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Gig Work and the Platform Economy

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Introduction

The emergence of the gig economy and its associated labour forms represents a significant disruptor in the world of work. Structured around platform organisations that digitally connect freelance workers with customers to perform short, once-off tasks or 'gigs' (Adams-Prassl, 2022; Cennamo, 2019), work in the gig economy typically centres on the provision of on-demand services for customers, such as transportation, food or grocery delivery, and cleaning or DIY services (Duggan et al., 2022). This chapter reviews key trends in the gig economy and its implications for work and employment. The chapter begins by tracing the emergence and growth of gig work, highlighting noteworthy developments and controversies that have contributed to current understandings. Next, several employment-based issues in gig work will be explored, specifically considering the unique roles of platform organisations and workers in this novel context. From the platform organisation perspective, the chapter examines the prevalence and strategic use of algorithms to manage and coordinate gig workforces. From the worker perspective, the focus is on understanding the lived experiences of those who partake in gig work, particularly in seeking to recognise the positives, negatives, and uncertainties of this unique working arrangement. Finally, the chapter concludes by considering potential future directions in this new economy, with a focus on combining research and policy-based approaches to address some of the notable tensions that dominate current discourse.

The Emergence and Growth of Gig Work

It has been almost two decades since the gig economy – both as a mainstream term and a new economic force in the labour market – came to be. In 2008, at the time of the global financial

crisis, the disruption of the labour market transformed the nature of work and employment, causing widespread fragmentation of working arrangements (Friedman, 2014). Ultimately, looking back, this fragmentation has been long-lasting, and employment has continued to be characterised by increasing precarity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was also during this time that the gig economy emerged as a new and noteworthy, albeit very small, trend in the labour market. A product of the newfound uncertain and precarious economy, gig work represented a new way of doing things: a shift away from conventional working arrangements and the traditional protections that accompany life-long employment, towards hyperflexible and highly insecure work opportunities where individual workers are burdened with the risk of continuous and ever-increasing instability (Galiére, 2020; Gerwe & Silva, 2020).

The term 'gig economy' was coined to reflect the growing trend of workers pursuing 'a bunch of free-floating projects, consultancies, and part-time bits and pieces while they transacted in a digital marketplace' (Brown, 2009). Although specific definitions and broader understanding have seen much adaptation since then, this initial coining of the term still holds true in the present day: the gig economy essentially describes different types of contingent work that are transacted digitally, via platform organisations, with each work assignment being akin to an individual 'gig' (Duggan et al., 2022; Tran & Sokas, 2017). Figures and projections indicate that gig work – in its various forms – occupies approximately 2 to 4 percent of the overall labour market, although this varies across regions (Eurofound, 2017) and the definitional ambiguity surrounding gig work also results in the need to exercise caution in interpreting its size (Eurofound, 2017; Katz & Krueger, 2016). Additionally, individuals may work for more than one platform organisation at the same time – a concept known as 'multi-homing' (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019) – while others engage in gig work as a way of supplementing a more conventional primary role beyond the gig economy (Heiland, 2021).

The gig economy has undergone significant transformation since 2008, developing rapidly in line with technological advancements and diversifying its offerings to customers (Graham et al., 2017; Poon, 2019). Growing numbers of workers have started to engage in various types of gig work, and likewise, the scope of the organisations and services available in the gig economy has expanded accordingly (Adamson & Roper, 2019; Duggan et al., 2022). Some popular and well-known organisations operating in the gig economy include Uber (transportation and food-delivery services), Handy (housekeeping and repair services), and Deliveroo (food-delivery services). Beyond these local services, gig work may also refer to

computer-based crowdwork, on platforms such as Amazon Mechanical Turk and Fiverr, where freelance workers offer their services remotely for a vast range of tasks, ranging from website design, to video editing, to translation (Howcroft & Bergvall-Kareborn, 2019). Indeed, research suggests that the pace of growth and diversity found in the gig economy has made it difficult for researchers and policymakers to fully interpret developments and measure the numbers involved (Brawley, 2017; Duggan et al., 2022).

