

On-Demand Economy Survey: Characteristics of Hawaii  
Residents Who Worked in the Gig Economy

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In 2018, the National Governors Association (NGA) convened a consortium of states to better understand the “on-demand” or “gig work” economy. Gig work jobs are defined broadly and include non-W-2 occupations such as driving for ride-hailing companies (e.g., Uber), freelancing, and independent contracting. The consortium was intended to be an inter- and intra-state collaboration, and Hawaii’s team consisted of representatives from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations; Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; the University of Hawaii; and Hawaii’s P-20 statewide longitudinal data system.

Part of Hawaii’s contribution to the consortium was a survey through Hawaii’s workforce development website, HireNet Hawaii, to ask registrants about their work history and perceptions on gig work. The HireNet Hawaii survey was deployed at the beginning of March 2020, and had been online through the end of 2020. The high unemployment rate from COVID-19-related shutdowns increased HireNet Hawaii registrations, with almost 2,000 surveys completed. As of July 15, 2020, results from the survey have been mixed, with about 35 percent of respondents indicating some participation in gig work. However, only 300 of these respondents (15 percent) indicated that they worked a job in the past year in which they did not receive a W-2.

## Survey methodology

The overarching questions about gig workers revolved around the characteristics of the gig worker, as well as their opinion on, and their reason(s) for doing gig work. Limited resources required strategic planning for the distribution of the survey, and how many, and which questions to include. There were two main guiding resources. First, the Washington State Legislature directed the state’s Department of Commerce to provide information about independent contractors in the state (SSB 6032 Sec. 127 (a-b)), 2017-18). The Washington legislature appropriated a sum of money to allow for an in-depth survey and focus groups about gig work. This report informed the order and phrasing of survey questions related to the gig workers’ reasons and perceptions. Second, the Commonwealth of Virginia also conducted a survey on gig workers. Similar to Hawaii, Virginia’s resources are limited. Virginia’s approach to distributing the survey informed Hawaii’s approach to the distribution, length, and final questions on the survey.

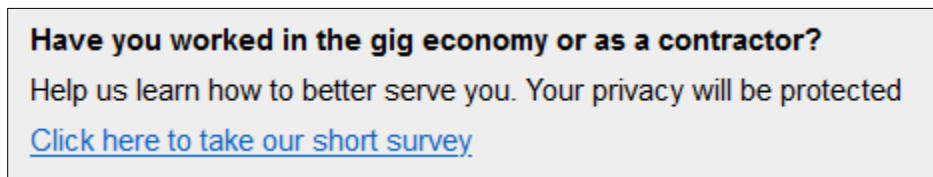
The NGA consortium included a team of researchers from various states who worked to develop a consistent definition for “on-demand” and/or “gig work.” There are a series of identified dimensions that show the depth and complexity of “on-demand” work. These dimensions would be too detailed for respondents to quickly assess whether or not they fit the definition. Accordingly, for the purposes of the survey, whether or not the respondent worked a job that did not provide a W-2 was used as the definition for “gig work.”

## HireNet Hawaii and Survey Prompt

Resources were not available to advertise and pay participants for either focus group participation or a statewide gig work survey. Virginia was able to field a survey by placing the survey on the state’s workforce training portal, the Virginia Workforce Connection. The Hawaii version of this is known as HireNet Hawaii.

Once the individual registered for services through HireNet Hawaii, a survey prompt (see Figure 1) would pop up which displayed a link to the survey developed on Google Forms (see Appendix A, Figure 2). This ensured individual anonymity since there was no way to attach the respondent's HireNet Hawaii account to their survey responses. Individuals did have the opportunity at the end of the survey to provide an e-mail address for referral to the American Job Center (AJC). All respondents that provided an e-mail address were referred to the AJC.

**Figure 1: Survey Prompt Message Text in HireNet Hawaii**



### Survey Limitations

Registrants to HireNet Hawaii are able to establish an account and access the portal multiple times to search for jobs. There was no mechanism to hide the prompt in successive log-ins, so respondents could have answered the survey multiple times. Some repeat responders were able to be determined by the e-mail address provided if they wanted to be contacted by the AJC for training opportunities. For these multiple respondents, their most recent responses were used. The most common response was a lack of e-mail; over 20 responses included some variation of “no”, “not available”, or “do not want to be contacted”. There was no way to determine if any of these responses came from the same respondent, and all “no”, “not available”, or “do not want to be contacted” responders were included in the following analysis.

