

# On-Demand Work in the Gig Economy: The Experience of Young Immigrants in Quebec

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## Abstract

Changes in the labor market primarily affect young people, and new forms of work associated with the Gig economy and the “uberization” phenomenon have significant impacts on young workers, particularly young immigrants. This results in major consequences in terms of job precarity and engagement, or new forms of engagement in work and employment. The prevalence of precarious employment affects all young people, but especially young immigrants or those from immigrant families. Our aim was to analyze this employment situation which manifests itself in specific sectors like digital mobility and delivery services, which we have studied. Our theoretical framework is based on labor market segmentation, and refers to issues of precarity and access to the labor market, particularly the debate about whether precarious jobs serve as bridges to better employment or traps that do not allow access to permanent or at least regular employment. The research method is qualitative, based on 22 interviews, with 17 men and 5 women, as there is a predominance of men in these jobs. The results show that this on-demand employment situation leads to limited work engagement, as this type of job is seen not only as temporary but also unlikely to serve as a “bridge” to better employment and professional integration, resulting in some disengagement among young people who take these jobs during their studies and early attempts to enter the labor market.

## Keywords

On-Demand Work, Gig Economy, Uberization, Precarity, Youth, Immigrants

## 1. Introduction and Problem Statement

Changes in the labor market primarily affect young people, and new forms of work associated with the Gig economy and the “uberization” phenomenon have

significant impacts on young workers, particularly young immigrants. This results in major consequences in terms of job precarity and engagement, or new forms of engagement in work and employment. It is evident that the prevalence of precarious employment affects all young people, but especially young immigrants or those from immigrant families. This precarious employment often manifests itself in specific sectors like digital mobility and delivery services, which we have studied. This particular employment situation leads to very limited work engagement, as this type of job is seen not only as temporary but also unlikely to serve as a “bridge” to better employment and professional integration, resulting in some disengagement among young people who take these jobs during their studies and early attempts to enter the labor market.

### 1.1. Problem Statement

We conducted research on the so-called “Uberization” process and Gig economy, in particular the development of delivery and digital mobility jobs, in Canada (Québec province mainly). We conducted a study with about forty young immigrants who hold jobs in delivery and digital mobility services.

So far, most studies have focused on Uber, but the main contribution of our research lies in the analysis of various types of applications besides Uber driver services, as many other services have developed significantly during the pandemic, especially for food delivery: DoorDash, Skip the Dishes, Deliveroo, Uber Eats, Instacart, etc. We will show that many workers actually use more than one application to earn a sufficient income. We also found that immigrant networks are very important in this type of work, and young immigrants often access these jobs through their networks of friends and family. Thus, we highlighted lesser-known aspects of the gig economy.

We focused on the effects of this type of work on professional aspirations, engagement, and labor market integration. We report the results here, focusing on delivery jobs held by young immigrants as well as young people from recently immigrated families. It appears that these young people do not professionally engage in these jobs, and furthermore, these jobs are not perceived as facilitating professional integration later on. In the “Bridge or Trap” debate concerning precarious jobs (a bridge to a better job or a trap?), it seems these jobs do not help young immigrants outline their professional future. Some do mention certain benefits however, but most see these jobs as temporary income sources and aspire to better, entirely different jobs later.

Work remains an important value for these young people, but precarious work associated with Uberization seems to be a passage or even a deterrent in terms of employment. Here, the relationship to work is entirely instrumental, and young immigrants do not seek to integrate it into their personal identity, planning instead to move away from it later. This could be described as “pragmatic engagement” (Méda & Vendramin, 2013) for these young immigrants and as a temporary engagement in this work (which is not even seen as real em-

ployment given the particular contract conditions). Let's first look at some data on immigration in Canada and Quebec before moving on to the theoretical framework, namely labor market segmentation and especially the platform economy, where many young immigrants work.

