

## FEMALE WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION IN GIG ECONOMY

Author Name: Ruhan Agarwal

School Name: The Doon School

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Understanding the Gig Economy

The term *gig economy* describes temporary, on-demand, sporadic, and usually task-oriented labour marketplaces. It started in the music business however has now expanded to include transportation, food and drink, education, and more. The gig economy grew as a result of the global economic downturn of 2008, which greatly increased the demand for short-term, contracted labour. *Gig worker* is a word that is used interchangeably with terms like independent worker, self-employed, freelancer, contingency labourer, and conventional worker. The gig economy differs from earlier types of temporary, sporadic work in that it is larger in scope and scale, encompassing a wider range of industries and individuals, especially those with lower skill levels. It also depends on the increased flexibility and frequently brief periods of gig labour, as well as digital technologies, particularly digital platforms.

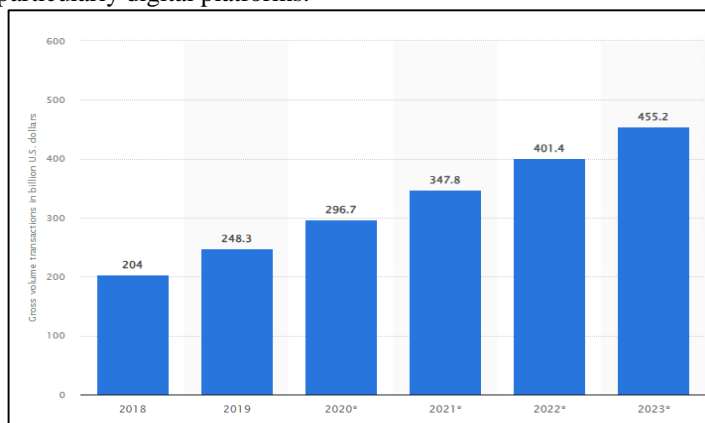


Figure 1: Gig Economy's Gross Volume From 2018 to 2023<sup>i</sup>

The gig economy is predicted to gross USD 455.2 billion in 2023. The gig economy is generally described as digital marketplaces through which independent workers can obtain short-term engagements, and project or asset-based contract work. Smartphones and app-based online platforms have played a major role in the gig economy's growth by enabling clear, temporary, payment-by-task matching between suppliers and clients<sup>ii</sup>. Digital platforms that rely on labour, like Task Rabbit, Uber, and Mechanical Turk, serve as middlemen, connecting labourers with clients and allowing users to locate service providers directly. It is important to differentiate these kinds of platforms from online retailers like Etsy and asset-based websites like Airbnb, which are an integral component of the *sharing economy*, however are not typically classified as gig employment or the gig economy websites.



Figure 2: The Gig Economy

(Source: Influenced by the Study of Tan et al. 2021)

## 1.2 Rationale

Businesses use independent contractors for temporary jobs or service agreements in the gig economy, which is a competitive marketplace system. Many job searchers are unable to find permanent positions due to the increasing supply of labourers, technological advances, and macroeconomic fluctuations; as a result, they often take up contract employment as independent contractors or freelancers<sup>iii</sup>. Gig platforms are popular among digital entrepreneurs since they offer temporary work before full-time employment. Small and medium-sized businesses, digital start-ups, and certain large companies dominate the demand aspect of the gig economy. Skilled workers from emerging economies have been drawn to the gig economy by the advent of online outsourcing portals. The rationale for researching female workforce participation in the gig economy lies in its social, economic and policy implications. This research is essential in understanding various policies, recommendations, opportunities, and challenges faced by female workers in the gig economy.

## 1.3 Importance of Female Workforce Participation

Female workforce involvement varies greatly among countries, influenced by market salaries and non-market time. This heterogeneity is caused by variations among government policies, cultural values, and institutions. Women are economically beneficial to their households as well as society as a whole due to their participation in the work market. Although many countries have seen a rise in the rate of participation, other regions continue to have low rates. Policies that promote women's involvement in the workforce are of importance to governments since they increase economic growth. Women currently make up a greater percentage of undergraduates in all financially developed nations, demonstrating the positive correlation between women's labour force involvement and increased educational attainment<sup>iv</sup>. Women's educational investments and long-term labour force connections are the reasons for this favourable correlation. The economic activity of women outside the home improves the lives of women and girls and contributes to the development of society. Participation of women in the workforce is encouraged by family-friendly policies like daycare subsidies and family leave.

