

# Generational Perspectives and Motivations within the Gig Economy in Slovenia

*Ivona Huđek*

Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Maribor, Maribor, Slovenia

## Abstract

This paper aims to examine how the gig economy, as a global trend that is transforming labour markets worldwide, manifests itself in a smaller economy such as Slovenia. Specifically, the paper focuses on how this trend is manifested among Slovenian freelancers, with an emphasis on generational differences. Descriptive statistics, the Mann-Whitney U test and the Chi-square test, were used in the study to explore perceptions and generational differences and to determine whether they are statistically significant. The results show that both younger and older individuals are likely to choose freelance work due to the need for flexibility and independence in project selection, reflecting their desire for greater control over their personal and professional lives. In addition, the research reveals a perception of insufficient support for such new types of careers and a need for educational programmes to improve skills and awareness of the digital labour market. The findings suggest the need for targeted policy measures to support freelancers of different age groups by implementing comprehensive government programs that promote lifelong learning and upskilling, enable the development of local coworking spaces, provide digital market information and include entrepreneurship education and digital literacy in school curricula to strengthen freelance careers, making them sustainable and contributing economically to regional development.

**Keywords:** gig economy; freelancers; generational differences; flexibility; digital market

**Paper type:** Preliminary research

**Received:** Feb 28, 2024

**Accepted:** May 9, 2024

**DOI:** 10.2478/crdj-2024-0009

## Introduction

In the rapidly changing global environment, the gig economy is becoming an increasingly important element of the modern labour market. It is reshaping traditional employment and offering new opportunities for workers and employers. Technological advancements facilitate flexibility and easy access to jobs via online platforms, making the gig economy particularly attractive to younger generations like Generation Z or millennials, who increasingly strive for autonomy and technology in their work. This study aims to explore the effects of the gig economy on the workforce, with a focus on shifting from global trends to the local area, particularly in Slovenia, and examining how these changes affect the younger population.

This type of economy, which gained importance during the financial crisis of 2009, offers various types of jobs, from less demanding ones to those requiring high specialization encompassing a wide range of professional services provided on a global scale (D'Cruz et al., 2016). It allows workers flexibility in choosing jobs and working hours and provides employers the opportunity to engage talent as needed, thereby reducing fixed costs (Burke & Cowling, 2015), consequently affecting labour relations and socioeconomic conditions (Bérastégui, 2021), as it represents a shift to informal, project-driven work engagements.

The main objective of the article is to determine the primary reasons why Slovenian freelancers choose this type of work, whether these reasons are due to opportunity or necessity. It also aims to explore whether there are differences in the motivations between younger and older generations and what the demographic characteristics of these two groups are. The purpose of the analysis is to gather information about the specificities of Slovenian gig workers in order to propose policies for new careers that are emerging in the market due to digitalization, the need for flexibility, generational effects, and the COVID-19 pandemic. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, the perceptions of Slovenian gig workers regarding the support provided by the state were also analysed.

Regarding the structure of the paper, the next section presents the theoretical background, followed by a description of the research methods used. The study's results are then discussed and presented, and the paper concludes with a summary of the main conclusions and recommendations for further research.

## Literature review

The term gig originated in the music industry in the 1920s and initially referred to a temporary musical performance. Today, however, the term is used more broadly to denote short-term projects or jobs across various sectors (Friedman, 2014). During the economic crisis of 2009, when unemployment rates rose, the gig economy gained significance as many sought alternative forms of employment. With the advancement of technology, the gig economy offers direct access to jobs through online work platforms that connect service providers and clients globally (Anwar & Graham, 2021).

Today, the gig economy, with its dynamic nature, is becoming an increasingly crucial element of the modern labour market, reshaping traditional employment concepts and offering new opportunities for both workers and employers.