## 1.2. Research Background: Immigration in Canada and Quebec

There are several different categories of immigration, each with different impacts on employment situations. Young people can fall into any of these immigration categories, which are divided into four sub-categories as follows:

- **Economic immigration**, which includes skilled workers, business people, and other economic categories selected for their ability to contribute to the Canadian economy (in sectors where there is demand or a labor shortage). In Quebec, the overall presence of immigrants in this first category is 67.6%, subdivided as follows:
  - 73.6% for skilled workers;
  - 19.2% for business people, with self-employed workers alone representing 58.9% of individuals in this sub-category, consisting of 67% entrepreneurs and 16.1% investors ([Gouvernement du Québec, 2021](#)).
- **Family reunification**, which includes immigrants sponsored by a Canadian citizen or permanent resident and who have obtained permanent resident status due to their relationship as spouse, descendant, or ascendant.
- **Refugees and similar situations**, including state-sponsored refugees, privately sponsored refugees, and recognized refugees.
- **Other humanitarian or public interest cases.**

People admitted under the family reunification category have the highest presence rate of all categories. This reality is related to the nature of this immigration movement: reuniting established individuals in Quebec with their close relatives (spouse, children, parents) from elsewhere to allow the reconstitution of family units ([Gouvernement du Québec, 2021](#)).

In Quebec, the proportion of immigrants within the Quebec population has increased significantly over the years, and immigration under the “economic stream” category continues to represent the largest proportion, with nearly 58% in 2006 and 12,772 people in 2020, accounting for 51% of all immigrants admitted to Quebec ([Statistics Québec, 2021](#)). Following the 2016 census, there were 1,091,305 immigrants in Quebec, representing 13.7% of the entire Quebec population.

The unemployment rate for immigrants is significantly higher than that for people born in Quebec. In 2020, the unemployment rate for immigrants was 16%, about double that of Quebec natives, which was 8.3% for those aged 15 and over and 6.3% for those aged 25 to 54. Young people aged 15 to 25 have a higher unemployment rate, raising the overall unemployment rate. It should be noted that, generally, even within the native Quebec population, young people typically have an unemployment rate about twice that of adults (24 years and older).

Statistics Canada data show that the unemployment rate has decreased in Canada in recent years but also that the unemployment rate for immigrants is lower when they have been in the country for 5 or 10 years. People doing “gig” work or on-demand delivery often arrived less than five years ago and are sometimes completing their studies to gain better access to the labor market.

The issue of integrating new arrivals is both a delicate and sensitive subject, as each individual has a different experience. For some, it is a relatively easy process, especially for those entering under economic immigration status; for others, integration is often very difficult. The challenges related to the socio-professional and economic integration of young adults are present, in addition to high unemployment rates and the over-representation of immigrants, especially visible minorities, in precarious and underqualified jobs (Bourhis, 2008).

Furthermore, it is important to note that immigrants are, like everywhere, subject to some discrimination or face exclusionary criteria practiced by some employers, which have exclusionary effects. This persistence of systemic discrimination against minority groups due to “institutionalized racism” remains very real (Osman, 2021; Darchinian et al., 2017; Liang, 2006; MIFI, 2019; Nadeau, 2019). Consequently, to avoid being left unemployed and without income to support their families, many new arrivals turn to independent jobs at the heart of the digital mobility sector and particularly growing ones like delivery through applications such as Skip The Dishes, DoorDash, Deliveroo, Uber Eats, becoming an Uber or Lyft driver, or carpooling.

### 1.3. Jobs in Digital Mobility and the Case of Immigrants

A study published by Statistics Canada (2019c) aimed to measure the on-demand economy in Canada using administrative data; it showed that on-demand work was more common among immigrants than among people born in Canada. In reality, 10.8% of male immigrant workers who had been in Canada for less than five years were on-demand workers in 2016, compared to 6.1% of male workers born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2019c).

Indeed, digital mobility jobs attract more and more immigrants because, initially, the hiring and integration processes are generally faster and easier compared to traditional jobs, especially since most young immigrants already have a driver’s license from their country of origin. This is a positive point for delivery or transport jobs.

