantification’ of learnings. Our interviews with experts revealed that most platforms outsource training to third-party vendors, who often focus on metrics such as ‘number of workers trained’ or ‘hours of training provided’. This tendency to quantify skilling outcomes compromises the quality of the training, whose outcomes are not measured as effectively, potentially affecting both the workers’ performance, the platforms’ outputs with their customers and the quality of services provided by the platform.

“Existing low overheads influence platforms to outsource most of their training to vendors and the goal of the sessions is stressed to be the metric of ‘amount of workers trained’ and not the ‘quality of the training.’”

- Leading logistics vendor

“The trainings for workers have become extremely segmented, with only a couple of videos to be watched and without any extensive elaboration from the company's side, which becomes quite necessary.”

- Workers’ Rights Group



Training modules on PoSH and gender sensitization, which can ease the process of assimilation for newly-recruited women gig-workers, are largely missing

While trainings on the usage of apps and on the workers’ specific skill sets are well-established practices, trainings on PoSH guidelines or gender sensitization are still largely absent, owing to increased costs and complexity of conducting them with platform gig-workers.

For instance, while over 81% of the surveyed platform gig-workers (N=618) have received training on how to use their respective apps and 74% have received skill-based training, only ~37% of them have received training regarding PoSH or gender sensitization.

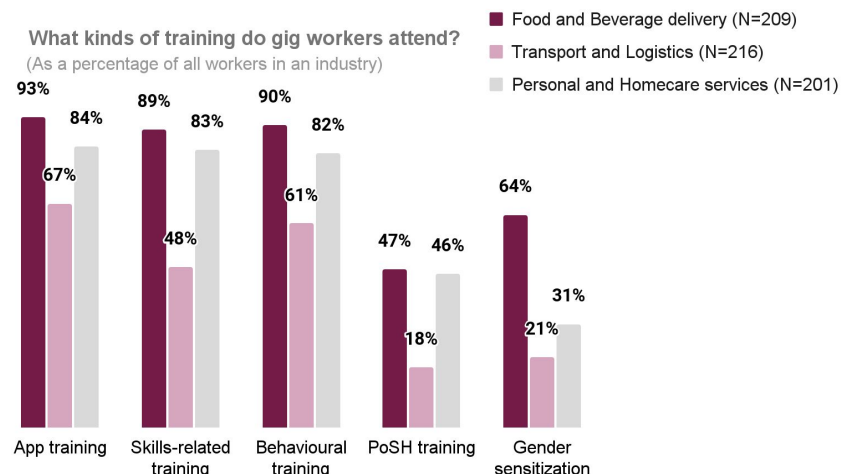


Figure 16: Provision of different types of training

A situation like this is likely to negatively affect the interactions between gig-workers, especially between men and women gig workers, as well as influence the overall retention of the workforce.

“Lots of education need to be done, and different kinds of trainings and refresher trainings need to be done. Platforms need to be educated on what language to use and male colleagues need to be made more comfortable to see women workers not as a threat.”

- Leading logistics vendor

Even in the Personal and Homecare Services industry, which includes a significant proportion of women, only 41% of male platform gig-workers (N=101) received PoSH training against over 50% of women platform gig-workers (N=100), highlighting the training-related gap that exists between the two.



Partnering with government training institutions, while effective, is a capital-intensive process and is largely utilized by industry leaders

Along with conducting training sessions through third-party vendors and organizations, platforms have also collaborated with various governmental institutions. These collaborations provide the government with platform-level support to train Indian citizens under the Skill India initiative, while enabling income opportunities for candidates that fall within Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), the flagship scheme of the government’s Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The objective of this Skill Certification Scheme is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood.⁷² This scheme is implemented by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), a not-for-profit public limited company which aims to promote skill development by catalyzing the creation of large, quality and for-profit vocational institutions.⁷³ This also allows for the government to supply platforms with a labor group that can be onboarded immediately.



The 2016 partnership between Uber and NSDC ⁷⁴

Uber partnered with the NSDC to guide interested candidates through their entire process of “training, licencing, and financing” and onboarded them onto its platform. They set up ‘Uber Partner Support Centres’ in Driver Training Centres affiliated with the Automotive Sector Development Council (ASDC) to facilitate vehicle leasing, financing and imparting of digital skills for trained and certified drivers.

The 2019 partnership between Urban Company and NSDC ⁷⁵

Aligned with NSDC’s mission to partner with the private sector, Urban Company partnered with the institution to train over 30,000 new individuals certified under PMKVY 2.0 which ran from 2016-2020. In turn, NSDC supported Urban Company in becoming a 100% Skill India-certified organization.

Figure 17: Collaborations between platforms and government to providing training

72. [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana \(PMKVY\)](#). (n.d.). PMKY Official. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

73. [About Us](#) | National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). (n.d.). NSDC. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

74. Mishra, A., 16 Sep 2016, “[Uber to train one million drivers in India](#)”, Governance Now. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

75. “[Urban Company and NSDC enter into a partnership on World Youth Skills Day](#)”, Urban Company. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

Recommendations for the Ecosystem

Challenges regarding worker selection and onboarding are multifold and include complex contracts, high initial investments, oversimplification of training, and lack of gender sensitization, among other elements. With our research, we have identified seven key recommendations for various stakeholders in the ecosystem that can help platforms and platform gig-workers overcome these challenges. To address these gaps, a collaborative approach between key actors is essential. Financing workers' initial investments, providing support to existing skilling initiatives, and creating a more transparent and fair work environment are some broad areas for the ecosystem to focus on.

For each recommendation, we provide a proof of concept in the form of similar activities already taking place in the ecosystem. We have prioritized recommendations based on criticality. Some recommendations are identified as areas of immediate interventions under the criticality column. A detailed list of opportunities for different stakeholders are listed in Table 6.

Recommendations for key actors	Implementing stakeholders	Type of opportunity	Proof of concept	Criticality	Time to implement
Provide relevant financing options and concessional capital to workers in the form of micro-financing schemes and shared subsidy programs	Governments, Banks, Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs), Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs)	Governmental schemes	KarmaLife, ⁷⁶ Portify ⁷⁷	Medium	High
Enable monetary incentives (tax, subsidies, grants, etc.) and preferential business to platforms that hire more women workers	Governments, Platforms	Regulatory move	Atmanirbhar Package 3.0 ⁷⁸	Low	Low
Provide platform gig workers with fair and simple contracts in local languages, elaborating financial and ethical clauses clearly	Platforms	Change in way of working	Swiggy and Zomato's multilingual contracts ⁷⁹	High	Low
Explore community-based training to help lower barriers for women platform gig-workers, while solving for biased social norms	Platforms, CSOs, Nonprofits	Change in way of working	EvenCargo ⁸⁰	High	High
Supplement videos-based training methods with relevant explanations and a feedback loop for query redressal to help workers understand better	Platforms, CSOs, Skilling Organizations	Change in way of working	EvenCargo ⁸¹	Low	High
Institutionalise additional training modules, like those on gender sensitization and PoSH in the workplace	Platforms, CSOs, Nonprofits	Change in way of working	Uber and Manas Foundation ⁸²	High	Low
Conduct refresher trainings on a regular basis to improve worker earnings, while making them employable for the long-term	Platforms	Change in way of working	Uber's refresher training on soft-skills ⁸³	Medium	High

Table 6: Recommendations for the selection and onboarding stage

76. Anand, M., 23 Jun 2020, "[Meet KarmaLife, bringing financial services to gig-workers in India](#)", Catalyst Fund. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

77. Palmer, M., 13 May 2019, "[Fintech for gig-workers is the next big untapped market](#)", Sifted. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

78. Ghosh, M., 12 Nov 2020, "[Govt Will Give Incentives For Hiring Employees: Rs 3 Trillion Emergency Loan For 26 Sectors Announced](#)", trak.in. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

79. "[Fairwork India Ratings 2021: labor Standards in the Platform Economy](#)", Fairwork. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

80. Saxena, A., 11 Mar 2022, "[Delivering Equality! Delhi-Based Startup Becomes India's First All-Women Logistics Company](#)", The Logical Indian. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

81. Ibid

82. "[Uber to impart gender sensitization to one lakh drivers by 2021-end](#)", 8 Mar 2021. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

83. "[Platform-Led Upskilling](#)", Caribou Digital. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



Chapter 5: Payments, Incentives and Growth Models

What is the financial engagement of platforms and workers and how do these two entities grow?