## 2. Methodology

The researcher of this study used the *Mixed Method*, which consists of *Primary Quantitative* and *Secondary Qualitative* methods, to gain a diverse, comprehensive and proper perspective for this research.

### 2.1 Primary Data Collection

Primary quantitative data is defined as numerical data collected from original resources such as surveys, observations, or experiments. Primary quantitative data is essential as it gives real, factual, & numerical data that is easily measurable from the source. It lets the researchers' set hypotheses, discover trends and to set relations between the factors. This type of data enhances the quality of conclusions made in research, the applicability of research findings in a larger population and the reliability of conclusions within different studies. *Statistical Data Analysis* is used to analyse this primary data set with the help of a survey.

#### 2.1.1 Surveys of Female Gig Workers

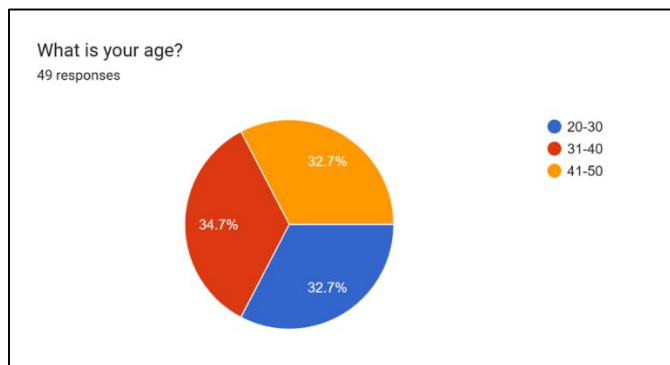
Self-selected questionnaires were administered to 51 female gig workers to know their experiences working in the gig economy. This survey is conducted with the help of Google Forms. To achieve this objective, the survey concentrated on variables such as income security, a balance between work and family or hobbies, job satisfaction and constrained factors including health insurance and gender bias. Different types of female gig workers include car and taxi drivers, beauty and grooming, domestic helpers and delivery personnel, gig economy stakeholders and women who are not currently in the gig economy but express interest in participating are included within the sample size of this research. Their insights provide a comprehensive information about flexibility, job insecurity, gender and social factors and managing family and work balance in informal employment with a particular focus on gig jobs for women.

### 2.2 Secondary Data

Secondary Qualitative data is collected in a method where the organization sources qualitative data that was originally collected by someone else for a different research purpose. Such data may be in the form of interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, articles, and reports<sup>18</sup>. Secondary qualitative data is collected to gain insight, find patterns or substantiate new research questions without collecting the data by different methods. The advantages of secondary qualitative data collection is that this method is cost-effective and time-saving. It results in huge amounts of information. It enables a researcher to compare with a study without having to conduct another research, gives numerous and composite approaches to a research problem, thus efficiently patterns out insights. This data is analysed with the help of *Thematic Analysis* as it helps to identify the themes and patterns of this study.

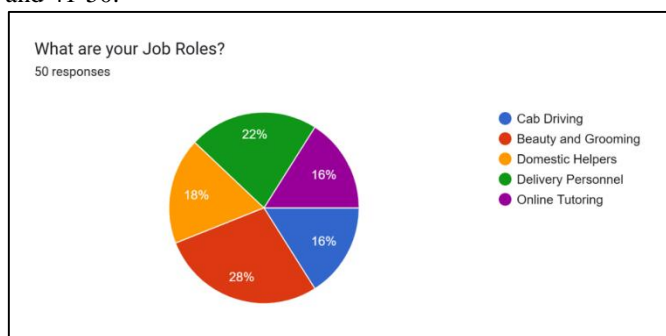
### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Primary Analysis Results



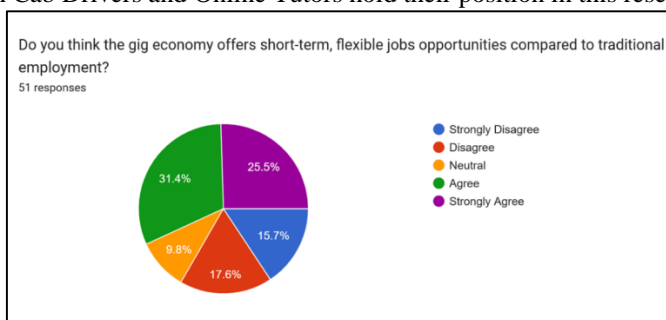
**Figure 3: Age of the Participants**  
(Source: Google Form)

The above pie chart highlights the age of the participants present in this study. Among 51 participants most of the participants, 34.7% of them are in the age group of 31-40. Moreover, 32.7% and 32.7% of them belong to the age group of 20-30 and 41-50.



