

# Uber hit with rape lawsuit, ATO crackdown and taxi driver rage, but its global expansion continues unabated

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*Uber has been accused of putting young women in harm's way.*  
Dana McCauley and wires

**UBER has been hit with a new lawsuit, with two alleged sexual assault victims accusing the company of placing them in harm's way.**

The complainants argue that Uber markets its services to young women who have been drinking, while failing to conduct adequate background checks on its drivers, [according to CNET](#).

It's the latest in a string of legal challenges that has the controversial ridesharing company fighting battles on multiple fronts.

One of the women was allegedly raped in a car park after booking an Uber home from a bar in Charleston, South Carolina.

The other young woman alleges that an Uber driver took a detour before groping and forcibly kissing her.

The 62-page complaint filed yesterday in San Francisco's US District Court seeks an injunction that could force Uber to overhaul its safety measures and crack down on drivers, who the company classifies as independent contractors, [CNET reports](#).

The women are reportedly seeking unspecified damages for negligence, fraud and misrepresentation.

Uber drivers have been implicated in dozens of alleged sexual assaults around the world — including a 51-year-old Perth man charged with indecently assaulting a 20-year-old female passenger in June, [as reported by WA Today](#).

This is despite the fact drivers must pass through a series of background checks before being able to use the platform.

An Uber spokesman [told CNET](#) the company had permanently banned both drivers.

“Our thoughts remain with the victims of these two terrible incidents,” the spokesman said.

“We proactively worked with law enforcement in Massachusetts and South Carolina at the time to share information and aid their investigations.”

Chinese police have paid visits to Uber offices in at least two Chinese cities including Guangzhou and Chengdu this year, as the company plots its \$1 billion expansion into dozens more cities in the world's most populous country.

And a French court has postponed the trial of two Uber executives who face criminal charges of illegally organising taxi services through UberPop, the French version of UberX.



Pierre-Dimitri Gore-Coty, general manager for western Europe of California-based Uber, and Thibaud Simphal, manager of Uber France, arrive at court in Paris on September 30. Picture: AP/Michel EulerSource:AP

Pierre-Dimitri Gore-Coty and Thibaud Simphal could face up to two years in prison and up to 300,000 euros in fines if they are found guilty, [the New York Times reports](#).

Their trial has been stood over until mid-February to give their legal team time to examine computer evidence that was seized during raids at the company's Paris headquarters.

The French government last year passed legislation making ridesharing illegal for drivers who do not have a professional license to pick up paying customers.

Meanwhile, two cab drivers have been charged over Monday's targeted attacks against Uber drivers in Brisbane.

One of the victims was allegedly told "F\*\*\* Uber, f\*\*\* you, you're taking away our business" before he was assaulted, the Brisbane Magistrates Court heard this morning.

The taxi drivers, aged 26 and 29 from Calamvale, were allegedly part of a group who assaulted two Uber operators at Fortitude Valley and Kangaroo Point, along with a motorist they mistook as a driver with the ridesharing app.

The duo will appear in Brisbane Magistrates Court on October 9, charged with a string of offences including assault occasioning bodily harm, stealing and unlawful entry of a vehicle.



Uber has enraged taxi drivers around the world, including in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where taxis blocked a main thoroughfare during a protest yesterday. Picture: Nacho DoceSource:Reuters

The Australian Taxation Office is about to start trawling through Uber drivers' bank accounts looking for undeclared income.

The taxman will use data matching software to investigate up to 15,000 drivers, Business Insider reports, in its latest bid to drag the company kicking and screaming into the tax system.

Assistant commissioner Michael Hardy told Business Spectator drivers could avoid trouble by getting their affairs in order now.

"We want to make sure everyone knows what needs to be done and only after that if people are still resisting doing what needs to be done, out of fairness we'll take corrective action," Assistant Commissioner Hardy said.

Ironically, the ATO has reportedly not ruled out using the ridesharing service for its own employees, a scenario that aptly illustrates Uber's disruptive power.

The company has also thumbed its nose at those who believe it should pay tax on money earned in Australia, confirming in submissions to a federal inquiry send profits offshore.

Uber told the Senate corporate tax avoidance inquiry that their Australian operations merely provide support services to parent companies based in the Netherlands and Ireland, where company tax rates are lower, the SMH reports.

Its drivers were forced to get ABNs and register for GST in August, pending the outcome of a legal battle over whether the 10 per cent goods and services tax should apply to its rides.

Uber has raised prices to cover the levy pending its Federal Court appeal, arguing that the ATO ruling is in conflict with rules governing other sharing economy platforms like Airbnb,

which does not have to collect GST until they turnover \$75,000 a year.

The ACT last month became the first jurisdiction in the world to legalise ridesharing, passing new laws that will regulate the market and reduce taxi license fees in compensation.