

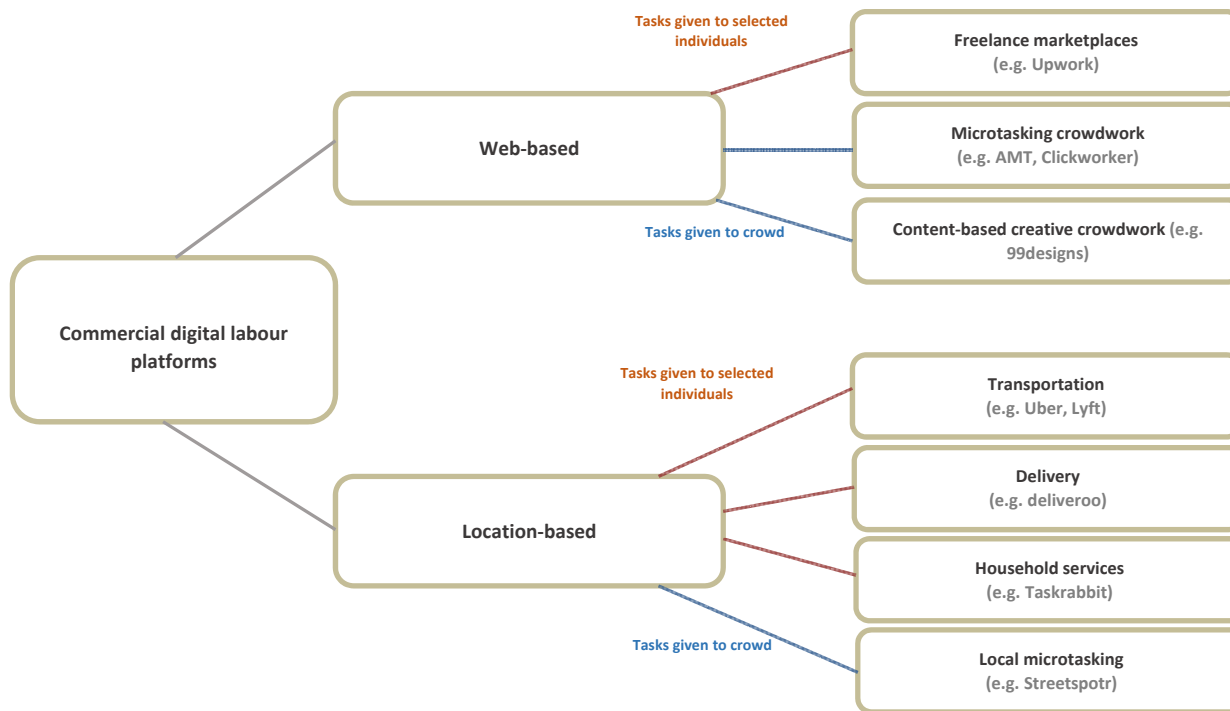


Digital labour platforms: Towards decent work in the online world

Janine Berg
International Labour Office

Meeting of the working group of the XX Inter-American Conference of Labour
Ministers (CIMT)
Quito, Ecuador
December 3, 2019

What is work on digital labour platforms?



Digital labour platforms: Design is not neutral



Choudary (2018) – design and working conditions:

1. Price setting – does the worker set the price or the platform?
2. Ability to encourage repeated exchange – can clients return to the worker?
3. Structure of the reputation system – does it improve market exposure or is it merely a source of discipline?

But other issues as well: Transparency, fee-charging, dispute resolution

OII: Online Labour Index



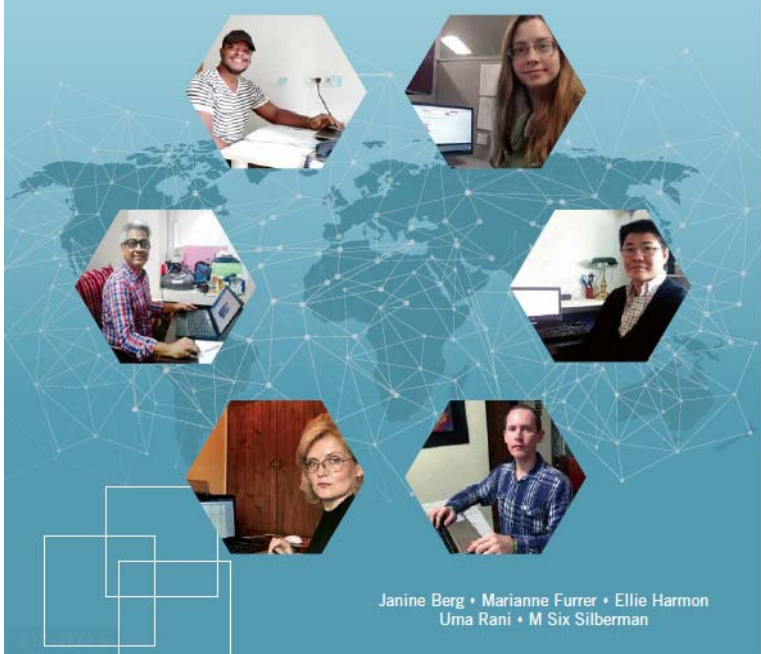
Activity on 5 largest English-language platforms expanded by 1/3 between 2016 and 2019.