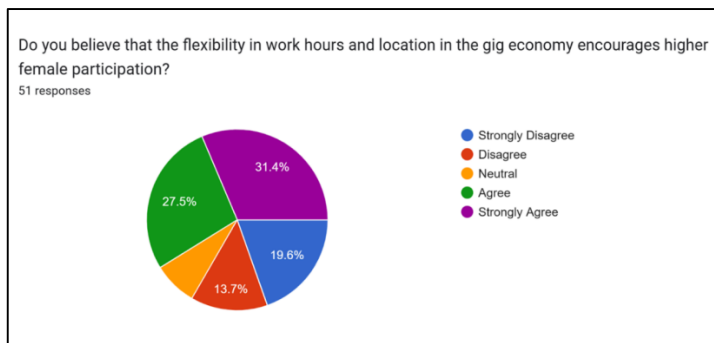
**Figure 4: Job Role of the Participants**  
(Source: Google Form)

This graphical representation highlights the job role held by the participants in this research. Most of them that is 28% are doing Beauty and Grooming. 22% and 18% of them are Delivery Personnel and Domestic helpers. Moreover, 16% of both Cab Drivers and Online Tutors hold their position in this research study.



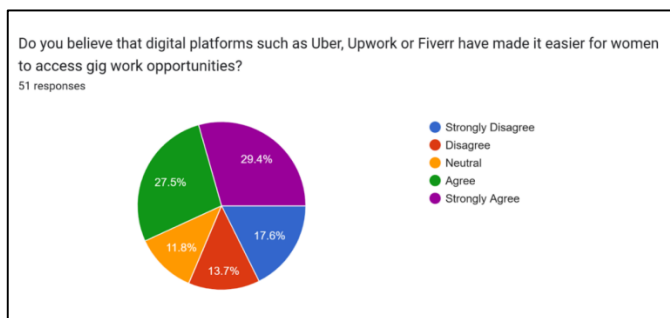
**Figure 5: Gig Economy Provides Short-term Job Opportunities Compared to Traditional Employment**  
(Source: Google Form)

The above picture represents the responses of the participants regarding the fact that the gig economy effectively provides short-term job opportunities compared to traditional methods of employment. Among 51 participants 31.4% and 25.5% agree and strongly agree, whereas, 15.7% and 17.6% of them strongly disagree and disagree about this fact. However, 9.8% of them are neutral.



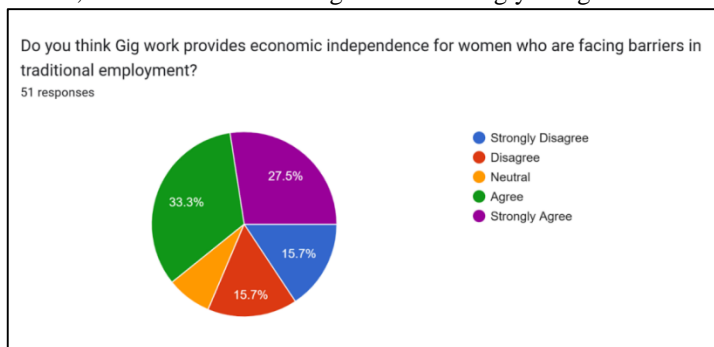
**Figure 6: Flexible Timing in Gig Economy Increases Female Participation**  
(Source: Google Form)

This graphical image states that flexible timing increases the participation of women in the gig economy. 31.4% and 27.5% of the participants Strongly agree and agree whereas, 19.6% and 13.7% strongly disagree and disagree with this fact.



