

# The Future of Employment Law in the Gig Economy: Legal Protections for Digital Workers

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## Abstract

The gig economy, which encompasses short-term, flexible work arrangements facilitated by digital platforms, has rapidly transformed labor markets worldwide. However, this transformation has raised significant legal challenges, particularly concerning the classification of workers, the extent of their rights, and the protections they are entitled to under labor laws. This article aims to explore the legal landscape of gig economy employment, focusing on the evolving nature of worker classification, the existing gaps in legal protections, and the regulatory innovations being implemented to address these challenges. It examines the key issues facing gig workers, such as the uncertainty surrounding whether they should be classified as employees or independent contractors, and highlights international variations in legal responses. Additionally, the article explores the adequacy of current labor laws in providing social protections for gig workers, including access to health insurance, paid leave, and unemployment benefits. The article also analyzes the emerging trends in the regulation of gig work, such as the potential for hybrid classification models, the use of portable benefits systems, and the role of technology in reshaping employment contracts. Furthermore, it discusses the potential for global cooperation to establish standardized legal protections for gig workers, ensuring fairness and equity across borders. Ultimately, this article provides a comprehensive overview of the current legal framework, identifies key gaps, and offers recommendations for future legal reforms aimed at improving the working conditions and rights of gig economy participants.

**Keywords:** Gig economy, worker classification, legal protections, labor law reforms, digital platforms, worker rights

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## 1. Introduction

The gig economy, a term referring to the increasing reliance on short-term, flexible, and independent work arrangements, has become an undeniable force in the global labor market in the digital age. This mode of employment enables individuals to engage in temporary jobs, often facilitated through online platforms, providing a wide range of services from ride-hailing to freelance tasks across various sectors. The rapid growth of gig work is fundamentally reshaping traditional employment relationships, often moving away from long-term, secure positions in favor of short-term, project-based work. The increasing digitalization of the economy has amplified the proliferation of gig work, enabling workers to participate in these flexible arrangements from virtually anywhere, which has been particularly appealing during times of economic uncertainty or

technological advancement. This shift has not only led to an increase in the number of gig workers but has also expanded the scope of industries in which gig work is prevalent, ranging from transportation and hospitality to IT and content creation. Employers, on the other hand, benefit from the gig economy by gaining access to a flexible, scalable workforce without the financial obligations associated with traditional employment, such as providing benefits or job security (Arouti Movahed, 2021; Rastgar-Khalid et al., 2020).

However, while the gig economy offers substantial benefits to both workers and employers, it also raises significant legal challenges that need to be addressed to ensure fairness and protection for digital workers. A key issue in this regard is the classification of gig workers, as many of them fall outside traditional definitions of employees, resulting in their exclusion from a wide array of labor rights and protections. This classification dilemma is further complicated by the fact that gig workers are typically categorized as independent contractors, which means they are not entitled to the same benefits that full-time employees receive, such as health insurance, paid leave, or retirement plans. Moreover, workers may also face difficulties in accessing social security, workers' compensation, and other safety nets designed to protect them in times of economic hardship or injury. These legal gaps create an environment where workers may be left vulnerable, without the necessary legal recourse to address grievances or disputes with their employers (Sadat Bidgoli, 2023; Sadeghi et al., 2022).

The purpose of this article is to explore the evolving legal protections for gig workers and to analyze the challenges that exist in the regulatory landscape of the gig economy. By reviewing the current state of employment law, the article aims to shed light on the legal rights of gig workers, the gaps in protection, and the prospects for future legal reforms that could help address these challenges. Through a detailed analysis, this article will also investigate the potential ways in which the law may adapt to the growing importance of gig work and the technological forces driving it. The evolution of employment law in the gig economy is not only essential for the protection of workers but also for the sustainable development of the gig economy itself, which relies on clear and predictable legal frameworks to foster trust between workers and employers (Pourkhaghan Zeynab et al., 2019; Touhidi et al., 2023).

