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Final Project

Sociology of the Gig Economy

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The Gig Economy Within the Context of Younger Generations

Abstract

With the rapid development of technology, the gig economy has taken the world by storm. From rideshare apps to grocery delivery, platform work and maintaining multiple revenue streams have become standard for many people. While there is much discussion on how beneficial or detrimental the nature of the gig economy is, more needs to be done regarding policy or control of the phenomenon. There remains a tremendous disparity between earning a few extra bucks from one's hobby or relying on a gig for one's livelihood. Much of the focus regarding policy and organized effort to seek fair rules to develop some sort of security for individuals within the gig economy seems to mainly revolve around those who utilize platform work to make ends meet. This project, however, will shift focus to the younger participants of the gig economy – those between the ages of 20 and 30. Each member of this research group will utilize a qualitative research method to investigate this less-explored phenomenon. Through the following research methods, we aim to research why, how, and to what end the younger generation participates in the gig economy.

Research Question:

What are the more significant implications of age within the context of the gig economy?
Why do people of a certain age (between 20 and 30 years old) do the gigs that they choose as opposed to others?

JONATHAN PERLIN - INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG GIG WORKER (Instacart)

Introduction

The gig economy has become an important topic of interest within the developing field of applied digital sociology. The COVID-19 pandemic played a pivotal role in the growth of many areas within the gig economy, including grocery delivery services like Instacart, with many consumers preferring the convenience and safety it offered. Through qualitative methods like interviews, digital sociologists can talk with gig workers and provide detailed insights into their experiences while opening up new avenues of research.

As the gig economy expands, it becomes increasingly essential to classify and organize the less familiar landscape to help us better understand the different areas and populations it affects. This is particularly pertinent within the emerging field of digital sociology, where technology is changing the nature of society. By researching gig work and its participant populations, researchers can better understand the more significant implications of the gig economy for workers, businesses, and culture. In addition, this type of research will also help classify and organize what defines gig work and help establish effective rules and regulations to help protect gig workers and promote fairness and equity in new areas of work and industry. In a hearing regarding millennials in the gig economy held by the House of Representatives Committee of Small Business in 2018, the following was said in an opening statement:

“These rapidly changing dynamics have called into question more traditional definitions of a business owner and an employee. The majority of gig economy workers tend to be part-time and independent contractors, many of whom

appreciate the flexibility and autonomy of this new sector. These jobs' flexibility allow millennials to have different work experiences without significant risks or sacrifices, so they can gain job experiences and build their professional networks quickly." (Millennials and the Gig Economy, 2)

Now that policymakers have actively entered conversations on the gig economy and young participants within the emerging landscape, qualitative research methods are more important than ever for gaining a glimpse into large populations. Interviews help to provide insight into the gig economy by opening up new avenues of research and identifying untapped areas of investigation. One of these areas focuses on a younger class of gig workers who "gig" to supplement their income.

Case Study: An Interview with AP

Background

AP entered the gig economy to supplement his income as a young worker. As a college student, he required an additional income stream and turned to gig work to make ends meet. He chose Instacart as a platform because he had heard positive things about the company and its flexibility. He also valued his ability to choose his schedule and work around other responsibilities. Through his experience with Instacart, he has found that the platform allowed him to earn a decent amount of money while still being able to prioritize his education. His experience highlights the importance of understanding the motivations and circumstances that lead younger individuals to enter the gig economy.

Day to day of a young gig worker

Being a younger gig worker, AP faces unique challenges compared to older gig workers, including a higher level of comfort with the Instacart shopper user interface. AP says:

“I would imagine that older shoppers may not take into consideration the radius aspect of it... There's a little feature on the app that I actually just discovered not too long ago. Certain stores will have a store map that... maps out the entire store and I guess using the wifi of the phone, it'll direct you or it'll show your location on the store map and where the items are specifically... So I'm sure there's a lot of maybe older people who aren't as tech savvy, who are just literally just looking at the grocery list and trying to find it manually. Anytime a store has a store app, I finish it half the time. So I'm sure that's a factor.” (P, A. Zoom Interview. 27 March 2023.)

However, he may need more work experience and knowledge of labor laws, leaving him vulnerable to exploitation by platforms or other gig workers. AP also mentioned that his gig economy participation extends beyond Instacart, allowing him to supplement his income and enjoy flexibility and control over his work schedule. AP States:

“My overhead's pretty low that I live with my parents again. So right now working, yeah. During winter, it's obviously slower at the brewery. And then with the cost of working Instacart, sometimes it could be a little tricky with getting the right batches and saving on gas. But overall, if you know what you're doing, then you can really make ends meet.” (P, A. Zoom Interview. 27 March 2023.)

Nevertheless, he does continue to grapple with financial instability and limited access to benefits and protections, common concerns among gig workers. Additionally, AP's age

influences his customer interactions. While some customers may perceive younger workers as less experienced, leading to difficulties in shopping for specific items or handling complaints, others find them approachable and relatable, resulting in positive interactions and higher ratings.

Understanding the experiences and challenges young gig workers like AP face is crucial in comprehending the gig economy's impact on diverse populations. Furthermore, such insights enable researchers to develop a nuanced understanding of the gig economy's benefits and drawbacks.

Choosing Batches

AP considers several factors when choosing batches of groceries for delivery. These factors include the size of the batch, proximity to the grocery store, familiarity with the area, and weather conditions. The size of the batch is an essential factor for AP. Large sets with many items can be challenging to manage, so he prefers smaller batches with fewer items. This allows him to move faster and more efficiently, which can help him earn more money per hour. On this topic, AP says:

“If you get that done in an hour, you're making \$18 an hour. You get it done in two hours, obviously now you're making \$9, you're making a lot less money. So sometimes going through a store that will mess you up, will throw your whole day off. And now you spend gas, now you're factoring gas, taxes, making even less money.” (P, A. Zoom Interview. 27 March 2023.)

Proximity to the grocery store is another important factor. AP prefers batches close to the grocery store, saving time and allowing him to complete deliveries quickly. He also considers familiarity with the area and weather conditions.

"...the days that you make the most money are the days that people don't want to go outside. So snowy days, rainy days. My car isn't four wheel drive so I don't drive in the snow regardless. Even though that's the days where you'll probably make a killing. But rainy days obviously you have to be a little... Those are the days I will go out. But obviously those days you got to drive a little safer, you got to be careful." (P, A. Zoom Interview. 27 March 2023.)

Understanding the factors that gig workers like AP consider when choosing orders is essential for improving their working conditions and experience on gig platforms. In addition, qualitative research methods such as interviews can provide valuable insights into gig workers' experiences and help identify improvement areas.

Age and gender when it comes to safety

The impact of the gender or age of another shopper on the experience of comfort within the context of safety is an important aspect to consider in the gig economy, where workers may interact with other workers and customers during their work. For example, during the interview with AP, he mentioned that he had not experienced uncomfortable situations or safety concerns while working for Instacart. He stated:

"I haven't really [come] across anyone too mean or anything like that. I had one lady that she did shopping from Sephora, and I got all the stuff, all her makeup stuff, and she claimed that I broke her makeup, which wasn't true, but I just told her, I'm like, 'Hey, just hit up Instacart. They'll refund you for everything and now you have all that makeup, plus you can order more.' So I was just like, 'What do you want me to do?' But that was about it. That was the only probably negative interaction I've had."