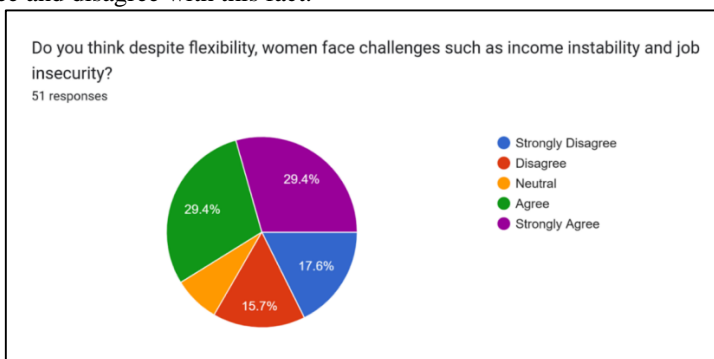
**Figure 7: Digital Platforms Make Easy Opportunities in Gig Workers**  
(Source: Google Form)

The above picture shows that digital platforms that as Uber, Fiver or Upwork make access easy for women for gig work opportunities. Among all of the participants, 27.5% and 29.4% agree and agree with this fact, whereas 11.8% are neutral. However, 13.7% and 17.6% disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement.



**Figure 8: Gig Works Serves Economic Independence to Women**  
(Source: Google Form)

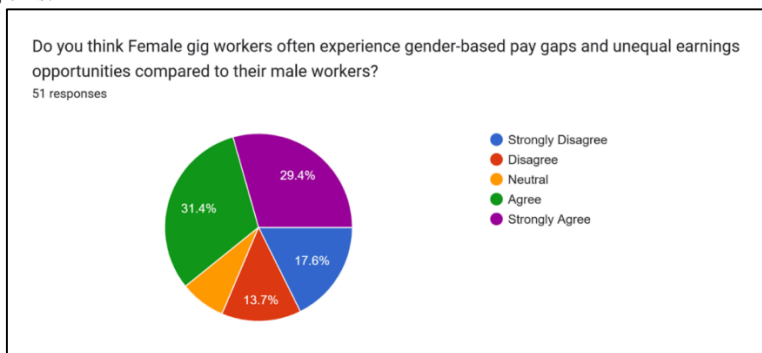
The upper graphical representation highlights that gig work helps women economically more than traditional employment. 33.3% and 27.5% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed, whereas, 15.7% and 15.7% of them strongly disagree and disagree with this fact.



**Figure 9: Women Faces Income Instability and Job Insecurity**

(Source: Google Form)

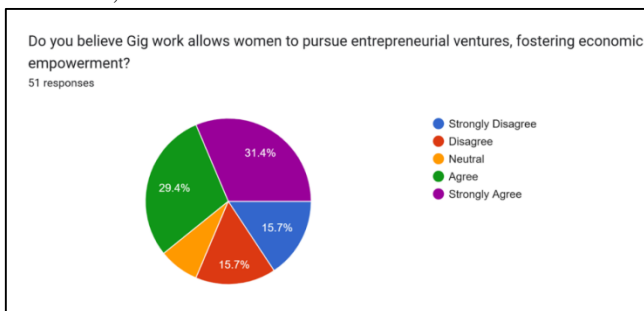
The upper graphical representation states that despite flexibility, most of the women faced income instability and job insecurity. 29.4% and 29.4% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed, whereas, 17.6% and 15.7% of them strongly disagree and disagree with this fact. The rest of them respond neutrally as they do not have any idea regarding this.



**Figure 10: Gig Worker Faced Gender-based Pay Gaps**

(Source: Google Form)

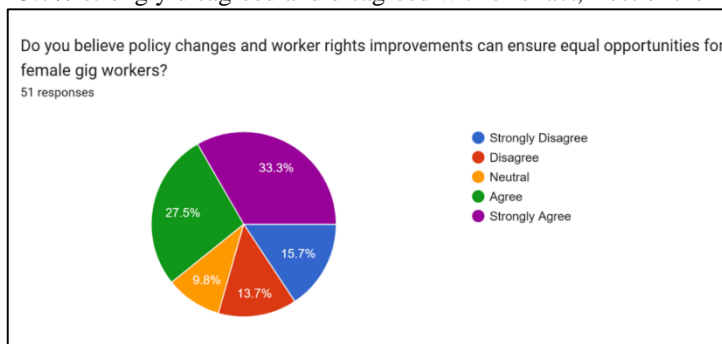
According to the upper picture 31.4% and 29.4% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed that gig workers face gender-based pay gaps. Whereas, 13.7% and 17.6% disagreed and strongly disagreed with the fact of unequal earning options. However, the rest of them are neutral.