### Gig Work Definition

Review of the survey response showed that the “received W-2 or not” definition was not preventing people who did not do gig work from responding to the survey. Due to COVID-19 related job loss, the Hawaii team felt that it would be useful to have registrants directed to the AJCs if they choose to be identified. Therefore, the survey did not incorporate a method for ending the survey for respondents who only worked jobs where they received a W-2. There were also a subset of respondents that suggested they did indeed have a gig work background, even if they responded negatively about working a job that did not result in a W-2.

Accordingly, there are two “definitions” used to define gig workers in this survey. The broadest definition is any respondent who answered all the gig work questions in such a way that suggested that they were gig workers (e.g., answering the question “Thinking about the gig work you did in the past year, what was the nature of the work?”). As of June 15, 2020, this resulted in 730 completed surveys. From this broader sample, a smaller sample of 325 respondents responded that they worked a job that did not result in a W-2.

## Survey Questions

Beyond a demographic analysis of Hawaii's gig workers, Hawaii's team wanted to understand why these individuals got into gig work in the first place, and how they viewed their gig work. Importantly, it seemed plausible that these responses would depend on the role gig work played in these gig workers' lives: whether the work was the primary source of income; or whether the gig work was a complementary income source.

The questions to the complete survey can be found in Appendix A.

## Results

Between March 1, 2020, and July 15, 2020, almost 2,000 surveys were filled out. Only 730 of these respondents responded in a way that suggested they actually participated in gig work, i.e., they answered gig work questions. Only 399 respondents answered that they worked a job in the past year in which they did not receive a W-2, the strictest definition of gig work for this survey. Of the 730 who responded to all the gig work questions, only 325 confirmed that they worked a job in the past year in which they did not receive a W-2. Results for both samples will be included in the following analyses. The strictest definition is more accurate, but the sample size is too small to comfortably do cross tabulations. Demographics are generally similar across the two samples, but the respondents' relationship with the gig economy shows more contrast for the most part.

## Demographics

A majority of gig workers live on Oahu, with around 20 percent each on the islands of Hawaii and Maui. A majority of respondents were female (52.7 percent) with an average age of 47 years. Very few respondents did not complete high school, and a majority of respondents (65.3 percent) had at least some college or higher. Though not directly comparable, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' results from the 2017 Contingent Worker Supplement (CWS) to the May 2017 Current Population Survey shows a demographic breakdown rather dissimilar to the demographic breakdown of gig workers in Hawaii. Contingent work arrangements are those that are contingent and alternative arrangements to a worker's main job. Thus, the CWS sample is likely to include fewer older, more educated independent contractors (anecdotally, independent contractors worked as full-time employees when younger, and then have moved to independent contracting as they gain more experience). Alternatively, data from the General Social Survey (GSS) contains information on independent contracting, consulting, temporary agency work, on-call work, etc., allowing for a broader definition of "gig work" that follows a little more closely to the intentions of Hawaii's gig economy survey. In both cases, however, there are distinct differences from Hawaii's data. For the purposes of this comparison, the GSS gig definition used is the "Gig 3" measure, which includes all independent contractors, consultants, freelancers, temp agency workers, on-call workers, and contract company workers.

**Table 1: Gig Worker Demographics**

	Answered all gig questions	Worked non-W-2 job	Answered all gig questions & worked non-W-2 job	CWS	GSS
<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>325</b>	-	-
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	52.7%	52.9%	52.0%	48%	40.1%
Male	44.5%	43.4%	45.5%	52%	59.9%
<b>Education</b>					
Less than HS	5.5%	5.3%	4.6%	13%	-
HS	28.5%	19.5%	19.7%	41%	-
Some college	26.3%	27.8%	27.7%	9%	-
College	31.2%	36.1%	36.6%	22%	-
Graduate degree	7.8%	10.8%	11.4%	16%	-
<b>Age (average)</b>	<b>47.4</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>48.5</b>	<b>37.8</b>	<b>47.7</b>
<b>County</b>					
C&C Honolulu	54.9%	51.4%	53.2%	-	-
Hawaii	18.2%	19.3%	17.5%	-	-
Maui	19.0%	21.3%	20.9%	-	-
Kauai	7.3%	6.8%	8.0%	-	-

Source: Hawaii Gig Economy Survey. Contingent Worker Supplement, Gig Economy Data Hub (<https://www.gigeconomydata.org/basics/who-participates-gig-economy>). General Social Survey, American Action Forum and Aspen Institute's Future of Work Initiative (<https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/gig-economy-research-policy-implications-regional-economic-demographic-trends/>).

