

**AUGUST 2024**

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**HEAT  
WATCH**

# Impact of Extreme Heat on Gig Workers: A Survey Report

Conducted by Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU) & HeatWatch



Credit : [Thred.](#) : India's gig workers grapple with climate change

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# Introduction

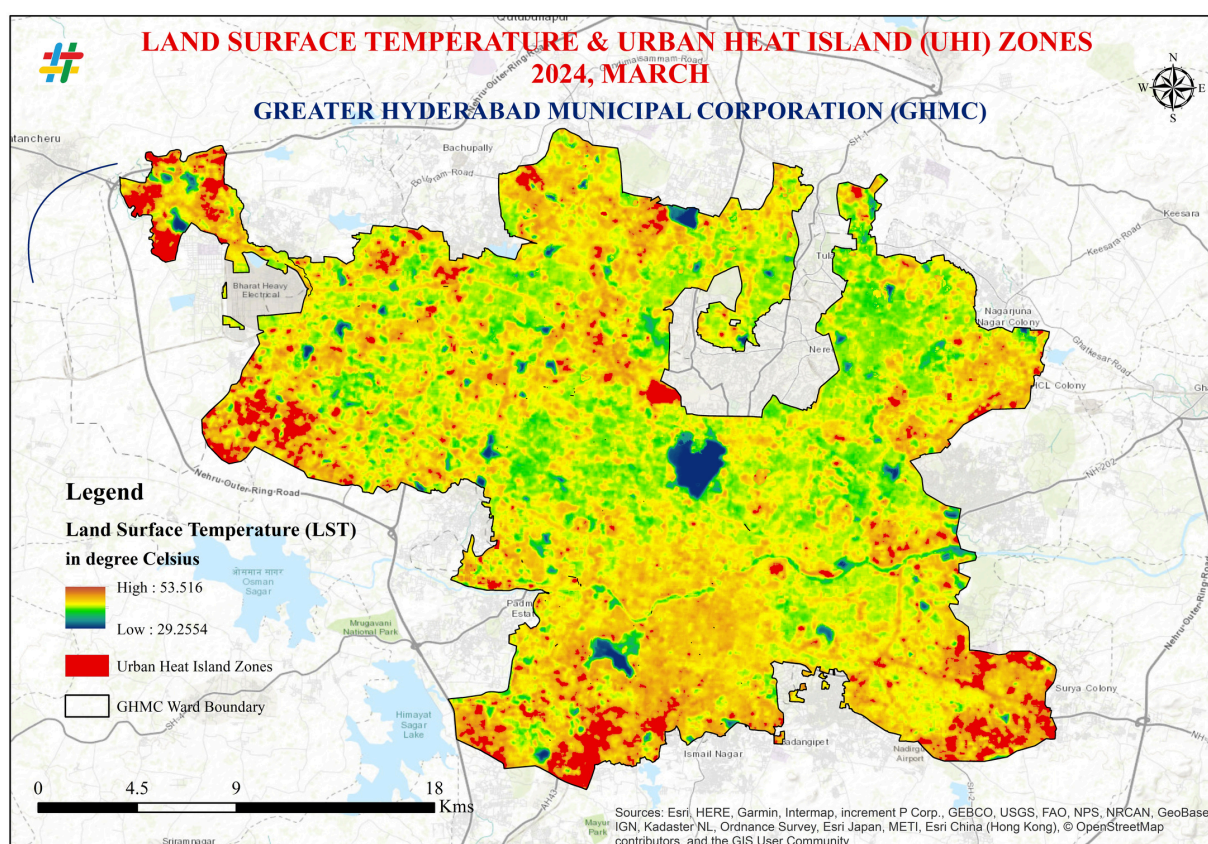
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This summer, India experienced the longest-ever heatwave in its recorded history. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) highlighted that India witnessed 536 heat wave days, the highest since 2010 when the country witnessed 578 heat wave days (PTI, 2024). Between March 1 and June 18, India reported over 40,000 suspected cases of heatstroke and at least 100 confirmed deaths this year (Patel & Agarwala, 2024). However, an online data-gathering exercise conducted by HeatWatch showed over 600 deaths. The intensity, frequency and duration of extreme heat and heat waves will continue to rise due to the recent increase in climate change impacts and the urban heat island (UHI) effect in cities – a phenomenon due to which land surface temperatures in certain areas rise relative to surrounding areas due to urbanisation and anthropogenic activities (Coleman, 2024; HUL Foundation, 2024; U.S. EPA, 2023).

Recent analysis by researchers at Hyderabad Urban Lab revealed that in March 2024, urban heat islands in the city of Hyderabad were concentrated in northwestern (Patancheruvu and Bandlaguda wards), western (Gachibowli ward), southern (Mailardevpally ward) and southeast (BN Reddy Nagar, Hayathnagar and Mansoorabad wards) regions of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) (HUL Foundation, 2024) (see Figure 1). With the demands placed on extant city limits by rapid urbanisation and concomitant implications such as heatwaves and urban heat islands, extreme heat and prolonged spells of heat pose a significant threat to the health and well-being of urban populations. Workers engaging in outdoor work for long hours, such as gig and platform-based work, street vending, and other such occupations, are the most affected. With no health insurance and job security, heat impacts their health as well as their livelihoods.



**Figure 1: Land Surface Temperature and Urban Heat Island (UHI) zones in Hyderabad, March 2024**



Source: UHI phenomenon calculated using Land Surface Temperature data from LANDSAT and extracted using Google Earth Engine. Map by Sabarinath D of Hyderabad Urban Lab.

It is estimated that India has 7.7 million gig and platform workers, a figure which is expected to rise to 23.5 million by 2029–30 (NITI Aayog, 2022). Another study, by Boston Consulting Group and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, suggests that the gig economy can create 90 million non-farm jobs in the long run, up to 1.25% of the country's GDP (Augustinraj & Bajaj, 2021). The growth in the gig economy's workforce is driven by the rise of platform companies such as Uber, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato, Blinkit, Grofers, Dunzo, Big Basket, UrbanCompany, Delhivery, and Shadowfax, among others (Joshi, 2023). These companies offer essential services that are quick, easy and flexible, making them convenient for many urban residents – as they are available at the click of a phone app. However, the gig economy's rapid growth is marked by informality and related challenges for those who work in it (Nair, 2022; Medappa, 2021). Gig and platform workers experience long hours of work, low wages with income fluctuations, no legal employment contracts, poor social protection, limited work security, no health insurance, absence of paid leave, and lack of access to amenities. A multi-city report by the University of Pennsylvania and the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT) reveals that 83% of cab drivers and 78% of delivery workers work over 10 hours a day, with 43% of cab drivers

reporting a net monthly earning of ₹15,000 or less, and 34% delivery workers reporting a net monthly earning of about ₹10,000 (PAIGAM & University of Pennsylvania, 2024).

