

# Empowering Inclusive Work\*

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March 2026

## Abstract

Can AI improve workplace outcomes for workers with disabilities? We examine the relative performance of deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) workers on one of China's largest food-delivery platforms. Pre-AI, DHH workers are slower than non-disabled workers and have worse customer ratings, although they supply more hours to the platform and are less likely to quit. Midway through our data, the platform suddenly introduces an AI-based intelligent outbound calling system designed to improve communication for DHH workers. Using a difference-in-differences design comparing DHH and non-disabled workers before and after the AI tool, we find that AI increases the speed and productivity of DHH workers, especially on tasks involving customer interaction; substantially reduces negative customer reviews; and increases labor supply and retention. AI eliminates one-third of the disability hourly pay gap and significantly increases the profitability of DHH workers for the platform.

**Keywords:** AI, productivity, disability, personnel economics, gig work, deaf or hard of hearing  
**JEL Codes:** M50, J14

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\*We thank David Autor, Heski Bar-Isaac, Gordon Dahl, Chiara Farronato, Peter Kuhn, Xiang Hui, Rafael Lalive, Sarah Miller, and Imke Reimers for helpful comments, as well as seminar participants at Beijing, Bocconi, Cornell, CUHK, EIEF, Gothenburg, Guelph, Lausanne, NBER Labor Studies, Shanghai, SUNY Buffalo, Toronto, Toronto Rotman, UCR, UCSB, Wisconsin, and Zurich. We also thank Xiaonan Zhu, Weiyue Zhang, Ruibo Sun, Yaqi Du, Yu Xu, and Yibing Xia for excellent research assistance. We thank Schmidt Sciences for their support. Any opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the focal Platform.