Digital labour platforms and the future of work

Towards decent work
in the online world



International
Labour
Organization



Janine Berg • Marianne Furrer • Ellie Harmon
Uma Rani • M Six Silberman



International
Labour
Office

WORK ON DIGITAL LABOUR PLATFORMS IN UKRAINE

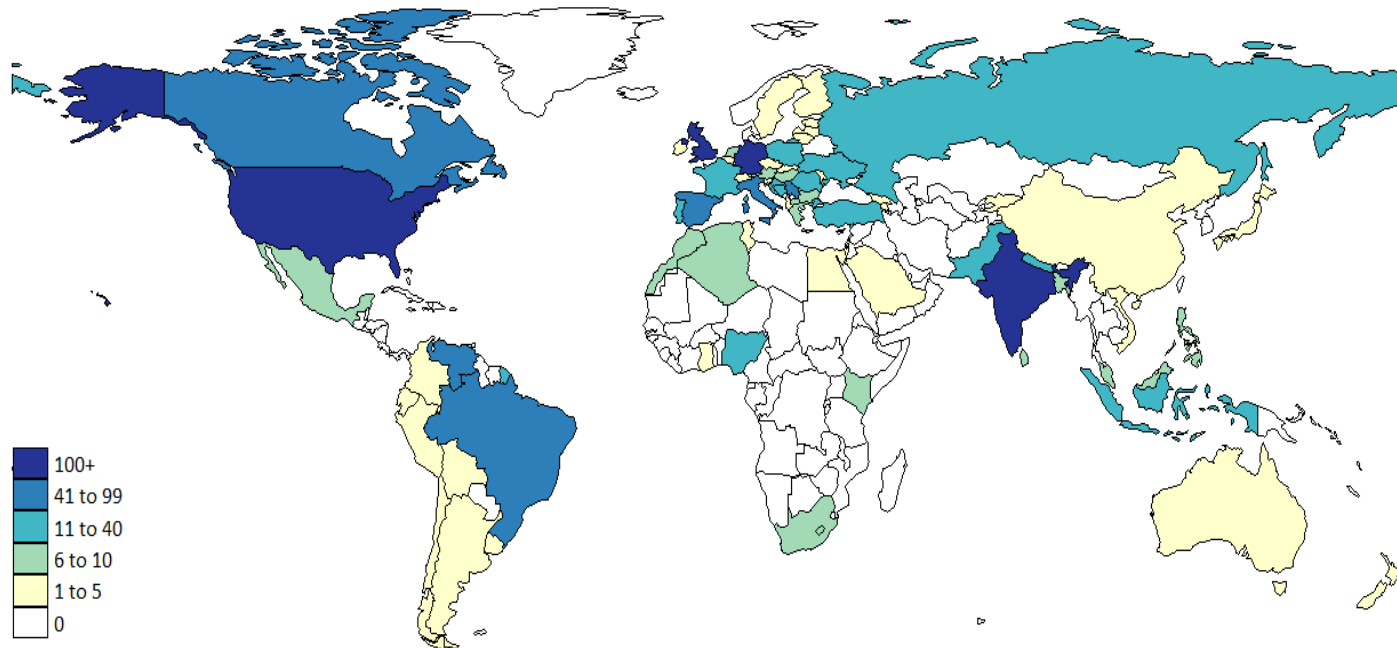


ISSUES
AND POLICY
PERSPECTIVES



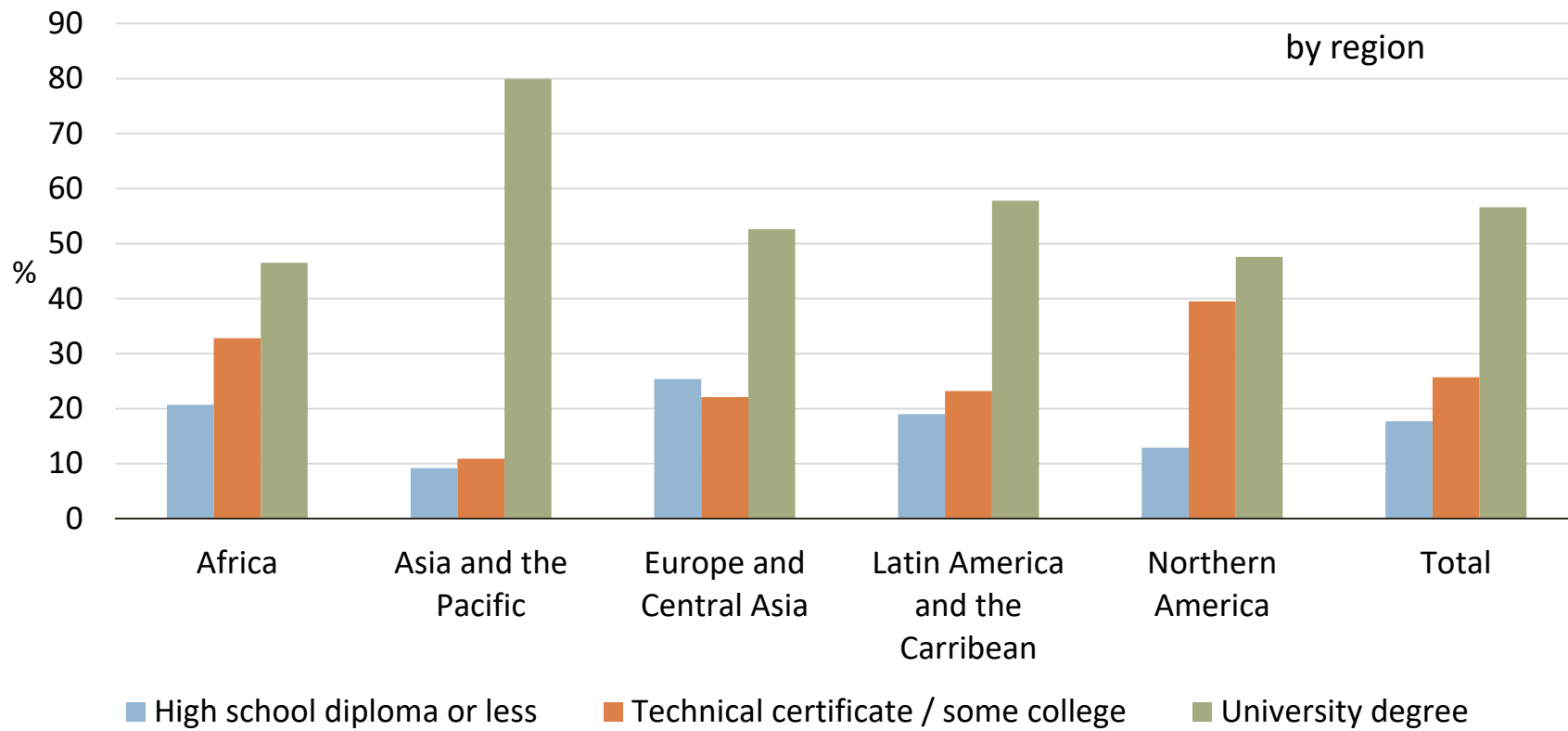
Mariya Aleksynska (ILO)
Anastasia Bastrakova
Natalia Kharchenko
(Kiev International
Institute of Sociology)

Workers spread across 75 countries



Source: ILO Survey of Crowdworkers.