This review adopts a narrative approach with a descriptive analysis methodology, providing a comprehensive examination of the legal challenges and protections faced by gig workers across different jurisdictions. The review will discuss legal frameworks, recent regulatory developments, case law, and relevant academic literature to highlight the complexities of employment law in the context of the gig economy. By focusing on various aspects of the issue, including worker classification, benefits, rights, and protections, this article seeks to provide a thorough understanding of the current state of employment law in the gig economy and to outline potential future developments that could shape the legal landscape

## **2. The Rise of the Gig Economy**

Gig work is defined as a type of employment where individuals engage in temporary, flexible, and often digital labor on a short-term basis, typically through online platforms or apps. This work contrasts with traditional forms of employment, where individuals typically hold a permanent contract with a specific employer, receiving long-term job security and benefits. In the gig economy, workers are often considered independent contractors rather than employees, and they generally have the flexibility to choose their working hours, tasks, and sometimes even their pay rates. Examples of gig work include drivers for ride-hailing platforms, such as Uber and Lyft, freelance workers in sectors like graphic design or writing, and home-sharing services like Airbnb. The gig economy has gained momentum due to technological advancements, particularly the rise of digital platforms that facilitate the matching of workers with employers or clients on a flexible, as-needed basis. This flexibility has appealed to a wide array of workers, from students seeking supplemental income to individuals pursuing a more independent or entrepreneurial lifestyle (Bytyci & Phillips, 2017; Zamani & Nikoui, 2017).

The growth of the gig economy has been exponential in recent years, with millions of people now engaged in gig work across the globe. According to recent data, approximately 36% of the U.S. workforce was involved in some form of gig work by 2020, with similar trends being observed in other developed and developing nations. The gig economy's share of the global labor market is expected to continue to grow, driven by advancements in digital technology, the increased use of smartphones and mobile apps, and the growing preference among workers for flexible employment options. The economic importance of gig work is further highlighted by the increasing number of global platforms that facilitate such work, from tech companies like Uber, Airbnb, and Fiverr, to specialized platforms catering to creative industries, healthcare, and other fields. The rise of

these platforms has fundamentally altered traditional notions of employment, introducing new opportunities for workers but also creating new legal complexities (Shahbazianni, 2023; Beijerman, 2018).

Gig work has not only grown in scale but also in diversity, with new forms of employment emerging in sectors that were traditionally considered outside the realm of gig work. For instance, while ride-hailing and delivery services were some of the first industries to embrace the gig economy, sectors like education, professional services, and creative industries have also seen a rise in gig-based employment. Digital workers in these fields may engage in tasks ranging from tutoring and translation to content creation and software development. These workers, often termed as "digital nomads," have the ability to perform their jobs remotely, and they rely heavily on online platforms to access work opportunities and communicate with clients. The gig economy is, therefore, not just a temporary trend but a significant shift in the nature of work itself, presenting new opportunities and challenges for both workers and employers alike (Crum & Merlo, 2020; Beijerman, 2018).

In parallel with the growth of gig work, digital platforms have played a critical role in reshaping the employment structures within these industries. These platforms provide an intermediary service, matching gig workers with clients or employers, thereby facilitating the transactions that characterize gig work. They have transformed industries by allowing individuals to easily access a global labor pool, while offering employers a flexible, on-demand workforce that can be scaled up or down according to demand. The influence of these platforms has not been limited to economic considerations, as they also exert significant control over the working conditions, compensation, and expectations placed on gig workers. The power dynamics between gig workers and platform owners have thus become a central area of concern in discussions about the regulation and protection of gig workers' rights (Grzybowski, 2019; Hartmann, 2017).

### **3. Legal Status of Gig Workers**

One of the most contentious and complex issues surrounding gig workers is their classification. Unlike traditional workers who are typically classified as employees, gig workers are often considered independent contractors by the platforms that hire them. This classification has significant implications for the legal rights and protections afforded to these workers. The core issue lies in the discrepancy between the definition of an employee and an independent contractor in most labor laws, with employees enjoying more legal rights and benefits, such as health insurance, social security contributions, paid leave, and the protection of collective bargaining. In contrast, independent contractors are usually excluded from these protections, as they are regarded as self-employed individuals responsible for their own benefits and working conditions. However, the nature of gig work often blurs these lines, as many gig workers are not truly independent contractors in the traditional sense, but rather depend heavily on platforms for work opportunities and are subject to considerable control by these platforms regarding pricing, hours, and tasks (Sajadi Zadeh et al., 2020; Rastgar-Khalid et al., 2020).

