Shared Economy and Gig Workers: Safety Beyond Traditional Employment Stats and Facts

FACTS

- **Independent Contractor Status Does Not Remove Hazards:** Classifying a worker as an independent contractor changes their legal status — it does not change the physical dangers of the work. A delivery driver in traffic faces the same hazards as an employee doing the same job.
- **No Employment Means No OSHA Coverage:** Most gig workers fall outside OSHA's jurisdiction. They receive no mandatory safety training, no employer-provided PPE, no workers' compensation, and no right to refuse unsafe work without losing income.
- **Injury Data Is Largely Invisible:** Standard injury reporting systems are built around employer-employee relationships. Gig workers injured on the job often have no reporting mechanism — meaning the true scale of gig work injury is significantly undercounted.
- **Speed Incentives Override Safety:** Delivery quotas, surge pricing, and star ratings create financial pressure to work faster and skip precautions. The gig business model directly conflicts with safe work behaviors.
- **Violence Is an Occupational Hazard:** Rideshare and delivery workers operate alone, often at night, in unfamiliar areas with strangers — with no coworkers nearby, no employer security protocol, and limited recourse when situations turn dangerous.

STATS

- Roughly 17.4 million Americans have gig work as their primary income — approximately 10.2 percent of the workforce

– as of 2024, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- At least 50 app-based delivery and rideshare workers were killed on the job in the U.S. between 2017 and 2022, with 63 percent of those killed being people of color, according to a report by Gig Workers Rising cited by U.S. Congressional representatives in July 2022.
- In 2022, at least 31 app-based workers were murdered while working, according to a review of public sources cited by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.
- Gig food delivery drivers were nearly twice as likely to run red lights, nearly three times more likely to be distracted by their phones, and nearly twice as likely to report a collision injury compared to employed drivers doing the same work, according to a 2022 University College London study.
- Transportation incidents account for nearly 40 percent of all U.S. occupational deaths, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.