

## Attempts to mitigate gig work

Efforts to soften the impacts of irregular employment have involved legislation, organizing, litigation, pro-worker markets and commercial solutions.

Despite these measures, uncertain employment continues to grow. Across the US for example, pre-Covid [over 30%](#) of workers were reliant on at least some gig work. Even before the pandemic, that was forecast to be [43%](#) by end of 2020.

For-profit labor markets dominating this kind of work resist many attempts to mitigate its impacts, seeing them as a threat to business models.



### The “Gig work” issue:

“Gig work” can be a confusing term. It is typically associated with ad-hoc earning through online platforms. But that is a small part of irregular employment.

- Many low-skilled jobs now involve employees being [called in and sent home](#), by a workforce scheduling [system](#), in line with their employer’s hour-by-hour needs.
- Some 40% of Americans have earned off-the-books in the shadow economy.

The forces driving precarious employment include:

- New technologies.
- Cost-cutting by buyers of labor.
- Voracious Venture Capital.

These forces shape a commoditized, cheapened, labor pool often classified as “Independent Contractors” meaning they have minimal employee rights. The typically voiceless - [the young](#), [women](#), [minorities](#) and the [lowest-income](#) households - are over-represented in this pool.

Our proposed solution to this shift is markets for irregular employment built around needs of workers, launched at scale by **leveraging the heft of public agencies**. They could neutrally enable multiple tools and interventions for workers. Comparable markets already exist for those in traditional employment.

- Most governments provide a platform linking job seekers to any kind of job. They are an alternative to for-profit job boards like [Monster](#) or [Indeed](#). In the US, each state workforce agency funds [a jobs platform](#). Examples include: [Alabama JobLink](#), [IowaJobs](#) and [CalJobs](#). Other countries do it nationally, for example [Canada](#), [Australia](#) and [Britain](#).
- These services have no agenda beyond maximized opportunities, growth, generating data and interfacing into public assistance. Extending these services to hourly labor would create a comparable alternative to for-profit gig work exchanges.

In the meantime, there are diverse efforts to tame exchanges for precarious work.

| Solutions to irregular work problems |   |                               |  |
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|                                      | Category                                | Solution                      | Notes  |
| 1.                                   | Legislation/<br>proposed<br>legislation | Employee<br>classification    | California's <a href="#">AB5</a> bill forced gig work companies to give workers employee rights. Some companies <a href="#">decided</a> they were exempt, then raised <a href="#">\$205m</a> to successfully fight the legislation, after having to be <a href="#">sued</a> to comply with it. They helped introduce federal <a href="#">legislation</a> protecting gig work platforms from AB5 during the Coronavirus pandemic. For gig work platforms this was a good investment, bringing <a href="#">new business</a> and <a href="#">increasing</a> their valuations.<br><br>Other states were considering a version of AB5. Their success now seems <a href="#">unlikely</a> . |
| 2.                                   |   | Limited rights<br>for workers | California's <a href="#">Prop. 22</a> overturned AB5 (above) but introduces a net earnings floor and some other benefits. Academics calculate Prop 22 creates an effective minimum wage of <a href="#">\$5.64 an hour</a> .  |
| 3.                                   |   | Hybrid<br>classification      | Groups like Tech:NYC propose a hybrid category between "W2" (employee) and "1099" (freelance contractor). This could follow <a href="#">Canada</a> with a "Dependent Contractor" status. See also: <a href="#">Good Work Code</a> .  |
| 4.                                   |   | Portable<br>benefits          | <a href="#">Writers</a> like Nick Hanauer and David Rolf propose benefits accounts for sickness, unemployment insurance, etc. independent of formal employment <sup>1</sup> . New <a href="#">taxes</a> could fund this. Senator Warner <a href="#">proposed a bill</a> to <a href="#">pro-rate</a> benefits. In <a href="#">New Jersey</a> and <a href="#">Washington</a> , state   |