This ambiguity has led to significant legal and regulatory challenges, with courts and lawmakers grappling with how to properly categorize gig workers. On one hand, gig platforms often argue that their workers are independent contractors because they maintain flexibility in choosing when and where to work. On the other hand, many gig workers argue that the degree of control exerted by platforms, including algorithms that dictate work allocation, prices, and ratings, is more akin to an employer-employee relationship. The legal battle over worker classification has profound implications for the rights of gig workers, as misclassification may result in them being denied access to essential benefits and protections (Crum & Merlo, 2020). Various jurisdictions have attempted to address this issue, with some adopting hybrid models that combine aspects of both employee and independent contractor classifications, but the legal landscape remains fragmented and inconsistent, with ongoing debates about the appropriate classification standard.

A number of high-profile legal cases have highlighted the challenges of worker classification in the gig economy. For example, in several jurisdictions, court cases involving companies like Uber, Lyft, and Deliveroo have brought the issue of worker classification to the forefront. In the United States, a landmark case involving a ride-hailing company resulted in a ruling that gig workers should be classified as independent contractors, a decision that was met with significant backlash from labor advocates, who argued that these workers should be entitled to employee benefits (Grzybowski, 2019). Similarly, in the UK, a legal battle between a ride-hailing platform and its workers led to a decision that gig workers were entitled to worker status, which provides some employment rights but stops short of full employee benefits. This case has had far-reaching implications for the legal treatment of gig workers in the UK and Europe. Another case in Spain, involving the food delivery

service Deliveroo, further illustrated the difficulties in defining the legal status of gig workers, with the courts again leaning towards classifying gig workers as independent contractors despite the platforms exerting considerable control over their working conditions (Sajadi Zadeh et al., 2020; Shahbazianni, 2023).

Internationally, different countries have taken varied approaches to gig worker classification and rights, reflecting the diverse legal and cultural contexts in which the gig economy operates. In the European Union, the legal framework is increasingly moving towards recognizing gig workers as a distinct category, with some jurisdictions taking steps to offer greater protections to workers in the gig economy. For instance, the EU has introduced proposals that would create a new legal category for platform workers, offering them some protections while preserving the flexibility inherent in gig work. This model seeks to strike a balance between the benefits of flexible work arrangements and the need to ensure workers are not exploited or left without essential legal protections. In contrast, the United States has predominantly followed a model that favors a more traditional classification of gig workers as independent contractors, though individual states have introduced legislation to protect gig workers in specific sectors. For example, California's Assembly Bill 5 (AB5), which sought to redefine the status of gig workers as employees, sparked considerable debate and was met with resistance from both gig workers and platforms (Zamani & Nikoui, 2017; Touhidi et al., 2023).

#### 4. Current Legal Protections and Gaps

The gig economy, by its nature, operates outside many of the traditional labor frameworks that apply to full-time, permanent employees. As a result, gig workers often find themselves without access to many of the labor rights and protections that are afforded to employees in conventional employment arrangements. The existing legal frameworks that apply to gig workers vary significantly depending on their classification as independent contractors, and in many jurisdictions, these frameworks have been slow to adapt to the growing prominence of gig work. In the case of workers classified as independent contractors, their rights to benefits such as minimum wage, health insurance, and social security are often non-existent or severely limited. While some countries have attempted to adapt their legal systems to provide greater protections for gig workers, the overall legal landscape remains fragmented, leaving many workers exposed to risks such as exploitation, unfair dismissal, and lack of recourse in the event of disputes (Arouti Movahed, 2021).