(P, A. Zoom Interview. 27 March 2023.)

This perspective raises important questions about how gender and age dynamics might impact the experiences of gig workers in terms of safety and comfort. For example, female gig workers may face more significant risks of harassment or violence than their male counterparts, and older workers may be seen as more vulnerable to such threats. On this topic, AP stated:

“I guess the only concern would be meeting random people by their houses. But I guess maybe if I was a woman, just that would definitely be a factor. You're going into random apartments. One time... There'll be the occasional time where I delivered to the projects. So for sure, I guess that would be a factor. But as a... I'm a man, I don't think really. Obviously anyone could be in danger if they go by a house or somewhere. But obviously, I'd be better off, but for sure, yeah, safety definitely is a factor that you have to keep in the back of your head.” (P, A. Zoom Interview. 27 March 2023.)

Applied digital sociology can also play a role in understanding the impact of technology on gender and age dynamics in the gig economy. For example, certain features in the shopper interface, such as communicating with customers or sharing information with other shoppers, could promote safety and comfort for all workers. As a result, researchers and technology developers can work together to create a more inclusive and safe gig economy for those who work within it.

Conclusion

AP's interview provides insights into the future of the gig economy, particularly in grocery delivery services such as Instacart. As more consumers have become accustomed to the convenience of having groceries delivered to their doorstep, the demand for gig

workers in this sector will likely continue to grow. AP noted that during the pandemic, he witnessed a significant increase in orders and new shoppers signing up for Instacart.

Furthermore, there may be increased competition in the gig economy as more platforms emerge and existing ones expand. This could drive down wages and make it harder for gig workers to earn a living wage. In an article titled *Digital Nomads: Employment in the Online Gig Economy*, the author Beverly Yuen Thompson points out that:

“...while digital nomads may have the freedom to spend their time in countries that are very affordable for themselves, this is matched with a downward mobility in their financial status, as they can no longer count on full-time employment like their parents’ generation, but must rely on digital piece-work, or gig, employment.

However, this isn’t necessarily due to their digital nomad status alone, as Millennials in developed nations around the world are facing downward mobility, shrinking governmental safety nets, and raising rates of debt.” (Thompson, 23)

Therefore, it is essential for policymakers and researchers to closely monitor the growth and evolution of the gig economy and develop policies that protect the rights and well-being of gig workers. Overall, the future of the gig economy in grocery delivery services like Instacart is bright. Still, it is vital to address the issues and challenges faced by gig workers and ensure they are treated fairly and have access to benefits.

The insights gained from AP's interview provide valuable contributions to understanding the gig economy, particularly in grocery delivery services, and the experiences of gig workers of different ages. Through AP's expertise, we see the importance of convenience and flexibility in the gig economy, especially in times of crisis like the

COVID-19 pandemic. When it comes to younger platform workers within the gig economy, qualitative research methods such as field interviews can help us better understand the landscape and provide an environment where young adults can grow and develop in the modern workplace within the context of supplemental income streams. Furthermore, such research into platform work and the gig economy provides more insight regarding the classification and organization of these new areas of society, not just within the interest of large corporations but with everyone's interests in mind.

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MARLENE SAHALON - INTERVIEW WITH A GIG WORKER

The gig economy, also known as the freelance or sharing economy, is an emerging trend that uses digital platforms and technology to connect service providers with consumers. It has grown tremendously in recent years, particularly among younger generations who prioritize flexibility, autonomy, and work-life balance. However, the gig economy has also raised concerns about job security, income instability, and lack of benefits and protections.

In this reflection, I will examine the larger implications of age in the gig economy and explore why people between 20 and 30 years old choose certain gigs. I will draw on three sources and an interview that provide insights into gig workers' experiences and perspectives.

Age can have significant implications for both gig workers and businesses in the gig economy. Younger workers between 20 and 30 are attracted to gigs that offer flexibility, autonomy, and the opportunity to learn new skills. They may still be exploring different career paths and are less likely to be tied down by family or other obligations. Additionally, they are often more comfortable with technology and social media, which are important tools for finding and securing gigs.

On the other hand, older workers may have more experience and specialized skills, which can make them attractive to businesses looking for high-quality workers. However, they may also face age discrimination or be passed over for younger workers who are seen as more adaptable or tech-savvy.

Aldinger (2021) argues that the gig economy is a flexible option for college students who seek to earn money while pursuing their education. According to the author, many college students turn to gig work as a way to supplement their income and gain work experience that can enhance their resume. This trend is particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, which

has disrupted traditional employment opportunities and forced many students to find alternative sources of income. However, the author also notes that gig work can be challenging for college students who must balance their academic responsibilities with their work commitments. Moreover, the lack of benefits and job security can be a source of stress and uncertainty for students who rely on gig work as their primary source of income.

Mulcahy (2016) argues that universities should prepare students for the gig economy by providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in this new work environment. According to the author, the gig economy requires workers to be adaptable, entrepreneurial, and tech-savvy. Universities should therefore offer courses and programs that teach students how to navigate the gig economy and leverage digital platforms to market their skills and services. Moreover, universities should promote a culture of innovation and experimentation that encourages students to embrace new challenges and opportunities. However, the author also acknowledges that the gig economy raises concerns about income inequality, job insecurity, and social protection, which require policy interventions at the national and international levels.

Raja et al. (2022) provide a comprehensive study of the future of gig professionals, focusing on three generations: Gen Y, Gen C, and Gen Alpha. According to the authors, the gig economy has become a global phenomenon that offers opportunities and challenges for workers of all ages. The authors argue that younger generations are more likely to embrace gig work due to their digital literacy, entrepreneurial mindset, and desire for autonomy and flexibility. However, the authors also note that gig work can be demanding and stressful, particularly for those who lack the social and financial support networks that traditional employment provides. The authors recommend that policymakers and stakeholders should develop policies and

practices that promote sustainable and inclusive gig work, such as portable benefits, collective bargaining, and social safety nets.

To shed light on the larger implications of age in the gig economy, I conducted an interview with Abraham, a 23-year-old gig worker. Abraham values the flexibility that gig work offers him, as he is able to choose when and where he wants to work. However, he also acknowledges the downsides of gig work, such as the lack of benefits and job security. When asked about the role of age in the gig economy, Abraham shared that he believes younger workers are more likely to take advantage of the flexibility that gig work offers. He explained that younger workers are generally less burdened with responsibilities, such as caring for children or supporting a family, and therefore have more freedom to choose when and where they work.

Abraham's perspective highlights an important aspect of age in the gig economy: younger workers may be better equipped to handle the inherent risks and uncertainties of gig work. However, this does not mean that older workers are unable to succeed in the gig economy. In fact, many older workers bring valuable skills and experience to the table, which can make them attractive to clients and customers. For example, a retired accountant may be able to offer high-quality financial consulting services on a freelance basis, while a former marketing executive may be able to provide strategic marketing advice to small businesses.

Despite the potential advantages that older workers bring to the gig economy, there are still some challenges that they may face. One such challenge is the perception that older workers are less tech-savvy and therefore less capable of performing certain types of gig work. This perception can be especially harmful in industries such as tech, where proficiency with digital tools and platforms is highly valued.