Introduction

One of the main factors that catalyze employment of platform gig-workers is the financial aspect of their work. Specifically, the ease of receiving remunerations, based on completion of singular tasks, combined with primarily a low entry barrier into the space, is quite inviting. Certainty of payments in platform gig work is higher than that in traditional systems of gig work, like contractual engagements, temporary work arrangements, etc. Additionally, payments are directly credited into the worker's bank account, minimizing the challenges associated with middlemen. Payments and incentives structures adopted by platforms have certain features which are consistent across the different sectors considered for this study:

1. **Price discovery through algorithms:** Payments are determined through platform-designed and computer-driven algorithms. These algorithms decide the value of the task completed and the incentives or penalties associated with the task.
2. **On-job feedback through customer ratings:** Evidence suggests that along with successful fulfilment of the required service, customer ratings, another crucial factor, is dependent on the consumer's experience and their racial/ethnic/gender biases.⁸⁴ For some platforms, these ratings also feed into the algorithm and play an important role in determining the gig-workers' future with the platform.⁸⁵
3. **Directly transferred online payments:** Since platforms allow consumers to pay directly through the service app, a majority of payments made out to platform gig-workers are done through direct online transfers into their bank accounts.

Across the three sectors studied in the report, most of the platforms follow an algorithm-based and online payment model for each task performed by platform gig-workers.

Food and Beverage Services

Platforms in the food and beverage delivery industry provide platform gig-workers with a flat base pay for the first 6-7 kms covered after picking up the food for delivery. For any additional distance logged after that initial stretch, platforms pay around INR 5-6 per km. The take-home income depends on number of deliveries completed, distance travelled and tips paid by customers.

Transport and Logistics Services

Payments in the transport and logistics services sector are based on the distance covered and the time taken for each ride. Like other industries, platforms take a pre-decided percentage of the charged fare. Further, some platforms in the logistics industry also provide a fixed payment on the delivery of each parcel, while controlling for the shipment size and the distance covered.

Personal and Homecare Services

In the personal and homecare services sector, customers are charged for each service provided by the workers. In case customers make online payments, platforms deduct a pre-decided commission rate before crediting the workers' share into their account. For cash payments made by customers, the commission amount is, instead, debited from the workers' accounts later.

Our research suggests that gig platforms tend to use a range of monetary benefits to further incentivize their workers' productivity.⁸⁶ For instance, monetary incentives for meeting targets, incentives attached to high customer ratings, overtime pay, and a higher base pay during rush hours are some instances. Similarly, time-specific bonuses and incentives are also used to encourage retention of workers.⁸⁷ Annual, bi-annual and seasonal bonuses are a very common, especially across the food and beverage delivery industry. Moreover, in order to improve the size of their gig workforce, platforms also provide existing workers with a referral bonus, which is to the tune of INR 1000-1500 for each successful referral.⁸⁸ On the other hand, along with these positive encouragements, platform gig-workers also face wage cuts for not complying with the rules set by the digital platform. These rules include, but are not limited to, punctuality, uninformed leaves, customer rating falling below a certain pre-decided level, refusal to accept a booking or task, incomplete tasks and non-completion of a minimum number of daily bookings.⁸⁹

84. Rosenblat, Levy and et al., Oct 2016, "[Discriminating Tastes: Customer Ratings as Vehicles for Bias](#)", Data & Society. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

85. Agarwal, A., 1 Dec 2021, "[Urban Co's three-way balancing act in search of profitability](#)", The Ken, . Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

86. Sattva gig-workers' survey analysis

87. Ghosh and Ramachandran, "[Engendering the gig economy in India](#)", Institute of Social Studies Trust.. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

88. Ibid 86

89. Ibid 87



Platforms provide some level of autonomy to platform gig-workers through flexible timings and timely income

The platform gig economy emerged as the primary source of income for over 90% (N=618) of the respondents across all the three sectors. Further, platform gig work provides flexibility to workers to switch their work choices to potentially attain the maximum remuneration at any given time. For example, informal, semi-skilled work, with low barriers of entry — such as driving — allows workers to leverage their flexible work opportunities and switch to the most remunerative opportunities for work. This aspect also got reverberated in our survey where 48% (N=618) of the workers chose flexibility as one of the benefits provided by platforms.

Is gig work your primary source of income?

(As a percentage of all workers in an industry)



Figure 18: Primary source of income for platform gig-workers

Flexibility, along with consistency in payments, makes the platform gig work systematic and reliable for workers. It also enables them to trust the system more than traditional gig work. Additionally, the algorithms and automation of processes have enabled workers to trust companies and is a potential motivation for many workers to join platform gig economy.⁹⁰ In parallel, as the supply of potential platform gig-workers increases in the economy, the absence of a minimum wage law has forced down daily earnings over the past few years.⁹¹ However, according to our study, 44% (N=618) of the platform gig-workers still reported better earnings as compared to remunerations received from their previous jobs.

Challenges in payments, incentives and growth models

While improved incomes is an established fact for workers in the gig economy, there are a range of challenges across payment, incentives, and growth models. Due to the unequal bargaining power between platforms and platform gig-workers, these challenges are likely to affect workers significantly. Through our research, three major challenges emerged, which impact the platform gig-workers' day-to-day proceedings, while also affects them in the long term:

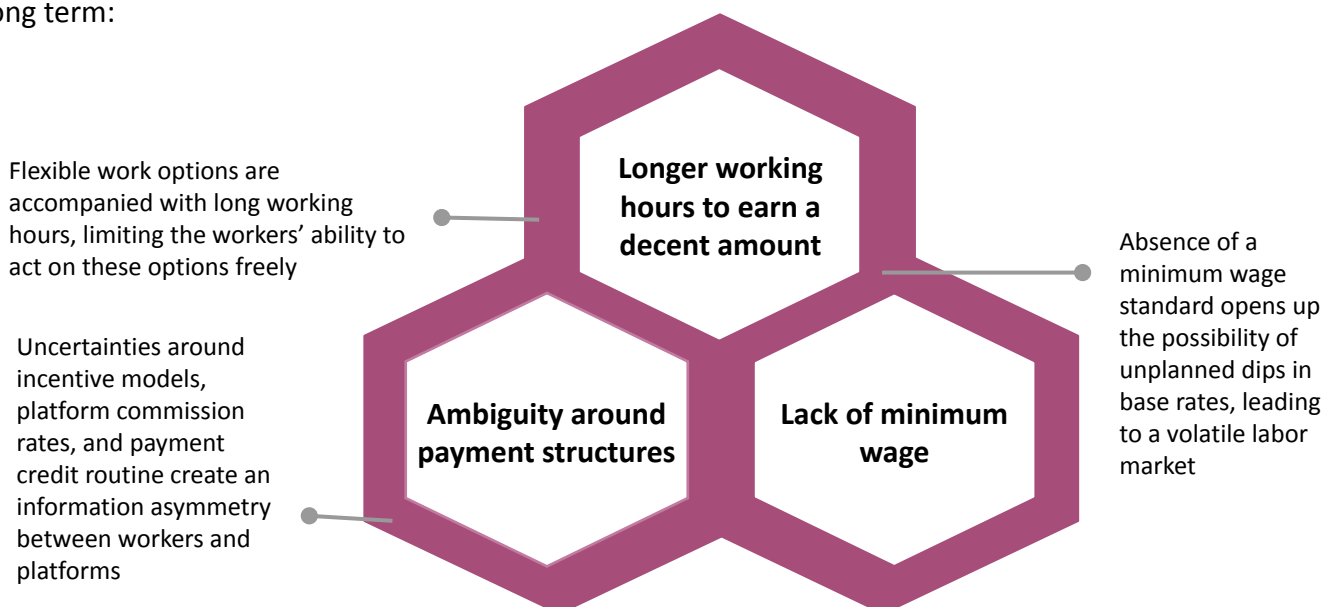


Figure 19: Challenges in the Payment and Incentive Model

90. "Have Uber and Ola Met Promises Made to Drivers and Commuters?", 13 Jan 2020, EPW Engage. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

91. Kapoor, A., 4 Aug 2021, "The challenge with gig economy", Economic Times. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



Workers have better control over their working hours but these hours are long and a high number of tasks need to be completed to achieve decent income

Initially platforms use incentive schemes to on-board workers, but as these platforms have expanded, the supply of workers has increased, thereby pushing workers to do more work to achieve similar kind of earnings which they previously accrued when they initially joined the platforms.⁹²

Although ~68% (N=618) of the gig-workers from the survey reported they have better control over working hours as compared to their previous jobs, in absolute terms, this still does not fare well, since over 51% (N=618) of all platform gig-workers work for over 10 hours daily. More specifically, workers on ride-sharing and food delivery platforms report having to work long hours for incentives to be credited. For instance, research suggests that workers have to login for minimum ten hours per day in the food delivery platform Swiggy.⁹³

On average, how many hours do you work in a day?

