

- gig economy NOUN-COUNT

A **gig economy** is a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organizations contract independent workers for short-term engagements. Examples of gig employees in the workforce could include freelancers, independent contractors, project-based workers and temporary or part-time hires.

Britain's booming gig economy has more than doubled in size over the past three years.

- contingent worker (contingent workers) NOUN-COUNT
- contract worker (contract workers) NOUN-COUNT

A **contingent worker** or a **contract worker** does not have an implicit or explicit contract for ongoing employment. The term does not include someone expecting to retire or leave for personal reasons. A **contingent worker** or **contract worker** can be an employee or a self-employed individual.

An attempt by contract workers to unionize has brought Pittsburgh's industrial past crashing into the 21st century.

- on-call worker (on-call workers) NOUN-COUNT
- to be on call VERB

If you **are on call**, you are available to work for an employer whenever they need you. If you are an **on-call worker**, you are called by a company to work only as needed. You can be scheduled to work for several days or weeks in a row.

Two years ago she was told her duties included being a key holder and being on call 24/7 in case of break-ins and general problems.

- temporary help agency worker (temporary help agency workers) NOUN-COUNT
- temp (temps) NOUN-COUNT

Temporary help agency workers, or **temps**, are paid by an agency not the company where they will be assigned to work. A **temp worker** may work for a few days or longer periods.

In March, Google abruptly shortened the contracts of 34 temp workers on the "personality" team for Google Assistant.

- worker through a contract firm (workers through a contract firm) NOUN-COUNT

When you are a **worker through a contract firm**, you are employed by a company that provides their services to other companies under contract. Usually a worker through a contract firm is assigned to one customer and works at the customer's worksite.

- self employed ADJ

A worker who is **self employed** does not work for a specific employer who pays them a consistent salary or wage. **Self-employed** individuals earn income by contracting with a trade or business directly. In most cases, the employer will not withhold taxes, so this becomes the responsibility of the **self-employed** individual

The number of people who are self-employed has increased dramatically since 2001, jumping from 3.3 million to 4.8 million.

- freelancer (freelancers) NOUN-COUNT
- freelance ADJ
- to freelance (freelances, freelancing, freelanced) VERB

If you are a **freelancer** or if you work **freelance**, you work independently instead of for a long-term employer. If you do **freelance** work, you are free to say yes or no to any project.

Changes in the mortgage market have made things even harder for freelancers whose income may well fluctuate month to month.

Outsourcing and social media mean there's never been a better time to freelance.

- independent contractor (independent contractors) NOUN-COUNT
- independent worker (independent workers) NOUN-COUNT

If you are an **independent contractor** or an **independent worker**, you are self-employed.

The company argues that drivers want independent contractor status because they value the chance to be their own boss.

- gig (gigs) NOUN-COUNT
- to be paid by the gig/by the job

Originally, a **gig** was, and still is, a single performance by a musician or group of musicians, especially playing modern or pop. In the economy, a **gig** refers to a temporary contract or short term engagement with a company, often to do a specific task. When you **are paid by the gig** or **paid by the job**, you receive payment for the task you are contracted to do. You do not receive a salary and usually are not entitled to company health insurance. Freelancers and independent contractors **are paid by the gig**.

- to temp (temps, temping, temped) VERB

When you **temp**, you do not have a regular job in one company. Instead, you work for periods of time in different companies as the need arises for more employees in the company.

Whether you're fresh out of college, returning to work after having children, or trying to change career direction, temping is an ideal way to earn some cash while looking for a suitable permanent job.

- precariat NOUN-GENERIC
- precarious ADJ

The **precariat** is someone who is not defined by a profession or steady job and lives in economic uncertainty. The **precariat** relies largely on money wages, but does not receive non-wage benefits or rights-based state benefits. The **precariat** is often a worker in the gig economy.

Too many jobs are now temporary and insecure: a new class, the 'precariat' is growing.

The number of workers in the UK in precarious positions where they could lose their jobs at short or no notice has grown by almost 2 million in the past decade, as businesses insist on using more self-employed workers and increasingly recruit staff on temporary and zero-hours contracts.