Another challenge that older workers may face in the gig economy is competition from younger workers. As Abraham noted in his interview, younger workers may be more likely to take advantage of the flexibility that gig work offers. This can lead to a crowded market, where older workers may struggle to find clients or customers who are willing to pay for their services.

In order to address these challenges, it is important for older workers to focus on their strengths and marketable skills. This may involve seeking out niches or specialized areas where their experience and expertise can be highly valued. It may also involve investing in training or education to keep up with technological advances and stay competitive in the gig economy.

Overall, the role of age in the gig economy is complex and multifaceted. While younger workers may be better suited to handle the risks and uncertainties of gig work, older workers can bring valuable skills and experience to the table. While younger workers may have a better grip on technology and social media, which are essential for gig work, older workers may have better time-management skills, work ethics, and a wider range of experience that can benefit them in the gig economy. By understanding these dynamics and focusing on their strengths, older workers can succeed in the gig economy and continue to contribute to the workforce in meaningful ways.

Moreover, it's worth noting that the gig economy is not the only option for older workers. Some may choose to continue working traditional jobs or pursue entrepreneurship. However, for those who choose to pursue gig work, it's crucial to understand the risks and rewards that come with it and develop strategies to mitigate those risks.

In conclusion, age is an important factor to consider in the gig economy, but it should not be the only one. While it is true that younger workers may be more adept at navigating the challenges of gig work, older workers should not be dismissed or overlooked. They have a

wealth of knowledge, experience, and skills that can be leveraged to create value for themselves and their clients.

To promote inclusivity and diversity in the gig economy, companies and policymakers should take steps to address the unique needs and concerns of older workers. This could involve providing more training and support for gig workers of all ages, developing targeted marketing campaigns to attract older workers, and creating more flexible and adaptable work arrangements. By doing so, we can create a more equitable and sustainable gig economy that benefits workers of all ages and backgrounds.

Ultimately, the gig economy will continue to evolve and transform, as new technologies and business models emerge. However, by recognizing the importance of age and embracing the diverse perspectives and experiences of all workers, we can create a more resilient and dynamic gig economy that benefits everyone involved.

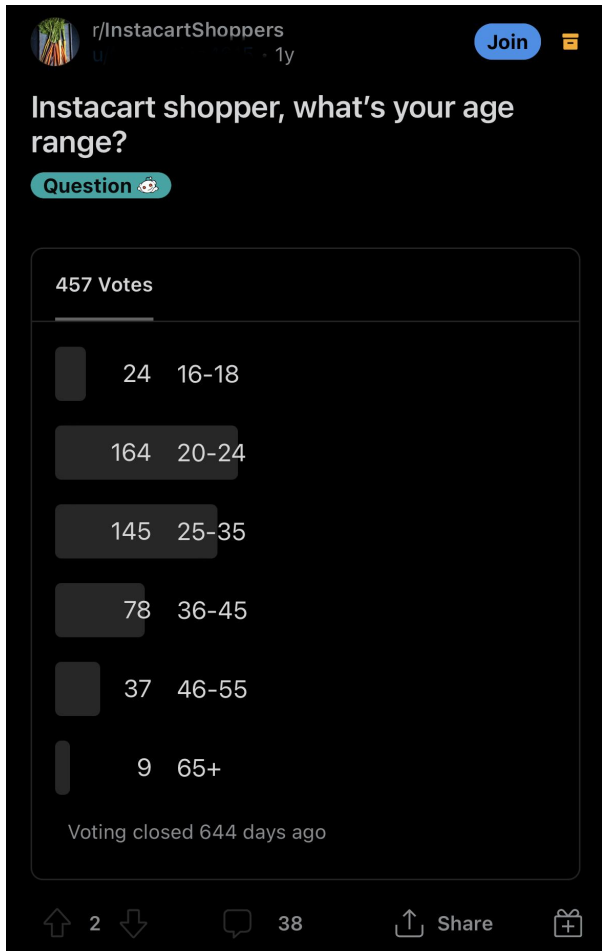
GABRIELLA FASANO - REDDIT CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is a beneficial way to tackle our research question: What are the larger implications of age within the context of the gig economy? Why do people of a certain age (between 20 and 30 years old) do the gigs that they choose as opposed to others? According to the Pew Research Center, nearly 30% of adults ages 18 - 29 have earned money through gig platform work, with at least 10% of this group making food deliveries, ride-sharing, and/or delivering groceries. With the reliance on platforms for social media purposes, the use of platforms for work is increasingly attractive to young people ages 20 to 30. Whether it be for extra money or a “side hustle”, convenience, or rejection from the standard workforce (either due to inexperience, language barriers, criminal record, lack of high school/college education, etc.), gig work has shown itself to be an option for young people.

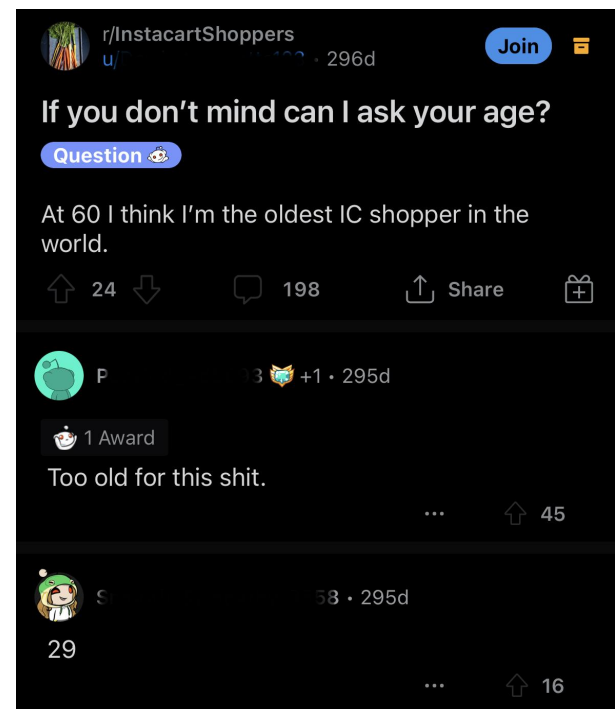
The gig platforms I chose to analyze through social media experiences are Instacart and Upwork. Through this content analysis, I will pick out various posts in three categories: reasons why this poster chose to pursue gig work, the success people have experienced in this line of work, and failures/challenges they have faced. Posts may not be all from the same person/account, which will be noted, and posts where someone mentions their age will be highlighted over others as accounts may not display a person’s age publicly. Posts are from Reddit, as it was an easier platform with a low barrier of entry to post and look at posts without an account. Also, most groups are public and have tens of thousands of users for a variety of different platforms, which allows for a wealth of experiences and information. Account names and photos, if applicable, will be blocked out. The social media posts will be broken down by platform: Instacart and Upwork.

