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***Uber Drivers' Working Conditions and Overall Job Satisfaction in London
Proposal.***

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Abstract:

This study investigates the relationship between working conditions and overall job satisfaction among Uber drivers in London. Although platform-based driving offers flexibility and autonomy, drivers may also experience uncertain earnings, long working hours, vehicle-related costs, safety concerns, customer-rating pressure and limited employment security. The study will examine whether these working-condition factors are associated with drivers' overall satisfaction and whether the relationship differs between driver groups, such as full-time and part-time drivers and those who depend on Uber as their primary or supplementary source of income. A quantitative research design will be used, involving a questionnaire distributed to Uber drivers operating in London. The data will measure drivers' perceptions of pay, flexibility, workload, safety, platform support, employment security and overall satisfaction. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses will then be used to identify the factors most strongly associated with satisfaction. The study is expected to contribute evidence on the quality of platform work and provide practical recommendations for improving driver retention, service availability, working conditions and driver well-being.

Introduction and background

Uber driving has become an important form of flexible work in London. Drivers may value the freedom to choose their working hours, but they can also experience challenges such as variable income, vehicle expenses, long working hours, traffic congestion, passenger behaviour, safety concerns and limited job security. Previous research suggests that flexibility can contribute positively to drivers' life satisfaction, while earnings after vehicle expenses may remain relatively low.

Uber states that eligible UK drivers receive certain worker protections, including National Living Wage adjustments and holiday pay, although drivers remain self-employed for tax purposes (Uber, 2026). This study will examine how these factors affect Uber drivers' overall satisfaction in London in 2026.

Organisational and industry context

This proposal is prepared from the perspective of a junior analyst reporting to a senior analyst. It examines whether Uber drivers' working conditions influence their overall satisfaction with driving for Uber in London. The issue is strategically important because Uber's service quality, driver availability, reputation, and ability to retain experienced drivers depend in part on the quality of the relationship between the platform and its driver workforce.

Uber drivers operate within a platform-based business model in which the mobile application allocates or facilitates journeys, processes payments, records performance and communicates with drivers. Platform work can provide flexibility, but research has also identified concerns relating to income insecurity, unpredictable

work, long hours, algorithmic management, weak social protection and unequal power between platforms and workers (Koivusalo et al., 2024). A comparative study that included London found that drivers sometimes compensate for declining earnings and rising operating costs by working longer hours. It also found concerns about commissions, disconnection, customer ratings, limited support and the difficulty of challenging platform decisions (Koivusalo et al., 2024). These issues may affect driver satisfaction, wellbeing and willingness to continue working for Uber (Koivusalo et al., 2024).

The London regulatory context adds further complexity. Private hire drivers must meet requirements relating to licensing, medical fitness, enhanced criminal record checks, English-language competence, topographical knowledge, and safety awareness (Transport for London, 2026). They also bear substantial costs, including vehicle purchase or rental, insurance, fuel or electricity, maintenance, licensing and, where relevant, London-related charges such as the Congestion Charge and Ultra Low Emission Zone costs. TfL specifically advises prospective drivers to consider income, working hours and vehicle-related outlay before entering the occupation (Transport for London, 2026)

The employment relationship is also multidimensional. In 2021, the Supreme Court judgment in *Uber BV and others v Aslam and others* supported the classification of drivers undertaking bookings for Uber London as “workers”. TfL reported that this judgment had implications for operators’ contractual relationships and obligations (Transport for London, 2021). Nevertheless, the legal classification does not automatically mean that drivers experience their working conditions as satisfactory.

Drivers may value flexibility while simultaneously experiencing financial pressure, long working hours and limited influence over fares, ratings or account decisions.

The study will examine which working conditions influence driver satisfaction and whether this varies between driver groups. Widespread dissatisfaction could reduce driver retention and availability, weaken service quality, damage Uber's reputation, and increase regulatory scrutiny. The findings will help management prioritise the most important areas for improvement.

Research Aim, Objectives and Questions

Research Aim

This research aims to examine the relationship between Uber drivers' working conditions and their overall satisfaction with driving for Uber in London.