One of the most pressing issues for gig workers is their access to labor rights such as minimum wage protections. In many jurisdictions, gig workers are not guaranteed a minimum wage because they are classified as independent contractors. This leaves many workers vulnerable to receiving compensation that is lower than the statutory minimum for their industry. While some platforms have introduced measures to ensure fair pay, these are often insufficient or inconsistent, and workers may be forced to accept work that does not provide adequate compensation due to a lack of bargaining power. Moreover, the lack of a minimum wage for gig workers can contribute to a race to the bottom, where platforms continuously push for lower prices, putting downward pressure on worker earnings (Sadat Bidgoli, 2023; Rastgar-Khalid et al., 2020). In some regions, such as the EU, there have been proposals to address this issue by introducing wage guarantees for gig workers, but these proposals remain in the early stages and face significant opposition from platform companies.

In addition to minimum wage protections, gig workers are typically excluded from social protections such as health insurance, unemployment benefits, and pensions. Traditional employees, on the other hand, are often entitled to employer-sponsored health insurance, paid sick leave, and contributions to pension schemes. For gig workers, the lack of these benefits leaves them at a significant disadvantage, particularly in times of illness, injury, or economic downturns. The absence of health insurance is especially problematic in countries like the United States, where access to healthcare is heavily tied to employment status. Moreover, because gig workers are often unable to access unemployment benefits or workers' compensation in the event of job loss or injury, they are left without essential safety nets. While some countries have attempted to address these gaps by introducing new forms of social protection for gig workers, these efforts are often insufficient and fail to provide comprehensive coverage (Pourkhaghan Zeynab et al., 2019).

The lack of paid leave is another significant gap in the legal protections available to gig workers. In many countries, employees are entitled to paid sick leave, vacation days, and parental leave, but gig workers are typically excluded from these benefits. This lack of paid leave is particularly concerning in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when many gig workers found themselves unable to work due to illness or quarantine measures but had no access to paid leave. Some countries

have introduced emergency measures to support gig workers during such crises, but these measures are often temporary and do not provide long-term solutions to the underlying gaps in the legal framework for gig work (Beijerman, 2018; Sadeghi et al., 2022).

Another significant legal challenge is the lack of legal recourse available to gig workers in cases of dispute with platforms. As independent contractors, gig workers typically have limited access to formal dispute resolution mechanisms, and their ability to challenge unfair treatment or discrimination is often constrained by the terms of the contracts they sign with platforms. Because these contracts are often non-negotiable and heavily skewed in favor of platforms, gig workers may have little recourse if they are subjected to unfair pay practices, discrimination, or mistreatment. In contrast, employees in traditional work arrangements have access to labor courts and other legal mechanisms to address disputes with employers. The absence of such protections for gig workers contributes to a legal vacuum, where workers may feel powerless and unable to address grievances effectively (Crum & Merlo, 2020; Grzybowski, 2019).

Ultimately, the legal gaps facing gig workers are significant and multifaceted, and they require comprehensive reform to ensure that these workers are afforded the same rights and protections as traditional employees. While some progress has been made in terms of legal recognition and protection, much remains to be done to address the growing challenges posed by the gig economy and to ensure that gig workers are treated fairly and equitably in the digital labor market (Shahbazianni, 2023; Crum & Merlo, 2020).

## **5. Regulatory Responses and Innovations**

As the gig economy has expanded, there has been a growing recognition of the need for legal reforms that address the unique challenges faced by gig workers. Several national and regional initiatives have been launched to offer protections for these workers, with varying degrees of success. In the United Kingdom, the Taylor Review, which was commissioned by the government, sought to address the issues of workers in the gig economy by recommending a new "dependent contractor" category. This new category was intended to bridge the gap between the traditional employee status and the independent contractor status, offering workers more protections than independent contractors but fewer than full employees. The recommendations were aimed at improving the working conditions of gig economy workers, including offering rights to paid leave, better access to dispute resolution, and more clarity around worker classification. However, the implementation of these recommendations has been slow, and many gig workers still find themselves without access to the protections outlined in the review (Shahbazianni, 2023; Crum & Merlo, 2020).

