

# “Sharing economy” work in the GTA

## It’s more than just a gig

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They are young and highly educated, but many “sharing economy” workers in the GTA are selling their services under precarious working conditions, according to a new survey released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

While most workers in this survey say they like what they do, the work has downsides: more than a third of survey respondents say the hours are unpredictable, it’s hard to get enough work, they don’t make enough money providing these services, and if they get sick they don’t get paid.

“In other words, the ‘sharing economy’ looks a lot like traditional service sector jobs: precarious,” says CCPA-Ontario Director Trish Hennessy. “The only major difference is the business model they’re using to find work. They are turning to businesses that connect them with customers through online platforms, or apps, to provide a wide range of on-demand services — cleaning, rides home, meal prep, food delivery — using their own skills and their own assets.”

Among the survey’s key findings:

- It’s a small but significant part of the GTA’s labour market: Environics Research conducted the online survey of 2,304 people in the GTA between October 5-20, 2016. Among those respondents, only nine per cent of survey respondents say they’ve worked in the “sharing economy” while 38

per cent say they’ve bought “sharing economy” services.

- They’re young, educated, and many are raising families: 90 per cent have post-secondary education, 71 per cent are under the age of 45, and 51 per cent have children under 18.
- It’s not necessarily a short-term gig: 48 per cent have been selling “sharing economy” services for more than a year.
- In a tough job market, it’s a way to get by: 58 per cent say it makes up more than half of their personal income, 55 per cent say it’s the only way to make a living right now, and 53 per cent say it’s something to do until they can find something better.
- The work may be organized differently, but inequalities persist: racialized workers provide more of these services while non-racialized consumers buy the majority of them.

“There is a strong appetite for better protections in this sector,” says CCPA-Ontario Senior Economist Sheila Block. “78 per cent of respondents see a need for more health and safety standards in this emerging line of work, 72 per cent support regulations for the businesses providing the platform for these service transactions, and 65 per cent say there should be worker protections.”