



Protecting Workers in the Digital Platform Economy: Investigating Ola and Uber Drivers' Occupational Health and Safety

Indian Federation of App-based Transport workers (IFAT) and International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), New Delhi office

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Between July to November 2019, IFAT and ITF conducted 2,128 surveys across 6 major cities: Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi NCR, Hyderabad, Jaipur, and Lucknow, to determine the occupational health and safety of app-based transport workers.

Some of the most startling findings from the survey are below:

- There is a complete absence of social security and protection—a glaring 95.3% claimed to have no form of insurance, accidental, health or medical. This reflects the inability of workers to invest in their own health. This partly is a result of declining wages—after paying off their EMIs, penalties and commission to the companies and having less than Rs. 20,000 left at the end of the month.
- Only 0.15% of the respondents reported to have access to accidental insurance, which is the bare minimum companies like Ola and Uber should have provided to their drivers.
- Uber and Ola provide no assistance with regard to harassment and violence while drivers are on the road. Ola or Uber for the most part do not intervene if there is any intimidation from traffic police or local authorities, incidents of road rage, violent attack by customers or criminal elements that endanger drivers' lives, accidents while driving etc.
- On average drivers spend close to 16-20 hours in their cars in a day. 39.8% of the respondents spent close to 20 hours in their vehicle in a day, and 72.8% of the respondents from Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad drive for close to 20 hours a day. Due to long hours, 89.8% of the respondents claim they get less than 6 hours of sleep.
- Health issues arising directly as a result of conditions of work is affecting the day-to-day lives of workers. Backache, constipation, liver issues, waist pain and neck pain are the top five health ailments that app-based transport workers suffer from due to their work. 60.7% respondents identified backache as a major health issue.



App-based drivers/driver partners work in a very toxic and isolated work environment. Drivers can't exit their current occupational status even if they want to because they are shackled in debts and outstanding EMIs. As a result, they race every day to complete targets so that they may earn just enough to pay these liabilities.

The work these drivers are engaged in cannot be considered to be within the ambit of decent work and in reality, is representative of modern slavery. The algorithm of the companies they work for, pits them against their peers in order to maximize profit, while at the same time denying them social security or protection and essentially refusing to acknowledge them as employees.

Drivers working in various cities and working for different app-based platforms have complained about the lack of transparency in how these app-based companies determine fares, promotional cost, surge pricing, incentives, penalties and bonuses. There is little to no information on how rides are being fixed or are being allocated. There also isn't any effective grievance redressal mechanism to resolve any of the issues faced by workers.

The apathy of the state and the exploitation by app-based companies have brought the transport and delivery workers in a precipitous position across the globe. This is underlined and explained by the absence and lack of any social security or protection for the workforce, there are some other issues that the workforce is battling during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The full report is available on the Centre for Internet and Society's [website](#).

Hear our voices and address our demands.

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