Research Objectives

The study will

- a. Measure Uber drivers' perceptions of income, working hours, flexibility, operating costs, safety, platform support, autonomy and work-life balance.
- b. Measure the overall satisfaction of Uber drivers working in London
- c. Determine which working-condition factors have the strongest relationship with overall satisfaction

Research Questions

The study will be limited to the following three questions

- a. How do Uber drivers in London perceive their working conditions?

- b. What is the overall level of satisfaction among Uber drivers in London?
- c. Which working-condition factors are most strongly associated with overall satisfaction?

The study will also test the following hypotheses:

H1: Perceived income fairness is positively associated with overall driver satisfaction

H2: Perceived platform support is positively associated with overall driver satisfaction

H3: Perceived autonomy and flexibility are positively associated with overall driver satisfaction

Literature Review

Overall satisfaction:

Research on Uber drivers presents a complex relationship between working conditions and satisfaction. Drivers often value flexibility, independence and the ability to choose their working hours, but these benefits coexist with low employment security, variable earnings, long working hours, work-related stress and responsibility for operating costs. Therefore, overall satisfaction should not be assessed only through pay; it should also consider autonomy, work-life balance, safety, algorithmic management and access to employment protections.

Berger et al, provide important evidence from a representative survey of 1,001 Uber drivers in London. They found that Uber drivers reported higher average life satisfaction and a greater sense that their lives were worthwhile than employed and self-employed London workers, despite relatively low earnings. However, drivers also reported higher levels of anxiety. The study suggests that flexibility and control over working hours were major reasons for these positive satisfaction outcomes. Drivers who preferred flexible work generally reported greater well-being, whereas those who preferred fixed hours and employee status reported lower life satisfaction and greater anxiety. Nevertheless, the authors caution that these relationships are correlational and should not be interpreted as proof that Uber directly causes higher well-being (Berger et al., 2019).

The growth of digital platforms has changed the organisation of service work. Platform companies can match customers and workers efficiently, while workers can often choose when and where to work. This flexibility is particularly relevant to

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private hire driving because drivers may combine Uber with other platforms, employment or family responsibilities. However, flexibility can coexist with economic dependency. A driver may technically choose when to log on but still feel compelled to work during unpopular hours or for extended periods to cover vehicle and household expenses.

Koivusalo et al. (2024) describe platform work as a form of employment organised through an online platform to provide specific services to customers. Their research on Uber drivers in London, Helsinki and St Petersburg links platform work to wider issues of precarity, psychosocial stress and wellbeing. The study found that working conditions, rather than technology alone, were central to drivers' concerns. Drivers were especially concerned about pay, commissions, working hours, social protection, unfair disconnection and the lack of effective support.

This literature is useful because it challenges the assumption that app-based work is automatically flexible and empowering. However, the study by Koivusalo et al. used interviews and a relatively small qualitative sample. Its findings provide depth but cannot estimate the strength of relationships between different working-condition variables and overall satisfaction across a larger population of London drivers. The proposed research addresses this gap through a structured questionnaire designed specifically for quantitative measurement (Koivusalo et al., 2024).

Health and safety research further demonstrates how working conditions can negatively affect satisfaction. Greggo, de Lucca, Azevedo and Bandini (2022) studied 104 Uber drivers in Brazil and found that half worked at least 11 hours per day, while 24% worked seven days a week. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 79% reported reduced working hours and 96% reported reduced income. Drivers also

faced health risks and had to absorb the costs of protective measures themselves. These findings suggest that satisfaction may be weakened by financial insecurity, excessive working time, health risks and the absence of meaningful support from the platform (Greggo et al., 2022).

Literature reviews are essential for all research because they build knowledge, guide policy and practice, show evidence of effects, and, when done well, inspire new ideas and directions. They form the basis for future studies and theories (Snyder, 2019).

Job satisfaction:

Job satisfaction refers broadly to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of their work. It may involve satisfaction with pay, the work itself, management, recognition, security, relationships and opportunities. For Uber drivers, satisfaction may be influenced by both traditional employment factors and platform-specific conditions, such as app usability, algorithmic allocation, customer ratings and account deactivation procedures.

Research on London drivers has found that many value flexible working arrangements, while earnings after expenses may be lower than those of the average London worker. Reports concerning private-hire drivers have also highlighted issues such as long working hours, financial insecurity, safety risks and the cost of maintaining a suitable vehicle (London Gov, 2026).

