Platform workers in Europe

Evidence from the COLLEEM Survey

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Overview: upcoming Report on Platform Workers in Europe

- Report on Platform Workers in Europe, based on a survey carried out in 2017, with the following chapters:

  1. A review on the literature and existing evidence
  2. How many platform workers there are in Europe?
  3. Who are the platform workers in Europe?
  4. What kind of work is provided by platforms?
  5. What are the conditions of platform work?

- Draft report expected by March

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Policy relevance

- Increased attention to labour market and social implications of digital transformation.

- Emergence of platform economy leads to policy challenges in areas such as education and skills, access, sustainability and adequacy of social protection, quality of work, labour law, taxation, etc.

- Part of broader JRC research agenda to improve analytical underpinning and better inform policy-making in these areas.

- Useful to support implementation of:

  - European Pillar of Social Rights
  - European Agenda for the Collaborative Economy
 - New Skills Agenda for Europe…

1. The COLLEEM Survey

- Online survey conducted by PPMI in 2017, commissioned by JRC and DG EMPL.

- Covering 14 European countries, with a final sample of 32,409 (around 2,300 per country).

- Non-probability quota sampling of respondents by gender and age groups, aiming at being representative of all internet users between 16 and 74 in the selected countries.

- Questionnaire aimed at identifying platform workers, their characteristics, the nature of their platform work, and conditions.

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2. How many platform workers in Europe?

- People providing labour services via online platforms are very difficult to identify and measure
  - Blurred phenomenon, and difficult to define
  - Opaque for all except the platform itself (even for providers and buyers)

- Existing measures:
  - In the US, using a restrictive definition similar to the LFS concept of employment, estimations of around 1-2% of labour force
  - In the EU, only study (Hertfordshire Univ) estimates much higher share (above 10%), but much broader definition

- Our approach:
  - As in Hertfordshire, broader initial estimates, progressively narrow
  - From "ever done platform work", to "small but significant platform work" to "main platform work", big differences in shares