Instacart

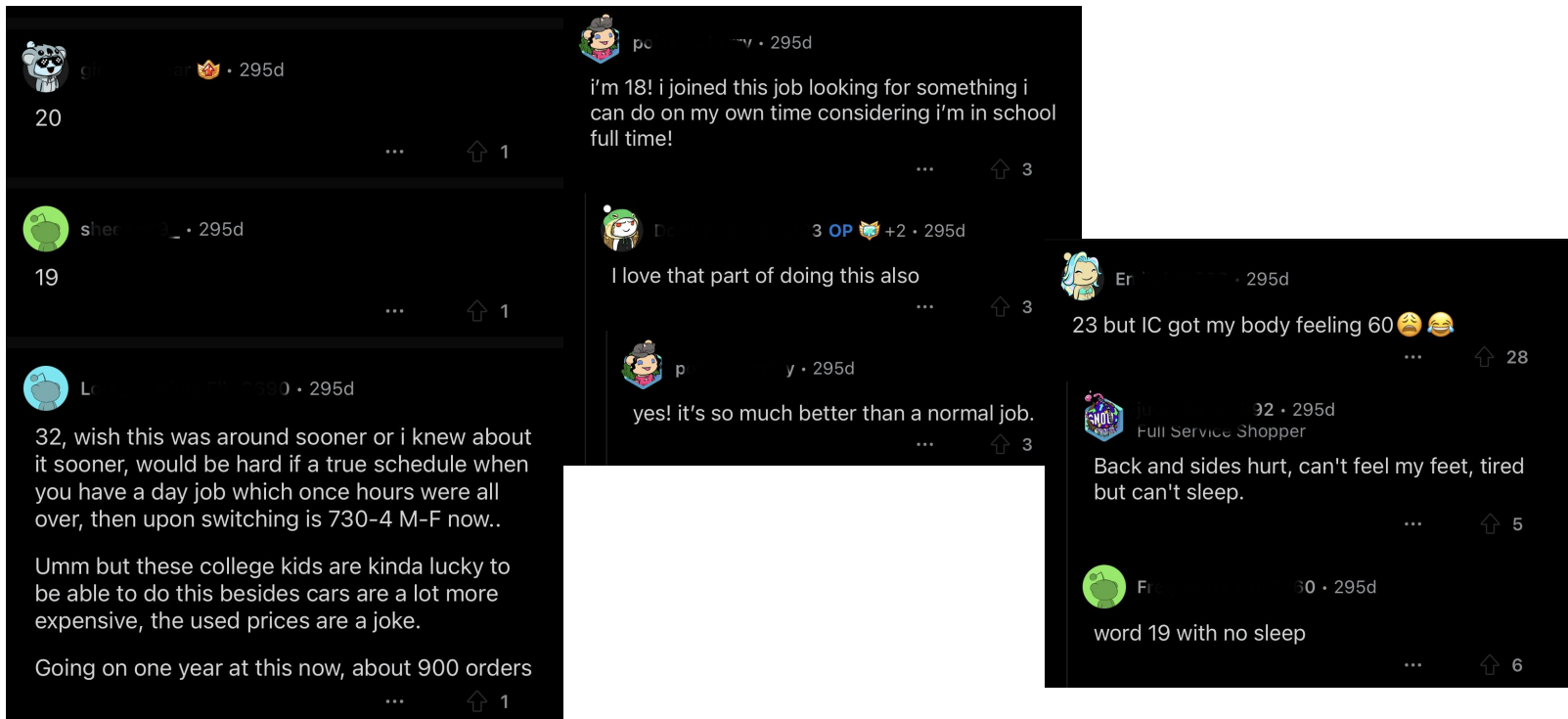
Instacart is a grocery and delivery pick-up service that was founded in 2012 and began to make a profit of over one billion in 2020. (BussinesOfApps) To sign up to work for Instacart, workers or “shoppers” must be 18 years or older, be eligible to work in the U.S., have a bank account, and have access to a vehicle and smartphone. (Instacart FAQ) There are mixed reports on the ages of Instacart workers, as the company did not disclose that information and many sites have estimates based on employee accounts or have a different age range noted. According to Zippia, 54% of Instacart shoppers are between the ages of 20 through 30, but this data seems skewed. According to The Progressive Grocer, 61% of Instacart shoppers are between the ages of 25 through 44. To find a better understanding of the age of shoppers, I found a couple of posts by users asking how old their fellow shoppers are. Although this is not conclusive, you can see there is a decent amount of 20 to 30-year-olds working.



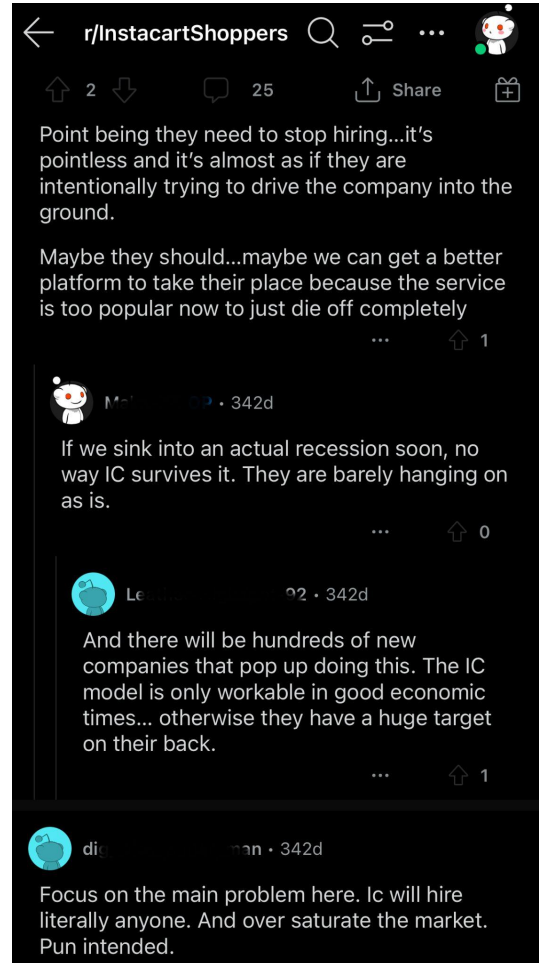
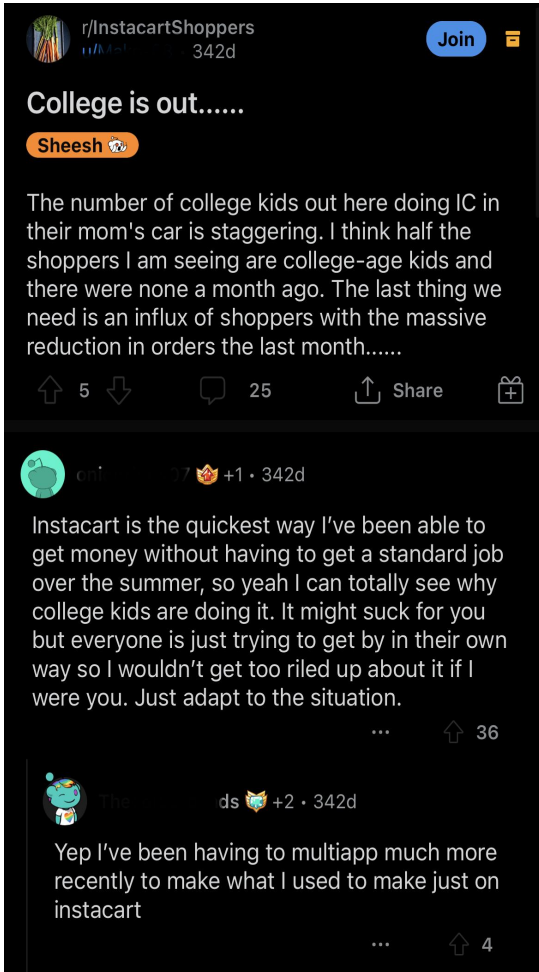
The post on the left from the sub-Reddit r/InstacartShoppers shows a majority of users ages 20 through 35. The post bottom right asks users to comment on their age. Some comments are upvoted, which can be assumed that others are that age as well. Counting the 198 comments, over 50 comments posted were from people under 30.