The impacts of heat waves have been particularly pronounced in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Between 2012–2022, a total of 3596 people died due to heat strokes in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, according to National Crime Records Bureau data compiled by the authors (NCRB, n.d.). In May 2024, Hyderabad recorded a temperature of 47.2°C, the hottest in Telangana this year (Kashyap, 2024). Additionally, IMD issued a red alert in 14 out of the 33 districts in the state as temperatures crossed the 45°C mark (ibid.). Amidst such sweltering heat wave conditions, gig and platform workers such as cab and auto drivers, and bike delivery workers, among others, are badly impacted due to high temperatures. With limited access to water, shade or washrooms, they are also at great risk of various illnesses such as dehydration, heat exhaustion, kidney failure and even heat stroke.

# **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

In June 2024, HeatWatch and Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU) conducted a survey to collect data on the implications of extreme heat waves on the working lives of gig and platform workers in Hyderabad, Telangana. This report highlights our key findings and aims to address the impact of extreme heat waves on the health, productivity and livelihoods of gig and platform workers in Telangana state specifically, and in India, more generally. The report also identifies and highlights the gaps in the policies and practices of platform companies and government regulations that exacerbate heat-related risks for gig and platform workers.



[Photo | Sriram R \(The New Indian Express – Food delivery agents in Bengaluru run against time, brave rain, sun\)](#)



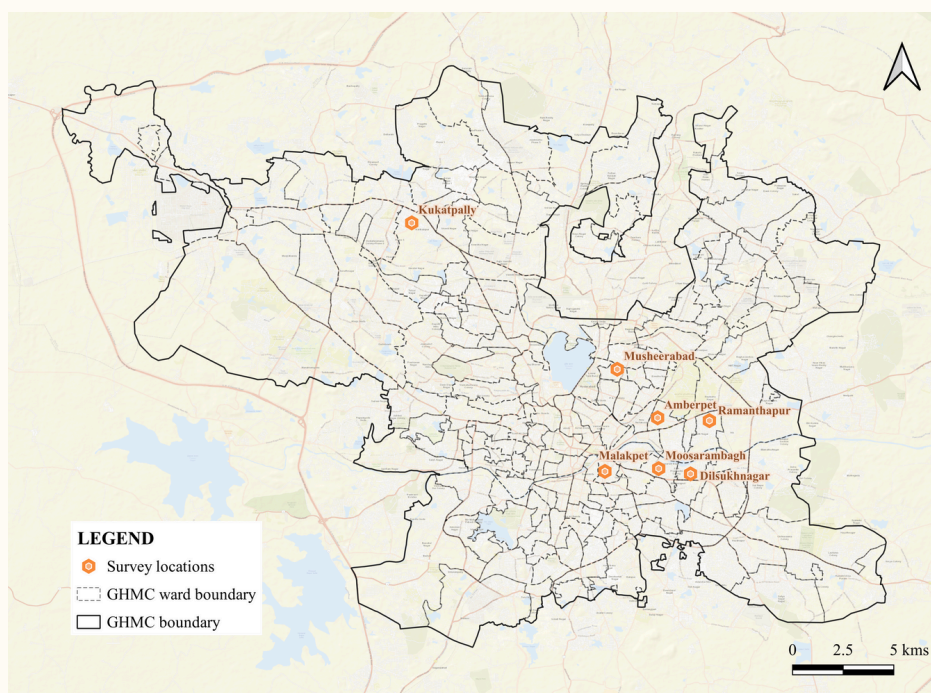
# DATA & METHODS

This report draws upon a sample survey of 166 gig and platform workers in Hyderabad city, conducted in the month of June 2024 by volunteers of Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU) in association with HeatWatch India. The survey followed a purposive sampling approach—covering workers across varied sectors in the city’s gig and platform economy, such as ride-hailing, food and grocery delivery, on-demand at-home services, and logistics, among others. Most surveyed workers were affiliated with TGPWU as members and were contacted by the volunteers over telephone. Additionally, the team surveyed a few workers not affiliated with the union by meeting workers outside dark stores (of grocery delivery apps) and at waiting hubs of restaurants (to meet food delivery workers), and while riding in bike taxis and autos. For these in-person surveys, survey locations included Amberpet, Ramanthapur, Musheerabad, Malakpet, Moosarambagh, Dilsukhnagar and Kukatpally. These locations, however, do not indicate the wider geography of work platform/gig in the city, as the workers surveyed overall (including telephonic surveys) worked across the city, especially cab, auto and bike taxi drivers.

The choice of in-person survey locations was a practical one, driven by considerations of proximity to the union’s office in Amberpet, and those that could be visited by the volunteers in a reasonably short timeframe. The only exception to this is Kukatpally in the north-western part of Hyderabad.

Additionally, this report draws on discussions at a Heat Health Awareness Session conducted in May 2024 at the TGPWU office by HeatWatch and TGPWU, and from the first episode of TGPWU’s podcast titled “Gig Workers ki Awaaz” (TGPWU, 2024), which focused on the implications of rising heat for gig and platform workers in the city.