Level of education



Workers appreciate the ability to work from home



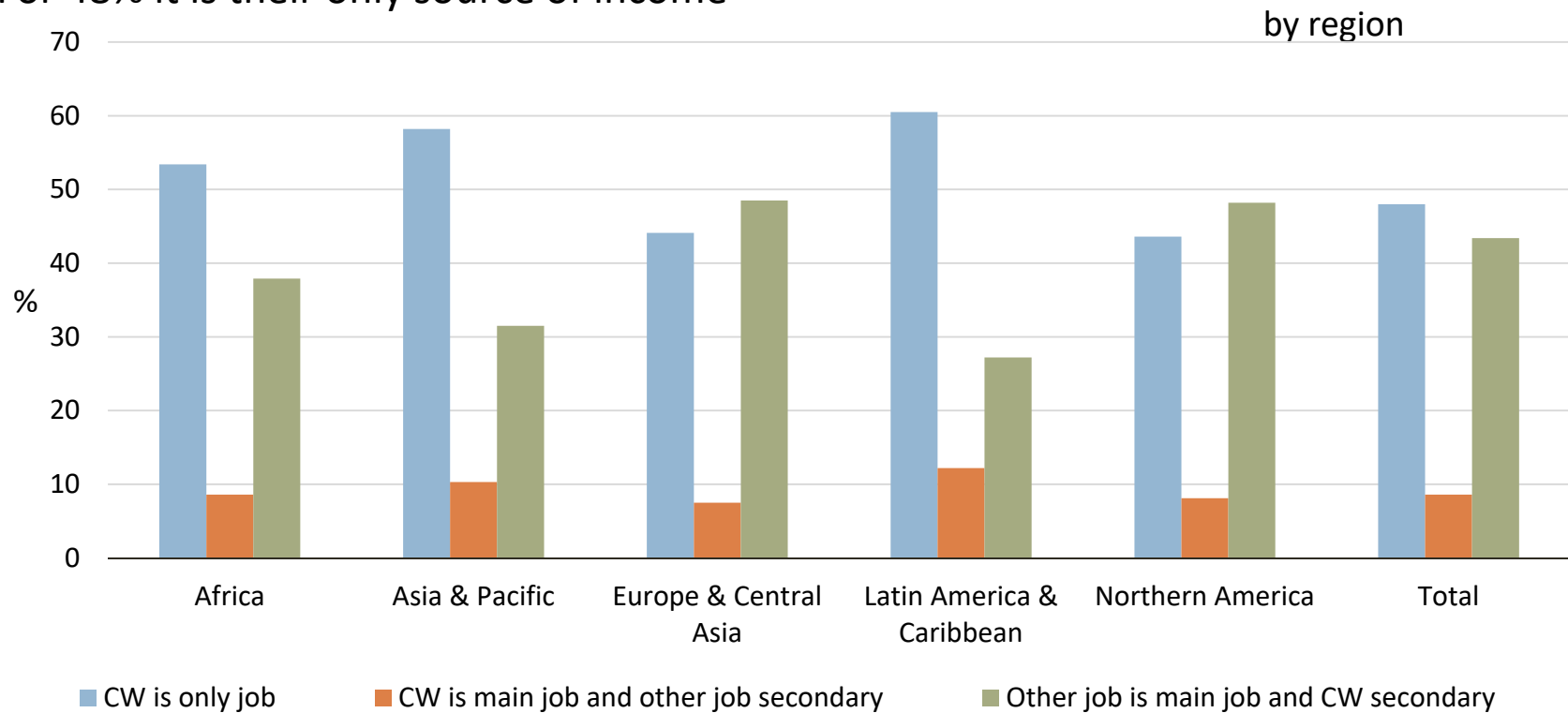
«I am unable to work because I take care of my ill mother and being a crowdworker gives me the flexibility and means to make some money while I am confined to home»