**Figure 11: Gig Work Allows Women to Foster Economic Empowerment**

(Source: Google Form)

The upper statement shows whether Gig work allows women to foster economic empowerment or not. Most of the participants responded as strongly agreed and agreed with 31.4% and 29.4% as a response to this fact whereas, 15.7% and 15.7% strongly disagreed and disagreed with this fact, Rest of them were neutral.



**Figure 12: Policy Change and Improve Worker's Rights Ensure Equal Opportunities for Female Workers**

(Source: Google Form)

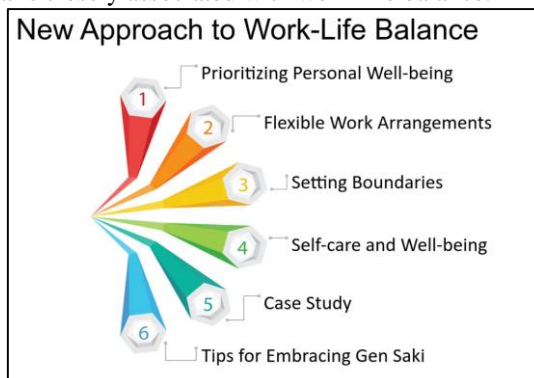
The upper fact shows whether policy changes and worker rights improvements ensure equal opportunities for female gig workers or not. 33.3% and 27.5% of participants strongly agreed and agreed respectively. On the other hand, 15.7% and 13.7% strongly disagreed and disagreed with this fact, and 9.8% of them were neutral.

### 3.2 Thematic Analysis: Key Themes in the Gig Economy

#### 3.2.1 Flexibility and Work-Life Balance in the Gig Economy

Gig work—also referred to as platform, collaborating, or on-demand work—involves exchanging labour for cash through online marketplaces that allow service providers and clients to connect on a task-by-task and

temporary basis<sup>v</sup>. Work-time versatility, which gives gig workers the freedom to decide whether to work, what to accomplish, what amount of work to undertake, where to perform it, how much to pay, and for how long to remain with an employment provider, is one of the primary benefits that are touted. Employee wellness, mental health issues, perceptions of work and the company, and personal and professional outcomes all benefit from a healthy work-life balance. Health and job outcomes are linked to conflict between work and family responsibilities, a concept that is closely associated with work-life balance.

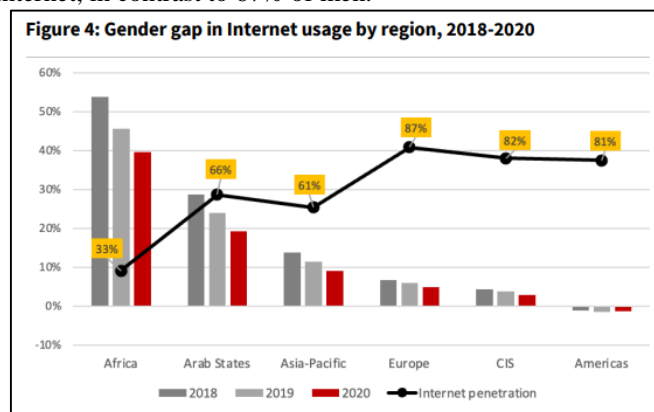


**Figure 13: Work-Life Balance in the Gig Economy<sup>vi</sup>**

Employers and employees can change the current quantities and qualities of work experience, harnessing the power of the gig economy to achieve a healthier and happier attitude toward labour. Employees feel more in control of the limits separating their jobs in their personal and professional lives when they have more flexibility with their working hours. High levels of flexibility over working hours, however, might negatively impact employees' personal lives, particularly when paired with high levels of stress or concentration at work<sup>vii</sup>. Work-life tensions and self-destructive behaviours, including unhealthily extending working hours, may be facilitated by occupational flexibility.

### 3.2.2 Barriers to Entry for Women in the Gig Economy

The stress of doing both paid labour in the workplace and voluntary labour at home, particularly after having families, is the main cause of the substantial turnover among women in the job market. Workers can better balance paid labour and informal care due to gig platforms' flexibility, which lessens their reliance on a fixed physical location. However, since the work required by social standards and the freedom provided primarily depends on whether this is a major or supplemental source of income, there has not been much of an improvement in the labour force engagement rate. Another major barrier to women's gig labour involvement is inadequate access to technological advancements. Women still struggle with digital literacy, and only 55% of them utilize mobile internet, in contrast to 67% of men.