**Figure 2: Map of in-person survey locations in Hyderabad**

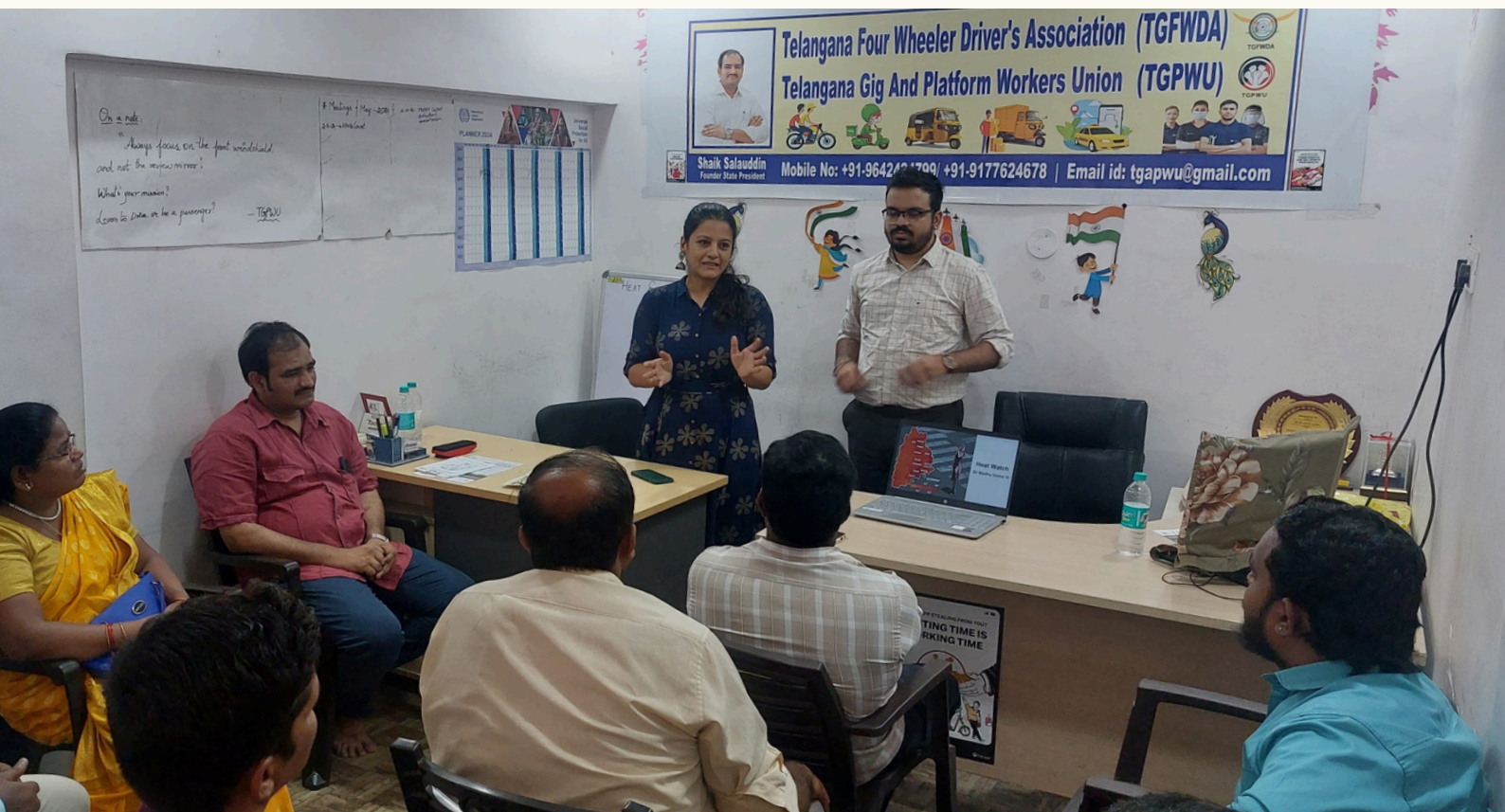


Source: Map by Sabarinath D of Hyderabad Urban Lab. Ward boundaries as per [Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation \(GHMC\)](#).

# HEAT HEALTH AWARENESS SESSION

In May 2024, HeatWatch and Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union held a heat health awareness session. It was led by a medical practitioner, Dr Madhu Vamsi, practising at Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad, and attended by 15 gig workers, working as cab drivers, bike taxi workers, and delivery workers.

**Content of the session:** Dr. Vamsi covered a variety of issues in the session, such as the challenges of extreme heat for people's health, types of heat-induced illnesses, symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke, and how to identify signs and take necessary precautions, as well as offer first-aid if needed. He explained the difference between heat stroke which is a potentially fatal condition and heat exhaustion which includes excessive sweating, dizziness, trembling hands, and vomiting (WHO, 2024). He noted that heat stroke is characterised by a lack of sweat and a body temperature above 100 degrees Celsius. The doctor also explained that to help someone affected by heat stroke, they must be made to lie under the shade in an open area, with a fan or cooling equipment to cool them down, and their legs should be raised 5-6 inches to allow the flow of blood, and a wet towel should be used to pat them down.





# HEAT HEALTH AWARENESS SESSION

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The session also covered the disproportionate impact of extreme heat on kidneys through kidney stones as well as fungal infections, itching, and rashes due to accumulated sweat and lack of hygienic facilities. Heat does not impact everyone equally, and even among those most affected, Dr. Vamsi explained that pregnant women, children, the elderly and those with pre-existing diseases are most vulnerable.

He further explained that in order to protect ourselves from heat, it is important to cover our heads, not step out in peak heat in the afternoon hours and preferably work more during the night, wear light-coloured clothes, sip water every 15 minutes and urinate frequently. One's diet is crucial and needs to include more fruits, salads, vegetables, and hydrating drinks like lime/lemon water, coconut water and buttermilk. Alcohol and caffeinated drinks can flush out water and dehydrate the body, and workers were informed of the need to limit or avoid their intake. Dr. Vamsi also addressed mental health challenges and how they can get exacerbated due to extreme heat.

Post the session, participants asked questions and shared about the realities of their working lives. When asked if gig workers could skip workdays because of excessive temperatures, they said that they cannot because they work paycheque to paycheque and must be able to earn a certain income every day to be able to make ends meet. Further to the question of basic survival, it is important to note that algorithms structure the everyday routines of work for gig and platform workers through a phenomenon that has come to be termed as “algorithmic management” (Griesbach et al., 2019; Wood et al., 2019; De Neve et al., 2023; Nair, 2023). This entails the deployment of digital tools and data analytics by web-based/ mobile platform companies to determine, direct, and monitor the behaviour of those working for the platform. In location-based work such as ride-hailing, food delivery and home services, platforms flash targets, i.e., the number of rides, food delivery orders or service orders to be completed by the workers to receive their daily earnings and incentive pay (Anwar et al., 2021; Raval, 2020). Relatedly, this entails fulfilling certain conditions such as nil to few order cancellations, staying logged in to the app for a specific number of hours, and maintaining good customer ratings—failing which workers' profiles stand the risk of being deactivated from the platform (Gandini et al., 2019; Medappa, 2021). Therefore, even as Dr. Vamsi's advice of working later during evenings to avoid peak heat hours was well-noted; in reality, gig workers have little control over their actual workday. This is compounded by the absence of any form of job security or social protection for the workers, rendering them vulnerable and precarious.