Additionally, no prior qualifications are required even if they often have a solid intellectual and professional background. Furthermore, immigrants may be less likely to face racial discrimination, and many platforms have applications available in different languages, allowing everyone to understand the instructions and perform the work more easily, whereas French is generally required for regular jobs in Quebec.

Moreover, the issue of work-family balance is also a challenge for many immigrants who do not always have access to childcare, especially at a reduced cost

in the public system in Québec (Tremblay, 2019, new version to be published in 2024). Thus, digital mobility jobs offer a lot, summarized in one word: independence, as they offer flexibility and autonomy; work schedules are not fixed, and individuals can choose their employer and decide the frequency and manner of performing tasks (by car, bike, etc.), working anytime and anywhere. This can be seen as a significant advantage for students, parents, and anyone with other commitments, even if there are also disadvantages with the on-call situation.

Beyond studies focused on immigrants, a 2019 study on professional and economic quality of life in Canada interviewed 2524 Canadian workers and revealed that participation in this type of economy and employment is very common among one in five workers, whether it involves piecemeal paid activities like food delivery, ridesharing, or online tasks (Glavin et al., 2019).

Despite the above-mentioned advantages such as the ease of access to this type of work, there are numerous challenges faced by young immigrants, one of the main problems being job precarity. These workers do not benefit from social benefits such as health coverage or vacation pay. They are also responsible for withholding their own taxes and are not allowed to organize or engage in collective bargaining. Additionally, they must cover all costs associated with their work equipment (e.g., car maintenance and cleaning) (Senett, 2021). For some jobs, like ridesharing, the pay is often very modest, and a low salary means workers must work more hours to earn the necessary income to meet their needs.

To deepen our understanding of the situation beyond published figures, we deemed a field study necessary to learn more about the various challenges faced by young immigrants in on-demand jobs. We first present the theoretical framework and then the methodology before we turn to the results.

## **2. Theoretical Framework: Labor Market Segmentation and the Gig Economy**

### **2.1. Labor Issues and Precarity**

Our theoretical framework relates to the issues of labor market segmentation (Tremblay, 2022), as well as to issues of precarity and access to the labor market, particularly the debate about whether precarious jobs serve as bridges to better employment or traps that do not allow access to permanent or at least regular, fixed-term employment (“Bridge or Trap?” as expressed in research and publications on this debate).

We are also interested in Uberization and the development of the gig economy and its impacts on job quality or precarity, a central dimension of the theoretical framework associated with labor market segmentation (Tremblay, 2022), as it is established that young immigrants are overrepresented in this economic sector.

The question of the integration of young immigrants into the labor market is an increasingly prominent topic, especially with the various waves of immigration that Canada and Quebec have experienced, and the overall importance of the immigrant population. Many of these young people face difficulties inte-

grating into the labor market and find themselves in precarious jobs, particularly in what is known as the gig economy, the digital economy, and for some, jobs associated with Uberization or digital mobility or on-call delivery services.

The digital economy refers to all economic activities conducted using digital technologies such as the internet (Revenu Québec, 2022). It results from a transformation process triggered by new technologies that have led to the emergence of new business models, thanks notably to search engines, information sites, and social networks (Revenu Québec, 2022).

With the rapid evolution of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), we are witnessing a boom in the “platform economy,” also called by some the “gig economy” (International Transport Workers’ Federation, 2022). There are two main types of digital platforms: those that pay workers to provide a service, such as making deliveries over short/medium distances, driving passengers from point A to point B, carpooling, and those that connect workers with potential employers (International Transport Workers’ Federation, 2022). This type of activity is also part of what some refer to as the collaborative economy, but I personally find the word is not appropriate in this case, as there is not so much collaboration, or very minimally between workers.

Although the term may be criticized as collaboration is not always evident, this economy relies on transactions conducted through digital platforms. Some platform operators offer full management of the services or goods offered, from advertising to payment, including customer service (Revenu Québec, 2022). The main digital platforms that are part of the gig economy in Quebec include Uber, Uber Eats, Lyft, DoorDash, Skip The Dishes, Instacart, etc.

