

# DRIVING DANGER IN ILLINOIS

SEPTEMBER 2023



**STRATEGIC  
ORGANIZING  
CENTER**



**Chicago Gig Alliance**

**THE  
PEOPLE'S  
LOBBY**

# CONTRIBUTORS

**THE STRATEGIC ORGANIZING CENTER (SOC)** is a democratic coalition of three labor unions: Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Communications Workers of America (CWA) and United Farm workers of America (UFW). Together, SOC-affiliated unions represent more than 2.5 million workers. The SOC is a labor union innovation center dedicated to improving the lives of working people, partnering with its affiliates to develop effective strategies to support workers organizing for better lives for themselves and their families. We stand against structural racism and fight not only for jobs, but good jobs: safe, equitable workplaces where all employees are respected, paid living wages and have real power at work.

**CHICAGO GIG ALLIANCE**, a project of The People's Lobby, is in its fourth year of working to improve conditions for gig workers working for companies like Uber, Lyft, Doordash and Instacart and we are closer than ever to achieving our goals. We have talked with thousands of rideshare drivers about the issues impacting their economic security, and worked with them to create a priority list of changes. Drivers drafted and are fighting for a City ordinance that would give workers a living wage (including yearly raises with inflation); put a 20% cap on how much the companies can take from each fare; improve app safety; create an excluded worker safety committee; institute an appeal process for deactivations and increased transparency for both workers and passengers.

**THE PEOPLE'S LOBBY** is a membership-driven organization of people across the Chicago region that work together to build widespread support for public policies and candidates – including people from our communities – that put racial and gender justice and the needs of people and the planet before the interests of big corporations and the very rich.

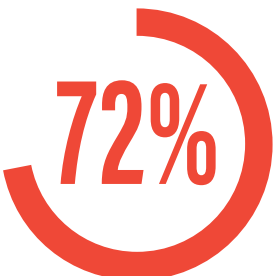
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Uber and Lyft have created a safety crisis for their drivers across country. For app-based drivers in Illinois specifically, these risks are especially high. In 2021 and 2022, almost 80 percent of app-based drivers in Chicago reported feeling unsafe at least once a month.<sup>1</sup> Because of how Uber and Lyft structure their apps, drivers don't have much choice in which rides they accept without fear of being punished by getting deactivated, regardless of how unsafe they feel. The threat of deactivation and lack of meaningful safety protections allows Uber and Lyft to squeeze more work out of their drivers for less pay, all to maximize the companies' bottom line. In the last year alone, Uber and Lyft, who comprise nearly 100 percent of the rideshare market, made a combined \$35.9B in revenues.<sup>2</sup>

To understand more about how much more severe the safety crisis for app-based drivers in Illinois relative to the rest of the country, the Strategic Organizing Center conducted a national survey of app-based drivers with the support of the Chicago Gig Alliance and the People's Lobby and compared survey responses of Illinois-based drivers to drivers nationally.

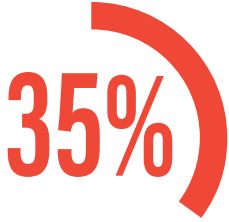


**74%** of Illinois drivers reported experiencing at least one form of threat, harassment, or assault in the last year. Across almost all types of violent behaviors named in the survey (verbal abuse, use of slurs, etc.), Illinois app-based drivers experienced higher rates than nationally.



**72%** of drivers in Illinois gave rides to passengers even though the passenger made them feel unsafe, compared to 60 percent nationally.



A large red percentage '35%' is displayed inside a red circular arc that is open on the right side.

of Illinois drivers are “extremely concerned” about deactivation and feel pushed to continue rides despite feeling unsafe. 78 percent of drivers in Illinois said they continued an unsafe ride due to some concern related to deactivation, higher than the national rate of 68 percent.

A large red percentage '62%' is displayed inside a red circular arc that is open on the right side.

Drivers in Illinois don't report instances of violence to Uber or Lyft because they believe the companies would not act and because they fear retaliation. 29 percent of Illinois-based drivers don't think the companies would investigate or provide support and 29 percent of Illinois-based drivers were concerned about deactivation, suspension or other retaliation. Of Illinois drivers who did report violent or threatening behavior to their app-based companies, **62 percent were not satisfied with the company's response.**

A large red percentage '66%' is displayed inside a red circular arc that is open on the right side.

of drivers in Illinois reported that the ability to deny or cancel rides if they feel threatened or unsafe without consequence would make them feel safer on the job.