Despite this ambiguity, something more certain is that the increasing convergence of technology and work has enabled the gig economy to grow and prosper (Pesole et al., 2018). In most cases, platform organisations operating in the gig economy identify as technological companies (e.g., Uber Technologies Inc), rather than direct service providers. The claim from organisations is that they simply offer their technology, in the form of a digital infrastructure such as an online platform or smartphone application, that matches supply and demand in markets (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020). Accordingly, gig workers essentially become direct service providers to customers, with the platform organisation acting as an intermediary in this arrangement. An oft cited example is that Uber is viewed as the world's largest transportation company, although the company directly owns no vehicles – it simply provides the technology that allows customers to request rides from workers who use their own personal vehicles to offer this service (Duggan et al., 2022). From this perspective, many of the services and tasks on offer in the gig economy are simply components of more traditional roles held by, for example, taxi drivers, couriers, and so on. The novelty of gig work instead lies in the technology-enabled fragmentation of these roles into discrete, hyperflexible tasks that are made available to workers on a precarious, piece-rate basis (Smith & Leberstein, 2015). Gig workers must then navigate a competitive and unpredictable working arrangement, striving to earn income by quickly completing multiple short-term tasks, with minimal commitment and little stability (Todolí-Signes, 2017).

Reflecting on the pace of development and change in the gig economy since its inception, it seems likely that the ongoing surge of critical discourse in this domain will result in further transformation in the years to come. Our understanding of the gig economy and its work forms has been and continues to be shaped by the complexities and controversies that surround its business operations and practices (De Stefano, 2016; Howcroft & Bergvall-Kareborn, 2019). For example, the classification of gig workers as self-employed, independent contractors has formed an ongoing issue of debate (Prassl, 2018; Todolí-Signes, 2017), with critics arguing

that workers do not enjoy the same freedoms and flexibility as freelancers, and thus, are subject to bogus self-employment (Ravenelle, 2019). By drawing on the advanced capabilities of new technologies, research suggests that platform organisations closely monitor and coordinate gig workers' activities to ensure that work is carried out efficiently and service standards are upheld at all times (Duggan et al., 2023; Veen et al., 2020). Yet, these organisations simultaneously deny any employment-based responsibility towards gig workers, instead reverting to their default position of providing a technology to 'match' customers with independent workers (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). Due to this, gig workers become central to the organisation's core business offering, while still remaining peripheral to the organisation itself (Duggan et al., 2023).

Relatedly, the role of technology in enabling and facilitating gig work has shaped much of the discourse in this domain. The use of algorithmic technologies and GPS-enabled tracking systems has allowed for the remote, automated connection of workers and customers in markets, while also helping to ensure the highest possible degree of standardisation in the structure and delivery of labour (Jooss et al., 2022; Prassl, 2018). The benefit for platform organisations is that labour costs are lowered significantly, while also emphasising awareness amongst workers of the need for efficiency in completing tasks (Rosenblat, 2018). For gig workers, the prevalence of technology has benefits and drawbacks. Positively, workers can take advantage of the increased flexibility afforded by digitally mediated work. For example, research indicates that gig workers possess greater control over scheduling, allowing them to choose when and where to work, and subsequently raising feelings of empowerment and autonomy (Carr et al., 2017; Duggan et al., 2021). On the other hand, however, multiple studies examine the potentially negative implications for gig workers operating within algorithmic structures, particularly relating to workers' wellbeing, satisfaction, and career progression opportunities (Huws et al., 2018; Kost et al., 2020).