## 2.2. Workers in the “Gig Economy”?

In our research and to maintain coherence, we will also use the term “Jobs in Digital Mobility.” Gig economy jobs or digital mobility jobs are becoming a central element of professional life in Canada. This burgeoning new model already represented about 8% to 10% of the Canadian workforce in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c; 2022a, 2022b), and the following **Figure 1** shows that the growth is ongoing.

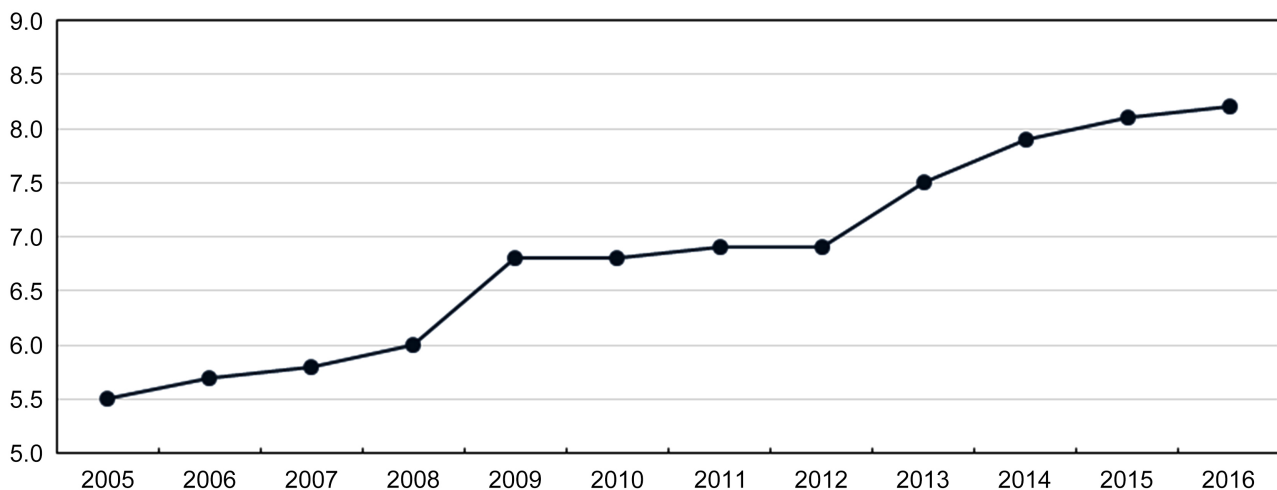
Statistics Canada defines on-demand workers as: “On-demand workers are not usually employed long-term by a single company. They sign different contracts with companies or individuals (task requesters) to complete a specific task or work for a given period, in exchange for a negotiated sum. This includes independent contractors or freelancers with specific qualifications and on-demand workers hired to fill jobs provided through the growing number of online platforms.” (our translation, Statistics Canada, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c; 2022a, 2022b).

In general, people doing these types of atypical jobs, which are less remunerated and often lack social benefits or long-term job security (Appjobs Institute, 2020; Angus Reid Institute, 2019, Boudarbat, 2011; Moulds, 2020; Ott, 2021; La Presse Canadienne, 2019), are mostly young people seeking financial stability to

meet their needs and those of their families. On average, about 15% say they took such jobs due to a lack of regular employment, and more than double (37%) to compensate for job loss, reduced working hours, or stagnant income. A study by the Bank of Canada shows this unfavorable economic situation with 42% of young people stating that these jobs are their main source of income, even though it is far from their first choice (Desrosiers, 2019).

Indeed, the objective of this Bank of Canada study was to understand the characteristics, reasons, and extent of such work forms among young people while there is available labor in other sectors; a paradox linked to the low growth rate of wages and the availability of nearly 58% of young people aged 18 to 24, twice as many as those aged 55 and over, who occupy jobs in digital mobility.

