**A GIG’S A GIG**

**1 Work in pairs. Look at the dictionary definition below. Using this, discuss what you think “the gig economy” might mean. Give examples. It might help if you think about how regular and secure work is for a singer, comedian, etc.**

**gig** (noun) [C]

1 A **gig** is a live performance by someone such as a musician or a comedian

**2a Complete the sentences using the words below.**

courier gig laid off pit

get sacked labour trade union sack

1 A lot of workers don’t even realise they have a legal right to join a ……………….. .

2 Some bosses threaten to …………. workers if they refuse to work overtime.

3 Sometimes people ……………. for going on strike.

4 I work as a ………….. and deliver about 100 packages a day – at 90p a time.

5 My dad used to be a miner. He worked down in a local ………… until it closed down.

6 Traditionally, we’ve imported people to do most of our manual ……….. .

7 When the factory closed down, over 300 workers got ……………… .

8 She got paid £1000 to play online games for 50 hours. Not a bad ………., eh.

**2b Work in groups. Discuss these questions.**

a Can you think of three different reasons why people **get sacked**?

b And why might people **get laid off**?

c What kind of work might does **manual labour** include?

d What are the advantages of belonging to **a trade union**?

e If someone is a member of a trade union, would you expect them to-

* do a certain type of job?
* be young or old?
* vote for a particular political party?

f What else would you expect an employer to give you apart from your basic salary?

**3a You are going to watch** [**a video by a journalist called John Harris**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNxFNoCKkMU&feature=emb_title)**.**

**Watch the first part set in London and answer these questions.**

1. What does John Harris ask the couriers/drivers about? How do they reply? What point does Harris make about people’s opinions in the past?
2. What company does Max work for? What does she deliver?
3. Are she and her colleagues asking for the same things you suggested above?
4. What else are they asking (or NOT asking) for?
5. How many deliveries does the second courier do every day?

6 What does the 3rd courier say happened to one of his colleagues?

What happens to them in cases like this?

7 What two groups does Harris identify in the street?

8 What union does Harris visit? Who do they represent?

9 Which person from earlier in the video is a member?

10 What do the union say is the problem with labour laws in Britain?

**3b Compare your ideas with a partner.**

**4a Now watch the second part of the video. Complete these notes.**

The first old man in Bolsover used to work 1…………………………….. .

What was good about was the 2…………………………….. .

He used to belong to the 3…………………………….. .

The second man interviewed used to vote for 4…………………………….., but stopped because he didn’t 5…………………………….. .

The young man who used to work for Sports Direct in Shirebrook got 6…………………………….. .

Him and his girlfriend then had to 7…………………………….. .

None of the three young people knew what 8…………………………….. was.

They also didn’t know 9…………………………………….. .

**b Compare your ideas with a partner. Who has better notes?**

**5 Work in groups. Discuss these questions.**

* How do you feel about the things you heard in the video?
* How similar would you say the situation is in your country?
* Do you know anyone who’s in a similar situation to anyone in the video?
* What other ways can you think of to tackle the problems outlined in the video?

**ANSWER KEY & TEACHER’S NOTES**

Note: the video you’ll be using in this lesson needs to be queued up and viewed in sections.

Detailed notes below.

As a lead-in, you could get the class to read the dictionary definition of **gig**, explain that this is the most common meaning, and ask the whole group if anyone has been to any gigs recently – or went to any memorable gigs in the past.

**Exercise 1**

Put students in pairs. Give them a couple of minutes to discuss what they think the gig economy might involve. Then elicit ideas from the whole group. Clarify that it’s a relatively recent term that’s only really started being used in the last five or six years. According to one definition, it’s “a labour market characterised by short-term contracts or freelance work, as opposed to permanent jobs". Depending on your point of view, it’s either a working environment that offers flexibility with regard to employment hours, or a very modern form of exploitation that offers very little workplace protection.

You could ask for examples of jobs that form part of the gig economy – couriers, taxi drivers, anyone employed by the big platforms like Uber, but also writers, freelance designers, IT specialists, etc.

**Exercise 2a**

Explain that you’re going to look at some of the key vocabulary from a video about the gig economy that students will watch later in the lesson. Give students a few minutes to try and complete 1-8. Tell them they can use dictionaries or ask you if they have problems with specific items.

When 60-70% of the class seem to have finished, put students in pairs to compare their answers. Then elicit the answers from the class and write them up.

**Answers**

1 trade union

2 sack

3 get sacked

4 courier

5 pit

6 labour

7 laid off

8 gig

As you’re going through the answers, you might also want to clarify meaning and give extra information about usage. For example:

1 A **trade union** is an organisation of workers that aims to improve pay and conditions at work, so you can *join* or *belong to a union*. The union can *negotiate on your behalf*. Sometimes *union members vote to go on strike* – to refuse to work as a protest.

2 If you **sack** someone, you tell someone they can no longer work at their job. The big bosses sometimes sack football managers if their team is doing really badly.