(As a proportion of total surveyed workers in the industry)

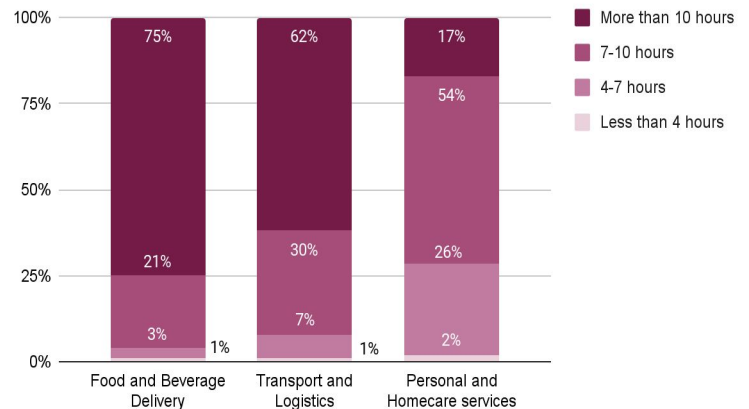
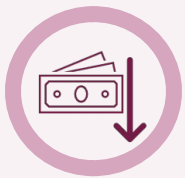


Figure 20: Average number of work hours in a day

An analysis of an average day at work revealed that gig-workers affiliated with the transport or the food delivery services industry seem to work longer hours. A handful of food delivery workers even stated working till well after 12 AM, and only returning home after around 2 AM. **Hence, long working hours and mandatory login periods to achieve decent income puts the concept of “flexibility” into question.** Further, tasks are singular in nature and each task has the potential to invite either an incentive or a penalty, keeping the workers under continued stress and control.



Long working hours do not necessarily translate into better earnings. Instead, this depends on industry-specific factors such as type of work, price variability, etc.

While there is a positive correlation between working hours and the average daily earnings, in the food and beverage delivery industry—those who work over 10 hours daily are ~4x more likely than those who work between 7-10 hours to earn over INR 1000 every day. However, this trend is either negligible or reversed in the other two industries.

How do the workers' work-hours affect their average daily earnings?

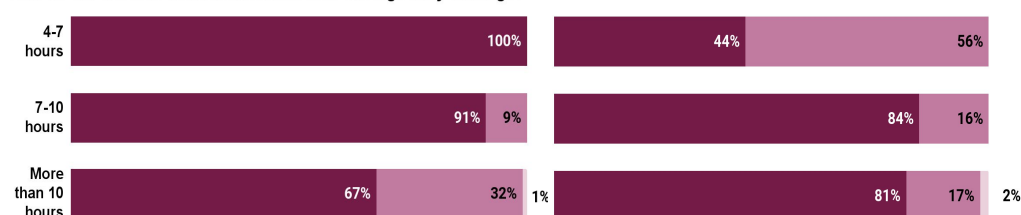


Figure 21: Average number of work hours in a day - Food and Beverage Industry

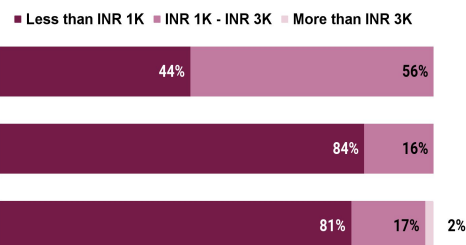


Figure 22: Average number of work hours in a day - Transport and Logistics industry

92. Bharadkar, Medappa and et al., 2020, “Is Platform Work Decent Work? A Case of Food Delivery Workers in Karnataka”, INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY (IPP). Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

93. Ibid.

More specifically, despite working for lesser hours, on average, earnings in personal and home services are higher than those in the other two sectors, largely due to external factors such as the skill-based nature of the job. For instance, about 76% of the respondents from the food and beverage delivery and transport and logistics sectors earn less than INR 1000 per day as compared to only 55% from personal and homecare services industry.

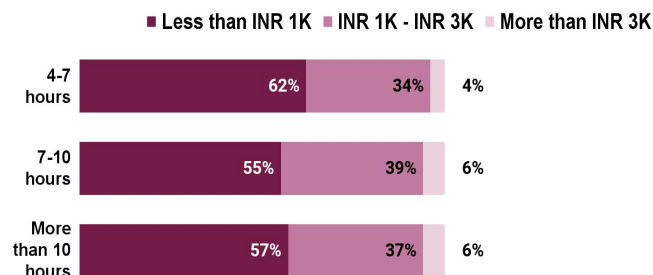


Figure 23: Average number of work hours in a day - Personal and Homecare Services



Lack of information on design of payment structures creates ambiguity and uncertainty amongst workers on their take home income

Literature says that algorithm determined payments often make payment structures unclear and gives little control to the workers on their work and income.⁹⁴

However, findings from our survey suggests that more than a majority of workers across two of the industries are, at least, aware of methods to increase their income through these platforms. For instance, 70% (N=209) of food and beverage delivery platform gig-workers and 76% (N=201) of personal and homecare platform gig-workers are aware of these methods. However, among platform gig-workers in the transport and logistics industry, only 42% (N=216) seem to know how this.

Do you know how you can increase your income levels with the current platform?
(As a percentage of all workers in an industry)

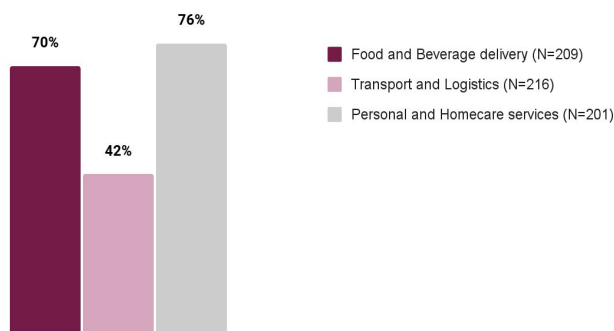


Figure 24: Knowledge about incentives

“Platform gig-workers are not paid the market value of the task completed rather their pay is based on surge pricing.”

- Industry Expert

“Transitioning more regular platform gig-workers to “full time” workers, who follow a fixed pay and algorithm-driven incentive model would be beneficial for platforms to improve worker retention.”

- President, Leading job creation platform



In the absence of a minimum wage guarantee, platform gig-workers, are more susceptible to financial vagaries during crises or disasters

94. Chatterjee, D’cruze and et al., Aug 2021, “[Literature Review: Finances of Platform Workers in India](#)”, Dvara Research. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

As highlighted in Figure 25, during COVID-19, there was a dip in platform gig-workers' earnings from the platforms. For instance, almost three-quarters of platform gig-workers (71%), more women (80%) than men (69%), reported that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their earnings. According to our survey, this was due to a combination of a lower frequency of orders and a change in the platforms' existing incentive and commission structure, the latter probably being a necessary measure during the pandemic for the platforms to take.

Did the COVID-19 pandemic impact your earnings?
(As a percentage of all workers in an industry)

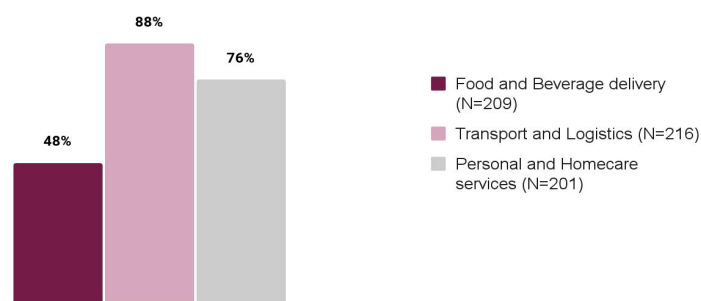


Figure 25: Impact of COVID-19 on earnings

Another survey also suggest that about 90% of ridesharing drivers saw a decline in income as compared to 75% of delivery workers and 72% of house cleaners during the COVID-19 lockdown.⁹⁵ It also suggests that about 90% of Indian platform gig-workers lost income during the pandemic, with more than a third making less than INR 5000 in August 2020.⁹⁶ Although some of the platforms tried to protect their workers with income protection benefits during COVID-19, only 36% (N=618) of the platform gig-workers across all sectors received such benefits.

