

# Online Platform Work: Findings from the Empire State Poll

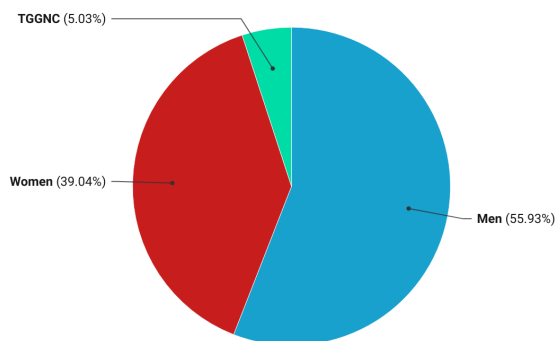
## Worker Institute Data Snapshot August 2024

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The 2023 Empire State Poll surveyed 2,593 New Yorkers from all 62 of New York’s counties.<sup>2</sup> This policy snapshot summarizes key highlights from data on respondents who indicated that they worked for online platforms in New York State from the 2023 Empire State Poll (ESP), carried out by the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR). Data were obtained between July and December 2023.

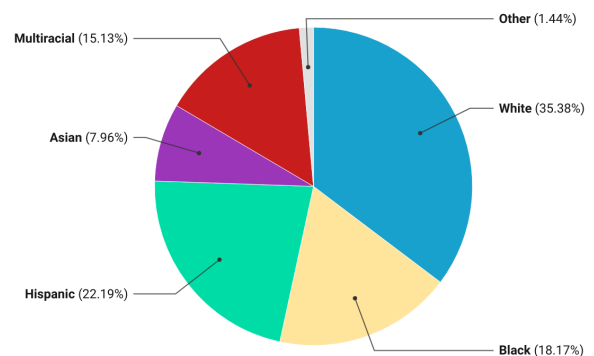
Of the respondents who took the Empire State Poll (n=2,593), 11% or 376 indicated that they obtained work or provided services through online platforms in the last 12 months (at the time they took the survey). Respondents who identified as men (55.93%) and women (39%) were the two groups who obtained work through online platforms. A small group of respondents—5%—identified as transgender and gender nonconforming (TGGNC) and indicated that they obtained work through online platforms. The racial and ethnic make-up of respondents included 35.38% of online platform workers who identified as white, 22.19% as Hispanic, 18.17% as Black, 7.9% as Asian and 15.13% as multiracial. Ages ranged from 18 to 75 and older, with the greatest concentration between 25 and 34 years of age (39%). But overall, on-line platform workers were more likely to be younger (18-44 years of age; 82%) compared to the general ESP population (46%).

**Online Platform Workers by Gender**



Source: Empire State Poll 2023 • Created with Datawrapper

**Online Platform Workers by Race**



Source: Empire State Poll 2023 • Created with Datawrapper

Analysis of the ESP showed that DoorDash (30%) and Uber (29%) were the two apps through which this subset of respondents primarily worked. Respondents also indicated relying on other platforms for work, such

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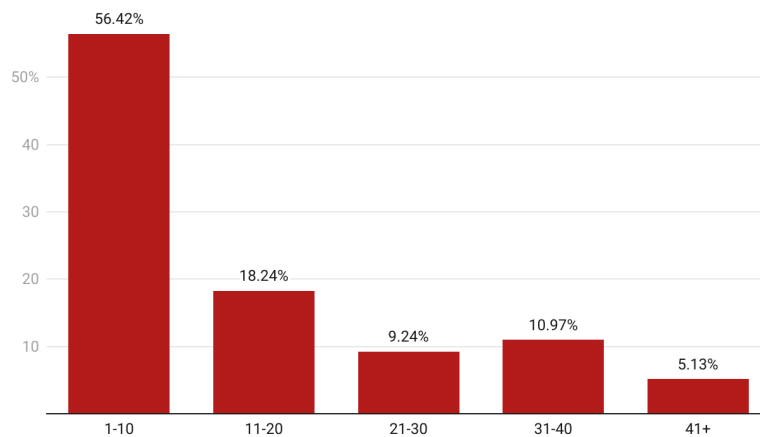
2 The total number of survey responses was 3,394. Roughly 800 observations were associated with missing data for one or more of the variables that were used in the weighting procedure. As such, weights could not be generated for these observations. This brief, which employs survey weights, accordingly omits these missing or incomplete records. The resulting sample size is n=2,593 observations.

as AirBnB, care.com, Grubhub, Instacart, Lyft, Rover, Thumbtack and UrbanSitter. Of the subsample of ESP respondents who work for an online platform, 67% work for a single platform and 33% work for 2 or more platforms at the same time. A slight majority of on-line platform workers (54%) indicated that this was their main job, with slightly under half (44%) indicating that it was a side job. A majority of respondents (57%) have worked for one year or less for an online platform.