Here are a couple of comments I have highlighted under the post to the left of people sharing brief experiences as a young person using Instacart:

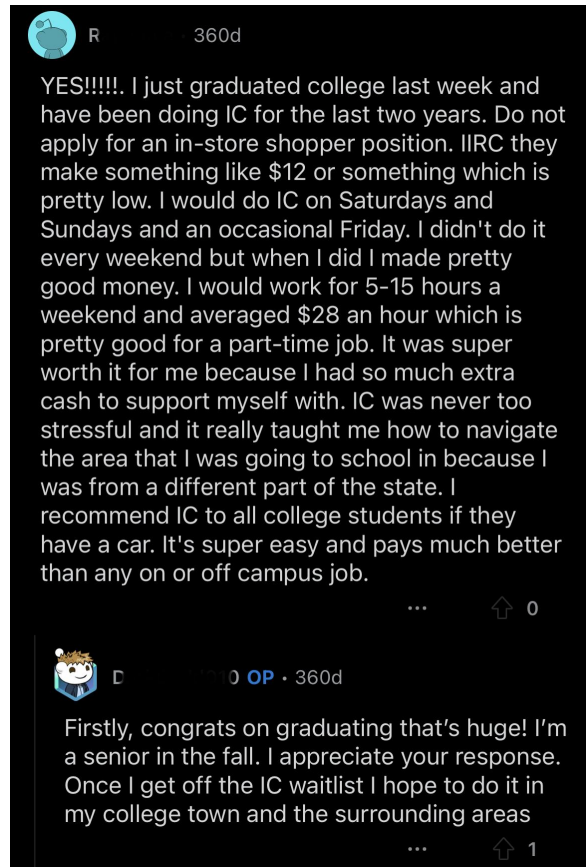


As we can see from these comments, young people are using the app when they turn 18 to use it while they are in school full time. Another poster writes that they are tired from working, while a 32-year-old poster writes that they wish they knew about the app sooner and that college-aged people are “lucky” to have this option for income. A different post below highlights this same sentiment as this poster explains that they have noticed an increase in college-aged shoppers in their area working.



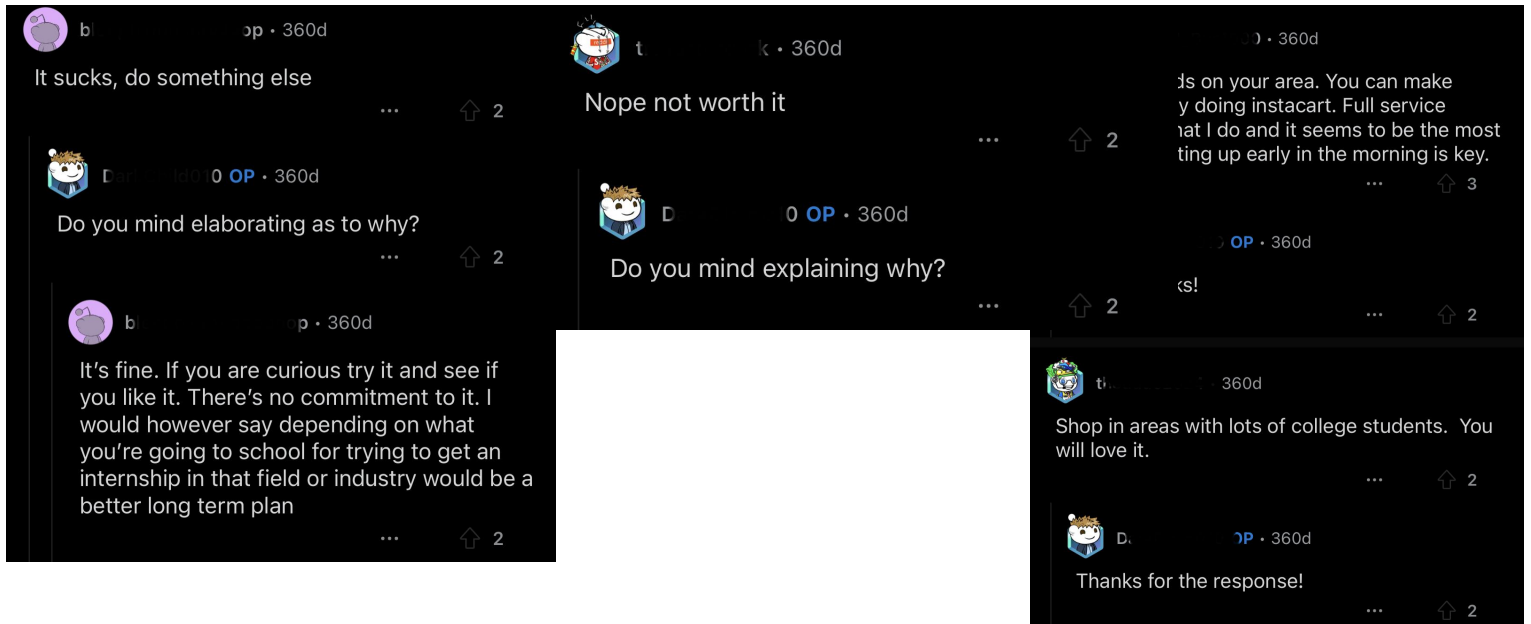
As we can see from the comments, many 20 to 30-year-old posters took offense to the post, one writing “college ain’t cheap” and defending their use of the app. An upvoted comment points to how easy it was to make money through the app rather than working a standard job for the summer which would only last a few months. The post to the left shows more commenters expressing their frustrations with oversaturation during the summers when college students go back to their hometowns. The app will put new shoppers on a waiting list to prevent oversaturation in an area, which some workers fear may cause the app to “have a huge target on their back” and “die off” if other platforms gain popularity.

The following post is asking for feedback regarding college students using Instacart for a part-time job during the school year. Commenters responded with their experiences as well as apprehensions. (The post to the left is the original post.)