In the United States, California's Assembly Bill 5 (AB5) has been one of the most significant legislative attempts to address the classification of gig workers. The law aimed to reclassify many gig workers as employees rather than independent contractors, thereby granting them access to employee benefits such as unemployment insurance and workers' compensation. However, the law has faced significant opposition from gig platforms, leading to a 2020 ballot initiative, Proposition 22, which sought to exempt gig platforms from the provisions of AB5. The initiative passed, allowing gig platforms to continue classifying their workers as independent contractors while offering some benefits, such as health insurance subsidies and limited paid time off. Despite the ongoing legal battles, AB5 and Proposition 22 have highlighted the tensions between the rights of workers and the business models of gig platforms, which rely on a flexible, on-demand workforce (Zamani & Nikoui, 2017; Sadat Bidgoli, 2023).

In Europe, there has been a growing push to create a legal framework that addresses the specific needs of gig workers. The European Union has proposed a "Digital Labour Law" that aims to regulate platform work and ensure that gig workers are granted adequate labor rights and protections. This proposal focuses on improving transparency in the gig economy, ensuring that workers are not subjected to unfair working conditions, and providing clearer definitions of worker classifications. One of the key aspects of the EU's proposal is the creation of a "right to disconnect," which would protect gig workers from being overworked or coerced into accepting tasks during off-hours. The EU has also focused on ensuring that gig workers are not excluded from social protections such as health insurance, pensions, and unemployment benefits. While these initiatives represent significant progress, they are still in the early stages of development and face resistance from both platform companies and member states (Sadeghi et al., 2022; Pourkhaghan Zeynab et al., 2019).

Despite the legal innovations at the national and regional levels, the process of securing labor protections for gig workers remains fraught with challenges, particularly when it comes to collective bargaining and unionization. In many jurisdictions, gig workers are considered independent contractors, which significantly limits their ability to form unions or engage in collective bargaining. Traditional labor laws, which grant employees the right to join unions and negotiate with employers, do not apply to independent contractors, leaving gig workers without the means to advocate for improved wages and working conditions. Efforts to organize gig workers into unions have faced numerous obstacles, including resistance from platforms, legal barriers, and the lack of a cohesive workforce. The fragmented and decentralized nature of gig work further complicates collective bargaining efforts, as workers are often dispersed across various platforms and industries (Grzybowski, 2019; Beijerman, 2018).

Nevertheless, there have been some notable efforts to organize gig workers and advocate for better working conditions. For example, ride-hailing drivers and delivery workers in various regions have attempted to form associations and unions to secure better pay, benefits, and working conditions. These efforts, however, have faced significant resistance from gig platforms, which often argue that their business models rely on flexibility and independence, making traditional unionization efforts incompatible with their operations. In response to this challenge, some gig platforms have sought to self-regulate or implement worker protections within their own systems. Platforms like Uber and Lyft have introduced measures such as minimum earnings guarantees, insurance coverage, and paid leave benefits for their workers, though these protections are often limited and subject to various exclusions (Sadeghi et al., 2022; Rastgar-Khalid et al., 2020).

## **6. Technological Disruption and Employment Law**

The rapid advancement of technology is fundamentally altering the nature of work, particularly in the gig economy, where automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are expected to play an increasingly prominent role. As AI systems and algorithms become more sophisticated, they are likely to impact both the demand for gig work and the legal frameworks that govern it. For example, the use of AI in gig platforms could automate many aspects of work allocation, pricing, and task assignment, potentially reducing the need for human intervention and changing the relationship between workers and platforms. While automation could increase efficiency and reduce costs for platform companies, it also raises concerns about job displacement and the need for legal protections to address the consequences of technological disruption. Gig workers, who already lack many of the protections afforded to traditional employees, could be further marginalized as AI-driven platforms replace human workers or reduce the opportunities available to them (Arouti Movahed & Arouti Movahed, 2021).