# HEAT HEALTH AWARENESS SESSION

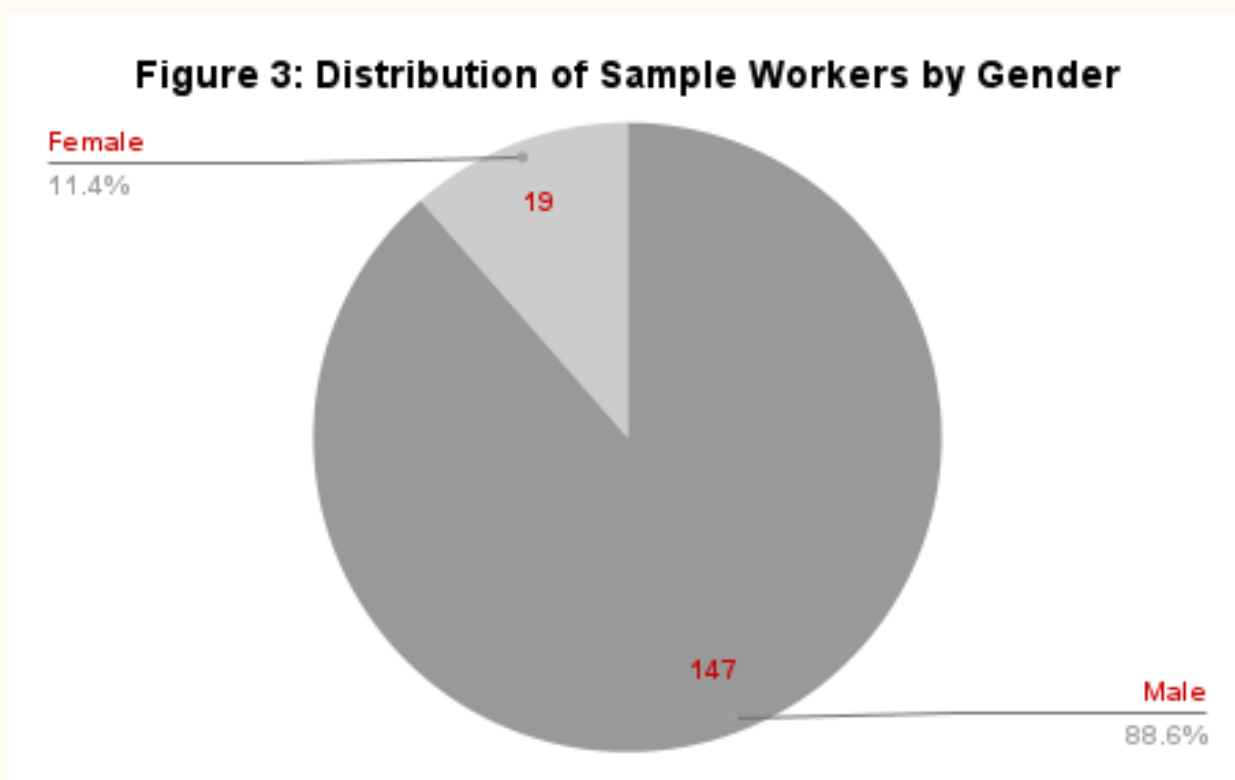
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When asked what can be done to improve working conditions, a variety of issues came up:

1. Gig workers discussed that there is a need for more awareness of heat-related illnesses and challenges as well as available medical facilities, especially in high-heat areas such as airports where most taxis are parked. In this regard, TGPWU president Shaik Salauddin stressed upon the union's long-standing demand for shade at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA).
2. Responding to Dr. Vamsi's advice of taking rest between peak heat hours of 12 pm and 3 pm, workers argued for the need for necessary compensation from platforms or the government, since foregoing three hours of work every day would entail a loss of pay in the range of ₹400–500.
3. Gig workers suggested that heat should be included in accidental hazards and not as a natural hazard. The importance of heat insurance was also discussed.
4. Gig workers said that they do not find it easy to visit government hospitals. Reasons include poor response, long waiting hours, and doctor absentees.
5. Mental health challenges because of heat were also discussed. A driver mentioned that because of extreme heat, they end up working at night. But staying awake all night leads to further irritation and sleepiness. "In such an environment," the driver asked, "if there is an accident, then who is really responsible? Can the driver solely be held responsible?"
6. Gig workers agreed that heatstroke needs to be raised as an issue. Platform companies and governments need to be held accountable, especially as the platforms charge money for safety kits.
7. Workers found information about first aid symptoms of heat stroke, heat exhaustion, illnesses, advice on diet, and clarification about how kidney stones are caused because of heat, useful. They also learned how there are special heat units in government hospitals which are freely accessible.

# PROFILE OF WORKERS SURVEYED

Following the discussions at the heat health awareness session, HeatWatch and TGPWU conducted a survey of 166 gig and platform workers in Hyderabad in June 2024. The survey covered gig and platform workers across a range of platforms, such as Uber, Ola, Rapido, Swiggy, Zomato, Porter, Blinkit, Grofers, Big Basket, Dunzo, Swiggy Instamart, Shadowfax, Delhivery, and Urban Company, among others. Out of the 166 survey responses received, 88.6% (147 workers) were from male workers while 11.4% (19 workers) were from female workers.