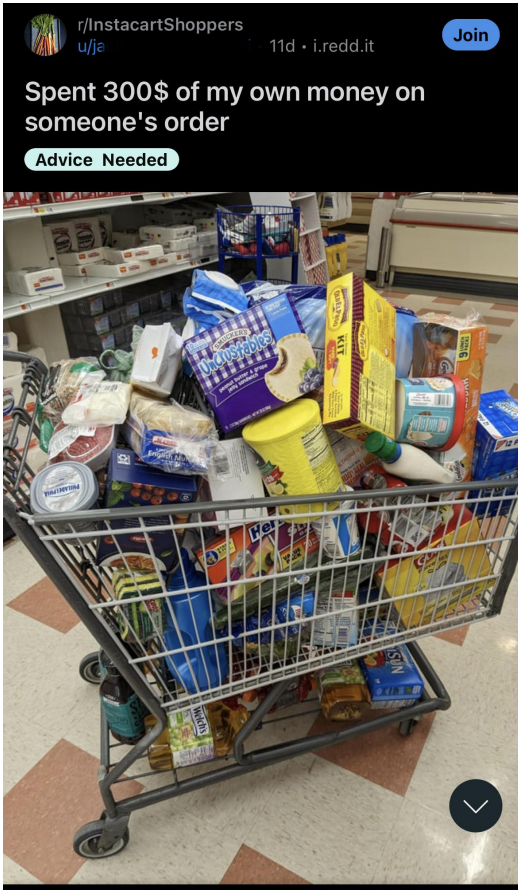
As we can see from the comments, a couple of people shared that it is a “great” part-time gig. As noted by commenters, depending on your location, Instacart (“IC”) can be a great source of income on the side due to the influx of college students in the area if they live in a college town. The post to the left goes in-depth into a college student’s experiences working with Instacart around their college. The benefits they mentioned were: getting to know the area, ease of use, and better pay than other jobs they saw at the time. Below are comments from people saying not

to sign up. Although they did not elaborate fully, it is interesting to see if their negative experiences with 20 to 30-year-olds in their area oversaturating the market affected their view.



The commenter to the left advises the original poster, recommending an internship in the industry they are studying rather than pursuing gig work. The middle post simply does not recommend gig work while the commentators to the right give advice. They recommended, like others, that the time and place you are in while working as an Instacart shopper matters especially if you are in a college town.

The next section of posts will be about challenges and apprehensions people 20 to 30 years of age had while working on an order for Instacart.



I am having a really shitty day today. I forgot my Instacart card at home in another jacket. I had spent 3 hours collecting 69 products at Market basket and only then did I realize I forgot my bitch ass card.

Context: I'm a broke college student who just approved for food stamps and my desperate ass took this order like a lamb to the slaughter since this is my second order ever.

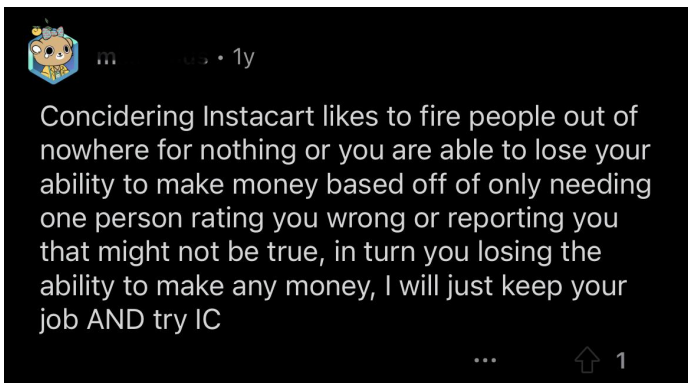
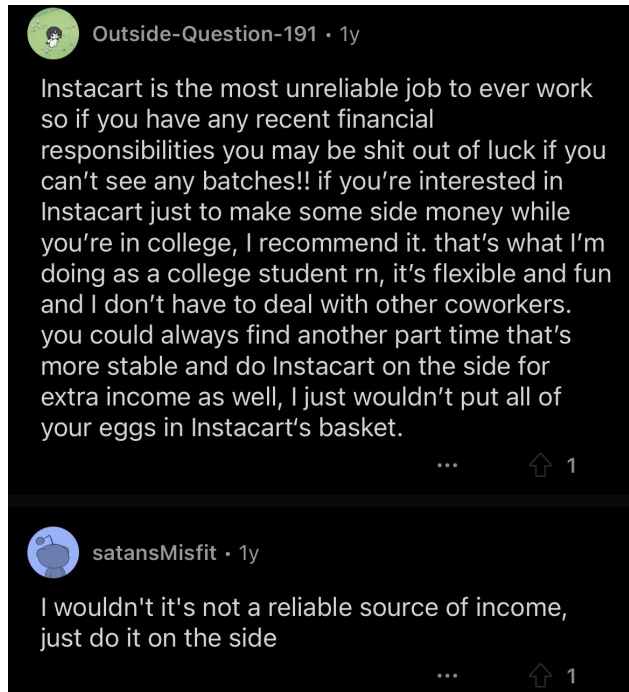
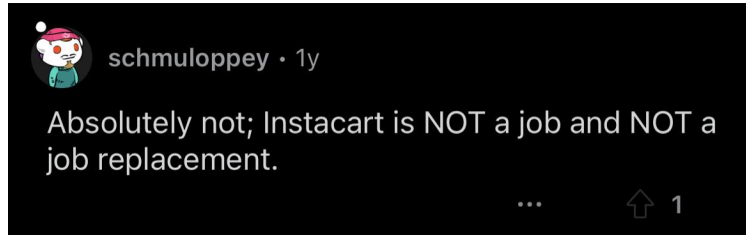
I know I might see replies saying how I shouldn't have taken the order and I'm ruining it for other shoppers by taking such a shitty order but honestly idk if I need to hear that rn. Help? less

0 104 Share

This post is more of a “horror story” that is somewhat common in the subreddit. Instacart provides shoppers with a card where the customer's money is deposited for shoppers to use to buy groceries. The poster forgot their card and had to pay for the groceries with their own money, which was a

burden on them as they were a broke college student, “desperate” to go through with the order. Like many gig workers, this sentiment is sadly something that is lingering. They “must” go through with an order or they risk bad reviews or expulsion from the app. As this poster mentioned, it was their second order and they felt desperate to fulfill it for the money and tip offered.

Below is another post with comments asking for advice on possibly quitting a job to do Instacart. I have highlighted comments that share warnings about this move for a young person to choose.



Similar to advise others may give about gig work, commentators warned against “putting all your eggs” in the Instacart basket. Although the original poster is a 22-year-old working in a grocery store, these comments were not supportive of them

quitting as Instacart was not seen as “reliable income.” Another commenter warned of Instacart’s firing people “out of nowhere” and considering gig work as a side job, rather than committing to it fully.

Overall, the sub-Reddit r/InstacartShoppers provided a variety of experiences from young people who have worked for the app, as well as people's views of young people using the app. The main benefits users noted was its ease of use, as you can make your hours and how quickly you can make a couple of hundred dollars depending on where you are. For many young people using the app in major cities, it can be easy to make money as there are many "gigs" for them to fulfill, especially if they live in a college town. A surprising find through searching for these posts by young users was the criticism of their use of it by other workers. As shown previously, the oversaturation of workers on the platform is an issue some have experienced in their area if there are too many shoppers. Some have been waitlisted or can not find viable work due to the influx of young people in college coming back home, or due to workers living near a college town with many other workers. As Jobs for the Future reports, gig work for low-income adults is an explored option, but still not seen as a reliable source of income, even as more young people are joining these platforms. (JFF, The Risks, and Benefits of the Gig Economy) Overall, Instacart has shown through these social media posts to be beneficial for young people for a side job and as a quick way to make money with a busy schedule, but others warn of its sole use for young people rather than pursuing internships and standard workforce opportunities.