3 If you **get sacked**, it’s passive, so it happens to you – you lose your job, usually after doing something wrong or breaking some rules.

4 A **courier** is someone whose job is to deliver parcels and documents. You have *cycle couriers* and *motorbike couriers*. It can also be a verb. You can *courier documents across town*.

5 A **pit** is a mine under the ground – especially a coal mine. We often talk about *pit towns* – towns where mines are, or used to be. People used to *work down the pit*.

6 **Manual labour** (or manual **work**) is work that involves using your hands. It’s sometimes called *blue-collar work* (as opposed to *white-collar office work*). If we talk about *organised labour*, it means groups of blue-collar workers who form unions and organise themselves.

7 If you **get laid off** – or **made redundant** – you’re told to leave your job, usually because there’s no more work for you. You may *get some redundancy pay*.

8 If you earn decent money for a short bit of work we do, we often say *it’s a good gig* or *it’s a nice little gig* or *it’s a well-paid gig*.

**Exercise 2b**

Give students a minute to read through the questions. tell them to ask about any questions they don’t understand. Then put them in groups and give them a few minutes to discuss these questions. Stress that there are no fixed correct answers.

As students are talking, monitor and help out with new language, where necessary. You may want to get some better versions of things students are trying to say up on the board so you can come back to this as part of your round-up. It’s always good to gap the odd word here and there and then see if you can elicit the missing words from the group. You can include the first letter of the missing words if you want to make it easier. For example:

*He got sacked from his last job after getting c………… stealing from the till.*  (caught)

*She got sacked from her last job for gross m……………… .* (misconduct)

One other way to round up might simply be to ask the whole group for their ideas about each question. Tell the class they’ll see more about d-f in the video they’re now going to watch.

**Exercise 3a**

Tell the class they’re going to watch part of a video by a journalist called John Harris. He writes for the Guardian, a centre-left newspaper, and he’s been travelling round the country talking to working people about their lives, making a series of videos called ANYWHERE BUT WESTMINSTER as he goes.

The first part of the video is filmed in London. Here’s the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNxFNoCKkMU&feature=emb_title>

Note that you’ll need to queue the video up as this section runs from 1:25 to 6:10.

Give students a few minutes to read through questions 1-10 so they know what they’re listening for.

Play the video extract.

**Exercise 3b**

Give students a few minutes to compare their notes / answers in pairs.

Then round up by getting ideas from the whole group.

**Answers:**

1 He asks if they’re self-employed. They are.

He also asks if they get holiday pay or sick pay or anything like that. They don’t.

He comments that in the past, these things were seen as a basic part of the job.

2 Max works for eCourier picking up and delivering medical samples.

3 No fixed answer to this as it depends what students came up with earlier.

4 They want minimum wage, paid annual leave, enrolment on pension schemes and protection from discrimination. They’re not even asking for sick pay, redundancy pay, parental leave, protection from unfair dismissal, and so on.

5 Between 35 and 40.

6 He almost lot two fingers (after someone opened a car door on him).

They don’t get sick pay so they lose wages, they lose money.

7 Office workers in suits and posh shirts . . . and service workers (who are dressed more causally, and moving around at speed).

8 The IWGB – the Independent Workers Union. They represent, in this instance, cycle couriers.

9 Max.

10 The laws exist, but they’re not enforced (certainly not in the way that immigration laws are, for example).

**Exercise 4a**

Tell the class they’re going to watch the next part of a video. This part was filmed in Debryshire, about 150 miles north of London.

Note that this section runs from around 6:10 to 10:45.

Give students a few minutes to read through the notes so they know what they’re listening for.

Play the video extract.

**Exercise 4b**

Give students a few minutes to compare their notes / answers in pairs.

Then round up by getting ideas from the whole group.

**Answers:**

Note that there are often several possible answers here.

1 down the pits / mines . . . as a miner . . . in the mining industry

2 comradeship / togetherness . . . the fact everyone watched your back and stuck together

3 the NUM, the National Union of Mineworkers

4 Labour / for the Labour Party

5 like the leader, Jeremy Corbyn . . . he couldn’t relate to him . . . he didn’t like Labour’s position on Brexit.

6 laid off / made redundant

7 give up / move out of the flat they were renting (because they could no longer afford it).

8 a trade union

9 what the Labour Party stands for, what policies the Labour party have

**Exercise 5**

Put students in small groups of 3 or 4. Let them discuss the questions in groups. Monitor and help out with new language, where necessary. Get some better versions of things students are trying to say up on the board so you can come back to this as part of your round-up. Gap some words and try to elicit the missing words from the group.

**Homework**

Tell the class to read this blog post on the gig economy and make a record of any new words / collocations / chunks / phrases. You could begin the next class by getting them to compare what they noted down.

<https://www.lexicallab.com/2017/01/phrase-of-the-day-the-gig-economy/>