## METHODOLOGY

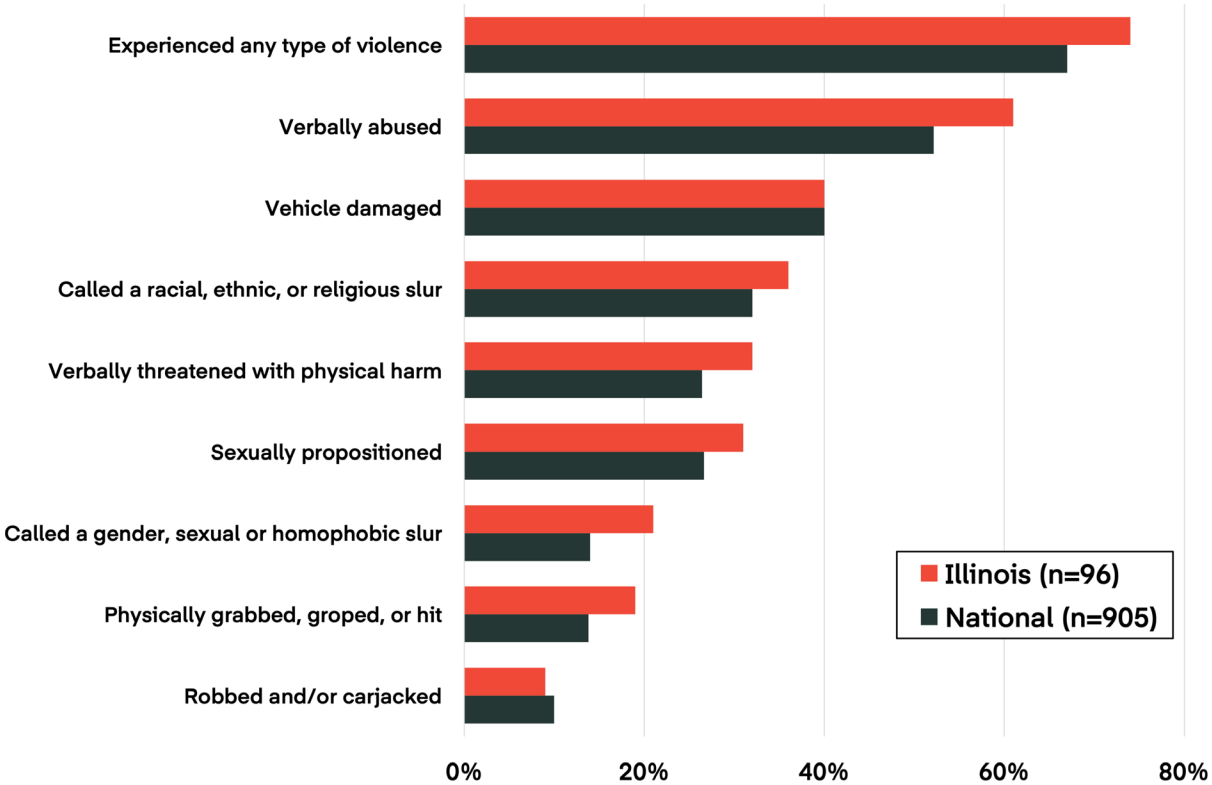
The SOC conducted a national safety survey of app-based rideshare drivers. The survey was conducted between February 23 and March 17, 2023 and utilized advertisements on Meta platforms Facebook and Instagram. A total of 906 rideshare drivers across 37 states completed the survey. Of the survey respondents, 96 identified themselves as living in the state of Illinois. Eight-nine percent of Illinois rideshare respondents reported driving for Uber, 63 percent for Lyft and two percent for other app-based rideshare employers. All the survey respondents had been active drivers within the last three months from when the survey was conducted.

# KEY FINDINGS

**1. Nearly three-in-four Illinois rideshare driver respondents (74%) have experienced some kind of violence or harassment in the last year.**

We asked rideshare drivers about whether they have experienced various forms of physical violence, harassment or threatening behavior, while working, in the last year. Nearly three-in-four Illinois respondents reported that they had experienced at least one form of violence, harassment or threatening behavior, a share of rideshare driver respondents greater than the national rate of 67 percent.

**Figure A: Rates of Violence, Harassment and Threats Experienced by App-based Rideshare Driver Respondents, Illinois and National**



As shown in Figure A, the most common violent, harassing or threatening behaviors experienced by Illinois app-based rideshare drivers in the last year included being **verbally abused (61%)**, **having vehicle damaged (40%)**, **being called a racial, ethnic, or religious slur (36%)** and **being verbally threatened with physical harm (32%)**. Further, nearly a third have been sexually propositioned and one in five have been called a gender, sexual or

homophobic slur. **Across almost all types of behaviors named in the survey, Illinois app-based drivers experienced rates that were higher than national rates.** For example, the rate of verbal abuse reported by Illinois rideshare drivers was 17 percent higher than the national rate. Similarly, the rate that Illinois rideshare drivers reported being called a gender, sexual or homophobic slur was 50 percent higher than the national rate.

**2. Seventy-two percent of rideshare driver respondents in Illinois report giving ride to a passenger(s) that made them feel unsafe and that the fear of deactivation was a motivating factor in continuing an unsafe ride.**

Over seventy percent of Illinois rideshare driver respondents reported giving a ride to a passenger that made them feel unsafe. This rate was 20 percent higher than the national rate (60%).