Note: For the Hawaii survey and the CWS, the survey asked about age using age ranges. To determine average age, the average age in the age range was used.

Hawaii's gig workers are more likely women than the nation as a whole; over half of Hawaii's gig workers are female, compared to the 48 percent in the CWS and the 40 percent in the GSS. It also appears that Hawaii's gig workers are more educated and older, though as noted before, CWS respondents might be biased to younger, less educated workers. The average age among GSS respondents is more similar to the average age of Hawaii's gig workers.

### Characteristics and Perceptions of the Gig Economy

Around 40 percent of respondents who confirmed they worked a non-W-2 job were employed as consultants in the previous 12 months and around half were self-employed. Full-time work was done in the past 12 months by about 40 percent of these respondents, and around 35 percent worked part-time in the past 12 months (respondents could respond with multiple employment situations). In contrast, of the 730 who responded to all the gig economy questions, over half worked full-time, and only a quarter were consultants or self-employed in the past 12 months. In all samples, about 15 percent looked for work in the past 12 months.

**Table 2: Gig Worker Employment Status**

Employment situation	Answered all gig questions	Worked non-W-2 job	Answered all gig questions and worked non-W-2 job
Full-time	52.6%	40.4%	41.2%
<i>Full-time only</i>	<i>33.7%</i>	<i>16.8%</i>	<i>16.0%</i>
Part-time	32.5%	34.6%	33.2%
<i>Part-time only</i>	<i>13.2%</i>	<i>7.3%</i>	<i>5.5%</i>
Consultant	23.7%	36.3%	39.7%
<i>Consultant only</i>	<i>5.6%</i>	<i>8.3%</i>	<i>8.3%</i>
Self-employed	25.8%	49.6%	50.8%
<i>Self-employed only</i>	<i>9.0%</i>	<i>16.3%</i>	<i>16.6%</i>
Looked for work	14.4%	13.5%	14.2%
Did not look for work	1.4%	1.0%	0.9%

The years of experience working gig jobs was rather similar across the different samples. Most respondents worked in the gig job for less than three years. The percentage of respondents decreased as tenure in the gig job increased, except for experienced gig workers, those who did gig work for over 15 years; around 15 percent of respondents worked in their gig job for over 15 years.

**Table 3: Gig Worker Years Worked**

Years working gig job	Answered all gig questions	Worked non-W-2 job	Answered all gig questions and worked non-W-2 job
Less than 1 year	28.9%	25.6%	24.3%
1-3 years	28.8%	27.3%	30.5%
4-6 years	13.4%	12.5%	13.2%
7-10 years	8.1%	8.3%	8.9%
11-15 years	6.6%	7.3%	7.7%
More than 15 years	14.2%	16.3%	15.4%

Respondents who worked a non-W-2 job were more likely to consider themselves to be independent workers; they did not rely on an app or company to find a job and they did not have someone else set their schedule. Around 10 percent of these respondents considered themselves fully dependent, needing an app or company to find a job and having their schedule set. In contrast, almost 30 percent of the larger sample of respondents who answered all gig questions considered themselves fully dependent. For those who felt partially dependent, more were

dependent on an app or company to facilitate finding a job while still having the freedom to set their own schedule, compared to having a set schedule but finding the job on their own.

**Table 4: Gig Worker Dependency**

Dependency	Answered all gig questions	Worked non-W-2 job	Answered all gig questions and worked non-W-2 job
Fully dependent	27.8%	9.5%	10.2%
Others set schedule	20.1%	17.5%	19.1%
Used agency/app to find job	20.4%	23.1%	27.7%
Fully independent	31.6%	45.9%	43.1%

A plurality of respondents considered themselves independent contractors to the gig job, even for those who only answered all the gig questions. Though, for these respondents, the percentage of respondents who considered themselves full-time workers was comparable (38.1 percent considered themselves full-time workers for the gig job, compared to 42.3 percent who considered themselves independent contractors). In all samples, the number of respondents who considered themselves independent contractors to the gig job is higher than the number of respondents who consider themselves fully independent. In other words, even though there is some dependency on another entity to set the schedule or find the job, they do not consider themselves employees of that entity.