**Figure 14: Gender Gap Regarding Usage of the Internet<sup>viii</sup>**

According to the year 2019, indicated worldwide and regional statistics; in all countries and territories, men are more active Internet users than women. Worldwide Internet usage is lower for women than for men with women at 48.4% and men at 58.3%. Due to social constraints, women are additionally less inclined to own smartphones and other gadgets. Some platforms provide customized devices to solve this problem, yet this is only a temporary fix given the demands for technological education, skill development, and availability barrier elimination. One of the gig economy's greatest advantages is that it offers equal opportunities; nonetheless, machine-learning algorithms can perpetuate prejudices and encourage gendered labour. Platformization makes it possible to combine paid and unpaid caregiving, however, it also tends to increase the workload for women, who still do the majority of home chores<sup>ix</sup>. Prejudice and maltreatment against employees who have



traditionally been more susceptible in traditional household employment give rise to disparities in relationships of power.

### 3.2.3 Role of Digital Platforms

Digital platforms are digitally facilitated tools that allow user groups to engage and carry out certain tasks. Its flexibility, socio-technical aspects, layered design, and influence on global norms or organizational frameworks serve as its defining characteristics. Application development, channels, and facilities are discrete units of IT design categories that exhibit a growing level of conceptualization and regulatory complexity, setting them apart from other technological objects. Due to greater connection and device accessibility, platforms are growing in importance globally, and new platform businesses are opening up shop there<sup>x</sup>. Digital platforms can create economic and social benefits for growth on a worldwide basis.



**Figure 15: Digital Platforms of Gig Economy<sup>xi</sup>**

The digital platforms of the Gig economy are Uber, Fiverr, Just Eat and more. The gig economy is a term used to explain the increasing industry in which people engage in work arrangements that are either short-term or non-regular. It means that with the help of the gig economy people were provided with new options to make money not following the rules of traditional employment. The concentration of wealth created by these networks in a small number of nations and businesses has sparked worries about the potential global progressive impact of these novel innovations. Although the gig economy—that is, the abundance of gigs and insecure work—is not new, internet platforms mark a substantial shift from earlier times. The economic crises and the fall in industrial profitability led to the emergence of an innovative company structure known as the digital platform. Digital platforms are online spaces that provide resources to connect the demand and supply of labour, serving as middlemen in the labour market<sup>xii</sup>. Similar to Upwork or Amazon Mechanical Turk, digital platforms give consumers the ability to interact with employees and establish their terms and fees. The job inquiries and responses from potential employees are stored on the digital platform.

### 3.2.4 Discrimination and Gender Gaps

Discrimination is a complicated problem that revolves around individual differences, and gender categories are a human conception that has ethical, social, and cultural ramifications for the distinction between genders. Physical and domestic abuse, destitution, starvation, harassment, and unfair treatment of women, girls, males, and occasionally transgender individuals are all consequences of this. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number five is the abolition of discrimination based on gender. Gender bias is caused by several variables, including biological traits and functions that differentiate men's and women's access to rights and freedoms and systemic inefficiencies that hinder the growth of a strong labour force. Even though women and girls confront discrimination based on their gender, there is a great deal of legal focus on ending gender bias against women<sup>xiii</sup>. There is no universally accepted theoretical definition of discrimination based on gender since it all looks at unequal treatment and its effects. Digital platforms such as Uber and Instacart have contributed to the growth of the gig economy, which is defined by freelance employment and short-term contracts. However, it has drawbacks, especially for women, who account for half of the labour force worldwide. Flexible work arrangements and more revenue prospects are provided by the gig economy, yet there is a chance that gender gaps could widen, especially in terms of compensation and job security<sup>xiv</sup>. Furthermore, the hourly wage gap between male and female gig workers is 7% indicating gender-based discrimination.

## 4. Policy Interventions and Recommendations

### 4.1 Government Policies for Supporting Female Gig Workers

A welfare framework that offers medical coverage and retirement benefits is being introduced by the government for gig workers. This action comes before labour rules, which are still pending enforcement in several states, are fully implemented. The government intends to guarantee gig workers obtain the bare minimum of benefits from social security by implementing health protection and retirement savings schemes.