### **The gig economy in numbers**

International statistics show that the gig economy has grown significantly worldwide in recent years. According to Upwork (2022), 39% of American workers participated in the gig economy in 2022, bringing in an incredible \$1.35 trillion for the national economy. The World Bank has reported that, contrary to earlier estimates, the gig economy globally makes up as much as 12% of the labour market (Nigatu & Datta, 2023). The Online Labour Index (OLI), developed by the Oxford Internet Institute at the University of Oxford, is an indicator that measures the use of online platforms for work on a global scale. OLI monitors projects on five key platforms, covering more than 70% of the market, and has found that the most sought-after professions in the gig economy are in software development and technology services (Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2018). According to OLI's analysis, employees from the USA, the UK, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan complete the majority of their jobs online (OLI, 2020). With over 500 platforms currently operational within the EU, Europe is similarly exhibiting this trend. In order to gain an understanding of this field, it is necessary to rely on reports or associations from specific countries, as there is no single registration of workers.

### **Diversity of gig professions - more than just delivery and transportation**

It is crucial to recognize that while the gig economy is often publicly associated with low-skilled jobs in sectors like food delivery and transportation, it also includes highly skilled professionals such as independent consultants, IT specialists, translators, graphic designers, so-called independent professionals or freelancers. These freelancers and self-employed creators, who range from financial analysts to healthcare workers and lawyers, serve a global clientele and are not just confined to visible street-level services. This diverse group is a key driver of future economic development and innovation, with potentials that are still being explored (Fernandes & Ferreira, 2017).

### **Factors that have influenced the development of the gig economy**

Digitalization is one of the key factors that have shaped the gig economy. With the introduction of digital technologies into everyday life, jobs and services have become more accessible through online platforms that connect freelancers with clients. Online labour platforms allow individuals to easily find temporary or project-based work without the need for permanent employment (Warner & Wäger, 2019). In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly transformed the world of work into the digital age and increased the importance and attractiveness of the gig economy. Companies have discovered the benefits of reducing costs and the ability to source talent globally, while

individuals are enjoying the benefits of working from home, flexible schedules and the potential for additional income or career development remotely (Pulignano et al., 2021), impacting the increasing need for flexibility and placing more emphasis on work-life balance. However, companies are also affected, as they can quickly adapt to market and technological changes by hiring workers for specific tasks without committing to the long term (Allon et al., 2018). In addition, generational differences also play an important role in shaping the gig economy. Younger generations, such as Millennials and Generation Z, often prefer the flexibility and autonomy that the gig economy offers.

### **Gig economy opportunities for young people**

Prior research indicates that young people strive for a balance between work and private life, value the freedom to choose projects, and want to work on meaningful tasks that match their personal and professional interests (Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022). This is especially important for students and young professionals building their careers. Also, gig work provides opportunities for people from different socio-economic backgrounds, promotes economic growth and reduces income inequality (Jackson, 2022). By selecting projects that match personal interests, the gig economy not only encourages entrepreneurship but also drives innovation in the sector (Silva & Moreira, 2022). Gig work or project work also fosters skills development by offering a variety of projects that cover different skill levels and allow young people to develop and gain practical experience and improve their employability, because continuous learning and skill enhancement are essential to remain competitive in the dynamic gig economy landscape (Huđek & Širec, 2023).

### **External support for new career paths**

In modern career theory, two key concepts align with the characteristics of work in the gig economy: the concepts of boundaryless and protean careers. A boundaryless career (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) focuses on transitions between different professional fields and organizations, and development through networking and horizontal progression. On the other hand, a protean career (Hall, 2004), named after the Greek god Proteus, known for his ability to change, highlights flexibility, personal values, and independence. Both approaches to career development, emphasize the importance of individual initiative, lifelong learning, and the ability to adapt, while reflecting broader social changes such as individualization, empowerment, and technological advancements that fundamentally reshape our work and private lives.

Therefore, the government policies play a crucial role in fostering and facilitating the transformation of entrepreneurial environment (Crnogaj & Rebernik, 2013). According to Gnyawali and Fogel (1994), government initiatives support the development of new companies as well as the culture that encourages proactive behaviour and taking risks. Although freelancers have internal motivation, outside support is necessary for their career development (Leighton, 2015). Burke and Cowling (2015) argue that the

economic contribution of freelancers should be recognized nationally, as their involvement enhances market flexibility and efficiency, potentially increasing profits and job creation. Thus, government initiatives, alongside educational institutions and other entities, play a key role in supporting freelancers through networks, communities, career coaching, temporary employment agencies, and unions, facilitating collaboration with businesses (Huđek et al., 2021).