**Table 5: Gig Worker View of Connection to Gig Job**

View of connection	Answered all gig questions	Worked non-W-2 job	Answered all gig questions and worked non-W-2 job
Full-time worker	38.1%	14.8%	16.3%
Part-time worker	19.6%	11.8%	12.9%
Independent contractor	42.3%	59.1%	70.8%

When it comes to reasons for accepting a gig job, a majority did the gig job as a primary source of income. Interestingly, the ability to control one's own schedule was not a particularly popular reason. "Filling income gaps" was a more popular reason to take a gig job in all cases, and for the larger sample of respondents who answered all gig questions, "work experience" was even more popular than "filling income gaps". Less than half of respondents who had the independence to set their own schedule cited "control own schedule" as a reason for taking the

gig job (somehow, some people who could not set their own schedule cited “control own schedule” as a reason for taking the gig job). “Control own schedule” was a more popular reason among workers who were somewhat independent compared to workers who were fully independent. Less than 15 percent of respondents did this job for fun.

**Table 6: Gig Worker Reasons for Working Gig Job**

Reason for accepting job	Answered all gig questions	Worked non-W-2 job	Answered all gig questions and worked non-W-2 job
Primary	65.9%	52.1%	56.9%
Fill gaps	27.0%	35.3%	37.5%
Control schedule	24.1%	28.3%	32.0%
Work experience	32.6%	26.1%	29.5%
Fun	11.0%	11.3%	12.3%
Looking for full-time work	22.2%	22.3%	23.1%
Primary & fill gaps	9.7%	9.3%	11.1%
Primary & control schedule	1.5%	17.3%	20.3%
Fill gaps & control schedule	11.0%	12.8%	14.2%

While respondents found the income from the gig job to be at least somewhat consistent, for the most part, a fourth to over a third of respondents found the money earned was inconsistent or somewhat inconsistent (ranging from 25 percent to 36 percent). Workers who considered themselves reliant on an agency, app, or website to find work were more likely to consider income to be inconsistent or somewhat inconsistent (less than 25 percent compared to over 35 percent).

**Table 7: Gig Worker Income Consistency**

How consistent is income?	Answered all gig questions	Worked non-W-2 job	Answered all gig questions and worked non-W-2 job
Inconsistent	18.2%	26.1%	25.2%
Somewhat inconsistent	7.5%	10.0%	11.4%
Neither	12.6%	11.0%	13.2%
Somewhat consistent	18.6%	17.8%	16.6%
Consistent	43.0%	30.3%	33.5%



In Hawaii, around 6 percent of the adult population does not have health insurance<sup>1</sup>. In contrast, over 20 percent of gig workers do not have health insurance. For those who do have health insurance, many get it through the government.

**Table 8: Gig Worker Health Insurance Coverage**

Health insurance status	Answered all gig questions	Worked non-W-2 job	Answered all gig questions and worked non-W-2 job
No health insurance	22.2%	23.3%	25.2%
Through other means	4.8%	5.3%	4.6%
Through the government (e.g., Medicaid, Medicare)	27.8%	30.6%	30.5%
Through a current/former employer	24.1%	16.5%	16.0%
Through a spouse/parent	14.0%	14.0%	14.8%
Through a healthcare provider or a health insurance exchange	7.0%	8.5%	8.9%

A significant percentage of gig workers (over 60 percent) would prefer a regular W-2 job. This percentage is rather consistent across income consistency; even a majority of those who have steady income from their gig jobs would prefer having a W-2 job.

**Table 9: Gig Worker Preference for W-2 Job**

	Answered all gig questions	Worked non-W-2 job	Answered all gig questions and worked non-W-2 job
I already work full-time in addition to my gig work	8.8%	9.8%	10.5%
No	20.0%	27.1%	25.5%
Yes	69.9%	59.4%	62.2%

1. *Quality of Life in Hawaii: 2019 Update*. Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism. Table D15. Available at <http://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/files/2020/06/Quality-of-Life-2019-Update.pdf>.

## Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

- 1. Over the past year, what was your employment situation? Check all that apply.**
  - I worked full-time for someone else
  - I worked part-time for someone else
  - I worked for someone else as a consultant, contractor, or freelancer
  - I worked for myself (self-employed)
  - I was not working, but looked for work
  - I was not working, and did not look for work
  
- 2. For the purposes of this survey, we are defining “gig” or contract work as work that does not generate a W-2. Did you do any “gig” or contract work in the past year?**
  - Yes, I worked a job that did not generate a W-2 form
  - No, all the jobs I worked last year generated W-2 forms
  
- 3. Thinking about the gig work you did in the past year, how long have you been doing that work?**
  - Less than 1 year
  - 1-3 years
  - 4-6 years
  - 7-10 years
  - 11-15 years
  - More than 15 years
  
- 4. Thinking about the gig work you did in the past year, what was the nature of the work? Check all that apply.**
  - Fully independent; I set my own work schedule and did not rely on an agency, app, or website to find this work
  - Somewhat dependent; I used an agency, app, or website to find work, but I was able to set my own schedule
  - Somewhat dependent; I did not need to use an agency, app, or website to find work, but my schedule was set
  - Fully dependent; I found work through an agency, app, or website, and my schedule was set
  
- 5. What best describes your connection to the agency, app, or website where did gig work?**
  - I think of myself as a full-time employee of the agency, app, or website
  - I think of myself as a full-time employee of the agency, app, or website
  - I think of myself as an independent worker/contractor who used the agency, app, or website to connect with customers

**6. Thinking about the gig work you did last year, why did you accept that job? Check all that apply.**

- To earn money as a primary source of income
- It helps to fill the gaps or fluctuations in my other sources of income
- To be able to control my own schedule (due to child care, school, or other obligations)
- To gain work experience for future job opportunities
- For fun, or to do something with my spare time
- To earn money while I look for full-time work

**7. How steady or inconsistent do you consider the money you make from the gig work?**

- It is steady from week to week
- It is somewhat steady from week to week
- It is neither steady nor inconsistent from week to week
- It is somewhat inconsistent from week to week
- It is inconsistent from week to week

**8. Would you prefer full-time (W-2) employment over your gig work?**

- Yes
- No
- I work full-time in addition to my gig work

**9. Are your employment options limited by any of the following? Check all that apply.**

- Available housing
- Disability
- Child or elder care needs
- Lack of education and training for jobs desired
- Lack of jobs in your field
- Lack of transportation
- No Internet Access
- Other (Please Specify):

**10. Would you be interested in completing any training or education to acquire new job skills?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

**11. What type of training would be of interest to you? Check all that apply.**

- Any
- Agriculture
- Business
- Computer
- Construction
- Continuing Education

- Culinary Arts
- Electronics/Electrical
- Financial Services
- HVAC
- Highway Construction
- Machining
- Management
- Medical Related (except Nursing)
- Metal Fabrication
- Nursing
- Office/Clerical
- Protective Services
- Special Trades
- Transportation Equipment Mechanic
- Transportation/Truck Driving
- Welding
- Other (Please Specify): \*

**12. Do you have any work experience or specialized training that qualifies you for a better job than the one you have now but can't find that employment locally?**

- Yes
- No

**13. On what island do you currently reside?**

- Hawai'i
- Kaua'i
- Lāna'i
- O'ahu
- Maui
- Moloka'i

**14. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say


**15. What is your age?**

- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- Older than 64

**16. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- Some high school
- High school diploma or GED
- Some college
- Associates degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate/professional degree
- No degree

Figure 2: Screen Capture of the Online Survey (Top Portion of the Screen)



**Hawaii WDC Gig Economy Survey**

\* Required

Over the past year, what was your employment situation? Check all that apply. \*

- I worked full-time for someone else
- I worked part-time for someone else
- I worked for someone else as a consultant, contractor, or freelancer
- I worked for myself (self-employed)
- I was not working, but looked for work
- I was not working, and did not look for work

For the purposes of this survey, we are defining “gig” or contract work as work that does not generate a W-2. Did you do any “gig” or contract work in the past year? \*

- Yes, I worked a job that did not generate a W-2 form
- No, all the jobs I worked last year generated a W-2 form