

UK report reveals majority of gig economy workers are earning below minimum wage

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As the cost of living continues to spiral, a new report shows more than half of gig economy workers in the UK are paid below the minimum wage.

The first-of-its-kind study, led by the University of Bristol, found 52% of gig workers doing jobs ranging from data entry to food delivery were earning below the minimum wage. On average respondents were earning £8.97 per hour—around 15% below the current UK minimum wage, which rose to £10.42 this month.

More than three-quarters (76%) of survey respondents also experienced work-related insecurity and anxiety.

Lead author Dr. Alex Wood, Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management and Future of Work at the University of Bristol Business School, said, "The findings highlight that working in the UK gig economy often entails low pay, anxiety, and stress. As food, fuel and housing costs keep rising, this group of workers are especially vulnerable and need to be more adequately remunerated and better protected."

Equally concerning, more than a quarter (28%) felt they were risking their health or safety in doing gig work and a quarter (25%) experienced pain on the job.

When asked what would improve their situation, basic rights such as [minimum wage](#) rates, holiday and sick pay, and protection against unfair dismissal were most wanted.

Unions and platform councils (similar to works councils that exist in some European countries) to represent their needs and help influence how gig economy platforms operate and affect their working conditions also featured on their wish list. More than three-quarters of respondents believed the introduction of such bodies would bring immediate benefits.

Dr. Wood said, "A major factor contributing to low pay rates is that this work involves spending significant amounts of time waiting or looking

for work while logged on to a platform. Not only is the work low paid, but it is also extremely insecure and risky.

"The self-employed who are dependent on platforms to make a living are urgently in need of labor protections to shield them against the huge power asymmetries that exist in the sector. This clearly warrants the expansion of the current 'worker' status to protect them."

The study involved 510 UK gig economy workers who were surveyed last year. There was representation from across the sector, with around half being remote freelancers using platforms such as Upwork and Fiverr to pick up jobs ranging from data entry to website design. The other half comprised local drivers providing food delivery and taxi services via platforms including Deliveroo and Uber.

More than just side hustles to earn extra cash, respondents spent on average 28 hours a week undertaking gig work, comprising 60% of their total earnings.

Respondents overwhelmingly considered their work to be best described as [self-employment](#) and thought an extension of labor rights to include the self-employed would significantly improve their working lives.

This was the first research to investigate what forms of voice [gig workers](#) want. The findings suggest strong support for European style co-determination whereby worker representatives are consulted on and approve changes that impact working conditions and employment. Works councils that exist in countries like Germany could therefore provide a model for platform councils and assemblies in the gig economy to facilitate workers having a say over the decisions which affect their ability to make a living.

Brendan Burchell, Professor in Social Sciences at the University of

Cambridge and co-author of the report, added, "Respondents strongly felt the creation of co-determination mechanisms would allow workers, and their representatives, to influence platform provider decisions which could instantly improve their working lives.

"These policies include elected bodies of worker representatives approving all major platform changes that impact jobs and working conditions. Our findings emphasize the potential for trade union growth in this sector, with majorities being willing to join and even organize such bodies."

Provided by University of Bristol

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