

Good jobs or bad? Immigrant workers in the gig economy

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Abstract

The new work arrangements enabled by online platforms—collectively known as “gig work”—have seen substantive growth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Various estimates have suggested that a significant number of workers are participating in the gig economy, with minority and immigrant workers disproportionately represented (e.g., Pew Research Center, 2021). Job quality, meanwhile, is a multidimensional concept that goes beyond earnings. Kalleberg (2011) discussed polarized and precarious employment in the framework of good jobs and bad, an analysis that has included a worker’s control over their schedule and the nature of the work they undertake as well as its duration, stability, safety, associated benefits and insurance, and the career advancement opportunities it offers. Rooted in this context, this presentation seeks to measure the quality of gig work for immigrant workers, how this quality differs from that experienced by native-born workers, and how it varies among immigrant workers themselves. This presentation will reference the 2022 survey conducted by the Entrepreneurship in the Population project, which is overseen by NORC at the University of Chicago and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. The project’s survey drew on a nationally representative sample of over 30,000 US workers, and it contains relevant questions on workers’ engagement in the gig economy as primary or secondary jobs, their reasons for gigging, and the characteristics of job quality that inform this presentation’s research question. The presenters have used descriptive and regression analyses to examine the quality of gig work for immigrant workers.

Biographies

Cathy Yang Liu is Professor and Chair of the Department of Public Management and Policy at the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University. Her research areas are urban and economic development, the labour market and inequality, and migration and entrepreneurship. She serves as Senior Associate Editor for the Journal of Urban Affairs and Associate Editor for Economic Development Quarterly, and she edited Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Cities: Global Perspectives (Springer, 2021). She holds a PhD in Urban



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