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|    |            |                      | lawmakers have introduced legislation to create portable benefits.   |
| 5. |            | Fair scheduling acts | <p>Some cities have <a href="#">ordinances</a> restricting employers' right to schedule at short notice. <a href="#">Georgia, Iowa, Arkansas and Tennessee</a> already have laws on the books blocking any attempt by their local governments to set rules around predictable scheduling.</p> <p>A variant, <a href="#">Show-Up pay</a> involves paying workers who turn up for a shift for which they are then sent home.</p> <p>These rules typically apply only to larger employers in a specified sector. As an unintended consequence, restrictions on scheduling of employees can drive take up of "Tap-the-App" staffing services which send temps on demand. Examples include: <a href="#">Bluecrew</a>, <a href="#">Work Genius</a>, <a href="#">Shiftgig</a>, <a href="#">Coople</a>, <a href="#">AllWork</a>, <a href="#">Uberworks</a>, <a href="#">Wonolo</a>, <a href="#">Forge</a>, <a href="#">Jitjatio</a>, <a href="#">Stafr</a>, <a href="#">Craigslist</a>, <a href="#">ODS</a>, <a href="#">Catapult</a> or <a href="#">Snagwork</a>. (These labor markets come and go, so some on this list may now be defunct.)</p> |
| 6. | Organizing | Unions               | <p>Unions are emerging for gig workers, largely focused on ride-hailing. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Gig Workers Rising</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">International Alliance of App-Based Transport Workers</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rideshare Drivers United</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Boston Independent Drivers Guild</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">United Private Hire Drivers</a> (UK)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Warehouse Worker Resource Center</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Unite Here: One Job Should be Enough</a></li> </ul> <p>Independent contractors have been allowed to unionize in <a href="#">some</a> US cities. Many commentators have noted the challenges of unionizing where there is no employer and such a fluid workforce.</p>  |
| 7. |            | Strikes              | <p>Early in the Cononavirus outbreak, Instacart workers went <a href="#">on strike</a> for better terms. In Los Angeles, Uber and Lyft drivers <a href="#">organized</a> a strike to align with Uber's Initial Public Offering. Other cities followed.</p> <p>Less aggressively, Working Washington has delivered bags of <a href="#">peanuts</a> to the offices of DoorDash and Postmates to protest pay rates.</p>   |

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| 8.  |                      | Training workers                    | Community Colleges, <a href="#">particularly in California</a> , teach courses in how to maximize opportunities as a gig worker. Samaschool <a href="#">pioneered</a> similar courses.   |
| 9.  |                      | Lobbying                            | Groups like the UK's <a href="#">doteveryone</a> have offered a <a href="#">manifesto</a> for better quality gig work.   |
| 10. | Legal solutions      | Court challenges                    | A prime mover is <a href="#">Shannon Liss-Riordan</a> , a Boston attorney who has pursued multiple cases against gig economy companies.  |
| 11. | Commercial solutions | Shift swapping communities          | <a href="#">Crew</a> , <a href="#">Shift Messenger</a> , <a href="#">Shyft</a> , <a href="#">Zoomshift</a> and their competitors allow workers to exchange shifts that have been dictated by a scheduling system.  |
| 12. |                      | Worker reputation aggregators       | <a href="#">WorkHands</a> , <a href="#">Traity</a> (Spain) or competitors aim to extract a worker's reputational data from multiple sites to create unified verification.  |
| 13. |                      | Administration tools                | <a href="#">Hurdlr</a> , <a href="#">Sherpashare</a> , <a href="#">Zen 99</a> (now defunct), <a href="#">Benny</a> and others bundle the kind of services employees get from an HR department for irregulars.<br><br><a href="#">Driver's Seat</a> do something similar as a co-op.<br><a href="#">OpenPlatforms</a> (Sweden) aims to merge data from multiple gig work platforms.   |
| 14. |                      | Increasing income stability         | Financial services firms are exploring income <a href="#">insurance</a> for gig workers. <a href="#">Wage insurance</a> can be purchased. <a href="#">Alia</a> pools domestic worker insurance. <a href="#">Wagestream</a> amortizes precarious income.  |
| 15. | Alternative models   | Platforms aiming to empower workers | <a href="#">Managed by Q</a> , <a href="#">Zirtual</a> , <a href="#">Hello Alfred</a> , <a href="#">Shyp</a> (now defunct) and others hire – or once hired - conventional staff then deploy them on short-term assignments. <a href="#">Juno</a> aimed to empower minicab drivers ( <a href="#">but didn't</a> ).<br><br>The <a href="#">UP&amp;GO</a> co-operative sells housecleaning in New York City, retaining only 5% of charges. <a href="#">Loconomics</a> is a co-op platform for the Bay Area. |