Recommendations

Challenges regarding payments, incentives and growth models are multifold. Our research identifies three key recommendations for various stakeholders in the ecosystem that can help platforms and platform gig-workers overcome these challenges. To address these gaps, a collaborative approach between the government, platforms and civil society is essential. Disclosing payment structures and incentive models upfront, transition to a full time working model, and loosening the grip on daily tasks to be completed are some broad areas for the key actors to focus on.

A detailed list of opportunities catering to different stakeholders are listed in Table 7 below:

Recommendations for key actors	Implementing stakeholders	Type of opportunity	Proof of concept	Criticality	Time to implement
Provide more information on payments, incentives, and commission modalities with the workers to create a transparent work environment	Platforms	Change in way of working	-	High	Low
Transition more platform gig-workers to a 'fixed pay plus algorithm-driven-incentive' model	Platforms, Investors and Philanthropies	Change in way of working	Even Cargo, Rapido, Swiggy	High	High
Establish 'weekly login hours'-based milestones instead of 'daily task'-based payments to provide income stability to workers	Platforms, Investors and Philanthropies	Change in way of working	Zomato's premium fleet delivery pilot ⁹⁷	Medium	Low

Table 7: Recommendations for the payments and incentives stage

95. Abrar, P., 30 Sep 2020, "India's gig workers hit hardest by coronavirus pandemic, finds survey", Business Standard. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

96. "The Digital Hustle: Gig Worker Financial Lives Under Pressure", Sep 2020, Flourish Ventures. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

97. Salman S.H, 17 Dec 2020, "Exclusive: Zomato Tests New Compensation Model For Delivery Partners With Minimum Guarantee Pay", Inc42. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



Chapter 6: Workplace Conditions and Interaction

What does a platform gig-workplace
look like?

Introduction

Workplace conditions include the working hours, grievance redressal, occupational safety and health and wellbeing of the workers. Government policies and the workers' interactions with their environment interactions with customers, the platform, and other workers determine the working conditions within the gig economy. Currently, government policies are yet to catch up to the address certain challenges emerging from platform gig work spaces, therefore platform gig-workers' in this avenue within the gig economy are largely determined by their interactions in the workplace. Interactions among the following players in the ecosystem impact the overall working environment, potentially creating less conducive work environment.

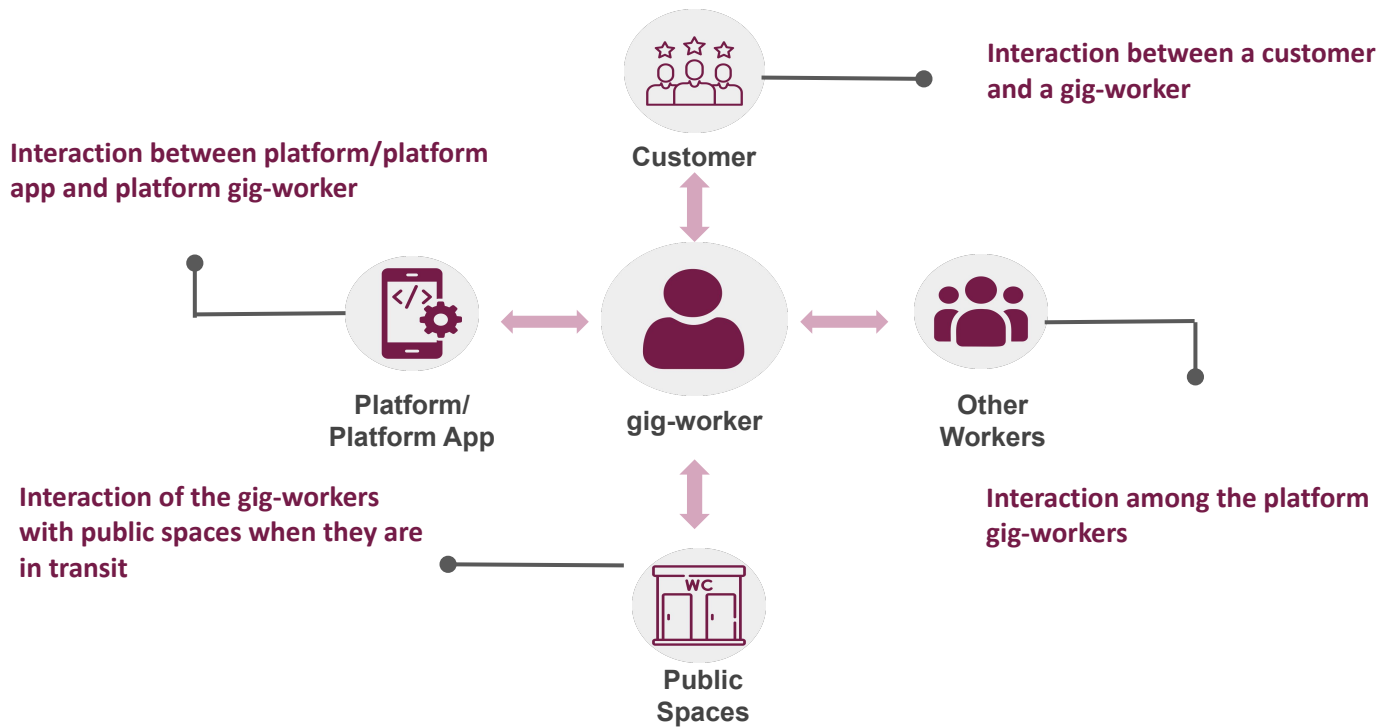


Figure 26: Interaction between the platform gig-worker and key stakeholders in the gig economy

These interactions among the above entities have different consequences, with each interaction being important and having its own set of benefits and challenges. The channels of each type of interaction is elaborated further below:

- Interaction between the **platform app and the worker**
This refers to the grievance redressal process put in place by platforms, SOS buttons in the app and other assistance provided to workers (eg. Covid-19 during the pandemic).
- Interaction between **workers**
This refers to interactions between workers resulting in knowledge transfer, exchange of information among workers and formation of worker collectives and workers' rights groups.
- Interaction of **workers with public spaces**, when they are in transit
This includes safety on the roads when workers are in transit, availability of public conveniences such as toilets, drinking water facilities and parking spaces.
- Interaction **between workers and customers**
This includes customer behavior towards the platform gig-worker during the provision of services and customer ratings based on the quality/experience, mood and inbuilt biases of the customer towards the gig worker's race, ethnicity, gender, religion etc.



Platforms across sectors have undertaken several initiatives to improve the safety and working conditions of their workers

Do complaints/grievances get addressed by platforms?

(As a percentage of all gig workers in an industry)

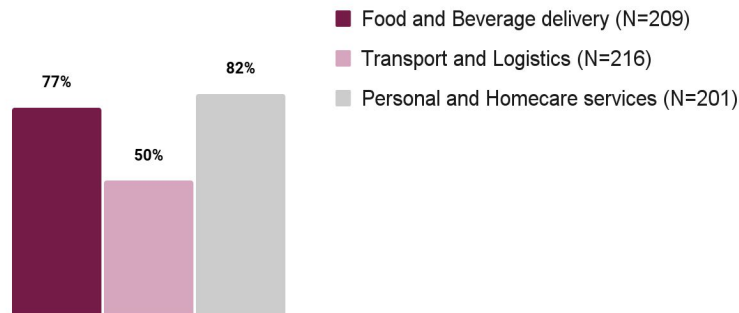


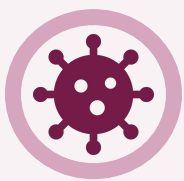
Figure 27: Grievance redressal by platforms

Platforms have incorporated complaint redressal and safety features in their applications which provide emergency support to workers when required. Our findings indicate that about 70% (N=618) of all platform gig-workers' complaints/grievances were addressed by the platforms. This number was higher for personal and homecare services industry at 83% (N=201), whereas the number was 77% (N=209) for food and beverage delivery industry and only 50% (N=201) for transport and logistics. Many platforms have an SOS button integrated in the app where workers as well as customers can send direct alerts with their location information.⁹⁸

"For women workers, there is an immediate helpline to reach out to in case they are unsafe. Similarly, apps also have an SOS button that provides a similar safety feature"

-Platform Representative

To provide safety for platform gig-workers, Urban Company requires service providers to record conversations with the customer prior to an agreement on the service.⁹⁹ Such data can serve as valuable evidence in case any dispute arises and ensure the digital safety of the service providers. This is especially important for women service providers, who are at a greater risk of harassment by potential service users, in the form of verbal abuse, stalking or bullying. A provision mandating recording service-related conversations can give women platform gig-workers a sense of security.¹⁰⁰



COVID-19 initiatives have also been undertaken by platforms to provide health and safety benefits to workers

Almost three-fourth of the respondents (71%) (N=618) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their earnings. Leading companies in the home services, transportation and food delivery sector rolled out COVID-19 insurance policies for their platform gig-workers and at times extended it to their families.¹⁰¹

Did the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impact your earnings?