ESP respondents worked on average 15.92 hours per week for online platforms with the majority of respondents working 10 hours or less per week (56%). For the rest of the respondents who worked for an online platform, 18.24% worked between 11 and 20 hours per week, 9.2% worked between 21 and 30 hours per week and 10.97% worked between 31 and 40 hours per week with 5% of respondents having worked 41 plus hours per week as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:**

**Total Hours Worked Per Week for Online Platforms**

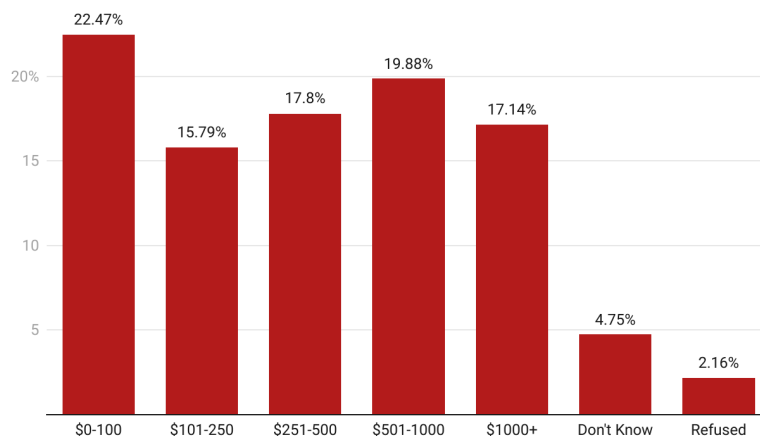


Source: Empire State Poll 2023 • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 2 shows that a slight majority of ESP respondents earned between \$0 and 100 per week with 15.7% of respondents earning between \$101 and \$250 per week; 17.8% between \$251 and \$500 per week; 19.88% between \$501 and \$1000 per week; and 17.14% earning \$1000 or more per week.

**Figure 2:**

**Income Earned Through All Online Platforms Combined in a Typical Week**

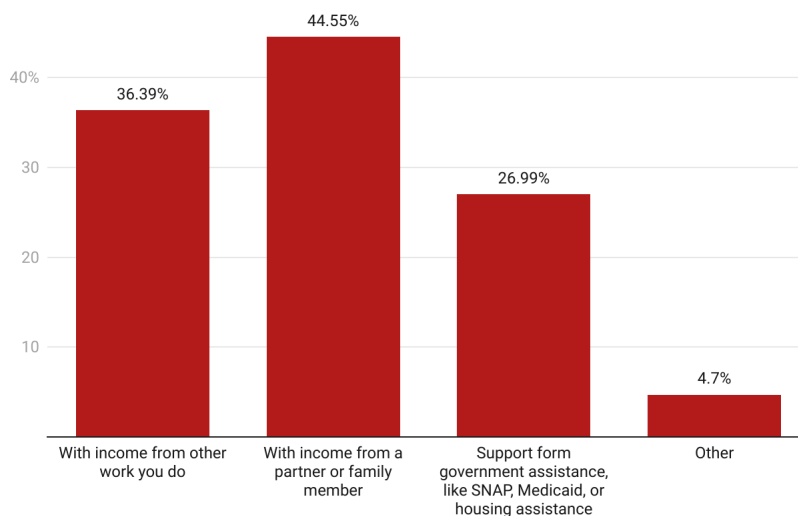


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When asked if the income earned through online platform work is enough to cover respondents' household living expenses, 34.53% of respondents indicated that it was not, while 58.83% indicated that it was. Figure 3 shows that of the 128 respondents who indicated that income earned through online platform work was not enough to cover their household living expenses, 36.39% of households with at least one person working for an online platform indicated that they earned additional income from other work they do—thus suggesting that they work more than one job—while 44.55% indicated that a family member or partner contributed additional income to the household. Moreover, 27% turn to sources of support from the government to bolster their household income, including, but not limited to, SNAP, Medicaid, housing assistance and TANF. For this proportion of ESP respondents, this need to bolster income through support from federal programs suggests that this group falls within what is often referred to as the *working poor*—individuals who are working and earning income, but not earning enough income to lift themselves or their household above the official U.S. poverty line.

**Figure 3:**

**Other Ways in Which Households with an Online Platform Worker Earn Income**



A subset (36.92%) of ESP respondents who worked for online platforms indicated that they have been injured or experienced unsafe working conditions while working for online platforms. Moreover, 40.21% report having had a pay dispute with online platforms, including being underpaid or not being paid at all. Among all online platform workers, about half (49%) report high levels of job satisfaction, 40% report medium and 12% report low satisfaction. 70% of online platform workers believe that their job utilizes their skills and abilities well. Just under half (47%) report an interest in pursuing different work.

And yet, the use of apps by the consumer is not letting up. When asked if ESP respondents used websites or mobile apps for ride-hailing, delivery of food, housing cleaning, home improvement or moving tasks, 47% of respondents said they did (rates of usage are higher in New York City (58%)). In the 2022 poll, we asked all respondents if they have used online platform services less, about the same, or more since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. In that poll, 28.5% indicated that they had increased their usage since the pandemic, while 42.2% indicated that their usage had stayed the same. By all accounts, online platform work is not decreasing as analysis of national data suggest that, while the incidence of platform work in the U.S. economy is still small compared to other industries, it is nevertheless a rapidly growing workforce.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Abraham, K. and Houseman, S., What Do We Know about Alternative Work Arrangements in the United States? A Synthesis of Research Evidence from Household Surveys, Employer Surveys, and Administrative Data, U.S. Department of Labor, 2021. Their analysis of national data suggested that between 1 and 3 percent of the U.S. workforce work for online platforms in the week prior. The incidence was higher among younger workers and African American men and women.