– AMT worker, USA

Main source of income



For 48% it is their only source of income

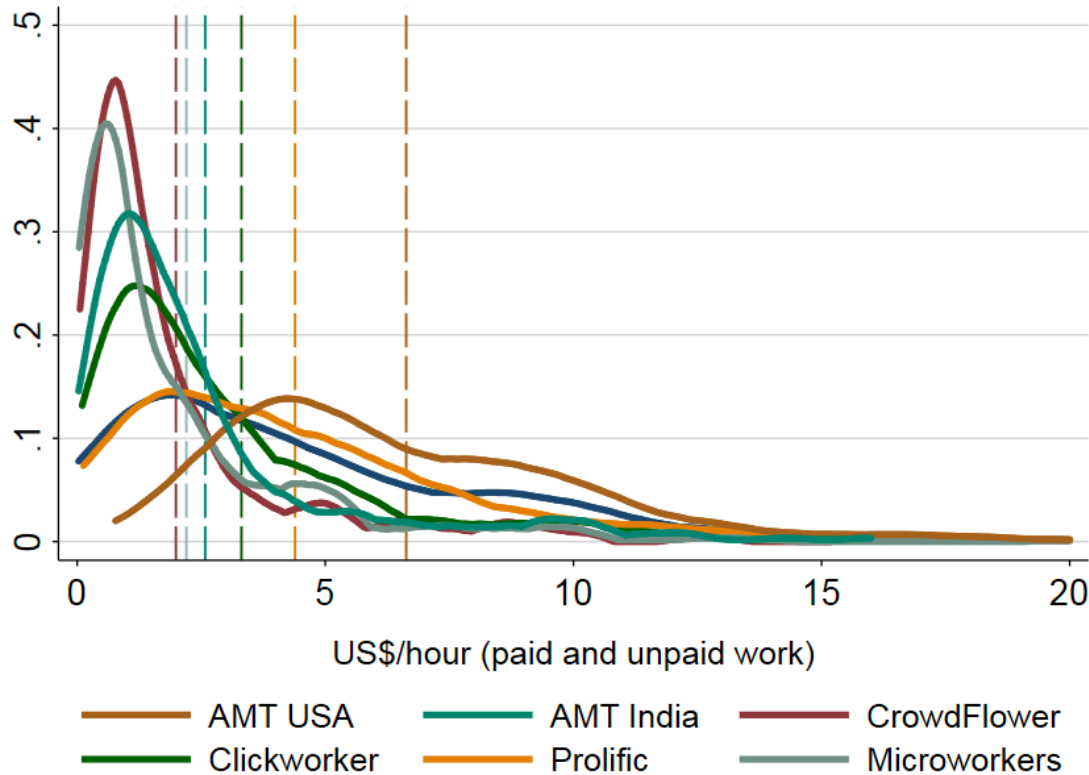


4 main areas of concern



1. Pay of the tasks
2. Availability of work
3. Unfair treatment by requesters
4. Lack of responsiveness of the platforms to the workers' concerns

Earnings of survey respondents



AMT: 2/3 of American workers on AMT < \$7.25 (federal MW)

Likelihood that results are overestimated: Hara et al. (2018) using a plug-in that followed 2,500 workers over a two-year period found median earnings of US\$2 and average earnings of US\$3.13.

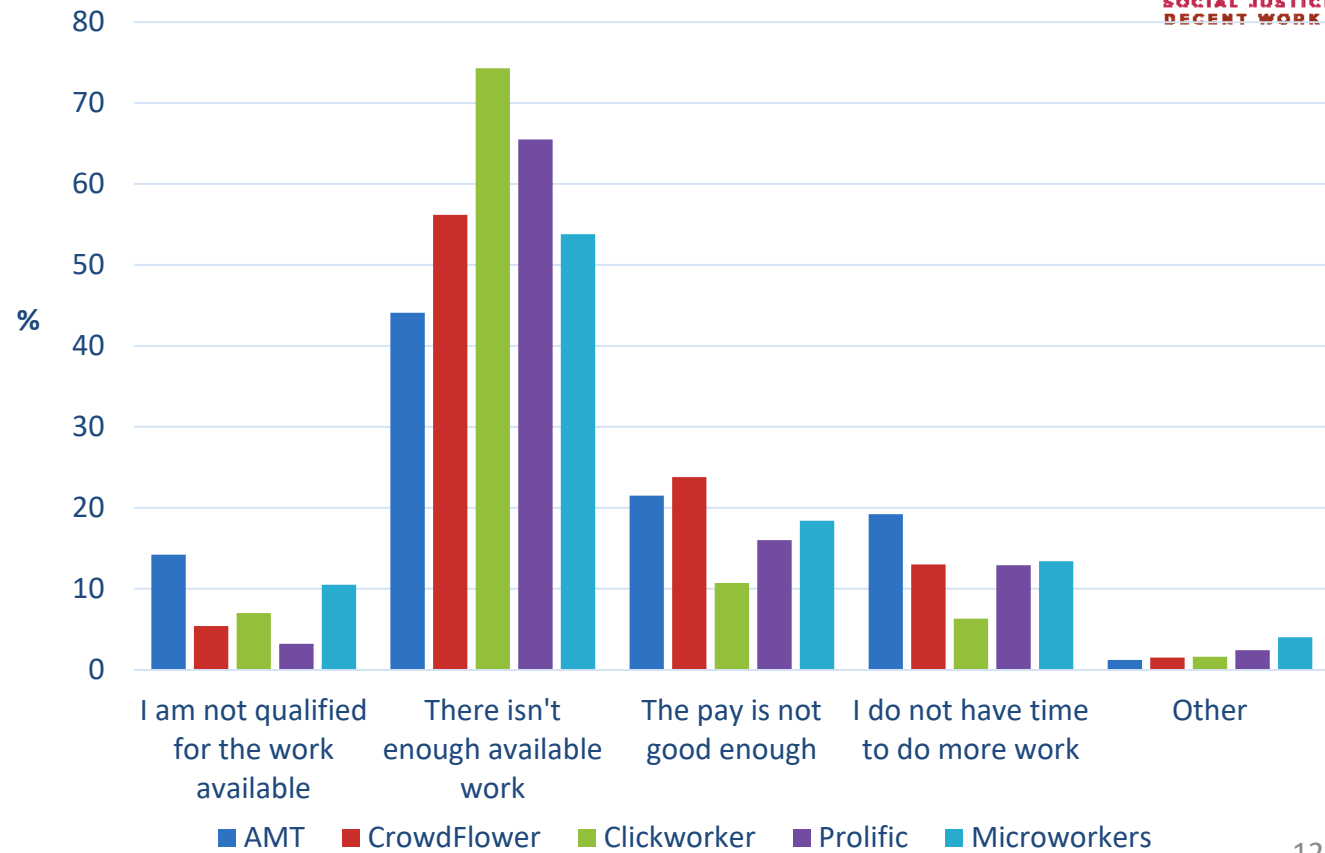
Clickworker: average wage of \$3.31 per hour; median wage of \$2.13.