(As a percentage of all workers in an industry)

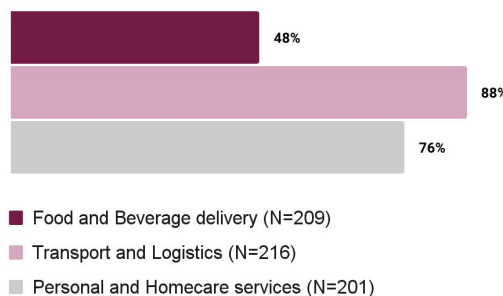


Figure 28: Impact of COVID-19 on earnings

care fund was provided to 1 lakh workers of the platform in the beginning of COVID-19 to meet their bare needs"

gig platform respondent

98. Murphy, D., 30 Apr 2015, "Uber Upgrades SOS Button in India With GPS Tracking", Pc Mag. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

99. Kasliwal, R., May 2020, "Gender and the Gig Economy: A Qualitative Study of Gig Platforms for Women Workers", ORF Issue Brief. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

100. "How gig economy is becoming mainstream in India", 17 Apr 2021, The Tribune. Accessed 14 Nov 2021.

101. "GigIndia to provide Rs 3 lakh insurance cover to active gig-workers", 9 May 2021. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

Companies also provided interest-free loans which had delayed and granted liberal payback periods which would start only after business activity resumed.¹⁰²

Challenges in workplace conditions

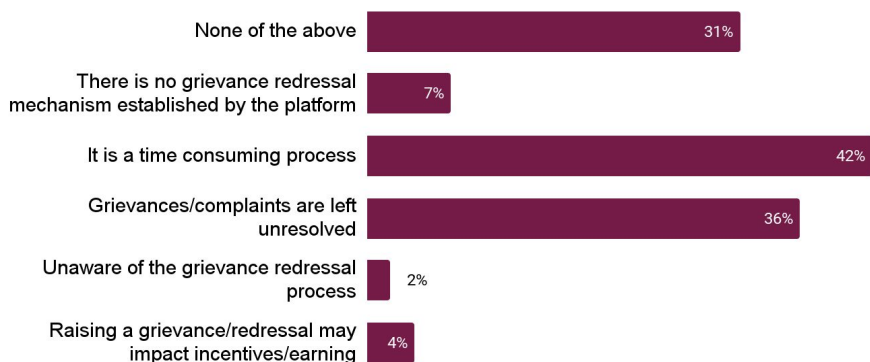
- **Time consuming grievance redressal procedures**
Grievance redressal processes put in place are either too time-consuming or ineffective. This can affect workers' well-being and also create situations where platforms lose out on business.
- **Lack of public infrastructure**
Workers also face difficulties while accessing public conveniences such as toilets, fresh drinking water and parking spaces, potentially leading to less uptake of work due to loss of well-being and in-turn affecting business.
- **Lacking income support during the pandemic**
Many platform gig-workers have not received income support announced during the pandemic by various platforms.
- **Forums to ensure appropriate worker representation are limited**
Existing apparatus to aid holistic representation of platform gig workers to gig platforms and to improve two-way communication between them are sparse. This can lead to build-up of worker's concerns and thus affecting both workers and platforms.



While initiatives have been undertaken to improve workplace conditions, there are gaps in the existing grievance redressal procedure adopted by gig platforms. This can affect workers' well-being and also create situations where platforms lose out on business.

What are some challenges you experience in getting a grievance resolved?

(As a percentage of all workers)



"I have talked to many women, and they say that it is difficult for them to drive for long and during their periods"

-Workers Rights Group Representative

Figure 29: Challenges with the grievance redressal mechanism

In case of grievance redressal, our survey found that 63% (N=618) of workers call up their customer care directly when they need to resolve a grievance and 31% (N=618) submitted a written complaint. Among these, 42% (N=618) of the platform gig-workers reported the grievance redressal mechanism to be time consuming, while 36% (N=618) reported non-resolution of grievances by platforms. The personal and homecare services sector fared better with around 58% (N=201) of gig-workers sharing that they did not face challenges in registering grievances. This percentage was comparatively lower for the transport and logistics (25%; N=216) and food and beverage delivery sectors (11%; N=209). While for transport and logistics sector workers, low resolution of complaints was the foremost challenge (47%; N=216), for food and beverage delivery workers, the time consuming process was the main issue (51%; N=209).

102. Khatri, B., 28 Mar 2020, "[Urban Company Offers Interest-Free Loans To 22K Partners And More](#)", Inc42. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



Limited availability and poor access to public infrastructure impacts the wellbeing and safety of platform gig-workers, especially women, potentially leading to less uptake of work due to loss of well-being and in-turn affecting business.

Workers who are on the move to complete their gigs, especially in the cab driving and food delivery sectors, also face issues around inadequate public infrastructure as they generally do not have access to safe and hygienic toilets.¹⁰³ Internationally, lawmakers have been coming in to support platform gig-workers in this aspect. For example, the City Council of New York passed a bill that grants free access of restaurant restrooms to platform gig-workers.¹⁰⁴ In another instance, the Trade Union CCOO in Barcelona allowed free access to basic public amenities to platform gig-workers (even non-members).¹⁰⁵ Indian lawmakers can leverage available networks of public conveniences for platform gig-workers such as RWA public toilets and fresh water facilities. To aid better working conditions for workers, platforms can look towards localization of point of service delivery so that workers do not have to travel far and wide to provide services.



Due to lack of government policies and recommendations around workplace safety, platform gig-workers are exposed to higher risks at their workplace.

Currently, there is no law that provides a defined structure on employment contracts between platforms and platform gig-workers. This absence of a clear, concise and easily understandable statement defining platform gig-workers' duties and expected rewards leaves a wide space for ambiguity. While the Code on Social Security is a step towards recognising platform gig-workers social security needs, platform gig-workers are conspicuous by their absence from other labor codes. It is important to include platform gig-workers in all labor codes including the Occupational, Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code which can lay down the basic minimum wages, occupational safety and working conditions they can be provided with. Other countries are increasingly realizing the need for this change and moving towards this goal.

"Other countries like Singapore has developed a policy to protect workers, and China where workers are extremely marginalized have come up with a policy to protect workers with minimum income, better access to toilets, and look at the algorithm themselves to stop the apps from giving unreasonable targets"

- Industry Expert

"Some of the countries in Europe, for instance, Spain, have classified delivery workers not as freelance or self employed workers but as employees of the platforms. Similar adjustments have been passed in Italy, Netherlands and the UK"

- Industry Expert



During the COVID-19 pandemic, the provision of income benefits varied across workers between different industries

During the pandemic induced lockdowns, various media articles reported that initiatives by the platforms were providing platform gig-workers with income protection and interest free loans.¹⁰⁶ However, our data suggests that only 36% of the respondents reported receiving income protection benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

103. Gurmat, S., 19 Oct 2021, "No Bathrooms, No Safety, No Formalization: For India's Women Gig-workers, Companies" Promises Ring Hollow, News Click. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

104. Menegus, B., 25 Jan 2022, "NYC's app-based delivery workers can finally use restaurant bathrooms", ENGadget. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

105. "Gig Economy Project – Trade union opens up a space for riders to wash and use the toilet in Barcelona", 4 Aug 2021, Brave New Europe. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

106. "Covid-19: Zomato sets up funds for income-starved daily wage workers in India", 26 Mar 2020, Economic Times. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

About 69% (N=209) of respondents from the food and beverage delivery services and transport and logistics services did not get any income protection from their platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic, as compared to 44% (N=201) from personal and homecare services. **Further, a higher percentage of workers in Lucknow did not receive any income protection (70%; N=263) as compared to workers in Bangalore (57%; N=355).** Low frequency of orders (69%; N=618), difficulty in accessing COVID-19 income protection benefits (37%; N=618) and delay in payments (21%; N=618) were the most reported challenges faced during COVID-19.