### Part des travailleurs à la demande dans l'ensemble de la population active pourcentage



**Note:** Basé sur le graphique 2 de Jeon et coll. (2019).

**Source:** Statistique Canada.

**Figure 1.** Proportion of on-demand workers in the workforce, Canada, 2019.

### 3. Methodology

We chose to conduct a qualitative survey through interviews. It is challenging to identify young immigrants working in this field and to convince them to participate in interviews. Therefore, we used the “snowball” method, starting with the contacts of the interviewer (who also wrote a master’s essay on the subject). We obtained participation from 22 young immigrants. Among these 22 individuals, there were 17 men and 5 women aged between 23 and 33 years, living mainly in the cities of Gatineau, Montreal, Longueuil, and Quebec for at least 3 years for some, up to 15 years for others. These individuals originated from Guinea (9.1%), Togo (13.6%), Ivory Coast (40.9%), Cameroon (9.1%), Burundi (13.6%), Rwanda (4.5%), Congo (4.5%), and Benin (4.5%).

From the qualitative data obtained, we were able to establish the distribution of our respondents demographically based on their age, gender, origin, city of

residence, and duration of stay in Canada.

To make the reading easier and more efficient, this first set of data will be presented in the **Figure 2** below.

Participants—Gender Age—Origin City of residence—No of years in Canada

	Participants (es)	Sexe		Age	Origine	Ville d'habitation	Nombre d'années au Canada
		M	F				
1	A	X		27	Guinée	Gatineau	9
2	B	X		31	Togo	Gatineau	7
3	C	X		27	Guinée	Gatineau	7
4	D	X		29	Cote d'Ivoire	Gatineau	3
5	E	X		27	Cote d'Ivoire	Quebec	8
6	F	X		23	Cote d'Ivoire	Gatineau	5
7	G	X		25	Cote d'Ivoire	Gatineau	6
8	H	X		28	Cameroun	Gatineau	12
9	I		X	30	Togo	Gatineau	10
10	J	X		33	Cote d'Ivoire	Gatineau	14
11	K		X	24	Cameroun	Gatineau	3
12	L		X	27	Burundi	Gatineau	8
13	M	X		32	Burundi	Gatineau	15
14	N	X		29	Rwanda	Gatineau	4
15	O	X		31	Republique Démocratique du Congo	Montréal	8
16	P		X	26	Burundi	Gatineau	9
17	Q	X		32	Benin	Gatineau	14
18	R		X	24	Cote d'Ivoire	Longueuil	4
19	S	X		23	Togo	Longueuil	5
20	T	X		28	Cote d'Ivoire	Gatineau	7
21	U	X		23	Cote d'Ivoire	Montréal	5
22	V	X		33	Cote d'Ivoire	Montréal	9

**Figure 2.** Participant information. Sources: our interview data.

Regarding the different applications and companies they worked for, we have among others:

- 1) DoorDash—34.1%;
- 2) Skip The Dishes—31.7%;
- 3) Uber Eats—19.5%;
- 4) Uber—9.8%;
- 5) Lyft—2.4%;
- 6) Instacart—2.4%.

It is important to note that the car is the preferred means of work for our participants, and they use multiple applications simultaneously, as illustrated in the summary figure below (**Figure 3**).

It is important to note that the car is the preferred means of work for our participants, and they use multiple applications simultaneously, as illustrated in the summary figure below (**Figure 4**).

Also, our participants are educated and minimally hold a post-secondary diploma, either a college or university degree. It is surprising that they have not been able to find better jobs. **Figure 3** also indicates their current status, showing that many are permanent residents, with a few being Canadian citizens, meaning

they are not recent arrivals, as indicated by the previously mentioned data on the number of years spent in Canada. We will later explore why these individuals still accept this type of work, specifically on-demand work in digital mobility.

