

## Driving Low-Income Mothers to Greater Success: The Impact of Ridehailing on Income and Employment

**Purpose:** For over 50 years, social scientists have shown that spatial mismatch (where people live versus where they work) prevents many lower-income Americans from attaining higher incomes and higher levels of participation in the labor force. The introduction of ride-hailing technologies throughout American cities offers a more flexible and convenient mobility option than public transportation. The research team wanted to explore whether subsidizing ride-hailing services to the poor would enable better access to employment, training, and social services and whether it could raise labor force participation, generating social benefits that outweigh the costs.

**Approach:** The team began by executing a field experiment that could determine the impact of access to the ridehailing technology for the geographically isolated urban poor on employment outcomes. The project team is in the process of recruiting up to 650 mothers with children under the age of 18 who lack reliable access to a personal vehicle and were seeking better employment. Half of the participants will be assigned to a control group, who will have limited access to ridehailing. The other half will be provided with substantially greater access to free ridehailing services over a limited period.

**Key Findings:** Because the research is still ongoing, the team cannot definitively answer the impact of additional mobility on employment outcomes. However, they can provide preliminary evidence showing the effects of free Uber rides on the geographic mobility of the subjects, which appears to be substantial. Project surveys also produced information on how the program participants are using the additional geographic mobility provided, for example 80% reported using the service to take themselves or family members to medical services.

**Conclusion:** As the work continues, the research team will expand the randomized control trial. While smartphone technology cannot tell us much about wage gains, it can help infer the impact of treatment on geographic mobility. To infer the impact of socioeconomic mobility, the partnership with and additional data collected by Allegheny County DHS will provide a supplement to self-reported data.



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### Project Record:

- <https://ppms.cit.cmu.edu/projects/detail/283>

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