Overall, the continued rise of gig work has reshaped and challenged many of the established contours of employment, particularly relating to working relationships and the role of management in upholding this arrangement (Heiland, 2021; Meijerink et al., 2021). The unique structure and design of gig work allows technology to act as a type of middleperson between workers and customers to closely monitor, manage, and control the working relationship and labour process (Duggan et al., 2022; Veen et al., 2020). The same technology also allows organisations to fragment work into individual, smaller tasks with piece-rate payments, thereby

minimising interpersonal interaction between parties and enabling the erosion of long-term commitment between parties (Aroles et al., 2019; Jooss et al., 2022).

The Importance of Studying Gig Work

In some ways, the rapid rise and disruptive nature of the gig economy may seem exaggerated. Historically, work has almost always been transforming in some shape or form, and the increasing prevalence of short-term, precarious, and more flexible forms of work are certainly not novel across the broader labour market (Adamson & Roper, 2019; De Stefano, 2016). Indeed, the specific terms associated with gig work are sometimes described as a case of 'old wine in new bottles', reflecting the potential re-emergence or rejuvenation of a neo-form of scientific management, as evidenced in several of the more control-centric and unstable practices often associated with gig work (Duggan et al., 2023; McGaughey, 2018).

It is, however, the role of technology and the significant pace of technological change found within gig work that differentiates this form of labour from other flexible and precarious employment. From an organisational perspective, the emergence of gig work represents a novel and innovative response to the fast-paced and competitive nature of the global labour market. The 'gig' business model heavily contrasts with the norms of conventional employment by allowing organisations to utilise a system that significantly decreases costs, while also increasing flexibility in their hiring practices by recruiting non-core workers to fulfil roles traditionally held by salaried employees (Duggan et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2021). Subsequently, platform organisations typically adopt a hands-off approach to their relationships with workers: personalised interactions between parties are usually minimal or often non-existent, and workers can typically join or leave platform organisations on a whim provided they meet certain minimum criteria. The ad-hoc nature of the work and the fluidity of the working relationship means there is little or no consideration of workers' previous work experience, skills and competencies, or level of 'fit' with the organisation (Williams et al., 2021).

From the worker perspective, a growing body of literature is concerned with exploring and investigating the lived experiences of workers who engage in the gig economy, and who operate under the guidance, instruction, and watchful 'eye' of the technologies used by platform organisations (Duggan et al., 2020; Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Norlander et al., 2021).

For example, scholarship has placed an increasing focus on examining the challenges and risks for workers arising from how gig work is organised, designed, and managed (Panteli et al., 2020; Shapiro, 2017). In particular, researchers have explored the potentially damaging implications for workers operating under control structures and regimes that are managed by algorithms rather than by human managers or supervisors (Bader & Kaiser, 2019; Galiére, 2020). Some literature has also considered the potential advantages and benefits of gig work, particularly relating to the enhanced flexibility and autonomy afforded to workers (Ashford et al., 2018), although these supposed perks have also been subject to debate and criticism (Kost et al., 2020; Duggan et al., 2021).

Overall, there appears to be a significant disconnect between what the gig economy *promises* to workers, versus the *reality* of the working arrangement. A fuller understanding of employment issues in this sphere reveals substantial heterogeneity in the way that gig work is designed, controlled, and organised across different job-types and organisations (De Stefano, 2016; Duggan et al., 2020). Conceptual and provocative literature focusing on such issues has surged over the last decade, with increasing efforts to effectively critique developments in gig work and to move towards implementing meaningful solutions to some of the most widely debated issues in this domain (Brawley, 2017; Tran & Sokas, 2017).