The rise of AI also raises significant legal concerns related to bias and discrimination in platform algorithms. Algorithms that determine which tasks gig workers are assigned, how they are paid, and how their performance is evaluated can be opaque, making it difficult for workers to understand how decisions are made or to challenge potentially discriminatory outcomes. For instance, an algorithm could unintentionally prioritize certain workers based on race, gender, or location, leading to unequal access to opportunities and compensation. This issue of algorithmic bias has become a significant area of concern in the context of gig work, as gig platforms may not be held accountable for the decisions made by AI systems. Furthermore, the lack of transparency in these systems makes it difficult for regulators to assess whether they are operating fairly and equitably. Legal frameworks will need to evolve to address these challenges, ensuring that gig workers are protected from algorithmic discrimination and that platform companies are held accountable for the decisions made by their AI systems (Sajadi Zadeh et al., 2020; Bytyci & Phillips, 2017).

Another technological development that could significantly affect the future of gig work is the emergence of blockchain technology and smart contracts. Blockchain, which allows for decentralized and transparent record-keeping, has the potential to transform the way gig workers are hired, paid, and protected. Smart contracts, which are self-executing contracts that automatically enforce the terms of an agreement, could streamline the process of gig work by ensuring that workers are paid promptly and fairly for the tasks they complete. In the context of gig work, blockchain could provide an immutable record of transactions, allowing workers to demonstrate their work history and earnings in a way that is transparent and verifiable. Additionally, blockchain could offer a solution to the issue of lack of trust between workers and platforms, as it would provide a decentralized mechanism for ensuring that both parties adhere to the terms of their agreements (Beijerman, 2018; Hartmann, 2017).

However, the widespread adoption of blockchain and smart contracts in the gig economy also presents several challenges. For one, it could lead to further legal complexity, as the decentralized nature of blockchain could complicate regulatory oversight and enforcement. Additionally, the legal recognition of smart contracts in different jurisdictions remains uncertain, and questions about their enforceability in court are still unresolved. While blockchain holds great potential to transform gig work, its implementation will require careful consideration of legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure that it benefits both workers and employers without creating new forms of inequality or exploitation (Rollo, 2019; Bytyci & Phillips, 2017). The integration of blockchain into the gig economy could also impact the way employment contracts are structured, potentially leading to a shift away from traditional employment models towards more fluid and flexible arrangements that are better suited to the digital age.

In conclusion, technological advancements such as AI, platform algorithms, and blockchain have the potential to reshape the future of gig work and employment law. However, these technologies also raise significant legal and ethical concerns that must be addressed to ensure that gig workers are adequately protected. As the gig economy continues to evolve, so too must the legal frameworks that govern it, with a focus on ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability in the use of emerging technologies (Touhidi et al., 2023; Grzybowski, 2019).

## **7. Future Trends in Gig Economy Employment Law**

As the gig economy continues to evolve, it is likely that employment law will undergo significant changes in response to the unique challenges faced by gig workers. One predicted trend is the ongoing evolution of worker classification. Currently, many gig workers are classified as independent contractors, which limits their access to employment protections like minimum wage, paid leave, and social benefits. However, there is growing recognition that this classification may no longer be suitable for the gig economy. As more workers engage in gig work as their primary source of income, there is increasing pressure to establish clearer definitions of work status that reflect the realities of modern employment. Some experts predict that hybrid classification models may emerge, blending the flexibility of independent contracting with some of the protections traditionally associated with full employment. This could involve creating a new category of workers who are entitled to certain benefits, such as minimum wage and social protections, without being subject to the full scope of employee rights. This approach would aim to strike a balance between the flexibility that gig workers desire and the legal protections they need (Sajadi Zadeh et al., 2020; Zamani & Nikoui, 2017).

Another key legal development on the horizon is the expansion of legal protections for gig workers. One possible model for extending greater protections is the creation of portable benefits systems. These systems would allow gig workers to access benefits such as healthcare, pensions, and paid leave, regardless of their employment status. This would address the current gap in benefits that many gig workers face, particularly in countries where the social safety net is largely tied to traditional employment. In some countries, lawmakers are already exploring the possibility of creating portable benefits systems, where workers can accrue benefits based on their income rather than their employer or employment classification. These systems would allow workers to take their benefits with them from one gig platform to another, ensuring greater security and stability in their working lives. Additionally, the increasing reliance on technology in the gig economy may lead to the development of new legal frameworks for digital contracts and blockchain-based worker protections, potentially enabling workers to have more control over their pay and working conditions (Khavari et al., 2022; Beijerman, 2018).