	Participants (es)	Applications utilisées					
		Doordash	Skip The Dishes	Uber Eats	Uber	Lyft	Instacart
1	A	X	X				
2	B	X					
3	C	X	X				
4	D	X	X				
5	E		X				
6	F		X				
7	G	X	X				
8	H	X	X		X		
9	I			X			
10	J		X	X			
11	K		X	X			X
12	L			X			
13	M	X		X	X		
14	N	X	X	X			
15	O	X		X			
16	P	X			X	X	
17	Q		X				
18	R	X					
19	S	X	X				
20	T		X				
21	U	X					
22	V	X		X	X		

**Figure 3.** Distribution of participants according to the mobile applications they use. Source: our interview data.

	Participants (es)	Statut actuel	Niveau de scolarité
1	A	Travailleur étranger	Baccalauréat
2	B	Citoyen canadien	Baccalauréat
3	C	Résident permanent	Maitrise
4	D	Résident permanent	Collégial
5	E	Résident permanent	Baccalauréat
6	F	Etudiant	Baccalauréat
7	G	Travailleur étranger	Collégial
8	H	Citoyen canadien	Baccalauréat
9	I	Citoyen canadien	Baccalauréat
10	J	Résident permanent	Baccalauréat
11	K	Travailleur étranger	Collégial
12	L	Résident permanent	Baccalauréat
13	M	Citoyen canadien	Baccalauréat
14	N	Résident permanent	Baccalauréat
15	O	Citoyen canadien	Baccalauréat
16	P	Citoyen canadien	Collégial
17	Q	Résident permanent	Baccalauréat
18	R	Travailleur étranger	Baccalauréat
19	S	Etudiant	Baccalauréat
20	T	Travailleur étranger	Baccalauréat
21	U	Etudiant	Baccalauréat
22	V	Résident permanent	Maitrise

**Figure 4.** Distribution of participants according to the immigration status and level of education. Source: our interview data.

## 4. Results

Now that we have presented the characteristics of the respondents, we will focus on the research results, particularly the reasons that lead them to this type of work, and the low engagement associated with it due to the precarity and lack of value of this type of work.

Our research identified the main reasons that led these young people to this work and the challenges related to the integration of new immigrants in Quebec. We are interested in the effects of digital mobility jobs on their daily integration. Economic issues and the current labor shortage highlight the importance of immigration, but many immigrants, especially the younger ones, seem to remain confined to precarious jobs, including those in digital mobility.

The integration of new arrivals remains a significant issue in Quebec, and professionally, there is a gap between the employment situation of immigrants and non-immigrants, leading them to turn to jobs in digital mobility or delivery. Among the challenges and obstacles encountered, which diminish or make their engagement purely instrumental, we observed the non-recognition of foreign work experience and diplomas, the lack of Canadian experience, the absence of English and/or French proficiency, and sometimes pure discrimination.

We will therefore examine the links between delivery jobs and the challenges associated with the integration of young immigrants in Quebec. We will focus on the issues of engagement and integration, although the research also covered the following themes: respondents' perceptions of their work, work-family balance, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their delivery activity, and broader integration into Quebec society. Recall that our sample consisted of 22 young people aged 23 to 33 living in Gatineau, Montreal, Longueuil, and Quebec City. The cities of Gatineau, Montreal, and even Longueuil involve dealing with both anglophone and francophone clients, whereas in Quebec City, it is more often francophones. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted remotely via the Zoom platform due to the pandemic context and the distance from participants not living in the interviewer's region.

The thematic analysis allowed us to interpret the data, and several results emerged. First, an advantage highlighted by our respondents regarding delivery work is that it easily allows balancing work with family and social life.

### 4.1. Influence of Relatives

This a work choice often influenced by relatives with experience in this field. This is illustrated by the participants' comments below:

“I had friends who talked about it, there were classmates doing Uber, Uber Eats and all, so out of curiosity, I wanted to do it too because obviously, it was repetitive. And since I am an international student, I wanted to pay for my studies, so for me, it was a quick way to get the necessary money to pay for my studies.”—Participant B.

Participant O also said, “A friend was doing it, he told me about it. He said it

was pretty good during the pandemic, so I thought, why not, I'll try it, and since with the pandemic, we were all at home, it was telework, so I had the energy.”

## 4.2. Autonomy and Flexibility

The second major reason for choosing this type of work is the autonomy and flexibility it offers. The lack of fixed work hours, the ability to manage one's schedule, and being “your own boss, stopping whenever you want. That was a good possibility because often you can be at school and doing another job, you run, you are your own boss, you manage your own income. It's like running your own business, and that's really a big advantage. You don't have a start time or a time when someone is waiting for you.”—Participant D.