Employment-Based Issues in Gig Work

Algorithmic management

A distinguishing feature of gig work is the heavily minimised role of human supervision, which is instead replaced by technology enabled algorithms that are programmed to monitor and coordinate large, dispersed workforces (Duggan et al., 2023; Jooss et al., 2022). Underpinning this managerial strategy is the classification of gig workers as independent contractors rather than employees, making it essential for platform organisations that direct, human supervision and managerial practices do not exist in order to uphold this classification (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). Thus, the advanced role of technology and capabilities of digitalisation have allowed platform organisations to use algorithmic technologies to coordinate, monitor, and sometimes control the labour process and the completion of tasks (Norlander et al., 2021; Veen et al., 2020). These algorithms tend to hold a comprehensive and encompassing role in gig work. By atomising work into fragmented, individual tasks with piece-rate payments (Aroles et al., 2019), these technologies minimise interaction between parties and reinforce the notion

that work is always offered on a hyperflexible basis only, and never with any meaningful or long-term commitment between the parties involved (Duggan et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2019). Beyond this, the algorithms used by platform organisations also enable the on-going, real-time monitoring and control of workers' activities (Prassl, 2018; Rosenblat, 2018).

Due to their heavy integration throughout the labour process, and particularly due to their capacity to replicate or replace many of the activities of human managers or supervisors, the algorithmic technologies used in gig work are known collectively as 'algorithmic management' (Duggan et al., 2020). Although algorithmic management enables the efficient organisation and delivery of work, it also raises significant ethical considerations and concerns for those operating under these algorithmic structures (Galiére, 2020; Kellogg et al., 2020), primarily because such systems leave little scope for engagement or the formation of meaningful, trust-based relationships. Subsequently, social interactions that we might typically associate with working relationships, such as those between supervisors or co-workers, are considered obsolete and even counterproductive as they introduce undesired variability into the process of matching supply and demand.

The design, implementation, and capabilities of algorithmic management have received significant scrutiny across gig economy scholarship (e.g., Kellogg et al., 2020; Meijerink et al., 2021; Norlander et al., 2021). Although the focus on these issues has spanned disciplines, employment-based perspectives on algorithmic management are heavily concerned with its ability to digitalise management-oriented activities, such as managing working relationships, work assignment processes, and performance management (Duggan et al., 2020). Thus, the controversy and complexity lie in the apparent implementation of managerial activities, but without the existence of a human manager or a discernible employment relationship. While managing employment relationships lies at the very heart of management research and practice, the emergence of algorithmic management eradicates this by removing the need for human managers to oversee workers' activities.

Consequently, understanding the intricacies of algorithmic management and how it functions in platform organisations is crucial in determining how the algorithm's layered control processes, implemented via a nonhuman agent, are likely to be impactful in disrupting and reshaping the working relationship. As alluded to earlier in this chapter, the monitoring and surveillance capabilities of algorithmic management raise the possibility of creating a

contemporary form of scientific management (McGaughey, 2018). Many features of gig work support this notion: jobs are fragmented into minute, simple and repetitive tasks; the labour process is tightly controlled to ensure efficiency via the issuing of detailed guidance and instruction; and workers who underperform can be easily identified and automatically replaced (Veen et al., 2020). By using algorithmic management processes, platform organisations are able to guarantee a high degree of consistency and predictability in the services delivered to customers. It is an algorithm that manages the interactions between parties, that dictates how work is assigned at any given time, and that takes the lead in evaluating the performance of individual workers (Kellogg et al., 2020; Meijerink et al., 2021). This approach moves work into an almost inhuman form, with algorithms undertaking roles that were traditionally the remit of supervisors or managers, and with workers potentially being disciplined or penalised in real-time (Duggan et al., 2020).

The encompassing role of algorithmic management clearly brings the need for a more critical consideration of the implications and consequences for employment. Schafheitle et al. (2020) argue that new technologies in the workplace, such as algorithms in the case of gig work, are becoming increasingly influential in transforming established forms of people management by automating interactions and processes, and by allowing data-driven digitalisation and the traditional management function to intertwine. In gig work, this transformation involves the creation of new and comprehensive forms of technology-enabled monitoring and micromanagement that would be almost impossible to achieve in more conventional employment settings. In these ways, algorithmic management has altered business models and confounded established people management structures (Duggan et al., 2022), consequently demanding new approaches and ways of thinking about the power dynamics that are reshaping workplaces.

