

Migration and the Future of Work



An unlikely stepping stone? Exploring how platform work shapes newcomer migrant integration

Anna Triandafyllidou and Laura Lam | Ryerson University

The rise of digital labour platform work has drawn researchers to study how migrants are impacted by greater technology dependence in the workforce and whether platform work might accelerate migrants' entry into precarious, low-income, contingent work. Emerging data in Canada indicate that the proportion of gig workers is considerably higher amongst immigrants, especially recent immigrants, compared to Canadian-born populations; yet, the demographics and typologies of migrants that choose to undertake platform work have been understudied. This presentation reviews a qualitative and exploratory study based on 24 semi-structured interviews with recent migrants in Canada who have engaged in platform work. Our findings suggest that work in the gig economy can serve as a useful first step to gain footing in a new country, as platforms have low barriers of entry, require little social or material capital and offer flexible forms of employment that can be combined either with studying or looking for another position or working in a different full-time job. It gives migrants a subjective feeling of control over their lives and security, albeit when we delve deeper we found that they also realize it can be a dead end. The paper concludes with some critical reflections on how work in the gig economy can shape migrant integration in the host country labour market.