1. Teleworking Case study: Is teleworking a solution for everybody?

https://osha.europa.eu/sites/default/files/33%20_risk_assessment_for_teleworkers.pdf

Rita's workplace is far from home and she often puts in overtime. She is in charge of graphic design at her company, and is very good at her job. When her employer proposes that she telework from home, Rita is enthusiastic. All the equipment will be provided by her company and she feels that at last she has the opportunity to organise her working time to suit herself. But little by little, she notices that working conditions are not optimum. She does not have enough room and her working space is not ergonomically organised. She has trouble concentrating her attention on her work because of the activities of others in the home. Her neighbours are noisy. She has technical problems with mobile reception, which sometimes makes it hard to reach customers and work colleagues. Her working equipment is dangerous for her children. One of them had a fall when his feet became entangled in electrical wires. There is no lock on the door of the room where Rita works. Eventually, Rita finds herself working at night because it's the only way she can get enough peace. She is starting to have second thoughts about teleworking from home.

2. Digital platform work Case study: Risks of Platform-Based Food Delivery

https://cunyurbanfoodpolicy.org/news/2022/10/13/algorithmic-management-of-food-delivery-workers/

The effects of algorithm

Delivery workers are vulnerable to health and safety risks as they cycle through city streets. Because those who work for digital platforms are classified as independent contractors, not employees, they lack protections like minimum wage guarantees or paid sick days afforded conventional workers. And the apps that allocate and manage the tasks assigned to delivery workers are designed to maximize profit, perhaps at the expense of worker health and safety. Algorithmic management adds even more uncertainty on top of an already precarious food delivery sector, as jobs are assigned using formulas to speed up the pace of work. Apps do not assure platform workers of continuous tasks, and this uncertainty can pressure platform delivery workers to accept even those jobs requiring excessive effort or undue risk to avoid unpaid down time. This especially affects delivery workers who use the platforms as their primary source of income, pushing them to work longer hours and/or take on more risks to make a decent wage. The pressures to deliver more food more quickly can lead to increased stress levels, sleep deprivation, and major work-life imbalance.

Though platform work can offer flexibility in schedules, which is positively associated with worker satisfaction and mental health, schedule variability and limited control over the work process can pose problems for those who are financially dependent on continuous work.

Unlike a traditional job, where the responsibility of generating work falls on the owner or manager, platform workers are responsible for finding their own jobs, and the lack of a job or income guarantee forces delivery workers to work throughout the day to catch peak periods of demand, like lunch and dinner time.

Algorithms are also crafted to limit the ability of workers to engage in work customization, such as devising their own delivery routes or rejecting orders without being penalized. Studies have found that control over one's work protects against the negative impacts of a high workload, so the limits to worker control imposed by the algorithms likely create additional health risks.

Algorithms can add yet another layer of stress by controlling the work pace. Speed of work is a major health and safety risk factor, as workers may adopt unsafe practices to meet delivery demands, to complete more orders and thereby earn more money, and to avoid negative consequences caused by delays, such as bad reviews or low tips from customers and/or any fines or penalties imposed by the app. Workers may speed on their bikes or cars, use their phones while driving, run red lights, and skip lunch and bathroom breaks, which could lead to worker fatigue, illness, and fatal accidents. This risk is increased during inclement weather, when more orders come in and delivery workers are encouraged to keep up the pace even in these less-safe conditions. A fast work pace can also lead workers to cut corners on health and safety precautions, such as by not wearing a helmet or face mask.

Platform-based workers must also provide their own bicycles and safety equipment (e.g., helmets), yet there are no standards for their quality or condition. If workers use substandard or damaged equipment, they can be at risk of injury or death. In the winter, the failure to wear weather-appropriate gloves, face masks, shoes, and other clothing can lead to hypothermia or frostbite. Yet the delivery platforms are not responsible for maintaining and inspecting delivery equipment or providing protective gear that meets quality standards, as conventional employers typically do.

Information Asymmetry and Control of Work

Many workers believe that the platforms work against them in the way they choose not to disclose relevant information and uphold the existing information asymmetry between platforms, their algorithms, and the workers. As expressed by a member of the organization Los Deliveristas Unidos/Delivery Workers United who works as an Uber Eats delivery worker, "We [app-based delivery workers] are competing to be assigned orders through an algorithm that is not transparent and fair," forcing him and others to work through late nights, bad weather, and unsafe conditions to maximize their earnings. Platform companies withhold information such as the location, distance, and payment to be received for potential deliveries before a worker can choose to deny or accept a trip. Information asymmetry also exists in the platforms' refusal to explain the confusing rules of their algorithmic management in calculating commissions and fees. Some punish workers who receive poor ratings by deactivating them from their platforms. Lack of information can often lead app-based delivery workers to sacrifice more hours on the job and risk accepting trips that are not economically beneficial or that are in dangerous locations.

Worker Safety

Another issue raised by the delivery workers centered around assault, robbery, and accident-related safety risks that have left workers dead, injured, or unemployed for long periods without workers' compensation or health benefits.

Workers testified that they face physical violence, have experienced a physical attack, have had equipment (e.g., vehicle, helmet, GPS, cellphone) stolen while on the job, and have had work accidents resulting in physical injuries to themselves and others, equipment damage, and even death of fellow workers. During his testimony, a delivery worker of the Deliveristas Unidos spoke of being assaulted and having his motorcycle stolen while making a trip for Uber Eats last Spring. He shared that the attack left him with physical trauma and a deep-seated fear for his well-being and anxiety over the state of his family. Despite being unable to work, as a non-salaried worker he has not received compensation from the platform throughout his recovery.

A similar picture was painted by a delivery worker for DoorDash, Uber Eats, and Relay, based in Astoria, Queens, who detailed the worrying reality of app-based delivery workers. This person shared that delivery workers risk their lives daily while on the job and that frequent traffic-related accidents and robberies create a significant financial strain that can prevent struggling workers from working for weeks or months at a time, juggling medical bills and digging into savings to reinvest thousands of dollars in damaged or stolen equipment.

This was another delivery worker's experience after being involved in a car accident while on the job in January 2021 that required six months of rest, leaving his family of five without income. As an independent contractor for both DoorDash and Relay, this worker was uninsured and described having no other option but to pay his ambulance fees with money he had saved for the birth of his newborn. The frequency of these types of experiences have left platform workers afraid for their safety and that of other workers, and they attribute these incidents to the fast-paced algorithm that pushes them to take on as many deliveries as possible for earnings that they describe as amounting to less than half of the New York State minimum wage.

Racial and Gender Discrimination

Some delivery workers also shared incidents of discrimination while on the job. A Relay delivery worker and member of the NYC Food Delivery Movement/Movimiento de Repartidores explained that while on the job, he and other workers have faced various forms of harassment, such as having water thrown in his face and his bike pushed as he rode by pedestrians, which he attributed to the fact that he and his coworkers are Hispanic. This worker added that when robbed and physically assaulted, many app-based delivery workers have stopped reporting these instances altogether since they are often ignored by the police. Equally as disturbing was the harassment toward female app-based delivery workers while on the job that one worker, a mother of three children and a Relay delivery worker, described during her testimony, sharing that she has faced harassment from men who have approached her while on her bike and made inappropriate comments. Although she was only

one of only two female delivery workers presenting at the hearing, she noted that her experience with harassment is shared by other female delivery workers.