This type of comment was repeated often, and the ability to work autonomously and without pressure was a plus for them, indeed for all participants.

Additionally, due to various constraints related to personal and career goals, having a job with such flexibility was very advantageous: “Since I finished my engineering studies and was working for a company here in Gatineau, I thought that if they called me at any time, I would need to be ready to leave and go directly to work no matter where it was. For example, I put myself in a condition where if they called me for my job, whether in Quebec or Toronto, I could immediately go, so I had to leave my job to really be autonomous. That's why I started doing Uber, to be really autonomous and have something I can drop immediately.”—Participant H.

## 4.3. Effects of the Pandemic

The measures associated with the pandemic, notably lockdowns, the closure of restaurants and other businesses at times, and the desire to limit contacts, had a significant effect on lifestyle and consumption habits. This led to an increase in delivery activities, attracting many young immigrants to this type of work. However, this work often does not affect the integration experience of new immigrants in Quebec, so these young people maintain what we might call a pragmatic engagement or an instrumental relationship with their work.

Our interviews and qualitative data analysis indicate that all our participants are immigrants, each with a unique and different experience. Indeed, depending on the number of years in Canada and their social, professional, and family backgrounds, the majority of our respondents stated that working as a delivery person was not their first job in Quebec; moreover, often, it was not their primary occupation. It was indeed a secondary source of income to meet their needs and those of their families, given limited income elsewhere, and to achieve short, medium, or long-term financial or employment goals.

Continuing, regardless of their status (student, employee, stay-at-home parent, etc.), many reasons motivate this job choice: autonomy, flexibility, control, and time management being the main ones, as seen above. Additionally, it emerged during our discussions that delivery jobs are easy to access, explaining

why they are mostly done by immigrants.

#### 4.4. Difficulty Finding Work in Their Field of Study

Motivations are diverse and varied, as seen above. Beyond the factors already mentioned, working in digital mobility is also explained by the difficulty of finding work in their field of study and/or main activity from their country of origin when they arrive because they have no Canadian experience, which is a bit discouraging because “Uber is like a taxi driver, it’s not necessarily a prestigious job.”—Participant M

It is important to mention that delivering does not require a diploma or specific work experience, and the most used applications are Skip The Dishes, DoorDash, Uber/Uber Eats.

Indeed, when asked if they thought it was a job highly sought after by immigrants, we received the following responses: “Yes, yes, yes, because generally when they arrive, they often have difficulty finding work. They do not yet have experience in the Canadian employment field. So they turn to this more often when they already have their car or driver’s license. Because it allows them to have a source of income...”

Next comes a second reason related to integration into Quebec society through delivery jobs. Respondents mention that one of the significant advantages for immigrants, especially recent ones, is that there is no language barrier, especially for those who do not have a thorough knowledge of French or English, allowing them to work smoothly and conveniently without worrying about having a highly developed vocabulary.

“There is no language barrier, you don’t have to know French or English, to speak perfectly or understand perfectly English or French to be a delivery person. As long as you have a valid driver’s license, you can start. It’s really an advantage.”—Participant L.

Participant M also stated: “One of the reasons is the language. Because you don’t have to talk to people while working, so for those who don’t understand English or French, you can just work.”

Although it is a customer service job, interaction with clients in delivery is very minimal, which has intensified with the pandemic. Thus, communicating and interacting with clients is not necessary; “There was also an impact because before COVID you could see the client, but now, after COVID, I couldn’t see the client, I dropped off the order, took a photo, and notified the client that I had made the delivery (...) There is no interaction.”—Participant L.

Indeed, this lack of interaction, while beneficial on the one hand, is on the other hand a disadvantage because it does not contribute to the integration and social development of some who would have liked to interact with others as part of their work, including to increase their language skills.