One of the more ambitious trends in gig economy employment law is the potential for global cooperation on legal standards. As the gig economy is a transnational phenomenon, it poses challenges that cannot be addressed solely within the boundaries of individual countries. The proliferation of digital platforms that operate across borders necessitates a coordinated approach to ensure that gig workers are adequately protected, no matter where they are located. There is growing support for the idea of a global legal framework for gig workers, which would provide a set of minimum standards for worker rights, classification, and benefits. Such a framework could help harmonize the rules governing the gig economy across different jurisdictions, making it easier for workers to navigate their rights and for businesses to comply with international regulations. This could involve international organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), working with governments, platform companies, and labor organizations to establish common standards that protect gig workers globally. While the idea of a global

framework is still in its infancy, it is increasingly seen as a necessary step in the development of gig economy employment law (Shahbazianni, 2023; Bytyci & Phillips, 2017).

## 8. Conclusion

The gig economy has transformed the way work is organized and has introduced new challenges for both workers and employers. One of the most significant issues in this evolving landscape is the classification of workers. Gig workers are often classified as independent contractors, which limits their access to employment protections, such as minimum wage laws, unemployment insurance, and workers' compensation. This has led to calls for new legal frameworks that would better account for the realities of gig work. Many experts believe that hybrid classification models, which blend the flexibility of independent contracting with some employee protections, could provide a more suitable solution. Additionally, there is a growing recognition of the need for portable benefits systems, which would allow gig workers to access benefits regardless of their employment status or the platform they work for (Sadeghi et al., 2022; Crum & Merlo, 2020).

Another key issue is the lack of social protections for gig workers. While some countries have begun to implement reforms to extend benefits to gig workers, much more remains to be done. Legal frameworks that provide access to health insurance, pensions, and paid leave for gig workers are still in their infancy, and there are significant gaps in existing laws that leave workers exposed. These gaps highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach to gig economy regulation, which could involve the development of new models for social protection that are portable and flexible enough to accommodate the nature of gig work. Additionally, the rise of automation, AI, and blockchain technologies is likely to further impact the gig economy, creating both opportunities and challenges for legal reform. Legal frameworks will need to adapt to these technological disruptions in ways that ensure workers are protected from exploitation and discrimination while also fostering innovation (Arouti Movahed & Arouti Movahed, 2021; Touhidi et al., 2023).

In terms of future recommendations, lawmakers, digital platforms, and labor organizations must work together to ensure that gig workers are adequately protected under the law. Lawmakers should focus on developing hybrid worker classification models and portable benefits systems that offer greater flexibility without sacrificing essential protections. Digital platforms, meanwhile, must take responsibility for the welfare of their workers by implementing fair pay practices, transparent algorithms, and worker-friendly policies. Labor organizations, in turn, should continue their efforts to organize gig workers and advocate for their rights, even in the face of significant legal and logistical challenges. Finally, the possibility of global cooperation on gig economy legal standards should be explored to ensure that gig workers are afforded the same protections regardless of where they work. These steps will help to create a legal environment that supports both the flexibility of gig work and the rights of workers (Pourkhaghan Zeynab et al., 2019; Rastgar-Khalid et al., 2020).

In conclusion, while the gig economy presents numerous challenges, it also offers significant opportunities for legal innovation. The balance between flexibility and protection is a delicate one, but it is essential for the sustainable growth of the gig economy and the well-being of digital workers. By developing new legal frameworks that account for the unique nature of gig work, lawmakers can ensure that gig workers are not left behind in the digital age. The future of gig economy employment law will likely involve a combination of legal reform, technological innovation, and international cooperation, all aimed at creating a more equitable and sustainable working environment for gig workers around the world (Khavari et al., 2022; Grzybowski, 2019).

## Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.



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