This study will build on previous research by collecting updated evidence from Uber drivers working in London during 2026. It will consider both positive aspects, such as flexibility, and negative aspects, such as stress, costs and insecurity

Research Methodology:

The study will adopt a positivist philosophy and a deductive approach. Positivism is appropriate because the research seeks to measure perceptions using standardised questions and examine relationships between variables. The hypotheses are derived from job-satisfaction theory and existing platform-work research, then tested using survey data.

A quantitative design will be used because the research questions require measurement of the prevalence and strength of relationships. The study will use only a survey questionnaire. No interviews, focus groups, observation or secondary driver-performance data will be collected. This restriction supports consistency, reduces the time required from participants and enables anonymous participation.

Target population and sampling strategy

The target population will be adults who currently drive for Uber using a London private hire licence. Respondents must be aged 18 or above, have driven for Uber in London during the previous three months and consent voluntarily to participate.

A non-probability purposive sampling strategy will be used because a complete public sampling frame of Uber drivers is unlikely to be available. The questionnaire may be distributed through driver associations, online driver communities, social-media groups, personal networks and suitable driver support organisations.

Snowball recruitment may also be used, with participants invited to share the survey with other eligible drivers.

The proposed target is approximately 100–150 usable responses. This would provide sufficient data for descriptive analysis and multiple regression in a small academic project, although the results would not necessarily represent every Uber driver in London. Quotas will be considered for driving experience, weekly hours and vehicle arrangement so that the sample is not dominated by one group.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire will contain the following sections:

- Eligibility and consent
- Perception of working conditions
- Overall satisfaction
- One optional open-ended question

Most attitudinal items will use a five-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The survey should take approximately five to eight minutes to complete. Questions will be written in clear English, avoid technical jargon and use one idea per statement. Sensitive questions about income will use broad categories rather than requesting exact earnings.

The independent variables will be grouped in the following way:

- Income fairness and financial security
- Hours, flexibility, and work-life balance

- Operating cost
- Safety and customer behaviour
- Ratings and complaints

The dependent variable will be overall satisfaction, measured through several items including general satisfaction, whether driving meets expectations and whether the driver would recommend the work to others. A separate item will measure intention to continue driving for Uber.

Data Analysis:

Questionnaire results will be analysed using percentages, averages and comparisons between groups. For example, the study may compare satisfaction among full-time and part-time drivers or among vehicle owners and vehicle renters.

Ethical considerations

Participation will be voluntary, and every participant will receive information about the purpose of the study before taking part. Participants will provide informed consent and may withdraw from the research without giving a reason.

No participant's name, Uber account details, exact address or identifiable passenger information will be collected. Data will be stored securely and reported anonymously. The study will also avoid presenting individual earnings or personal experiences in a way that could identify a particular driver.

Business relevance and practical implications:

This study could inform decisions on driver engagement, operations, service quality, risk management and regulatory relations. If income fairness and operating costs are

the main drivers of dissatisfaction, Uber could review fare structures, commission transparency, incentives and information about net earnings after expenses. Any changes should ensure that incentives genuinely raise net income rather than simply encouraging longer hours.

If platform support and fair procedures matter, Uber could improve response times, complaint handling, explanations for ratings and appeals against account restrictions. Clear communication may build trust even when not every decision can be changed

If long hours and poor work-life balance are linked to dissatisfaction, the company could provide clearer earnings information, fatigue guidance, rest prompts and incentives that do not promote unsafe driving. If safety is a key concern, improvements could include faster emergency help, stronger passenger checks, clearer reporting and better responses to abuse.

The results could also support segmentation. Part-time drivers may value flexibility more, while those relying on Uber as their main income may prioritise stable earnings and protection. Vehicle renters and owners may face different cost pressures so targeted support may be more effective than one-size-fits-all policies.

Conclusion

This proposal outlines a study of the working conditions and overall job satisfaction of Uber drivers in London. By combining questionnaire data with driver interviews, the research will provide both measurable results and detailed personal accounts. It will focus on income, expenses, flexibility, safety, stress, support and work-life balance to identify the main factors shaping drivers' experiences.

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