Advanced danger detection, injury coverage, and disability and life assurance will all be available to gig workers. Female gig workers will receive maternity benefits, and pension schemes will ensure their financial security as they age<sup>xv</sup>. A planned cess on operations conducted through freelance and platform-based businesses is one of the channels that would be used to fund the establishment of a Social Security Fund for funding these social programs. The precariousness of women's employment, discriminatory regulations, equitable pay, social safety, and education and training are just a few of the many issues facing the gig economy. Legislators should foster an atmosphere that values adaptability while defending the rights and welfare of employees. Policymakers should encourage behaviour adjustment, regulate gig employment, enhance access to financial assistance, take into account available social safety for female freelancers, and offer focused educational possibilities and skill-development training to combat sociocultural gender biases<sup>xvi</sup>. Awareness of gender prejudices and their detrimental effects on people and communities can be raised through efforts to educate the public, media attitudes, and instruction.

#### **4.2 Corporate Initiatives for Gender Inclusivity**

Long-term company achievement and profit production in the cutthroat business sector depend heavily on gender inclusiveness and diversity. Revenues rise by 3% to 9% for every 1% increase in worker diversity. It has a positive impact on the expansion of the organization. These techniques can improve productivity at work and result in good changes. They are fundamental tenets of the business strategy of twenty-first-century businesses and aid in their understanding of individual characteristics to ensure they can capitalize on them for financial gain<sup>xvii</sup>. Effective inclusion of all genders in the workplace has important economic and critical implications in addition to being an ethical and societal issue. Businesses need an array of existing and potential staff to get a competitive edge in the international business climate.

#### **4.3 Training and Skill Development Programs**

Workflows in businesses are being drastically changed by the gig economy, and due to their varied working styles and modern skills, freelancers need a different kind of training. Organizations must reconsider their current approaches to hiring and engaging this workforce. It is challenging to defend training expenditures due to the widespread belief that freelancers are hired temporarily for their specific skills. Businesses must make investments in online platforms, tools, and facilities to create carefully chosen educational materials if they want to properly engage and employ gig workers. Companies should support platform-led strategies for employment creation and development of skills, working with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to support micro-entrepreneurship and skilled employees. People will be able to enhance their income by taking advantage of opportunities to move through the ranks of the corporate career ladder as well as freelance and digital jobs. Skill training solutions for freelancers should be aligned with the principles of the gig economy, available online and in multiple media. Virtual initial orientation artificial intelligence (AI) learning, online education, augmented audiovisual learning, small-scale learning, learning via mobile devices, and instructional material on demand are a few of these tactics<sup>xviii</sup>. Gig workers should receive training that is specifically designed to meet their needs and online orientation should cover joining procedures, leadership and business introductions, functional and procedural instruction, principles, and cultural backgrounds. AI-powered learning platforms can suggest the most appropriate instruction for gig workers, empowering individuals to take charge of their education and make valuable contributions. The company's vision, goal, and values can be taught to gig workers through augmented video learning, while online education should be flexible and dynamic. It should be easy to use and adaptable, with mobile instructional courses available.