Did your platform provide any income protection benefits during COVID-19?
(As a percentage of all workers in an industry)

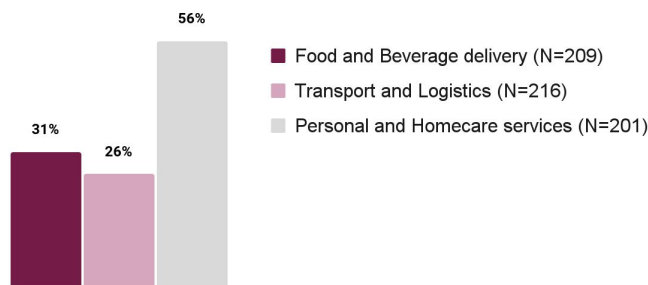


Figure 30: Income protection benefits during COVID-19



Although it is important to create better forums to effectively represent workers, existing focus among workers towards achieving this is largely limited to the Transport and Logistics sector. This can lead to build-up of worker's concerns and thus affecting both workers and platforms.

Providing workers and WRGs with appropriate and open avenues to share their concerns with their platforms can be a significant step towards improving worker pay and working conditions. However, despite the rapid increase in the size of the gig economy, worker unions or workers' rights groups of platform gig-workers are mostly non-existent, except for the transport and logistics services sector.

Our survey finds that only 20% (N=618) of all platform gig-workers are currently a part of a labor union or a workers' rights group. Additionally, men are about twice as likely as women to be a part of a worker union or a workers' rights group (22%; N=503 v/s 12%; N=115). Further, platform gig-workers belonging to the transport and logistics sector have the highest penetration in a labor union or a worker rights group, with around 50% (N=216) of all its workers belonging to one. In contrast, only 10% (N=201) of personal and homecare platform gig-workers and 2% (N=209) of food and beverage delivery platform gig-workers belong to a worker union or a worker rights group.

Are you currently a part of a workers' union or a workers' rights' group?
(As a percentage of all workers in an industry)

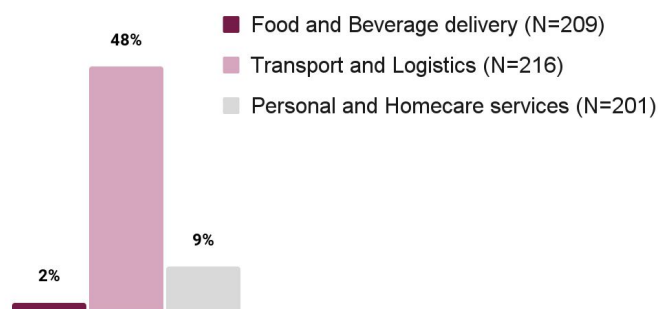


Figure 31: Affiliation with workers' unions or workers' rights' groups

“Worker collectives can perform important task of bringing down information asymmetries and bring the voice of the worker to the platform”

- Industry expert

Recommendations

Our research has identified four key recommendations for various stakeholders in the ecosystem that can help platforms and gig-workers overcome various challenges with respect to workplace conditions and interactions. These recommendations include implementation of short turn around times and incorporating an element of choice in terms of location of service delivery to attract women workers, localization of services to reduce safety risks, provision of public infrastructure and promotion of worker collectives in the gig ecosystem.

A detailed list of opportunities has been provided in Table 8 below:

Recommendations for key actors	Implementing stakeholders	Type of opportunity	Proof of concept*	Criticality [#]	Time to implement [@]
Strengthen flexibility and the element of choice in available service offerings to successfully attract and retain more women workers	Platform	Change in way of working	Even Cargo, ¹⁰⁷ Urban Company ¹⁰⁸	Low	Low
Localize services to eliminate the risks of safety and the lack of public amenities that act as a challenge to workers' well-being in the gig economy	Platform	Change in way of working	Even Cargo, Urban Company	Low	Low
Enable platforms to partner with RWAs to provide sanitation facilities to platform workers under the Swachh RWA Guidelines to ease the burden on platforms	Government/ RWAs	Provision of basic infrastructure	Swachh RWA Guidelines, ¹⁰⁹ New York Bill ¹¹⁰	High	High
Create accessible and accountable forums to improve workers' representation enabling both platforms and workers to voice their concerns	Government, Worker Unions	Regulatory move	-	Medium	High
Inculcate an ESG lens in the investment process, incentivising more practices to improve workplace conditions	Civil society, Venture Capitalists (VCs), & Investors	Change in way of working	Nordea's STARS strategy to enable sustainable investing ¹¹¹	High	Medium

Table 8: Recommendations for the workplace conditions stage

107. Saxena, A., 11 Mar 2022, "[Delivering Equality! Delhi-Based Startup Becomes India's First All-Women Logistics Company](#)", The Logical Indian. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

108. BW Online Bureau, 24 Aug 2020, "[85% Women Feel Flexibility And Autonomy Are The Most Attractive Features In Gig Economy](#)", Business World. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

109. "[Swachh RWAs: Standard Operating Procedures](#)", Ministry of Urban Development.. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

110. "[New York City Council Passes Six Bills Protecting Gig Economy Delivery Workers](#)", 30 Sep 2021, Ogletree Deakins. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

111. Jenssen, H., "[Sustainable Investing in the Gig Economy The Gig Economy is good for business, but is it good for giggers?](#)", Nordea Asset Management. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



Chapter 7: Social Security

What do platform gig-workers and platforms understand about social security?

Introduction

Organized sector workers receive social security through statutory schemes such as the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, Employees' State Insurance Act etc. In India, only 7% of the workforce is employed in the organized sector while the rest of the 93% unorganized workforce is covered under a patchwork of social schemes.¹¹² In recent years, there have been attempts to provide social security to an emerging class of platform gig-workers. The Code on Social Security was passed in 2020 and for the first time recognizes platform gig-workers and lays down a framework for providing them social security.

Legislation	Year
Workmen's Compensation Act	1923
Employees' State Insurance Act	1948
Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act	1952
Maternity Benefit Act	1961
Payment of Gratuity Act	1972
Cine Workers Welfare Act	1981
Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Act	1996
Unorganised Workers Social Security Act	2008
The Social Security Code	2020

Figure 32: Legislations and policy interventions that provide social security benefits for unorganised workers

The Code on Social Security has provided definitions of workers under different types of arrangements such as home-based worker, gig-worker, platform worker, fixed term employee and interstate migrant worker. In addition to this, the Code provides for a National Social Security Board that will give recommendations on formulating schemes for the unorganized, gig and platform workers. Social security schemes for platform gig-workers will be funded through a cess of 1-2% on platforms' annual turnover.

The Code also calls for the creation of a portal to register unorganized, gig and platform workers. Every eligible platform gig-worker or platform worker, shall be required to register with Aadhaar, on a self-declaration basis on the portal. Workers will be required to update their information on the portal from time-to-time. With respect to gig and platform workers, each aggregator will be required to share details of their gig or platform workers electronically to generate a Unique Registration Number on the portal on a monthly basis. Further, each platform gig-worker or platform worker will authenticate himself through Aadhaar as per the procedure specified by the Central Government.

These recent initiatives have tried to use a multi-stakeholder approach—either enabling government bodies (such as the National Social Security Board or the Employee State Insurance Corporation) or individual platforms (through contributions to an aggregate fund, proposed in the draft rules of the Code on Social Security).

112. "Unorganized Worker", Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

Our survey of platform gig-workers shows that only 8% of workers received any type of social security from the government. In a separate response, 67% of platform gig-workers were unaware of government social security schemes and another 57% did not know who to ask for social security benefits.



Platforms implement social security programmes for gig-workers on their payroll, with accidental insurance being the most prevalent form of social security, followed by health insurance and life cover.

Compared to government, more workers have received social security benefits from platforms. Platforms have been providing mostly insurance schemes to gig workers on a voluntary basis. 47% (N=618) of workers in our survey received some kind of social security from platforms and 45% (N=618) did not receive any social security. In addition to this, 7% (N=618) of workers are also unaware if their platform provides social security or not. Overall 85% (N=293) of platform gig-workers who received social security from platforms did so in the form of accidental insurance, and about 50% (N=293) did so in terms of health insurance. Around 29% also received vaccination support during COVID-19.

What kind of social security benefits did you receive from the platforms?

