

US warms to 'sharing' services like Uber, Airbnb

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Americans are getting comfortable with new "sharing economy" services like Uber for ride-sharing and Airbnb for lodging, a survey showed Thursday.

Some 15 percent of Americans have used a ride-hailing service such as Uber or Lyft and 11 percent have booked a stay with an online service such as Airbnb or HomeAway, according to the Pew Research Center survey.

When adding those using other on-demand services such as grocery delivery or errand applications, the total percentage using any of the services jumped to 72 percent, Pew found.

The remaining 28 percent have not used any major sharing or on-demand platforms, and many are unfamiliar with these services, according to the poll of 4,787 Americans.

"The sharing economy has been the subject of much ongoing debate, but these services are impacting consumers to widely varying degrees," said Pew researcher Aaron Smith, author of the study.

"Some Americans have deeply integrated these platforms into their day-to-day lives—but a larger number exist on the fringes of the sharing and on-demand economy."

The survey focused on 11 "sharing" or on-demand services ranging from

the popular ride-sharing [service](#) Uber to platforms such as Instacart for [grocery delivery](#) and TaskRabbit for errands and personal services.

The growth in these new services is concentrated in those under age 45, those with college degrees and those with incomes over \$100,000 annually, the researchers found. These groups have large numbers who use several of the on-demand platforms.

The median age of ride-hailing users was 33, and those in the 18- to 29-year-old age group were seven times as likely to use these services as are those age 65 and older.

The survey, first in a series on the "new digital economy," comes amid increased debate on how new online services are disrupting traditional sectors such as the taxi and hotel industry, and how jobs are being transformed in a so-called "gig economy" of flexible work but without labor benefits.

Positive views

The researchers found a generally positive impression among the public of these services: 86 percent of ride-hailing users said the services save time and stress, and 80 percent agreed that they offer good jobs for those who want flexible working hours.

Nearly 60 percent said services such as Uber were "software companies" that connect drivers with people who are looking for a ride while 30 percent said they were transportation companies with control over their drivers.

Only 11 percent said these services collect too much personal information about their users.

For home sharing, the [median age](#) of users was 42, and the more affluent respondents were more likely to use the services. A full 87 percent said this type of lodging was "a good option" for families and groups and 85 percent said it was a good way for homeowners to earn extra money.

In the survey, a majority of 52 to 30 percent said home-sharing services should not have to pay taxes on the cost of lodging.

Pew surveyed the respondents by Internet and mail from November 24 to December 21, 2015. The margin of error for the full group was 1.94 percentage points.

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