

New research reveals how gig economy platforms are transforming our cities

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The rapid rise of the "gig" economy for moving people, goods and services is transforming Australian cities, but not necessarily for the better, a new University of Melbourne study has found.

The five-year study [Gig Cities](#) is the first research in Australia to explore the [gig economy](#) from the perspective of consumers, workers, and industry in Australia and makes recommendations for policy makers in managing this transformation.

The study included in-depth interviews with 90 people, and found complex, unaddressed issues, including deep dissatisfaction with the existing gig economy model from both workers and consumers.

Project lead Associate Professor David Bissell said the research took a deep dive to find out how people's feelings about the gig economy are changing, using Melbourne as a [case study](#).

"Many workers and consumers are growing tired of the gig economy and are not passively accepting how things are. Our interviewees showcase a range of complex emotions, but many have become profoundly disaffected," Associate Professor Bissell said.

Research team member Dr. Elizabeth Straughan said the team interviewed both workers and employers to explore the positive and negative aspects of gig work platforms.

"Though some workers appreciate the flexibility to earn some top-up income, many are looking for ways out owing to dissatisfaction with low pay, fears for their [personal safety](#) and well-being, feelings of isolation, and a lack of viable career pathway," Dr. Straughan said.

"On the other hand, although consumers have at times enjoyed the convenience of these on-demand platforms, our findings show that consumers actively grapple with the tricky and inequitable politics of the gig economy when making decisions about using these services."

The report recommends that governments regulate platform companies

more tightly to ensure pay and conditions for workers are improved through recognizing them as employees.

Associate Professor Bissell said the entrenchment of gig work platforms prompts consideration about the kinds of cities we want in terms of equity of access to services, [workers'](#) rights, [urban planning](#) and infrastructure supporting this economy.

"If we're genuinely committed to cities that are socially just, it might be that these kinds of platforms have finally had their day."

Provided by University of Melbourne

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