(As a percentage of all gig workers who received social security by platforms)

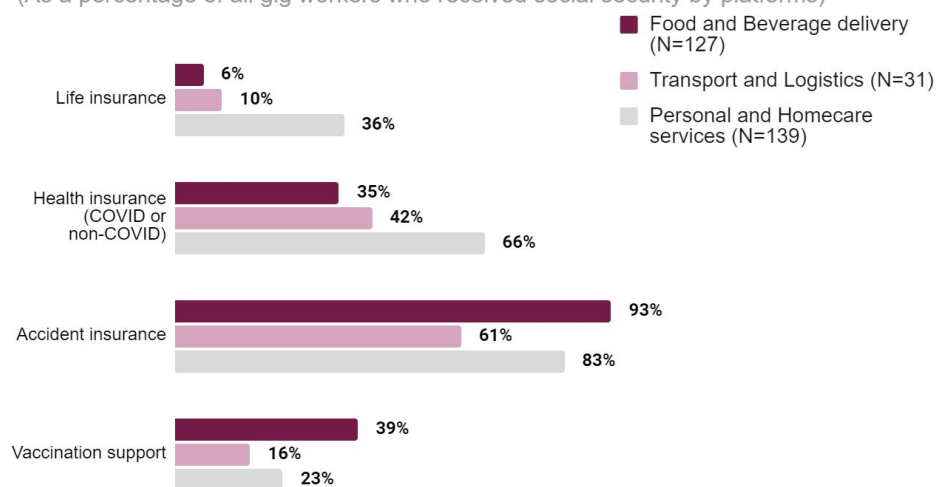


Figure 33: Provision of social security by the platforms

The proportion of accident insurance recipients is higher in the food delivery sector (91%) against the personal & home services sector (83%) and transport and logistics (61%). Health insurance and life insurance recipients are higher in the personal and home services sector (66% and 36% respectively) compared to transport and logistics (42% and 10%) and food delivery (35% and 6%). Platforms are also using forms of gratuity benefits for workers, based on the tenure of their employment. Such benefits have been noticed among platforms hiring women platform gig-workers such as Even Cargo or HeyDeeDee, who have been providing long serving women platform gig-workers with fixed deposits to improve retention.

It is noted that platforms do not provide retirement benefits. Only 2% workers had Employee Provident Fund (EPF), while no other form of retirement benefits are available to platform gig-workers. This is driven by the nature of gig work where platform gig-workers are usually registered with multiple platforms and change jobs frequently. Therefore, it is challenging for platforms to assist their gig-workers with retirement benefits. At the same time, platform gig-workers are not covered under the mandatory social security schemes such as EPF because they are labelled as independent contractors by platforms.

Lack of awareness is an important theme in social security provision by platforms. Almost 45% of platform gig-workers were not aware of any social security benefits provided by platforms and another 38% suggested that they did not know whom to contact to receive social security from platforms.

Challenges in social security for platform gig-workers

- **Lack of awareness about existing social security schemes**
Gig-workers are unaware if they receive any social security or whom to contact to receive social security from either the government or platforms.
- **Lack of coverage under mandatory social security schemes**
Platform gig-workers are labeled as self-employed or service partners and not full time employees of platforms and as a result are unable to access mandatory social security benefits such as the Employee Provident Fund (EPF).
- **Slow registration on e-SHRAM portal**
The e-SHRAM portal has been envisaged to register all unorganized sector workers in the country towards their provision of social security benefits. However, registration among workers is moving at a slow pace and this can hinder the ability of platform gig-workers to access social security schemes in the future.



Short-term social security by platforms and low penetration of governmental social security schemes are the most prominent challenges faced by the workers.

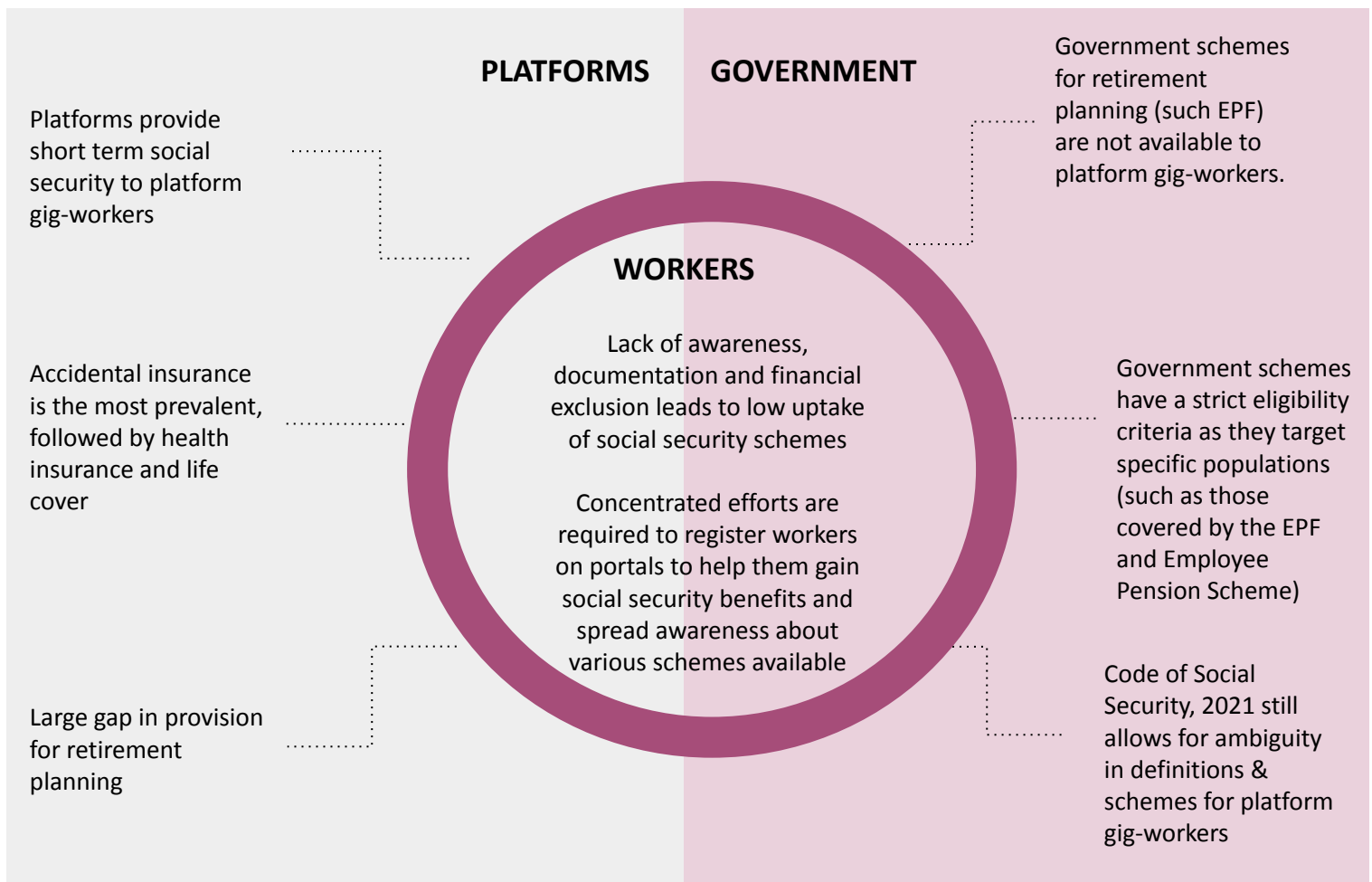


Figure 34: Challenges in social security for platform workers



Since gig-workers are not considered ‘employees’, they are excluded from mandatory social security schemes and also lack awareness regarding the same

The Government’s social security law mandates benefits for full-time employees through the Employee Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). The regulation requires all organizations with 20 or more full-time employees to register with the EPFO and contribute 12% of basic pay towards employee pension benefits.^{113 114} Employees also contribute 12% towards EPF. Since this is applicable to full-time employees, this retirement benefit is not extended to platform gig-workers who are considered partners or self-employed workers with the platforms.

Do you receive any social security benefits provided by the government?
(As a percentage of all gig workers in an industry)



Figure 35: Provision of social security by the government

Other retirement benefit schemes for workers in the unorganized sector such as Public Provident Fund, National Pension System-Lite, Atal Pension Yojana are all voluntary in nature.^{115 116} Their prevalence has remained low among the entire unorganized section of workers due to problems related to awareness, lack of financial inclusion, lack of documentation, complications in scheme design etc. We believe that concentrated efforts by the government to target platform gig-workers’ adoption of these schemes has the potential to provide platform gig-workers this missing safety net.

Additionally, low-income private-sector factory workers are provided health insurance under the Employees’ State Insurance Corporation.¹¹⁷ where employees earning up to Rs 21,000 are eligible for health insurance with the employer contributing 3.25% and employee contributing 0.75% towards the scheme.¹¹⁸ The Ayushman Bharat Scheme provides a Rs 5 lakh family cover for secondary (consultation with specialists) and tertiary treatments (treatments in hospital).¹¹⁹ However, the eligibility criteria for these schemes may leave many platform gig-workers outside this safety net.