The lived experiences of gig workers

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is platform organisations who are the primary beneficiaries of the implementation of algorithmic technologies, as it allows them to exercise greater control over the labour process while reducing labour costs (Norlander et al., 2021). The outcome is that gig workers, contrastingly, are seemingly left with very little discretion and minimal control over how they perform their roles. Therefore, studying the lived experiences of gig workers forms a crucial component of research in this sphere, with such a focus facilitating the

development of knowledge through workers' subjective, first-hand engagement with gig work, platform organisations, and algorithmic technologies (Ashford et al., 2018; Beigi et al., 2020).

For gig workers, the most prominent outcome of working under algorithmic management structures is that work tasks are highly standardised and rigidly designed, ultimately leading to greater levels of predictability in the delivery of work (Duggan et al., 2022). Arising from this, research indicates that gig workers experience a challenging and often complex relationship with the algorithmic management function, due to the reduced levels of reciprocity that occur when a key party in the working arrangement – the platform organisation – is wholly represented via digital means (Bader & Kaiser, 2019; Duggan et al., 2020; Kellogg et al., 2020). This atypical arrangement makes it difficult for workers to effectively navigate the working relationship, particularly in coming to terms with the promises of gig work versus the reality of operating in a heavily precarious and insecure environment.

Most forms of gig work are performed individually, with almost no contact with fellow workers and often in competition with them for the limited number of tasks available at any given time (Adamson & Roper, 2019; McGaughey, 2018). The expectation is that, without co-workers or any meaningful interactions with colleagues, partaking in gig work enforces a logic of 'every person for themselves' in striving for high efficiency and speedy performance to maximise earnings (Duggan et al., 2022). Similarly, even where workers are afforded autonomy over when work is scheduled and which tasks to complete, the remote nature of algorithmic supervision means that workers remain subjected to intense forms of control that ultimately limits their ability to resist automated directives and guidance (Schafheitle et al., 2020; Shapiro, 2017). Consequently, a much-discussed thread within employment-based studies on gig work is that the supposed independence from managerial control does not necessarily result in increased autonomy for gig workers (Duggan et al., 2020; Prassl, 2018).

Moving beyond the logistical aspects of gig work, the hyper-flexibility and fluidity of the working arrangement also presents career- and progression-based challenges for those who participate. Although an oft-cited benefit of gig work is the flexibility to work for multiple organisations simultaneously, research indicates that platform organisations rarely provide opportunities or resources to assist workers' professional or career development (Ashford et al., 2018). While organisational boundaries may be unusually flexible in gig work, the strategic benefit of this flexibility tends to lie primarily with platform organisations, who transfer the

risk of fluctuations in demand directly onto individual workers. Indeed, some studies indicate that the algorithmic management structures found in gig work actually inhibit workers' abilities to develop their knowledge and skills, even at an informal level (Duggan et al., 2021). Without belonging to a particular organisation as an 'employee', Ibarra and Obodaru (2016) argue that gig workers find themselves in a 'liminal space' between occupations: completing once-off tasks hyper-flexibly, and only guaranteed tasks and payments on a gig-by-gig basis.

Taking this series of issues and complexities into account, Bérastégui (2021) concluded that the fluidity of the gig economy is illusory for workers, trapping them in a cycle of financial vulnerability and low-skilled work without enabling them to stabilise their professional lives. Of course, the experiences of gig workers operating under algorithmic management structures can vary widely depending on a range of factors, such as the type of gig work that they engage in, the platform organisation used, and their individual circumstances and motivations for participating in the gig economy. However, regardless of these factors, gig workers remain an especially vulnerable component of the labour market, facing constant instability and uncertainty relating to work and income levels (Todolí-Signes, 2017; Veen et al., 2020). Even for those gig workers who may enjoy the flexibility of the working arrangement, challenges exist in seeking to effectively disengage or exit the gig economy in order to seek alternative career options, arising from the lack of financial safety nets and the inability to develop transferrable skills required to move into more stable employment (Carr et al., 2017; Friedman, 2014).

