

## Pros and Cons of the Uber Economy

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### **Abstract**

*We all have heard if not used the services of the app based ride sharing and ride hailing taxi and car service, Uber. Indeed, Uber has become a household name worldwide because of its innovative and inventive approach to providing cheap and reliable taxi and car services through its mobile and Smartphone app that “connects” the drivers with the passengers. Further, Uber works in an entirely freelance model where the drivers need to be just registered with the company and can pursue other occupations when they are not driving. This means that Uber represents the cutting edge in the new and emerging economic model wherein anyone and everyone can work multiple jobs and take up employment on a part-time basis with everyone and everywhere. This is the reason why this emerging freelance and gig work model has been called the Uber economy with its attendant advantages and disadvantages.*

### **A. Advantages of the Uber Economy**

To start with, there are many pros or advantages of the Uber economy. For one, it offers unparalleled flexibility and adaptability to the workers who can work multiple jobs and take up gig work during their spare time. In addition, it offers workers the chance to partake in the exciting and promising reward and benefit system which because of the simplicity of the model means that they would be compensated more than what they would get when working for a traditional full time or part time job. Of course, some might argue that full time jobs do have benefits that the Uber economy cannot provide and we would be taking that up subsequently. It would suffice to state here that the Uber economy represents the future of the work model wherein anyone and everyone can become gig workers and freelancers without having to give up their day jobs. Indeed, research and surveys have shown that there are many full time workers who drive for Uber and other gig work companies during their spare time to supplement their incomes and make hay while the sun shines.

### **B. Disadvantages of the Uber Economy**

However, is it the case that the Uber economy is a new dawn rising or is it the case that it represents another opportunity by the capitalists to fleece workers and make them work in a model where the only winners are the owners and not the employees? The answer to this depends on whom you talk to and whom you interview. For instance, there are many who swear by the freelance model of work since they can masters of their time and pursue other occupations as well as decide to set the working hours themselves instead of being dictated and ordered by the straightjacket of the traditional work model. Moreover, these people reckon that freelance work and gig work represent the future and hence, it is better to get in there early and reap the rewards of the emerging economic model where employment does not mean the earlier generation emphasis of a company that hires and keeps workers for life and instead, represents the brave new world of work where one is paid by the hour or for each parcel of work done. Having said that, there are others who point to the fact that the freelance economy or the Uber economy is a model where the workers do not receive health, social security, and 401(k) or pension benefits, in addition to not receiving any paid leave or time off

for medical reasons. Indeed, there is a growing chorus of opposition to the emerging freelance and gig economy or the Uber economy since many believe that this is no different from the colonial model of exploitation of workers where hourly wages and per task payment is the norm with no longer term benefits, no annual bonuses, and above all no medical and pension benefits.

Further, when one is performing freelance work, there is no guarantee that such gig work or the Uber model would let them continue even if they fail once or twice. In other words, unlike traditional occupations where the employers tend to take a longer term view and reward and take action on the workers depending on their performance over a broader time frame, the emerging world of work is a ruthless and Uber competitive place (literally as well as metaphorically) where one is as good as the last work or the gig done and there are virtually no laws or regulations that would protect the workers and their rights.

### ***C. The Emerging Debate on the Uber Economy***

Considering the pros and cons of the Uber economy, there are many who are filing for lawsuits and petitioning the government to regulate the emerging model of work so that the workers are not at the receiving end. Indeed, there are some class action lawsuits pending in the United States and upcoming to be heard in the next few months that seek more governmental oversight over the industry that specializes in freelance work. While the petitioners are not asking for a complete overhaul of the freelance or the gig model of work, nonetheless, they want the government to ensure that the workers are not shortchanged and that companies such as Uber follow some work practices where the workers are not always at the receiving end. Having said that, it must also be noted that the emerging Uber economy is something that no one can stop or slow down since the future of work would indeed be a model where there would be more sharing economic practices and companies such as Uber would be the go to employers for many.

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