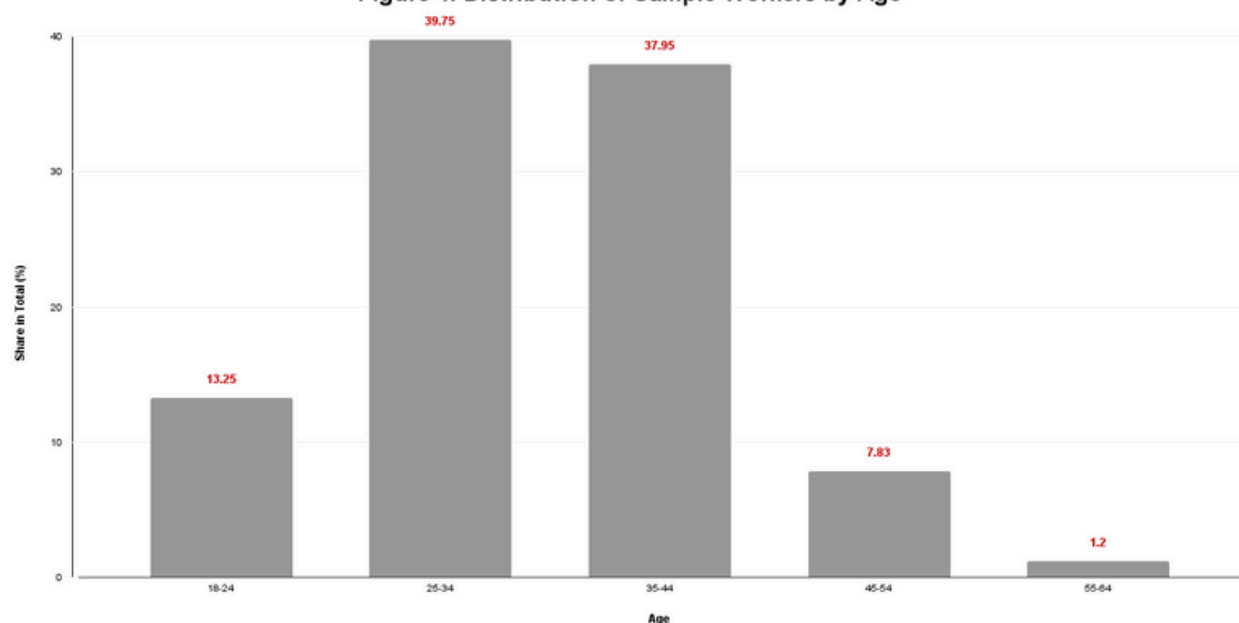


Source: Sample Survey

13.25% of the survey respondents belonged to the 18-24 years age bracket. The majority, i.e., 77.71% were in the age group of 25-44 years, with 39.75% comprising the 25-34 years age range and 37.95% comprising the 35-44 years range. Those aged between 45-54 years comprised 7.83% while the smallest group comprising 1.20% of workers were aged between 55-64 years.



**Figure 4: Distribution of Sample Workers by Age**

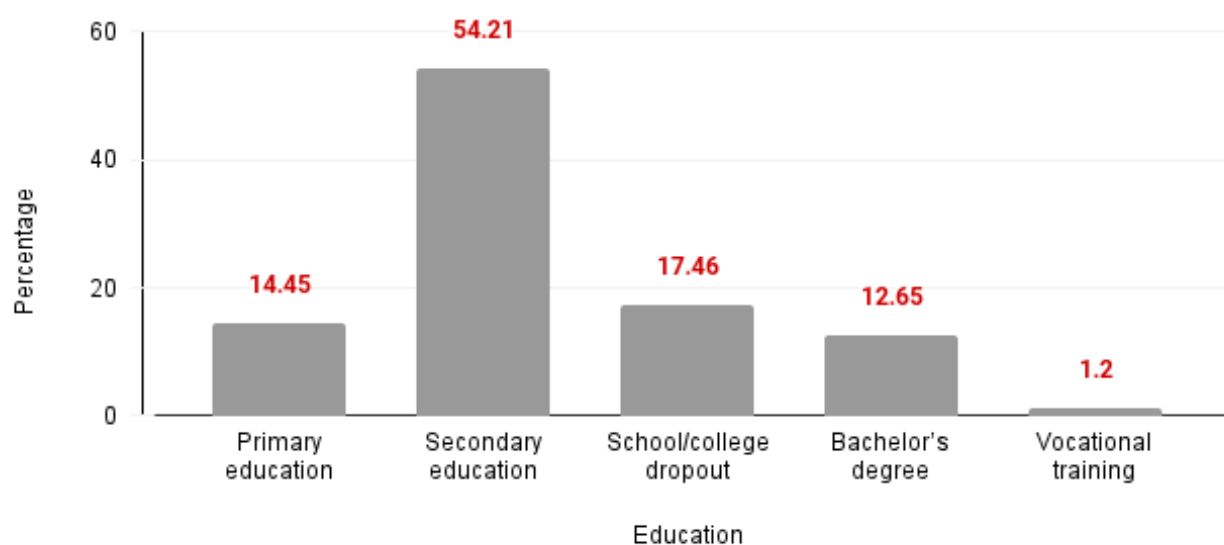


Source: Sample Survey

The survey asked workers to self-report their education levels. The majority of the workers, well over 50%, reported that they completed their secondary education. About 13% of the workers reported to have completed a bachelor's degree. Only a miniscule share of workers, i.e., 1.2%, reported to have received vocational training.

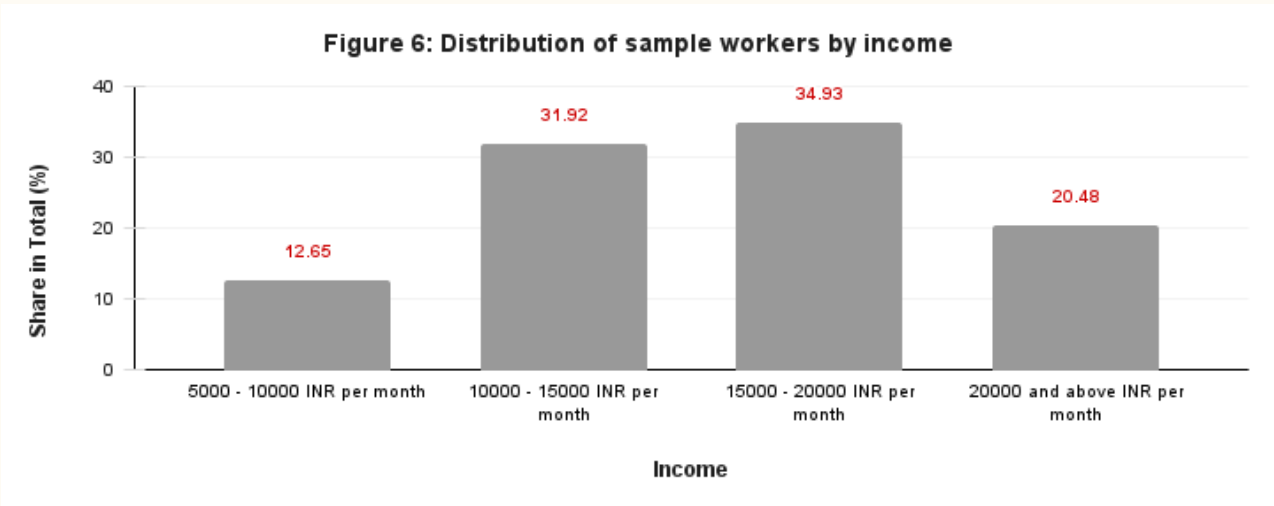
14.45% of the respondents reported that they studied until the primary level. As many as 17.46% reported dropping out of school/college and being unable to complete their education (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Distribution of Sample Workers by Education Level**



Source: Sample Survey

In terms of monthly earnings, a majority of workers surveyed, about 35%, reported that they earn between ₹15000 and ₹20000 per month. This is closely followed by another group of workers, about 32%, who reported earning between ₹10,000 and ₹15,000 per month. About 20.48% of the surveyed workers reported earning ₹20000 and above per month, while 12.65% of workers reported monthly earnings between ₹5000 and ₹10000.