Given the continued growth of the gig economy and the increasing numbers engaging in this type of work, it is important to more thoroughly understand how gig work may impact on the career paths of those who engage, and the risks that exist for those relying on this form of labour in the longer term. This emphasises the importance of working towards a gig economy where decent work can flourish, and where working arrangements are fair and ethical. If more workers are poised to join the gig economy in some capacity, these existing issues and complexities – if left unresolved – will continue to pose significant obstacles for the sustainability of platform organisations.

Future Research Directions in Gig Work

Despite a myriad of important concerns and criticisms, the gig economy continues to grow and evolve, making it an important area of study for researchers and policymakers. Although it remains difficult to predict what lies ahead for the gig economy, many believe that gig work – in whatever form – will continue to be an important aspect of the labour market in the future of work, offering flexibility and autonomy for workers as well as cost-savings and heightened efficiency for organisations (Ashford et al., 2018; Brawley, 2017). Ultimately, it is likely that the gig economy will continue to evolve and change, particularly as policymakers and governments around the world attempt to gain pace with this new way of working. As we work towards the future of the gig economy, as well as towards the future of work more broadly, we conclude this chapter by considering several key areas for future research to be conducted to better understand the gig economy and its impact on workers.

Coming to terms with algorithmic management

As discussed throughout this chapter, one of the most prominent and controversial aspects of the gig economy is algorithmic management and its potential to automate most aspects of the employment relationship. While this particular issue has received increasing interest across scholarship, there is significant potential for future research to explore the design, implementation, and implications of algorithmic management in greater depth. From the point of onboarding through to exit, algorithmic management holds responsibility and influence. Studies that examine the role of algorithms throughout specific aspects of the labour process – such as matching workers with tasks, monitoring performance, and determining reward strategies for workers – would be beneficial in more effectively determining the true scope and influence of heavily-digitalised management tools. Additionally, beyond the gig economy, the issue of potential bias within algorithmic structures has been widely debated across literature (Kellogg et al., 2020; Rosenblat, 2018; Schafheitle et al., 2020). Research exploring whether similar concerns of unfairness and discrimination are relevant in the gig work context represents a timely issue to investigate. With emerging evidence that some of the characteristics of gig work are spreading to the broader labour market, thereby becoming prominent features of work in the 21st century across many sectors (Aroles et al., 2019; Huws et al., 2018), such studies would hold significant value for research, practice, and policymakers.

The implications of engaging in gig work

Given the heterogeneity of gig work, research exploring the perspectives of those engaged in different variants of gig work – as well as the similarities and differences across these

perspectives – warrants further scholarly attention. Much existing research highlights the lack of mutual exchanges in the working relationship, arising from the absence of human managers, and the various pressures experienced by gig workers throughout the labour process (Beigi et al., 2020; Panteli et al., 2020). Beyond this, there are several important and timely avenues for future studies. For example, understanding the impact of gig work on individuals' mental and physical health, as well as their overall wellbeing, remains underdeveloped at this stage. Further studies should determine to what extent different types of gig workers lack various forms of support (e.g., career mentoring, coaching, and collegial or task support), and which aspects of gig work are most detrimental to this.

Power imbalances and resistance

Despite increasing interest in the nature of gig working relationships, relatively little is known about the dynamic that exists between platform organisations and gig workers. Current understandings point towards the existence of a power imbalance in this relationship, dominated by platform organisations and their customers, rather than by workers (Duggan et al., 2021). For example, Walker and colleagues (2021) argue that the algorithmic technologies utilised by platform organisations act as a form of 'biopower' – a term associated with Foucault to describe the technological power for managing humans in large groups – in prospering fragmentation, isolation and resignation. It seems likely that resistance efforts by gig workers will gain prominence in such settings, albeit in new forms due to the novel, isolated, and insecure work setting presented by the gig economy. Thus, the emergence of a potentially wide range of resistance strategies opens up new research avenues and could ultimately provide elaborated blueprints for successful worker emancipation.