## Methodology

In Slovenia, where no direct data on gig workers is available, a survey was conducted in 2020 among randomly selected Slovenian self-employed or independent creatives who can be classified as belonging to the gig economy based on certain characteristics. The study focused on individuals who fall into the self-employed, entrepreneurial category and do not employ anyone. These people work from places where they have access to the required resources, such as coworking spaces or their homes. In the previous 12 months, they have worked with a minimum of two clients. Furthermore, the study focused on highly skilled professionals, so-called freelancers who sell their expertise and knowledge. Local gig work, which includes food delivery and transportation services, was excluded. Therefore, according to the standard classification, more than 80% of survey respondents are engaged in professional, scientific, technical, and information and communication activities. These types of activities typically include software development, design and multimedia, website development, network and information systems development, writing and translation.

A random sample of self-employed individuals from online platforms and the Bisnode Gwin database was surveyed using computer-assisted web (CAWI) and telephone interviewing (CATI) techniques to collect 200 valid responses. The survey included questions about sample characteristics and motivations for gig work, referencing the 2019 European survey on freelancers by Malt and EIPF. It also examined perceptions of Slovenian government programs supporting this work. The main goal was to evaluate support for new employment paths in Slovenia. Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (7), to assess participants' attitudes and opinions.

The following hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: Slovenian gig workers choose this type of work more out of opportunity than necessity
- H2: There is a statistically significant difference between the age group under 34 and over 34 in terms of the motivations for choosing to work in the gig economy.
- H3: There is a statistically significant difference in demographic characteristics, including gender, education, hours worked per week, and place of work, between the age groups under 34 and over 34.

- H4: Slovenian freelancers perceive that there is still not enough support at the national level in terms of programmes, access to information and skills development to facilitate freelance work.

The data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and the Mann-Whitne test with the statistics program IBM SPSS Statistic 24.

## Results

Since the paper aims to analyse the younger generation of freelancers, the demographics were examined across two age groups. According to the findings (Upwork, 2023), young people are one of the most appealing groups in terms of their participation in the gig economy. As a result, the discussion that follows in this study will concentrate on individuals under the age of 34 by merging the two youngest age groups (18 to 34) and will examine the other age groups, which include those over 34, separately (Table 1).

**Table 1**

Age distribution

| Age group                        | Age range   | Frequency<br>(N=200) | Valid percent<br>(%) |
|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Younger than 34 years old</b> | 18 – 24     | 3                    | 1.5                  |
|                                  | 25 – 34     | 35                   | 17.5                 |
| <b>Older than 34 years old</b>   | 35 – 44     | 60                   | 30.0                 |
|                                  | 45 – 54     | 54                   | 27.0                 |
|                                  | 55 – 64     | 37                   | 18.5                 |
|                                  | 64 and more | 11                   | 5.5                  |

Source: Author

The data suggest a bell-shaped distribution of the participation of different age groups in the Slovenian gig economy. Engagement in gig work peaks among adults aged 35-54, who together represent 57% of the sample, suggesting that this age group is the most active in the gig economy. Specifically, adults aged between 35 and 44, who account for 30% of the sample, are likely to be the most engaged in gig work, suggesting that individuals in mid-adulthood are the core participants in Slovenia's gig economy. In contrast, younger and older age groups have lower involvement rates. Nineteen percent of the sample consists of young adults (18-34 years old), who are still in the early stages of their professions. The total participation rate of older persons (55 years and above) is 24%, indicating a decline in their involvement in the gig economy.

This distribution may be the result of a number of factors, such as the appeal of gig labour to various age groups. According to the table's trend, gig work in Slovenia seems to be especially appealing to people in their prime employment years because it offers flexibility and different work options.