Source: Sample Survey

# SURVEY FINDINGS:

This section presents key findings from the sample survey, alongside insights from the Heat Health Awareness Session and TGPWU’s podcast “Gig workers ki Awaaz” (TGPWU, 2024). We begin by looking at the number of hours spent working outdoors by workers, as that has a direct bearing on how heat impacts them on an everyday basis. Over 55% of surveyed workers reported working more than 8 hours outdoors, while close to 38% of workers reported working outdoors between 6 to 8 hours every day. A small share of workers, i.e., 5.42% reported working less than 6 hours outdoors.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Workers by Number of Hours Spent Working Outdoors

Outdoor Working Hours	Number of workers	Share in total (%)
Less than 6 hours	9	5.42
Between 6–8 hours	63	37.95
More than 8 hours	92	55.42
Other	2	1.20
Total	166	100

Source: Sample Survey

We further asked workers if they were likely to miss work or work fewer hours than normal as a result of working in extreme heat, to which we received a mixed bag of responses. While nearly 49% of workers reported that working in very hot weather likely reduced their productivity, about 46% of workers responded in the negative. About 7 workers (4.21%) responded more ambivalently to the question. One argued that reporting to a customer’s location “on time” was of paramount importance regardless of the weather. Another noted that extreme weather does sometimes delay workers who are typically required to reach a given location “on time”. It is important to note here that the notion of “on time”, in the context of gig/platform work, is not one of time in terms of a standard working day, but one that is estimated by the app/platform in a dynamic way through live location tracking. This remark of being delayed from being “on time” then, appears to be more a comment on how degrees of heat impact the rhythms of gig work itself rather than a single worker’s productivity.



**Table 2: Impact(s) of Extreme Heat on Workers' Productivity**

<b>Likelihood of reduced productivity</b>	<b>Number of workers</b>	<b>Share in total (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>48.79</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>46.98</b>
<b>Depends</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4.21</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Sample Survey

**Table 3: Access to Basic Amenities among Surveyed Workers**

<b>Access to Basic Amenities</b>	<b>Number of workers</b>	<b>Share in total (%)</b>
Cold and clean drinking water	96	57.83
Clean washrooms	52	31.33
Cooling facilities (like fans)	32	19.28
Rehydration solutions (like ORS, lemon water, or Torani)	25	15.06
Rooms for short rest breaks	26	15.66
Skin infection relief medicines (e.g., prickly heat powder)	10	6.02
Shade (e.g., trees, tarp tents, sun shade sails, etc.)	28	16.87
Heat Protective clothing and footwear	11	6.63

Source: Sample Survey

Note: Calculated as a share of total number of surveyed workers, i.e., 166. The total number of workers does not add up to 166 as the survey question allowed for multiple responses.

Working long hours outdoors is further compounded by the lack of basic amenities for gig and platform workers in the city. As Table 3 shows, well over 40% of workers do not have access to cold and clean drinking water, and nearly 69% lack access to clean washroom facilities. During the heat health awareness session, the lack of drinking water spots in the city emerged as a major issue afflicting gig and platform workers. Workers noted that they often need to go to cold water stands across the city to access water as the water in the bottles that they carry from home heats up easily. But such stands often do not allow them to (re)fill water in their bottles. Workers also report having to buy water sometimes.

The lack of sanitary public toilets too emerged as another major issue during this session. Even as the GHMC has reportedly installed several toilet blocks, they are either locked or are not adequately maintained. Workers reported that they end up relieving themselves in the open. They also mentioned how they often have to pay for accessing a toilet as well as parking charges at the facility. Few workers reported that they end up relieving themselves in the open. Delivery workers are not even allowed to enter hotels and restaurants to use washrooms and have to wait outside to collect the food parcels.

Additionally, the survey finds that workers lack access to a range of basic amenities, including but not limited to, cooling facilities, physical spaces for rest, rehydration solutions, and skin infection relief medicines (see Table 3). In the absence of facilities for outdoor work then, workers have to rely on basic coping strategies to protect themselves from the impacts of extreme heat, such as resting under a tree shade or waiting inside their own cabs (see Box 1). Relatedly, 46.98% of the surveyed workers reported being unaware of any guidelines or initiatives for heat protection by the platform companies.

Critically, workers lack access to heat-protective clothing and footwear. On the contrary, the dark colour of the uniforms of delivery workers (across several food and grocery delivery platforms) reportedly causes more heat absorption. Riding on motorbikes/scooters for very long hours in the heat furthermore causes a lot of sweat, which ironically is compounded with the use of essential protective equipment like helmets. Excessive sweat is reported to adversely impact drivers' grip over the bike/scooter handles and their ability to apply the brakes in a timely manner (TGPWU, 2024).

### Box 1: Workers' Coping Strategies During Extreme Heat

- Rest in shaded areas, e.g., under a tree shade
- Carrying water and ORS from home
- Drinking buttermilk, lemon water, glucose and hydrated drinks
- Rest and not work during hours of extreme heat
- Rely on publicly free or NGO-provided water filters or buy water if needed
- Wear a cap to protect themselves
- Wait inside their own cabs
- Rely on air conditioning inside one's cab

Source: Sample survey and TGPWU (2024)

**Table 4: Workers Reporting Symptoms of Working in Extreme Heat**

Symptoms while working in extreme heat	Number of workers	Share in total (%)
Heat exhaustion: A person may experience fatigue, weakness, dizziness, and nausea when exposed to extreme heat for long hours	86	51.81
Heat stroke: It is a medical emergency characterised by high fever, unconsciousness, rapid heartbeat, dry or damp skin	50	30.12
Dehydration: Arises when a person doesn't have enough body fluids to function normally. Marked by thirst, dry mouth, less frequent urination and weakness	45	27.11
Sunburn and other skin issues: Exposure to prolonged heat may cause skin redness, swelling, blisters, fungal infections, rashes, etc.	30	18.07
Chronic Kidney Disease/Kidney Disease: A person's kidney may get affected over time and symptoms may include swelling in the feet and ankles, urinating too much or too little, muscle cramps, appetite loss, shortness of breath	11	6.63
Water retention or Heat Edema: Heat Edema is when your body gets too hot and holds onto extra water. Symptoms include swelling of hands and feet, stiffness/cramps/tired legs, and weight fluctuations	12	7.23
Stomach or gastrointestinal issues: This may include acid reflux, indigestion, stomach cramps, and bowel problems like diarrhoea.	27	16.27

Source: Sample Survey



**Note:** Calculated as a share of total number of surveyed workers, i.e., 166. The total number of workers does not add up to 166 as the survey question allowed for multiple responses.