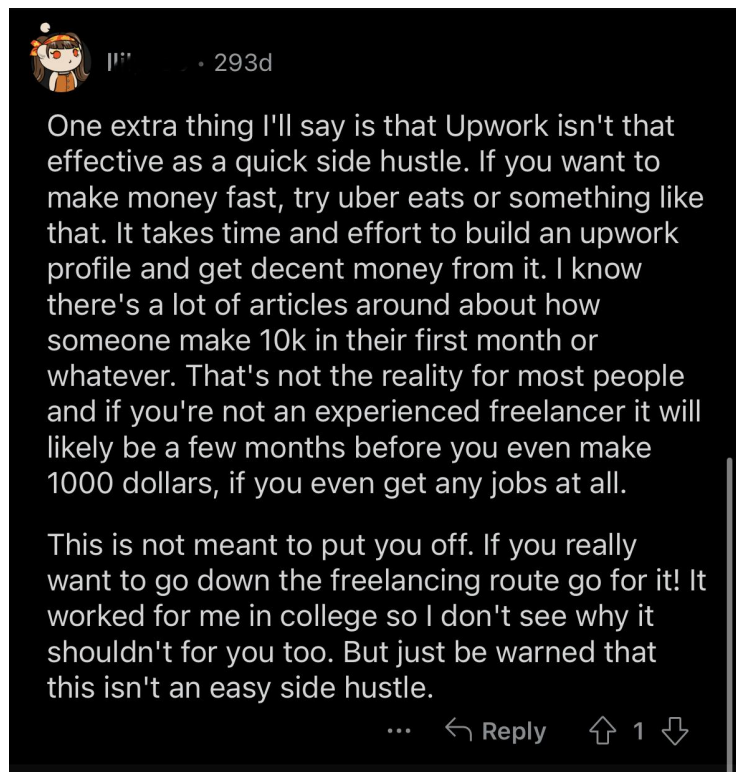
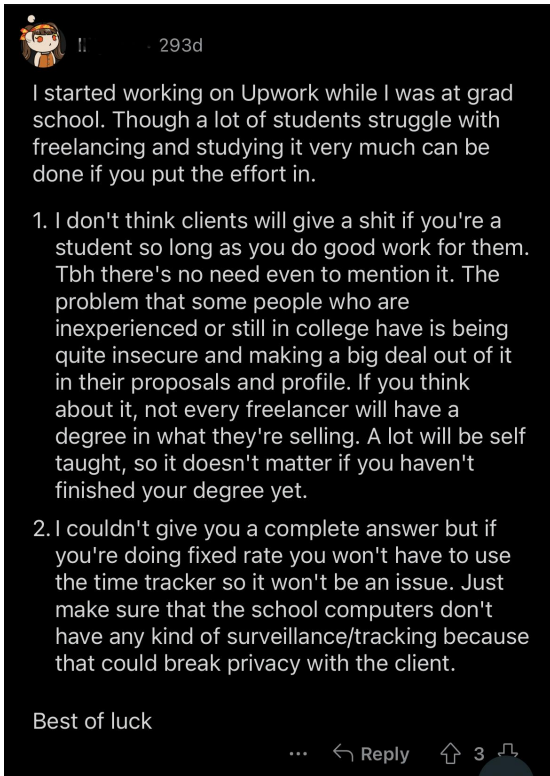
Upwork

Upwork is a freelancing platform that provides people with services like development and IT, sales and marketing, and administrative and customer support, to name a few, for short or long-term hires. Upwork was rebranded in 2015 from former companies named Elance Inc. and oDesk Corp and has made a profit of over \$300 million since 2020. (Luisa Zhou) The site requires workers to be over the age of 18 and apply via an online application that asks for fields of interest, specific skills, and other experiences one would note on a resume. Some workers, depending on their title and the number of similar workers on the site, may be put on a waitlist to join or be denied as Upwork writes on the FAQ, “to keep a balance between freelancers and projects available.” If accepted, a worker will fill out their online profile that lists, as previously stated, experiences, skills, and job titles, as well as contact information and a profile photo. Workers are also able to choose their hourly rate. Once on the site, workers can apply to work for jobs posted and may be asked to do an assessment and/or interview before being accepted for a job or a client may reach out to hire a worker for a specific job. Upwork has an international community of freelancers, the majority being in the United States and India, and there are an estimated 4 million freelancers on the site. (DemandSage)



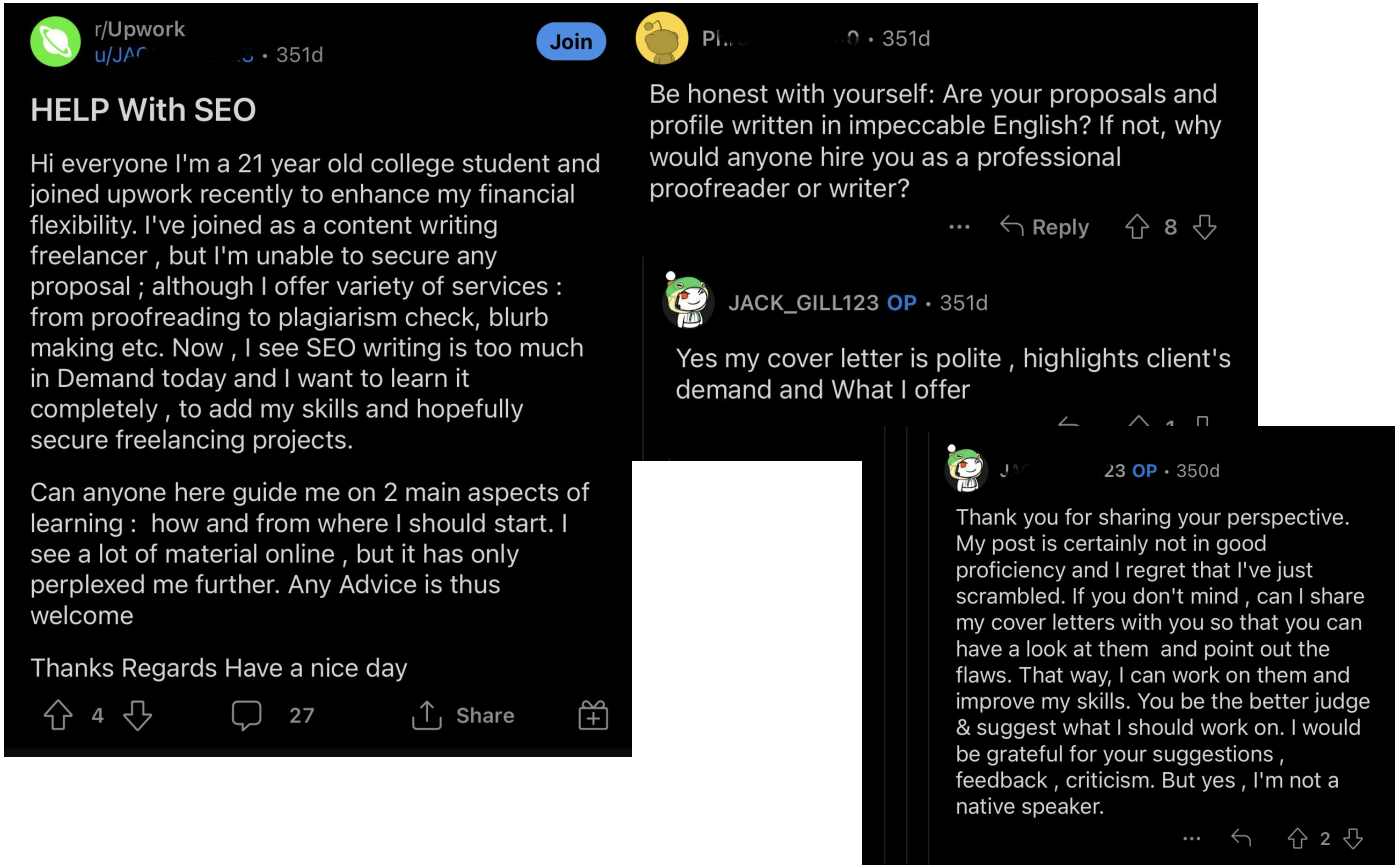
To start, we will look at posts of new users to Upwork. The subreddit r/Upwork is where I found all of the following posts. A majority of posts I found from people ages 20 to 30 were asking for advice as they are new to the platform. This user is asking for advice to use Upwork as a “side hustle” and how to market themselves well on the