To get a broader picture, the paper examined the motives of Slovenian freelancers for choosing gig work, comparing responses on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 between two age groups. In addition, the analysis used the Mann-Whitney U test to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the responses of the two age groups, as indicated by the p-value (Denis, 2021) as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

Motives of Slovenian freelancers in relation to age for choosing gig work

| <b>Motives</b>                                                        | <b>Younger than 34 years old (mean value)</b> | <b>Older than 34 years old (mean value)</b> | <b>Mann-Whitney U</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>Loss of previous employment or the expectation of losing it</b>    | 1.54                                          | 1.46                                        | 2789.000              | 0.297          |
| <b>Difficulty finding suitable employment</b>                         | 3.00                                          | 2.42                                        | 2703.500              | 0.219          |
| <b>Ensuring security in case of loss of primary job</b>               | 3.11                                          | 3.19                                        | 2917.500              | 0.794          |
| <b>This way of working is common in my sector</b>                     | 5.26                                          | 5.54                                        | 3360.500              | 0.293          |
| <b>Earn more money</b>                                                | 5.30                                          | 4.88                                        | 2522.500              | 0.125          |
| <b>Better work-life balance</b>                                       | 5.55                                          | 5.45                                        | 3062.000              | 0.958          |
| <b>An opportunity to learn new skills</b>                             | 5.87                                          | 5.60                                        | 2886.500              | 0.534          |
| <b>Exploring new passions. career paths or business opportunities</b> | 5.92                                          | 5.35                                        | 2471.500              | 0.086          |
| <b>Realization of own business ideas and entrepreneurship</b>         | 6.03                                          | 5.78                                        | 2742.000              | 0.389          |
| <b>More flexibility (including working from home)</b>                 | 6.11                                          | 5.80                                        | 3000.000              | 0.789          |
| <b>Independence in choosing projects</b>                              | 6.21                                          | 5.87                                        | 2813.000              | 0.371          |

Source: Author

The survey data on the motives of Slovenian gig workers reveals that the two primary motives for both age groups, are Independence in choosing projects and *More flexibility (including working from home)*. For the younger group, *Independence in choosing projects* has the highest mean value of 6.21, while *More flexibility* follows closely with a mean value of 6.11. Similarly, for the older group, these motives are also rated the highest, with mean values of 5.87 for *Independence in choosing projects* and 5.8 for *More*

*flexibility*. This suggests a strong preference for autonomy and the ability to work flexibly across all age groups in the gig economy.

On the other hand, the least important motives for both age groups are *Loss of previous employment or the expectation of losing it* and *Difficulty finding suitable employment*. For the younger gig workers, the mean values are low at 1.54 for *Loss of previous employment* and 3.00 for *Difficulty finding suitable employment*. Older gig workers rated these similarly low at 1.46 and 2.42, respectively. This suggests that moving to gig work is more about the intrinsic advantages of gig work, such as flexibility and independence than it is about a need resulting from a job loss or difficulties in the labour market. As a result, *Hypothesis 1* is verified.

The Mann-Whitney U test results presented in the survey are employed to ascertain the dissimilarities in responses between the two age groups. Across all motives, the p-values are greater than 0.05, which signifies that there are no statistically significant differences between the younger and older age groups in terms of their reasons for selecting gig work. In other words, the values associated with gig work are relatively consistent across different age groups, indicating that the reasons for working in the gig economy in Slovenia are not age-specific. Consequently, *Hypothesis 2* is rejected. Furthermore, Table 3 provides further information regarding the demographic characteristics of Slovenian gig workers, who are again divided into two age groups: those under 34 and those over 34.

**Table 3**

Sample characteristics in relation to age

| Characteristic                |                                     | Younger than 34 years (n=38) | Older than 34 years (n=162) | Chi-Square | p-value | Charmer's V |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------|-------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                 | Male                                | 60.5 %                       | 58.6 %                      | 4.437      | 0.109   | 0.149       |
|                               | Female                              | 36.8 %                       | 41.4 %                      |            |         |             |
| <b>Education</b>              | High school                         | 21.1 %                       | 29.6 %                      | 11.788     | 0.008*  | 0.243       |
|                               | Undergraduate degree                | 34.2 %                       | 17.3 %                      |            |         |             |
|                               | Master degree                       | 26.3 %                       | 45.7 %                      |            |         |             |
|                               | Specialization or master of science | 18.4%                        | 7.4 %                       |            |         |             |
| <b>Hours of work per week</b> | 21 – 30                             | 34.2 %                       | 19.1 %                      | 5.381      | 0.068   | 0.164       |
|                               | 31 – 40                             | 31.6 %                       | 28.4 %                      |            |         |             |
|                               | More than 40                        | 6.5 %                        | 52.5 %                      |            |         |             |
| <b>Place of work</b>          | Remotely from home                  | 60.5 %                       | 56.8 %                      | 1.901      | 0.870   | 0.097       |
|                               | In any location as long as there    | 5.3 %                        | 1.9 %                       |            |         |             |