In addition, the survey asked respondents about why they continued rides they felt were unsafe, as shown in Table 1. Of these options, three of the concerns involved a fear of deactivation such as: (1) a negative consumer review (62%), (2) an increase in the driver's cancellation rate (54%) and/or (3) a decline in the driver's ride acceptance rate (47%). Taken together, **78 percent selected at least one of these deactivation-related reasons as the reason they continued a ride that made them feel unsafe.** This rate of deactivation concern among Illinois rideshare drivers is higher than the national rate of 68%.)

**Table 1: Reasons Cited by App-based Rideshare Drivers for Accepting Ride(s) that Felt Unsafe, Illinois and National**

Concern	Illinois	National
At least one deactivation concern	78%	68%
Concerned passenger(s) would leave negative reviews, which might lead to deactivation	62%	59%
Concerned cancellation rate would increase, which might lead to deactivation	54%	49%
Concerned about falling below allowable ride acceptance rate, which might lead to deactivation	47%	43%
Concerned passenger(s) would respond violently toward me or my vehicle	65%	57%
Concerned about losing income	60%	57%
n	68	536

Rideshare driver respondents in Illinois also expressed concerns that not continuing rides that they felt were unsafe would lead to their losing income (60%) or that passengers may respond violently towards them or their vehicles (65%).

### 3. Thirty-four percent of Illinois rideshare drivers report being “extremely concerned” about deactivation by app-based companies

Thirty-four percent of Illinois rideshare driver respondents reported being “extremely concerned” about deactivation by their app-based companies, while 32 percent reported the same nationally.

**Table 2: Rideshare Driver Concern about Threat of Deactivation by App-based Companies, Illinois and national**

Level of Concern	Illinois	National
Extremely concerned	34%	32%
n	92	815

### 4. Half of rideshare drivers do not report violent and threatening behavior to their app-based companies for a variety of reasons.

A full 49 percent of Illinois rideshare drivers did not report experiencing violent or threatening behavior to their app-based companies. As shown in Table 3, the most frequently cited reasons for not reporting violent or threatening behavior is that drivers do not believe the app companies will investigate or provide support (29%) or that the companies will actually punish drivers for reporting through suspension, deactivation or another means of retaliation (29%). A higher proportion of Illinois rideshare driver respondents indicated that these were reasons for not reporting their violent or threatening behaviors than rideshare drivers nationally.

**Table 3: App-based Rideshare Driver Reasons for Not reporting a Robbery or an Injury, Assault or Discrimination/Harassing Behavior by a Passenger**

Reason for Not Reporting	Illinois	National
Didn't think app-based company would investigate or provide support	29%	21%
Concerned app-based company would deactivate, suspend or retaliate	29%	20%
Reported an incident before and app-based company didn't help	14%	13%
Didn't know how to report an incident to app-based company	7%	11%
n	42	477

Of Illinois drivers who did report violent or threatening behavior to their app-based companies, 62 percent were not satisfied with the company's response.

## 5. Two-thirds of Illinois rideshare driver respondents (66%) report that the ability to deny or cancel rides without consequence if they feel threatened or unsafe would make them feel safer on the job.

This rate is higher than the national rate, which is 57 percent.

# CONCLUSION

App-based drivers in Illinois working for Uber and Lyft are experiencing an acute safety crisis. Drivers in Illinois are threatened and experience more violence and harm from passengers than drivers nationally, and are more willing to accept and continue unsafe rides because they can't afford to lose income. Even more drivers in Illinois than nationally identified the threat of deactivation by Uber and Lyft as the primary reason why they accept and continue these unsafe rides. Uber and Lyft need to be held accountable for creating the safety crisis for their drivers in Illinois. Drivers in Illinois especially need strong protections against the threat of deactivation and living wages so that they can access safe and reliable work while on the apps.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Quality of the Gig | An Analysis of App-Based Platform Drivers' Working Conditions in the Greater Chicago Area," University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign School of Labor and Employment Relations, January 30, 2023, p. 19., <https://lep.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/PMCR-ILEPI-Quality-of-the-Gig-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> "Uber vs. Lyft: Who's tops in the battle of U.S. rideshare companies," Bloomberg Second Measure, June 15 2022, <https://secondmeasure.com/datapoints/rideshare-industry-overview/>; "Uber Announces Results for Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2022," Uber, February 8 2023, <https://investor.uber.com/news-events/news/press-release-details/2023/Uber-Announces-Results-for-Fourth-Quarter-and-Full-Year-2022/default.aspx>; "Lyft Announces Q4'22 and Fiscal 2022 Results," Lyft, February 9 2023, <https://investor.lyft.com/news-and-events/news/news-details/2023/Lyft-Announces-Q422-and-Fiscal-2022-Results/default.aspx>