platform. Below, another user gave helpful tips as they were also a student using Upwork.



The commentator's response was interesting, their main point being no to sell yourself short just because you are a student. Other Upwork users may pressure others into thinking they have to make thousands of dollars off the bat, the commenter notes, but that is unrealistic. These comments are important, especially for young people, as even I can see how success stories are highlighted by gig platforms, when there are real challenges that talented and educated people on these platforms face trying to get a gig.

The next post below is a newer user asking for advice as a non-native English speaker, which does present its challenges as they are pursuing gig work.



The original poster, like the poster previously, is in college and is looking for “financial flexibility” through gig work. They are looking into the writing and editing freelance side of Upwork. The commenter questions the original poster’s english ability, as a couple of other comments did. This may look very critical of the poster’s english ability, but they seem to welcome the critiques as they ask for other commenters to review their cover letter and Upwork profile. The poster admits that they are not a native english speaker, which may be a challenge for them if potential employees see flaws in their ability, as well as the oversaturation of SEO writing on the platform, as they note. Similar to the previous post from a new user, marketing yourself is a big part of becoming successful on the app. Moving on to another challenge that many users face is scams on Upwork. Sadly, from looking through the sub-reddit, there are hundreds of scammers attempting to hire people and some do fall victim to it. The following post

is by a young person asking if an offer they received is legit or not. The subreddit is filled with

HELP am i being scared ?

← Proposal details 1/2

! This job has been removed from Upwork, so we are no longer able to retrieve your proposal.

Hello there I'm new at Upwork and i proposed to 4 translation projects and i got accepted with 2 of them provided me with a link on telegram to contact them and it's the same company which is (ingenta) they both provided me with 2 different terms and conditions and the demand a (registration fee) and me being broke as a joke and i told them that one of them still accepted me and gave me a file 33 pages to translate and the price she's gonna pay me is 2500\$ (it's a lot of money that what makes it feels like a scam the most) and when i went to check the people who put the job on Upwork i found out that thier accounts has disappeared

When i started to overthink it i decided to search the company name on Google and oh boy but i still want to believe that it's true (2500\$) I'd die for it like literally that will help me with my college fees 🥺 less

posts like these, as well as posts warning of scammers with names, email addresses, and client names to be aware of.

The second poster writes as a 23-year-old who has almost a year of experience on Upwork about the challenges of receiving a low rating. The “low rating” in questions is two 4.25 out of 5-star reviews. While these may not seem low at all, the user is worried that this will affect their overall chances of receiving work, even with a 90% success rate and good reviews, at least from an outsider’s perspective. This overwhelming fear of ratings on gig platforms appears again. The top comment on the post reassures the user that “people have recovered from worse” and to not make the same mistakes again. Reading these posts does beg the question...

would similar mistakes, due to lack of experience as this user writes, harm a “regular” workforce job that someone would question their job security? Depending on the field someone is working in, mistakes may be costly, but uploading a document incorrectly seems to be an honest mistake that should not cause as much anxiety as it does. Again, this shows how gig work platforms like Upwork, or similarly Fiverr, where tasks like writing, editing, translating, etc. become big tasks for some as mistakes can tank your rating and hinder your ability to make

r/Upwork u/\u2014 25d Join

Do you think that my situation is compromised?

I'm a 23 years old starting as a freelancer. I started on upwork 7 months ago, and until now I did 5 jobs (total +2k\$). 2 of them 5/5 stars, 1 4,25 stars, another one 4,25 stars, one in progress. My success rate is 90%, that includes all the completed jobs excepted the last one, so it could be lower once upwork calculate the score again.

I should admit that I committed some mistakes uploading the articles on wordpress (I do copy in italian) for lack of experience, but one the clients that gave me the 4,25 review was very strict, and had closed 33% of contracts with bad reviews.

Do you think that I'm basically already fucked?

↑ 2 ↓ 3 Share

WordsbyWes · 25d Community Contributor

No. People have recovered from far, far worse. Don't make the same mistakes again, like with the upload issues you mentioned. Avoid clients that consistently give less than perfect reviews, at least until you have a solid reputation, and stick with jobs you know you can nail.

... Reply 12

money when similar situations may not occur in the regular workforce.

By reviewing Reddit posts from 20 to 30 year old workers of Upwork, it is more challenging and requires experience than one would need in a standard job. The main benefits of Upwork are similar to Instacart in that people can pick up gigs and not be tied down to one job, but the means to obtain these gigs have a higher barrier of entry. Marketing yourself and not making mistakes are some of the challenges Upwork poses to people, especially people who are students, do not have degrees, or are non-native English speakers working for English-speaking clients, jobs are not easy to come by. It can be argued that this platform may pose similar challenges to people in the regular job market, with the interviews, assessments, and rejections one may face while applying for jobs. Especially for young people with bachelor's and master's degrees, the job market is not welcoming and people do not make it to the interview stage and remain unemployed. (Business.com) However, with the challenges of this site, there are benefits for people who want flexibility and want to gain experience working small gigs or tasks for people in a field they are passionate about and skilled in. Through shared social media experiences, Upwork has shown to be a dynamic platform that requires skill to navigate both the platform itself and the hiring process.

Through this content analysis of Reddit posts by users of both Instacart and Upwork, we can see that not every gig platform is built the same and that age does have an impact on how users work these platforms, as well as what other users think of young people on the platforms. Being a 20 to 30 year old on a gig platform provides benefits of working part time along with school work or another job being the main focus. Although easier said than done, many of the posts we have explored seemed to have other options. Users even warned of using gig work as a main source of income, especially if the young person posting was pursuing a degree or had a degree.

The real differences in how young people navigated gig work was due to the app itself. Instacart requirements and success were self explanatory, although not easy: have a car, smartphone and access to popular grocery stores in your area. The success of a user is based on their ability to collect the correct goods, deliver in a reasonable amount of time and provide a seamless experience of delivering groceries to someone. This is not easy, and compared to Upwork requires a completely different set of skills to navigate the app's requirements. Upwork is similar to the standard job market in that gig/jobs are available, and you can be qualified for them, but have to market yourself and apply and network to have success. Overall, through a content analysis of 20 to 30 year olds using gig work platforms, success is both in the work you provide and your ability to navigate the app itself.

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