|                                        |        |        |  |
|----------------------------------------|--------|--------|--|
| is access to the necessary resources   |        |        |  |
| In coworking spaces (in rented spaces) | 34.2 % | 41.4 % |  |

\*Note: p-values < 0.05; statistically significant

Source: Author

As shown in Table 3, in terms of gender, there is a slightly higher percentage of females in the over 34 age group, but the chi-square test, which is used to determine whether there is a significant association between two categorical variables in a population (Janssen, et al., 2008), indicates that this difference is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.109$ ). In terms of education, a higher percentage of the group aged 34 and over has a Master's degree (45.7%) than the younger group (26.3%). Conversely, a higher percentage of the group younger than 34 has a bachelor's degree (34.2%) than the group older than 34 (17.3%). This difference is statistically significant ( $p = 0.008$ ) with a Cramér's V of 0.243, indicating a moderate effect size. This suggests that older gig workers may have more advanced qualifications. There is also a significant difference in working hours, with a higher proportion of those aged 34 and over working more than 40 hours a week (52.5%) compared with the younger group (6.5%). However, the p-value (0.068) is slightly above the conventional threshold of 0.05 for significance. In addition, both groups show a high preference for working from home, with the younger group at 60.5% and the older group at 56.8%. There is a slight difference in the use of coworking spaces, with a higher percentage of the older group using these spaces (41.4% vs. 34.2% for the younger group), but these differences are not statistically significant ( $p = 0.87$ ). Based on the above results, *Hypothesis 3* can be partially accepted.

Table 4 also provides a quantitative overview of Slovenian freelancers' opinions on various aspects of their support ecosystem, with data presented as mean scores on a seven-point Likert scale.

Table 4

Perceived national support for freelancing in Slovenia

| Statements                                                                                             | Mean | Std. error | Std. deviation statistics |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------------|---------------------------|
| In my country, the education sector places sufficient importance on the acquisition of digital skills. | 2.44 | 0.111      | 1.544                     |
| In my country, there are an adequate number of governments programmes for freelance work.              | 2.80 | 0.136      | 1.667                     |

|                                                                                                      |      |       |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|
| <b>In my country, people are well informed about the opportunities in the digital labour market.</b> | 3.57 | 0.114 | 1.546 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|

Source: Author

According to the results, freelancers in Slovenia feel that the education sector does not place enough emphasis on the acquisition of digital skills, which seem to be crucial for work in a global environment, as indicated by the mean score of 2.44, which is closer to the disagree end of the scale. There is also a feeling that there are not enough government programmes for freelancers, as the mean score is closer to disagree than agree. Freelancers feel somewhere between informed and uninformed about opportunities in the digital labour market, as the mean score is above the neutral midpoint of the scale. Based on this, *Hypothesis 4* can be confirmed.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study emphasises the transformative impact of the gig economy in Slovenia, which is reshaping traditional employment globally. The paper examines the factors that influence the decision of different generations to engage in gig work in Slovenia, with a particular focus on the implications of this phenomenon in a smaller economy. The primary research question is to determine whether these motivations are primarily driven by opportunity or necessity and to identify any significant generational differences in these motivations.

Following the initial hypothesis testing (*Hypothesis 1*), it was determined that Slovenian gig workers tend to select this type of work more as a result of opportunity than necessity. The research showed that the motives for choosing freelance work among Slovenian freelancers are similar regardless of age group. The most important motives for both ages were independence in choosing projects and greater flexibility, including working from home. These motives had high average values among younger freelancers and somewhat lower, but still high values among older ones. On the other hand, loss of previous employment or expectation of job loss and difficulty in finding suitable employment were with low average values for both ages. Moreover, in the second test, *Hypothesis 2*, the statistical analysis showed no significant differences between the two ages in terms of motives, which suggests that the reasons for working in the gig economy in Slovenia are similar among different generations.