Note: Data trimmed at 1 and 99 per cent. Dashed vertical lines represent mean. Source: ILO Survey of crowd workers 2017.

Why are you not doing more crowdwork?



Insufficient work: 88% of crowdworkers would like to do more work

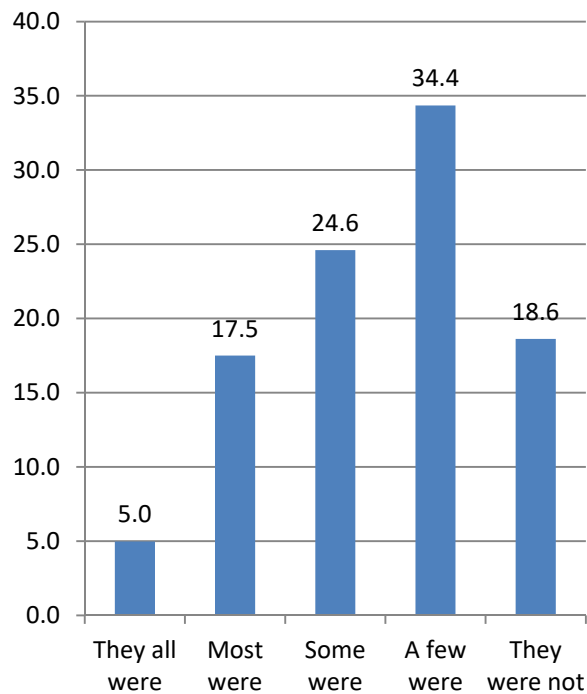


20 minutes of every hour are dedicated to unpaid activities



“I feel like I control the work, but I don’t have control over when work will be available”
(Clickworker respondent)

Nearly 9 out of every 10 workers has had work rejected or was refused payment



"When you work at a real job, you are given time to learn and make mistakes and are given feedback, but in crowdwork, the first time you make a mistake (usually for a task that has vague instructions) you are rejected and maybe even blocked"

- AMT worker

Algorithmic management



“You cannot spend time exchanging e-mail. The time you spent looking at the e-mail costs more than what you paid them. This has to function on autopilot as an algorithmic system....and integrated with your business processes”

- Large-scale requester on AMT platform (personal communication with L. Irani, cited in Irani (2015), p. 228)

On freelancing platforms, workers are paying to work



- Ukrainian survey: 85% of survey respondents pay a commission to the platform in order to work

Service fees for freelancers



Upwork charges freelancers a sliding fee based on the freelancer's lifetime billings with a specific client. In other words, the more business a freelancer has done with a client, the more they'll earn.

Specifically, Upwork charges the freelancer a fee of:

- **20%** for the first \$500 billed with the client
- **10%** for lifetime billings with the client between \$500.01 and \$10,000
- **5%** for lifetime billings with the client that exceed \$10,000