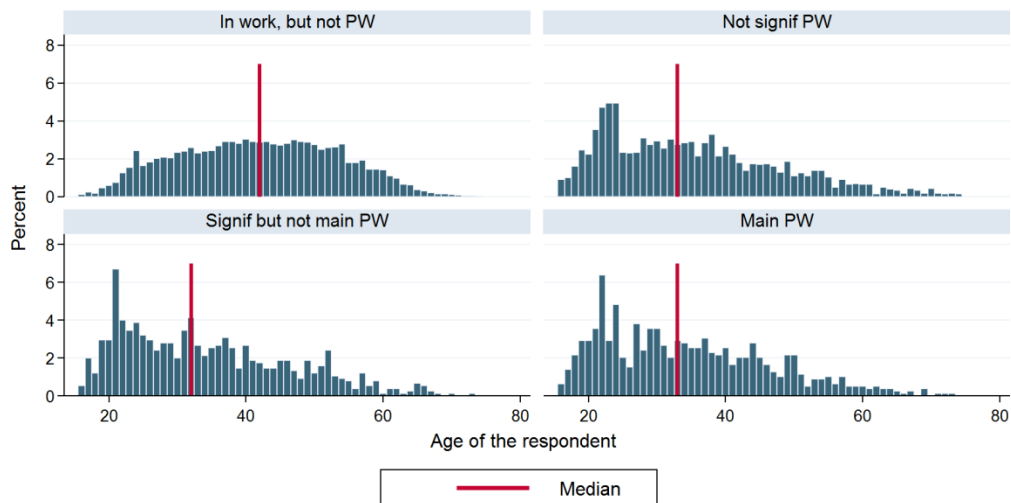European Commission

Our estimation
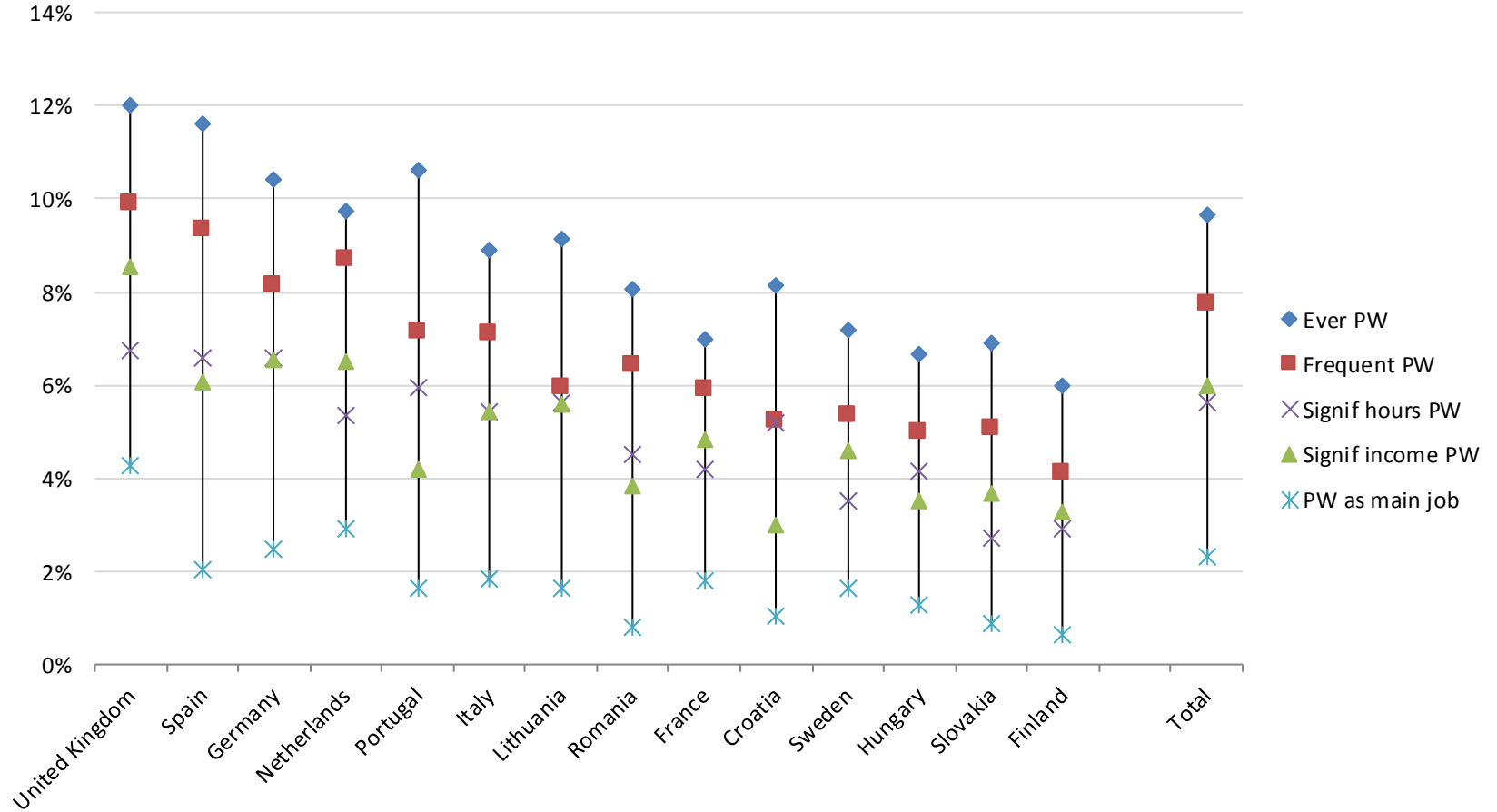
3. Profiling platform workers

This section provides a socio-demographic profiling of the three main categories of platform workers

Summary of findings:

- Platform workers are younger, mostly men, and highly educated

  - Approx. 40% of the significant/main platform workers are young men (aged 30 or younger)

- A surprisingly high proportion of the main platform workers are part of a couple and live with dependent children

  - Policy implications for social protection

- Still unclear the extent to which platform workers see themselves as employees or self-employed (or other)

Platform workers are younger

In work, but not PW | Not signif PW
Signif but not main PW | Main PW
Age of the respondent
Percent
— Median

Number of observations: 20,880

- The age distribution for the overall workforce in the COLLEEM sample is more uniform, while for platform workers it is more skewed towards the young.