Significant differences were observed in education levels and working hours, indicating that older freelancers are more likely to have higher education and work longer hours. However, no significant differences were found in terms of gender or place of work. Accordingly, *Hypothesis 3* is partially accepted.

With regard to the supportive environment, the results of the test of the last hypothesis, *Hypothesis 4*, also suggest the possibility of a robust support system tailored to freelancers, including policy changes and educational reforms to improve digital skills and ensure comprehensive support. These measures are crucial to sustain

the gig economy's growth and ensure fairness for workers of all ages. Statistically significant differences in educational attainment between the two age groups, as previously mentioned, where older freelancers are more likely to have a higher level of education, also indicate a need for educational programs aimed at younger freelancers to improve their skills and competitiveness.

In general, the results suggest that the government should make more efforts to promote entrepreneurship and innovation through extracurricular courses in entrepreneurship education and digital skills programs in schools, universities and vocational training to empower the young generation. Positive government incentives, such as equipping business incubators and coworking spaces with skilled local talent and upskilling programs, accelerate economic development and digitalization. In addition, the 2023 Future of Jobs Report (Di Battista et al., 2023) by the World Economic Forum stresses that today's workforce must develop irreplaceable skills such as creative thinking, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving, alongside technical skills like programming and data analysis, to stay competitive. Continuous education is vital for job security. Moreover, significant differences in working hours, with more older freelancers working over 40 hours per week, suggest that older freelancers may take freelance work more seriously or rely more on it as their main source of income. For younger freelancers, who may be working fewer hours, this may mean that they see freelancing still more as a side job or a means of achieving a better work-life balance.

By applying the findings from Slovenia to similar contexts, other smaller and medium-sized economies may better prepare and support their labour markets for the realities of contemporary, digitally-driven employment, ensuring both economic growth and employee fulfilment. By understanding these changes, policy makers in other similar economies can develop strategies to support their workforces as they transition to more flexible forms of employment. However, it is worth noting that the findings are also consistent with international data focusing on larger economies such as France, Spain, and Germany for choosing gig work, where independence is found to be the most important motivating factor, followed by flexibility in agenda, the ability to choose where to work and the power to choose the clients and projects (Malt & BCG, 2022). Furthermore, the distinction between the motivating factors of different age groups in Slovenia can serve as a model for other countries when it comes to considering generational approaches in their business planning. The Slovenian example, where gig work offers alternatives to traditional employment, can also inspire similar economies to promote gig work as part of a broader strategy to combat unemployment and increase labour market flexibility.

The legal framework for gig work in Slovenia, as in other parts of the world, is still not designed to ensure flexibility and social security at the same time. The attempt to fit this new reality into the outdated legal framework leads to various measures, ranging from social dialogue at European and national level to the protection of workers and legislative measures on the platform economy. In response, the European Commission introduced new laws in 2021 (European Council, 2024) to promote and strengthen gig workers' rights, although implementation varies across EU member states and is often restricted to specific sectors.

For example, Croatia's policy framework is also working towards greater inclusivity for gig workers. In neighbouring Croatia, approximately 100.000 people participate in the gig economy, representing a significant portion of the workforce, particularly those engaged in activities such as transportation and food delivery (Poslovni dnevnik, 2023). However, there is also the Croatian Association of Independent Professionals (Hrvatsko društvo nezavisnih profesionalaca, HDNP), which has over 2.000 independent professionals or freelancers. This non-profit organization, founded in 2013, aims to create and promote a healthy professional ecosystem for independent professionals in Croatia. HDNP operates based on the values of collaboration, openness, and community, providing freelancers with business support, education, professional development, information about engagement opportunities, and affordable office infrastructure (HDNP, 2024).