Finally, we can affirm that several reasons are behind this choice (or non-choice) of work in the gig economy or Uberized work. It appears that the aspect

of work-family balance is very important, especially for young people who hold two jobs, and delivery work represents the “ideal” job to better balance different aspects of their lives, particularly to balance two jobs; “It’s not a very demanding job since you also control your time. Practically all my brothers work in it. They have a fixed job and also do this work to make ends meet. Honestly, it’s easy to balance because you really decide when you start work, so it’s really during downtime when you have nothing to do or want to make some money, you go, that’s all.”—Participant T.

However, delivery work has not contributed to the true professional integration of almost all our participants into Quebec society; the number of years spent in Canada, the environment, or the goals pursued can explain this observation, as indeed, many already had another job, and this work is simply instrumental. It should be noted, however, that the main job is also often instrumental, as incomes are low in both cases. While some hoped that delivery work would facilitate their integration, notably by developing their language and social skills, it seems this is not often the case.

“It’s while waiting to find something else. Well, I think it’s a job mostly done by immigrants at the beginning generally. It’s also a way to get to know the surroundings.”—Participant K.

Participant F also stated: “Already it doesn’t require qualification, when they arrive they are not bilingual because they have just arrived, and especially if you come from a francophone country like Ivory Coast, you don’t have a diploma, you came looking for a diploma. And then you apply but no response from employers, you find nothing but you have to pay the rent, you have to do something. And with Skip, it’s quick, you just have to apply on their site and send your documents, and in less than 10 days you get a response.”

To conclude this presentation of results, we can say that most of our respondents took this type of on-demand job because it was difficult for them to find employment in their sector of studies. As many of these young people had relatives or friends who had used this type of on-demand job either as a living or to complement a basic wage, they had access to information on these types of jobs. Most appreciated the flexibility in hours and the autonomy they find in this type of work, although they realized this type of job would not necessarily help them access a better position.

## 5. Conclusion

The main contribution of our research lies in the analysis of various types of applications, beyond Uber, which is much more studied than other apps. Indeed, we highlighted the fact that many workers actually use more than one app to earn income. We observed that networks of immigrant individuals play a significant role in this type of work, and young immigrants often gain access through their networks of friends and family. Thus, we shed light on lesser-known aspects of the on-demand or gig economy.

We also found that gig economy work, particularly food delivery, is often taken up by young immigrants as a temporary solution while they wait for better opportunities. However, even after several years, it's not always possible to find something better or a job that matches their qualifications or credentials from their home country. Some pursue further education to build their social network and gain "Canadian" experience, knowing that employers value local work experience.

Respondents perceive gig work as easily accessible, with minimal barriers, although language can sometimes be a challenge for those who don't fully master English or French. People appreciate the flexibility of hours and the autonomy to choose their schedules and total working hours, sometimes alongside other jobs.

The ability to balance gig work with other employment and family life is also crucial. Among our 22 participants, 20 affirm that delivery work has no impact on their social and family life. On the contrary, they assert that they can maintain contact with family and friends since this can be considered as a form of self-employment, where they chose their hours and organize their work as they like." Participant H, confirms that better work-life reconciliation, "this is an advantage of doing deliveries."

To conclude on our initial question about whether this type of work can serve as a bridge to better employment or if it's more like a "trap" where individuals remain somewhat stuck without accessing better jobs, we must acknowledge that this type of work doesn't significantly contribute to accessing better employment. It is instrumental work that doesn't require deep commitment, or important qualifications. While young immigrants find it to be a supplementary income source, it doesn't necessarily provide them with a new social network or access to the host society's networks. Moreover, it doesn't offer support for accessing higher positions.

In essence, gig work serves as a fallback option. Despite this, it is appreciated by young immigrants who value the supplementary income, flexible hours, and autonomy to choose their schedules. However, there isn't substantial engagement in this type of work, especially since unionization is not permitted, preventing the creation of a collective work environment. As a result, young gig workers often remain isolated in their vehicles, waiting for customer orders. They maintain closer ties to their personal and family networks, as we've observed that it's often close acquaintances who introduce them to this type of work.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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