Some limited research has explored the potential for gig workers to collectivise in efforts to shape their conditions of work (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020). Generally, there is a lack of formal worker associations or trade unions among gig work populations. This, perhaps, can be largely attributed to the difficulty in collectivising a workforce which is largely geographically dispersed and working in isolation. Yet, despite these challenges, it is worth highlighting that collective action is far from structurally impossible for gig workers. Existing literature suggests that gig workers as a group have made efforts to enhance their power, unionise, and have created forums to share information and hold platform organisations to account (Duggan et al., 2022). Understanding these and related elements is key to improving regulatory and legal

environments in a way conducive to gig workers' welfare, while also providing the facts and figures desperately needed to stimulate debate at regional levels.

Sustainability, decent work, and legislating the gig economy

The diversity of issues associated with gig work, such as potential worker misclassification, legal issues, and the pervasiveness of technology understandably raises questions about the long-term sustainability of this new economy. Likewise, more recently, the concept of 'decent work' has begun to emerge in discussions about the future of gig work. Developed by the International Labour Organisation as a framework to ensure that all workers have access to safe, fair, and dignified working conditions, the decent work agenda focuses on elements such as job security, fair pay, safe working conditions, social protections, and the right to form and join a union (International Labour Organisation, 2018). Based on this understanding, gig work does not seem to readily align with most of the principles of decent work, although some workers may enjoy the increased flexibility, autonomy, and ease of access to work found in the gig economy. Research exploring the potential intersections and disparities between gig work and decent work would help to build understanding of the intricacies of this work, as well as assisting the future development of a gig economy that works for all parties involved. Current debates over how to ensure that gig workers have access to decent working conditions and that work is regulated in ways that protect workers from exploitation occur against the backdrop of governments who remain under pressure to catch up with the disruption represented by the gig economy (Duggan et al., 2022).

Perhaps the most widely-discussed route to resolve several prominent issues inherent in gig work is a legal one – in other words, revising or updating existing employment legislation to effectively govern and encompass the gig economy. Unsurprisingly, much scholarly literature and broader discourse on gig work has considered, at least to some extent, potential remedies to 'fix' legal and policy architectures in this domain (Prassl, 2018; Tran & Sokas, 2017). Suggestions include the proposal to create a special employment status for gig workers, acknowledging that the characteristics of these individuals do not fully comply with either the definition of employee or the self-employed (Maselli et al., 2016). However, the process of implementing a solution of this nature, in reality, is less straightforward. For example, recent years have seen a multitude of different rulings on the same issues regarding gig workers, with

similar types of workers being determined as employees or independent contractors across different jurisdictions (Duggan et al., 2022; McGaughey, 2018), making it unlikely that a universal solution of this nature will be accomplished with any ease.

Conclusion

Despite a surge in scholarly, public, and legislative interest, the future of the gig economy remains uncertain and multifaceted. From an employment perspective, gig work offers potential for both positive and negative consequences. Positively, work in this sphere offers increased flexibility and autonomy for workers, in addition to cost savings and increased efficiency for organisations. The continued growth of gig economy across different sectors also provides more diverse work opportunities for individuals, particularly those who may have difficulty accessing more conventional employment. However, more negatively, the gig economy raises concerns about job security and access to social protection for workers, potentially eroding employment standards and exploiting workers who are dependent on this form of labour. The use of algorithmic management accentuates these concerns by allowing organisations to enact significantly high levels of control over workers' activities, but without most of the relational aspects of management typically found in working relationships. Although the gig economy remains a relatively small part of the global workforce, these issues and their subsequent implications hold heightened importance as we rapidly move towards a labour market in which growing numbers of workers share the challenges and complexities faced by gig workers.

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