Our study affirms these findings. For instance, based on our survey results, only 8% (N=618) of platform gig-workers receive social security benefits from the government. Further, life insurance (19%), health insurance (23%), and accident insurance (30%) were the most common forms of social security received by workers from the government. More importantly, low levels of awareness regarding existing social security benefits (61%; N=618) and whom to contact to access these benefits (55%; N=618) seem to be the most prominent challenges for this low adoption.

In the post COVID-19 world, efforts are being made to provide a social security net for platform gig-workers. In this direction, the government, for the first time, has included gig-workers within the definition of ‘workers’ in the Code on Social Security, 2020.

113. “General Overview”, Ministry of labor and Employment, Government of India. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

114. “PRESENT RATES OF CONTRIBUTION”, EPF India. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

115. Ahamed and Bharmappa T, Dec 2019, “Public Perception Towards PPF as a Tax Saving Scheme – A Study”, Think India Journal. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

116. Rajasekhar, Kesavan and et al., “Contributory Pension Schemes for the Poor: Issues and Ways Forward”, The Institute for Social and Economic Change. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

117. Ibid 111.

118. “Employees’ State Insurance Scheme”, Ministry of Labor and Employment, National portal of India. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

119. “Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission”, National Portal of India. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.



Scope of the Code of Social Security is likely to remain muted due to overlapping definitions and lack of clarity around key provisions under the law.

The Code on Social Security defines platform gig-workers as “workers operating outside the traditional employer-employee relationship”.¹²⁰ Furthermore, platform workers have been defined as people engaged in platform work, which is outside the traditional employer-employee relationship or individuals using online platforms to access other organizations to provide specific services. There is, then, another category of self-employed workers in the Code. The Code doesn’t delink platform gig-workers and platform workers from self-employed workers explicitly, and consequently, creates ambiguity regarding the responsibility of providing social security.

The Code also envisages a 1-2% cess on platforms to fund social security for workers. The draft rules suggest that platforms will self-assess their contributions and would be required to share worker data with the government for quick registration of workers.¹²¹ However, the draft rules do not clarify which portal will be used to register workers.

Thirdly, the Code also suggests that a National Social Security Board will be created to formulate appropriate schemes for gig and platform workers. According to it, both the centre and state will create schemes for gig and platform workers. The central government schemes would provide life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits, old age protection, education and any other benefit. On the other hand, state governments will formulate social security schemes around provident fund, employment injury benefit, housing, education schemes, funeral assistance, and old age homes. However, the draft rules do not clarify if workers will need to contribute towards these schemes, as has been the case in traditional retirement and PF-related schemes. There is a lot of ambiguity regarding when the CSS will be implemented and what level of social security platform gig-workers will receive from the government.

Our conversations with policy experts suggest that having clear definitions of different types of workers including platform gig-workers and platform workers is the starting point towards reform and these definitions should be included in all four labor codes introduced in 2020.



Along with ambiguity in the official definitions of ‘gig-workers’, their enumeration is another challenge. The e-SHRAM portal, which is intended to solve this latter issue, is slow in its uptake and further limits their access to social security benefits.

Our research shows that only 48% (N=618) of the platform gig-workers seem to be aware of e-SHRAM portal and only 32% (N=618) were registered on the portal. Among the respondents who faced challenges with using the e-SHRAM portal, only 2% faced document-related issues, specifically, they did not have a relevant document for registering themselves.

What is the current adoption of the e-shram portal like?

(As a percentage of all gig workers in an industry)

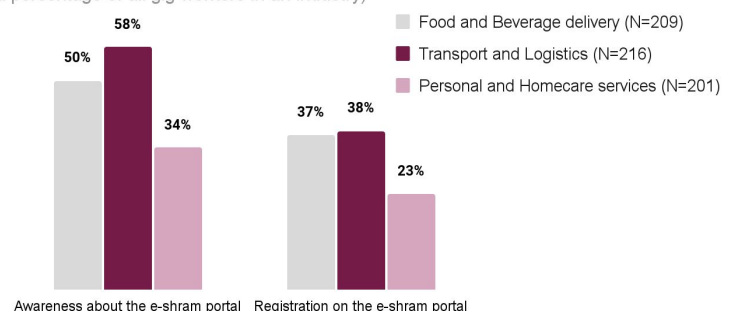


Figure 36: Adoption of e-shram portal

120. “The Code On Social Security, 2020”, Ministry of Labour and Employment, PRS Legislative Research. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

121. “Draft of the Code on Social Security(Central) Rules, 2020”, 17 Nov 2020, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

Additionally, about 12% (N=290) gig-workers also conveyed that they simply did not know why they should register themselves on the portal.

In India, there is a huge digital gap among workers with respect to region and gender. While only 4.4% rural households have internet access, 42% urban households have it.¹²² Further, only 21% of women have access to mobile internet as compared to 42% of men.¹²³ Further, there is a high possibility that the phone numbers of the unorganized workers do not match the numbers linked on their Aadhaar card which restricts them from registering on the e-SHRAM portal. It is also found that multiple workers are registered using the same mobile number, which suggests that the quality of data captured remains low.

Gross lack of awareness among the unorganized sector workers about the unveiling of such a facility is a major challenge. Experiences from the past show that when social security schemes were introduced by various state governments, registrations of beneficiaries took a lot of time and even after a decade or so, large sections remained uncovered. For example, registration of construction workers under the construction welfare boards constituted in all states is still unsatisfactory even after 15 years.

Lack of awareness among workers regarding social security is the biggest challenge affecting unorganized workers. Efforts related to spreading awareness among workers on new and existing social security schemes and policies will be important in the uptake of social security, for populations that most need it.

122. [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2020](#), GSMA. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

123. Ibid.

Recommendations

Our research has identified three key recommendations for various stakeholders in the ecosystem that can help platforms and gig-workers overcome various challenges. For each recommendation, we provide a proof of concept in form of similar activities already taking place in the ecosystem. We have prioritized recommendations based on criticality. Some recommendations are identified as areas of immediate interventions under the criticality column.

Key recommendations include measures for the government to leverage platform gig-worker data to register such workers on the e-SHRAM portal, for platforms to liaison with Common Services Centres and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to register workers on the e-SHRAM portal, and leverage existing pension saving schemes for the unorganized sector for targeted diffusion among platform gig-workers.

Recommendations for key actors	Implementing stakeholders	Type of opportunity	Proof of concept	Criticality	Time to implement
Leverage platform worker data to register workers active on platforms	Governments, Platforms	Regulatory move	Employers auto enrolling workers on mandatory schemes such as EPF	Low	Low
Facilitate onboarding of workers onto the e-shram portal through CSCs and CBOs to improve the workers' access to and adoption of existing government schemes	CSCs and CBOs	Addition of new areas to existing program	Haqdarshaq has helped unorganized workers register towards social protection schemes ¹²⁴	Low	High
Generate awareness around retirement schemes for unorganized workers (National Pension Scheme -Lite and Atal Pension Yojana) among gig-workers	Government, Workers' Rights Groups, Platforms	Targeted diffusion of existing scheme	NPS-Lite & APY have been in use	Low	High
Remove the ambiguity in and clarify the definitions of 'platform workers', 'platform gig workers', and 'unorganised workforce' in the Code on Social Security, 2020	Policymakers, Governments	Amendment to the law	-	Medium	High

Table 9: Recommendations for the social security stage

124. Gupta, A., "[Social Protection of Sanitation Workers](#)", Haqdarshak. Accessed 14 Mar 2022.

Annexures

Annexure A | List of key informant interviews conducted

Type of Organization	Organization Name	Interviewee Name and Designation
Gig platform	Uber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mahadevan Nambiar, Public Policy Consultant ● Priyanka Navle, Public Policy Associate
	Rapido	Bharat Rathore, Senior Strategy Manager
	Blowhorn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gautam Seshadri, Chief Business Officer ● Adarsh Arora, Growth Associate
	Urban Company	Bhavya Sharma, Associate Director of PR and Communications
Workers Rights' Group/Workers' Union	Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers	Shaik Salauddin, National General Secretary
	United Food Delivery Partners' Union	Vinay Sarathy, President
Industry and policy experts	Even Cargo	Karina Bhasin, COO and Founding Member
	laborNet	Gayathri Vasudevan, Chairperson
	Just Jobs Network	Sabina Dewan, President and ED
	Haqdarshak	Sambhavna, Growth Manager
	Jan Sahas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Neha Mallick, Manager, Government Relations ● Garima Sahni, Program Manager, Social Security
	School of Global Studies, University of Sussex	Kaveri Medappa Kaliyanda, Research Scholar