Around 52% of the surveyed workers reported experiencing heat exhaustion as a result of working in extreme heat, followed by 30% of workers who reported experiencing a heat stroke. About 27% of surveyed workers reported experiencing symptoms of dehydration, while 18% of workers reported experiencing sunburn and related skin issues. About 15% of workers reported experiencing stomach or gastrointestinal issues. About 7% reported experiencing kidney-related symptoms, while roughly another 7% reported experiencing heat edema (Table 4). Significantly, a large proportion of workers, about 48% reported that they experienced heat-related illness symptoms once or twice in two months, while about 20% reported experiencing symptoms once or twice a month (Table 5).

Among the 19 women workers surveyed, 13 reported that working in extreme heat made menstrual cramps and related symptoms worse. 4 women workers reported that they experienced increased Urinary Tract Infections (UTI) while working in extreme heat

**Table 5: Distribution of Workers by Symptom Onset Time**

Symptom Onset Time	Number of workers	Share in total (%)
Every day	8	4.81
Once or twice a week	18	10.84
Once or twice a month	34	20.48
Once or twice in two month	80	48.19
Other	26	15.66
Total	166	100

Source: Sample Survey

Despite such a significant share of the surveyed workers reporting to have experienced heat exhaustion and heatstroke, less than half of them, about 47% reported receiving a medical diagnosis for their symptoms. An equally significant share, about 45% reported not receiving any medical diagnosis for their symptoms. Several workers attributed this to financial or time constraints, while one worker cited access to health insurance as a barrier to seeking medical diagnoses. About 14 workers (8%) responded that they did not experience any symptoms (Table 6).

**Table 6: Workers Reporting Receiving a Medical Diagnosis for Symptoms**

Received medical diagnosis for symptoms	Number of workers	Share in total (%)
Yes	78	46.99
No	74	44.58
Not applicable (Did not report experiencing any symptoms)	14	8.43
Total	166	100.00

Source: Sample Survey

The survey sought workers' opinions on policy measures to improve their working conditions. About 65% of workers believe that the government should provide clean water and toilets. An equally significant number, around 55% believe that the government should create areas of shade and rest throughout the city. Following this, about 45% of surveyed workers believe that the government should provide health insurance, which should extend to heat-related problems. About 43% of surveyed workers called for a break in working hours between the peak heat hours of 12 pm and 3 pm, with compensation (see Table 7).

**Table 6: Workers Reporting Receiving a Medical Diagnosis for Symptoms**

Which of the following would make the biggest difference in improving your working conditions?	Number of workers	Share in total (%)
The city government should provide water and clean toilets	108	65.06
The city government should create shaded rest areas	92	55.42
Break in working hours between 12 pm and 3 pm with compensation	72	43.37
Government/Platforms should provide doctor-on-call services	59	35.54
Government/Platforms should provide health insurance (including heat-related problems)	75	45.18
Early temperature/weather alerts by platform-based companies	35	21.08
A repository of affordable medical services in the city	31	18.67

Source: Sample Survey

# CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The climate crisis is driving crippling heat everywhere. The United Nations Secretary-General recently announced a call for action on extreme heat. Recognizing that extreme heat is deadly and disrupts economies and societies, the call for action highlights the protection of workers as a key area of intervention (UNEP, 2024). This report has emphasised the impact of heat stress on a growing section of urban India's working population, i.e., gig and platform workers. Drawing on a combination of survey data and qualitative insights, the report highlights the extent of heat stress among platform and gig workers in Hyderabad. Our survey findings show that a vast majority of workers report experiencing heat exhaustion (52%) and heat stroke (30%) as a result of working in extreme heat. Women workers are disproportionately impacted: 13 of the 19 women workers surveyed reported that working in extreme heat made menstrual cramps and related symptoms worse. 4 women workers reported that they experienced increased Urinary Tract Infections (UTI) while working in extreme heat.

Our findings also reveal that resources to stay cool and hydrated are limited. The city also considerably lacks resting areas, green spaces and public spaces to allow opportunities for rest. Gig workers reported buying water, resting inside their own cars, or simply being unable to find spots to cool down or hydrate themselves. Many workers indicated that platform companies do not provide essential healthcare services like a doctor on call or health insurance. Additionally, platform companies have been reluctant to offer paid sick leaves to gig and platform workers.

The lack of affordable healthcare facilities combined with possible loss in wages makes it difficult for gig and platform workers to take out the time for a medical consultation.

In terms of workers' opinions on ways to improve working conditions, about 65% of workers believe that the government should provide clean water and toilets; while around 55% believe that the government should create areas of shade and rest throughout the city. A notable demand that emerged from about 43% of workers was to pause working hours between 12 and 3 pm of peak heat hours and offer compensation. Additionally, 45% of the surveyed workers opined that the government should provide health insurance that extends to heat-related illnesses. Our findings underscore the importance of not just incorporating green infrastructure into urban planning and policymaking but also of providing social protection to gig and platform workers (as to other segments of precarious urban workers), to help them cope with the challenges of debilitating health risks and losing out on their livelihoods due to extreme heat.