Accordingly, national ecosystem support and tailored interventions are very important and needed in these new career paths to boost gig work as a sustainable career option. So far in Croatia, the government is making efforts to clarify the taxation status of freelancers and reduce the administrative burden. The new Labour Act defines work via digital labour platforms and identifies aggregators. Platforms and aggregators must be registered with the Ministry. A unified electronic work record will provide data on workers, work type, and time/location, allowing the state to monitor gig work in real time and improve social security for workers (Government of the Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, 2023).

In this way, promoting the idea to residents that gig work is real work can integrate gig economy workers into regional economic frameworks and ensure that this growing labour segment contributes effectively to innovation and economic growth (Burke & Cowling, 2015). In addition, local governments can identify key gig economy sectors in their local or regional economies and gather information from workers and employers in those sectors about how they can develop policies and programs to support them.

Since the research is limited by the small sample size of young people included in the study, it would be useful for future research to aim to include a larger number of younger respondents in order to obtain more representative and reliable data on the motivations and behaviours that make up young people in the gig economy. Furthermore, future studies could consider including a broader range of gig workers, including those in less skilled and more visible roles such as delivery and transportation services, to determine whether motivations differ significantly from those in highly skilled positions. It could be considered to conduct sector-specific analysis within the gig economy, examining areas such as technology, creative industries and transport services. This would provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics, heterogeneity, and challenges within each sector and how different employment contexts impact worker motivation and experiences. Additionally, it would be valuable to explore further the various reasons why individuals choose to gig work, such as personal narratives or deeper socioeconomic factors. The data is collected at a single point in time, which may not fully capture the dynamics of the gig economy and the evolution of motivations in response to economic changes, policy updates, or shifts in the labour market. A comparison of the gig economy aspects in Slovenia with that in other

countries could help to identify unique and common factors that drive gig work in different global contexts.

Accordingly, it could be concluded that despite the opportunities and challenges presented by gig work, the broader acceptance of flexible work models is still developing. Therefore, national and regional governments, local communities, and academics must recognise these shifts to foster environments that support the stability and growth of independent careers. In a dynamic world, where traditional jobs often fail to meet modern needs, understanding and adapting to the gig economy is vital for future policy development and societal advancement.

## References

1. Allon, G., Cohen, M., & Sinchaisri, W. (2018). The Impact of Behavioral and Economic Drivers on Gig Economy Workers. *The Wharton School*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3274628>.
2. Anwar, M. A., & Graham, M. (2021). Between a rock and a hard place: Freedom, flexibility, precarity and vulnerability in the gig economy in Africa. *Competition & Change*, 25(2), 237-258.
3. Benitez-Marquez, M. D., Sanchez-Teba, E. M., Bermudez-Gonzalez, G., & Nunez-Rydman, E. S. (2022). Generation Z within the workforce and in the workplace: A bibliometric analysis. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 736820.
4. Bérastégui, P. (2021). Exposure to psychosocial risk factors in the gig economy: a systematic review. *ETUI Research Paper-Report*.
5. Burke, A., & Cowling, M. (2015). The use and value of freelancers: The perspective of managers. *International Review of Entrepreneurship*, 13(1).
6. Crnogaj, K., & Rebernik, M. (2013). Entrepreneurship policy and supportive environment for entrepreneurship development. *Management*, 8(4), 309-332.
7. D'Cruz, P., & Noronha, E. (2016). Positives outweighing negatives: the experiences of Indian crowdsourced workers. *Work Organisation, Labour and Globalisation*, 10(1), 44-63.
8. Denis, D. J. (2021). *Applied univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistics: Understanding statistics for social and natural scientists, with applications in SPSS and R*. John Wiley & Sons.
9. Di Battista, A., Grayling, S., Hasselaar, E., Leopold, T., Li, R., Rayner, M., & Zahidi, S. (2023, May). Future of jobs report 2023. In *World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland*. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023>.
10. European Council. (2024). EU rules on platform work. European Council. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/platform-work-eu/>
11. Fernandes, A. P., & Ferreira, P. (2017). Financing constraints and fixed-term employment: Evidence from the 2008-9 financial crisis. *European Economic Review*, 92, 215-238.