- zero-hours contract (zero-hours contracts) NOUN-COUNT
- zero-hour contract (zero-hour contracts) NOUN-COUNT

When an employee has a **zero-hour contract** or a **zero hours contract**, the employer does not have to provide regular work for the employee, but the employee has to be on call in case they are needed to work.

Hannah Shelton-Agar, 23, is employed on a zero-hour contract at Hoyts cinema in Auckland.

1. Complete the text using the terms in the box.

benefits	freelancer	temporary gigs	resources	work-life balance
	independent workers			

In a gig economy, businesses save _____ in terms of _____, office space and training. They also have the ability to contract with experts for specific projects who might be too high-priced to maintain on staff. From the perspective of the _____, a gig economy can improve _____ over what is possible in most jobs. Ideally, the model is powered by _____ selecting jobs that they're interested in, rather than one in which people are forced into a position where, unable to attain employment, they pick up whatever _____ they can land.

<https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/gig-economy> (adapted)

2. Which employees are more likely to participate in the gig economy?

- i. a freelancer
- ii. a salaried employee
- iii. an employee on a permanent contract
- iv. an independent contractor,
- v. a project-based worker
- vi. a temporary or part-time hire
- vii. someone about to retire after 20 years in the same company

3. Read the text and say if each statement is TRUE or FALSE.

When is a worker not a worker? When they're an "independent supplier," says UK takeout service Deliveroo. This is according to the company's vocab "crib-sheet," which features a six-page list of dos and don'ts, guiding staff on how to talk about the business. The internal document was seen by a number of publications, and makes for some awkward reading. It says bicycle couriers who work for Deliveroo are never to be referred to as workers, employees, or staff, and that the Deliveroo jackets they have to wear on the job are not uniforms but "branded clothing." These workers don't have "contracts," says the document, but "supplier agreements." They don't "schedule shifts," but "indicate their availability." And they can never get sacked — instead, they're "terminated."

Source: <https://www.theverge.com/2017/4/6/15204098/deliveroo-gig-economy-language-dos-donts-workers>

- i. The bicycle couriers for Deliveroo are probably independent contractors.
- ii. The bicycle couriers for Deliveroo probably receive a salary, i.e. the same amount of money each month.
- iii. The bicycle couriers for Deliveroo probably have employment benefits such as sick pay or holidays.
- iv. The Deliveroo business model is functioning in the gig economy.

4. Read the text and answer the questions.

Although gig work was initially seen as a way to maximize worker freedom and create opportunities, it has, in its short history, proven corrosive. A small percentage of people are making lots of money via side hustles, but they tend to be those who need it least. For example, independent hoteliers in New York renting out rooms and apartments via AirBnB include a corporate lawyer and a man owning a chain of laundromats. Because they already had capital, have steady sources of income apart from their side gigs and are willing to skirt rental laws, these two individuals are able to invest heavily in their "gigs" and create lucrative businesses.

Sadly, those who most need to work can find themselves trapped in a cycle of struggle. Men and women who signed up to do tasks on Task Rabbit – prior to its acquisition by IKEA – and who drove for Uber, for example were not employees and so had no health insurance, workers' compensation protections, employer contributions to Social Security and payroll taxes, paid time off, family leave protections, discrimination protections or unemployment insurance benefits. ---

Workers take gigs as they come and can't afford to be too picky, despite the supposed liberty of being your own boss in the sharing economy. Platform algorithms are designed to downgrade those who aren't always available, making it ever-harder to pick up gigs. All this ends up putting workers in dangerous situations, working for strangers without any protections from their employers.

Source: <https://qz.com/1556194/the-gig-economy-is-quietly-undermining-a-century-of-worker-protections/> (adapted)

- i. Has the gig economy created equal opportunities for workers?
- ii. Why were the corporate lawyer and laundromat chain owner able to profit from the gig economy?
- iii. Do you consider the corporate lawyer and laundromat chain owner to be gig workers like Task Rabbit workers or Uber drivers? Why/why not?
- iv. What benefits are the gig workers not entitled to?
- v. What risk does a gig worker take if he/she refuses a job or says that he/she cannot work?
- vi. Which examples of people participating in the gig economy could be considered examples of the precariat?