

New research shows ridesharing services reduce sexual assault

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Contrary to portraits painted in popular media, new research involving ridesharing services shows they provide an additional level of protection for potential sexual assault victims, particularly in neighborhoods with inadequate public transportation or in circumstances that are more prone

to sex crimes.

The study, "The Deterrent Effect of Ride-sharing on Sexual Assault and Investigation of Situational Contingencies," published in the INFORMS journal *Information Systems Research*, found the entry of Uber into a city in the United States contributes to a 6.3% reduction in rape incidents.

"Even a 1% increase in Uber pickups in a neighborhood translates to a more than 3% decrease in the likelihood of sexual assaults," said Jiyong Park of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

The study was conducted by Park alongside Min-Seok Pang of Temple University, Junetae Kim of the National Cancer Center Korea and Byungtae Lee of the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology.

This research investigates the relationship between [ridesharing](#) and [sexual assault](#), which has been a controversial, but underexplored topic in [public debates](#) on the sharing economy and ridesharing. This study is the first to present systematic empirical evidence that a ridesharing platform can provide a viable means to prevent sexual crimes under certain circumstances.

"Ridesharing can reduce a passenger's risk of being a target of sexual [assault](#) by providing a more reliable and timely transportation option for traveling to a safer place," said Park. "Moreover, ridesharing contributes to a more significant reduction in the likelihood of rape occurrences in neighborhoods with limited transportation accessibility, such as the city's outskirts and neighborhoods where a higher percentage of the population is non-Caucasian."

The study also found that ridesharing is more effective in deterring

sexual crime in riskier circumstances, such as around alcohol-serving establishments on weekend nights or when the probability of crime occurrences increases.

"Despite the common misconception due to [popular media](#) stories, our work proves that [digital platforms](#) can be leveraged to solve societal challenges by matching supply and demand closely for relevant services, which calls for spatiotemporal investigations of granular-level data in designing platform businesses and devising policy instruments," concluded Park.

More information: Jiyong Park et al, The Deterrent Effect of Ride-Sharing on Sexual Assault and Investigation of Situational Contingencies, *Information Systems Research* (2021). [DOI: 10.1287/isre.2020.0978](#)

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