Based on our ongoing research, survey findings and discussions with gig and platform workers, HeatWatch and Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union recommend these actions:

- 1. Declare heatwaves as a notified disaster:** The NDMA should declare heatwaves as a notified disaster under the National Disaster Management Act (2005).
- 2. Improve urban infrastructure:** Municipal authorities (in the case of Hyderabad, GHMC) should ensure access to clean drinking water, oral rehydration solutions, and hygienic toilets within a 2-kilometre radius. They should also establish shaded rest areas with seating and cooling facilities, drinking water stations, washrooms, and phone charging points. These should be attached to existing public facilities (airports, railway and bus stations, hospitals, educational institutions, mosques and temples, and markets) with adequate parking facilities for drivers and delivery executives. In places where there are no existing infrastructures, temporary facilities with adequate toilets, washrooms, seating and drinking water fountains should be provided.
- 3. Make urban infrastructure accessible:** Attention should be paid to making facilities for relief from heat (and rains as the case may be) accessible to all gig and platform workers. Locations of all such facilities for relief from heat and rain should be made available to workers through the apps.
- 4. Regulate working hours:** Platforms should implement mandatory breaks between 12 pm and 3 pm during extreme heat conditions with compensation, and offer flexible work hours without penalties.
- 5. Provide heat awareness training:** The state government and platform companies must provide mandatory heat awareness training programs for gig and platform workers educating them about the risks, precautionary steps and first-aid measures details for heat-related illnesses.
- 6. Offer doctor-on-call services:** The state government and platforms should provide doctor-on-call services to provide immediate first aid and medical consultation for those affected by heat-related illnesses.
- 7. Provide comprehensive health insurance:** The state government and platform companies should provide broad health insurance that covers heat-related illnesses and conditions.
- 8. Supply protective work gear:** Platform companies must provide lightweight and breathable work outfits along with protective gear to minimise heat exposure for gig and platform workers.
- 9. Install early warning systems:** Platform companies must make provisions for installing early warning systems highlighting the weather and temperature conditions of the day. This would help warn gig and platform workers about impending heat conditions and help them plan their workday accordingly.

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# Impact of Extreme Heat on Gig and Platform Workers: A Report

HeatWatch & Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU)

## Contributor's information

### Study Design and Conceptualisation:

Apekshita Varshney  
Shivani Das  
Shaik Salauddin  
Eesha Kunduri

### Survey Team:

Faisal Shaik  
Mohammed Saberuddin  
Sumer Ahmed  
Satwika Raju

### Report Writing and Data Analysis:

Shivani Das  
Apekshita Varshney  
Eesha Kunduri  
Khushboo Singh

### Report Design:

Dhanashree Pathade

### Maps:

Sabarinath D

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# Annexure: Survey Questionnaire

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## List of questions

### A. Profile of Workers

#### 1. Gender

- Male
- Female

#### 2. Age

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 and above

#### 3. Education

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- School and college dropouts
- Bachelors degree
- Vocational training

#### 4. Income

- 5000 – 10000 INR per month
- 10000 – 15000 INR per month
- 15000 – 20000 INR per month
- 20000 and above INR per month

#### 5. Occupation (short answer type)

#### 6. Name of the Platform Company

- Uber
- Ola
- Swiggy
- Zomato
- Blinkit
- Grofers
- Dunzo
- Big Basket
- Porter
- UrbanCompany

- Delhivery
- Shadowfax
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## **B. Questions to understand the impact of heat on workers' health and productivity**

**1. On average, how many hours per day do you spend working outdoors in the months of March and June?**

- Less than 6 hours
- Between 6–8 hours
- More than 8 hours
- Other

**2. Does working in very hot weather make it more likely for you to miss work or work fewer hours than normal?**

- Yes
- No
- Other

**3. Do you have access to the following during your outdoor work? (Check all that apply)**

- Cold and clean drinking water
- Clean washrooms
- Cooling facilities (like fans)
- Rehydration solutions (like ORS, lemon water, or Torani)
- Rooms for short rest breaks
- Skin infection relief medicines (e.g., prickly heat powder)
- Shade (e.g., trees, tarp tents, sun shade sails, etc.)
- Heat-protective clothing and footwear
- Other

**4. In case you do not have access to the following then how do you manage or protect yourself from the extreme heat? (short-answer type)**

**5. Are you aware of any guidelines related to heat stress/illnesses or initiatives taken by your company to support your work in the summer?**

- Yes
- No
- Other

**6. How often are you able to rest during a work day when temperatures are over 40 degrees Celsius?**

- 10 minutes every hour
- 10 minutes every two hours
- 10 minutes every four hours
- Twice in eight hours
- Once in eight hours

**7. Are you able to maintain a healthy lifestyle by doing the following? (Check all that apply)**

- Eating regular, balanced meals
- Drinking enough water and staying hydrated throughout the day
- Getting 7–9 hours of sleep per night and waking up feeling well-rested
- Staying calm, having a clear mind and feeling balanced

**8. Have you ever experienced any of the following symptoms while working in extreme heat? (Check all that apply)**

- Heat exhaustion: A person may experience fatigue, weakness, dizziness, and nausea when exposed to extreme heat for long hours
- Heatstroke: It is a medical emergency characterised by high fever, unconsciousness, rapid heartbeat, dry or damp skin
- Dehydration: Arises when a person doesn't have enough body fluids to function normally. Marked by thirst, dry mouth, less frequent urination and weakness
- Sunburn and other skin issues: Exposure to prolonged heat may cause skin redness, swelling, blisters, fungal infections, rashes, etc.
- Chronic Kidney Disease/Kidney Disease: A person's kidney may get affected over time and symptoms may include swelling in the feet and ankles, urinating too much or too little, muscle cramps, appetite loss, shortness of breath
- Water retention or Heat Edema: Heat Edema is when your body gets too hot and holds onto extra water. Symptoms include swelling of hands and feet, stiffness/cramps/tired legs, and weight fluctuations
- Stomach or gastrointestinal issues: This may include acid reflux, indigestion, stomach cramps, and bowel problems like diarrhoea

**9. If yes, did you get a medical diagnosis for your condition?**

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable (haven't experienced symptoms)

**10. If not, why were you not able to seek a medical check-up or consultation with a doctor?**

**11. How long have you been experiencing these symptoms?**

- Every day
- Once or twice a week
- Once or twice a month
- Once or twice in two month

**12. Additional questions for women workers: Does working in extreme heat conditions make menstrual cramps or other symptoms worse?**

- Yes
- No

**13. Additional questions for women workers: Have you experienced increased Urinary Tract Infections?**

- Yes
- No

**14. Which of the following options would make the biggest difference in improving your working conditions? (Select all that apply)**

- The city government should provide water and clean toilets
- The city government should create shaded rest areas
- Break in working hours between 12 pm and 3 pm with compensation
- Government/Platforms should provide doctor-on-call services
- Government/Platforms should provide health insurance (including heat-related problems)
- Early temperature/weather alerts by platform-based companies
- A repository of affordable medical services in the city

# Thank You

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