### **5. Evaluation of Challenges and Opportunities**

#### **5.1 Challenges**

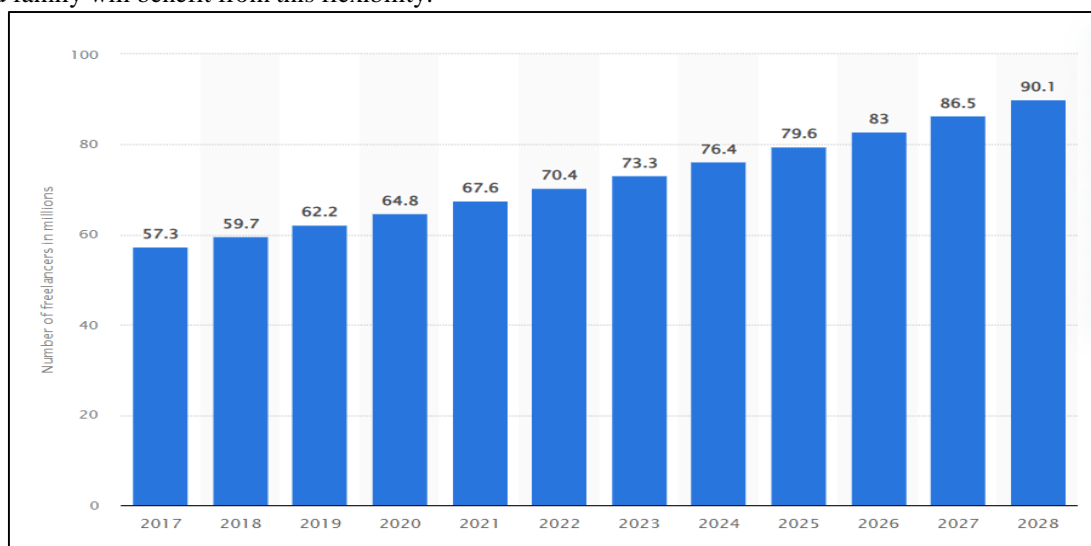
The primary and secondary findings indicate that despite flexibility gig work faces challenges such as income instability and job insecurity. Especially women in the gig economy face these challenges due to gender biases. The findings further indicate that female workers often experience unequal income-earning opportunities and gender-based pay gaps compared to male workers. Gig workers sometimes hold informal or casual positions and are not entitled to redundancy benefits, unemployment insurance, the national minimum earnings, paid time off, or sick leave. These platforms contend that they are impartial marketplaces that permit communication between employees and customers, hence enabling self-employment. These online services do, however, impose several job requirements that make their autonomy temporary<sup>xix</sup>. Gig economy jobs are typically contract, adaptable, or casual, and there is no protection system or social shield after the job is finished. It might be challenging for freelancers to get conventional advantages like timely salary payments. Gig workers may be subjected to extremely bad working circumstances, including extended hours without set entitlements to paid vacations, medical pay, or the national minimum income. Gig workers may lose out on developing



networks and interactions with other workforces since they frequently work from home. Due to their lower likelihood of receiving compensation for doing the same tasks or professions as males, female gig employees are especially susceptible to gender discrimination in compensation. Furthermore, the laws that guarantee their protection at work frequently do not apply to them.

## 5.2 Opportunities

According to the primary and secondary findings, freelancing or gig work often provides flexibility in working hours and location, particularly for female workers. Through online marketplaces like Upwork and TaskRabbit, the gig economy gives independent contractors, especially females a great deal of flexibility, enabling them to enter international markets and create various revenue sources. Those who are having trouble juggling work and family will benefit from this flexibility.



**Figure 16: Increasing Number of Freelancers in the United States<sup>xx</sup>**

The flexibility that gig workers get can be evidentially observed by the above graphical representation as it shows the increasing number of freelancers in the United States from the year 2017 to 2028. It can be seen that around 90 million people will be freelancing by the year 2028 in the United States. According to a World Economic Forum analysis, gig platforms make it easier for workers from a variety of social and academic backgrounds to enter the workforce. Diversity among workers has increased as a result, particularly in places where traditional job openings are few. Employing independent contractors can be advantageous for small and medium-sized businesses since it is less expensive than training new employees for specialized jobs. The issue of handling more orders at busy times without adding full-time staff is resolved by outsourcing work to freelancers. For instance, since gig workers are less expensive than full-time staff, businesses frequently use them for marketing communication efforts. Many contract-based job options are available in the gig economy, which helps those without jobs by offering financial assistance<sup>xxi</sup>. Both men and women benefit from this flexible job setting, which enables them to become independent. Employees have the freedom to select their working hours and locations. Companies gain by having access to a varied pool of talent, and they can hire people for extended periods if they live up to quality standards. Notably amid the Covid-19 outbreak, when many individuals lost their jobs and remained at home, the gig economy has grown significantly.

## 6. Conclusion

This research described are gig economy and the importance of female labour force participation in the gig economy. The gig economy is an on-demand job with flexible working hours. Conventional society wants women to handle the household chores, however constant economic growth, modernization, and increasing inflation have made women look for jobs that align with their lifestyle. Gig work provides the flexibility of time and location that has made it easier for women to participate in the workforce. This is evident from both primary quantitative and secondary qualitative findings. The research also highlighted the key themes of the gig economy and relevant policy interventions and recommendations. The study further evaluated the challenges and opportunities faced by the workers in the gig economy, particularly emphasizing the female workforce. Despite the flexibility, the gig economy faces many challenges, especially the female workers. The gender-based discrimination leads to lower income for females compared to male workers creating income inequality in the economy. Policymakers as well as business organizations should implement the required policies to safeguard women from this discrimination to ensure equal opportunities for female gig workers.

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