12. Friedman, G. (2014). Workers without employers: shadow corporations and the rise of the gig economy. *Review of Keynesian Economics*, 2(2), 171-188.
13. Gnyawali, D. R., & Fogel, D. S. (1994). Environments for entrepreneurship development: key dimensions and research implications. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 18(4), 43-62.
14. Government of the Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy. (2023). *Ravnatelj Uprave za rad i zaštitu na radu Dražen Opalić sudjelovao na prvoj konferenciji o Gig ekonomiji u Hrvatskoj*. <https://mrosp.gov.hr/vijesti/ravnatelj-uprave-za-rad-i-zastitu-na-radu-drazen-opalic-sudjelovao-na-prvoj-konferenciji-o-gig-ekonomiji-u-hrvatskoj/13244>
15. Hall, D. T. (2004). The protean career: A quarter-century journey. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 65(1), 1-13.
16. Hrvatsko društvo nezavisnih profesionalaca. (2024). *O nama*. <https://hdnp.hr/o-nama/>
17. Huđek, I. (2022). *The Emergence of Gig Economy Under the Impact of Digitalization-Model of the Success Factors of Freelancers* (Doctoral dissertation, Univerza v Mariboru (Slovenia)).
18. Huđek, I., & Širec, K. (2023). The Impact of Digital Transformation on Freelancer Well-Being: Insight From Slovenia. In *Digital Psychology's Impact on Business and Society* (pp. 56-91). IGI Global.
19. Jackson, H. (2022). Algorithmic Management: The Tin Man of the Gig Economy. *SAM Advanced Management Journal* (07497075), 87(3).
20. Janssens, W. (2008). *Marketing research with SPSS*. Pearson Education.
21. Kässi, O., & Lehdonvirta, V. (2018). Online labour index: Measuring the online gig economy for policy and research. *Technological forecasting and social change*, 137, 241-248.
22. Malt & BCG. (2022). *Freelancing in Europe 2022*. <https://www.malt.uk/resources/guide/freelancing-in-europe-2022-study-by-malt-bcg-sheds-light-on-the-state-of-the-european-freelancing-market>
23. Malt and EIPF. (2019). *The state of European Freelancing in 2018 – results of the first European freelancers' survey*. Malt. <https://news.malt.com/en-gb/2019/02/12/the-state-of-european-freelancing-in-2018-results-of-the-first-european-freelancers-survey-2/>
24. Nigatu, N. S., & Datta, N. (2023). Working Without Borders-The Promise and Peril of Online Gig Work: Short Note Series Number Two-Is Online Gig Work an Opportunity to Increase Female Labour Force Participation?.
25. OLI. (2020). How big is the online labour workforce? Our data-driven approach to this tricky question. Online labour observatory. <https://ilabour.oii.ox.ac.uk/how-many-online-workers/>
26. Poslovni dnevnik. (2023). *U gig ekonomiji u RH radi 100.000 radnika*. <https://www.poslovni.hr/hrvatska/u-gig-ekonomiji-u-rh-radi-100-000-radnika-4420606>

27. Pulignano, V., Domecka, M., Muszyński, K., Vermeerbergen, L., & Riemann, M. L. (2021). Creative labour in the era of Covid-19: The case of freelancers. *ETUI Research Paper-Working Paper*.
28. Silva, B. C., & Moreira, A. C. (2022). Entrepreneurship and the gig economy: A bibliometric analysis.
29. Sullivan, S. E., & Arthur, M. B. (2006). The evolution of the boundaryless career concept: Examining physical and psychological mobility. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 69(1), 19-29.
30. Upwork. (2022). *Freelance Forward 2022*. Upwork. <https://www.upwork.com/research/freelance-forward-2022>
31. Upwork. (2023). *Freelance Forward 2023*. Upwork. <https://www.upwork.com/research/freelance-forward-2023-research-report>

## About the author

Ivona Huđek, PhD, is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Maribor, where she has taught several courses. She received her PhD in Economic and Business Sciences from the same faculty with the dissertation titled “The Emergence of the Gig Economy Under the Impact of Digitalization: A Model of the Success Factors of Freelancers”. She is also a member of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Slovenia team, contributing to the study and development of entrepreneurship at both national and international levels. The author can be contacted at [ivona.hudjek1@um.si](mailto:ivona.hudjek1@um.si).