- Median age 10 years higher among non PW

- Mean and median ages are markedly similar across PW categories, but gradual shift toward the young as the significance of PW intensifies
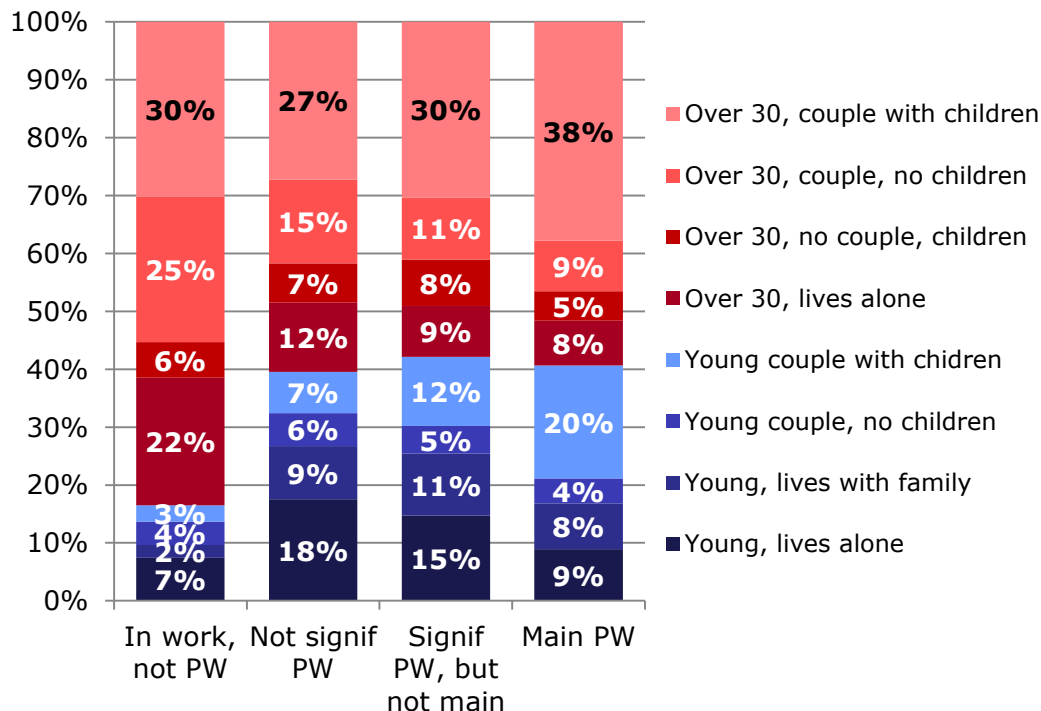
	Mean	Median	SD
In work, but not PW	43.1	44	11.6
Not signif PW	35.5	34	12.7
Signif but not main PW	34.5	32	12.1
Main PW	34.6	34	11.5

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Platform workers are mostly males
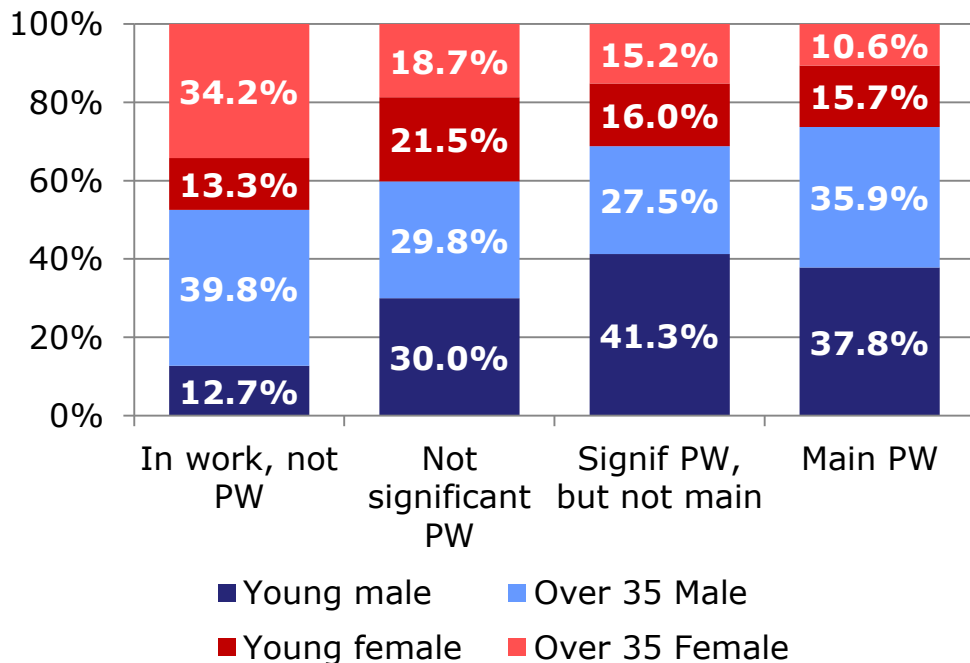
- The gender ratio varies significantly between PW and non PW, and also by intensity of PW
  - Women represent 47.5% of those who work but not on platforms and 26.3% of the Main PW
  - In addition, the largest share of working women (not PW) are aged over 35
  - By contrast, the share of women aged over 35 drops to 1/10 among main PW
- The older vs. younger men ratio also varies substantially across worker types
  - Three quarters of men in work, but not PW are aged over 35 vs. approx half of the main PW
- Our estimates somewhat differ from previous findings - E.g. Hertfordshire study found a more even gender split

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Platform workers' household composition

Legend:
- Over 30, couple with children
- Over 30, couple, no children
- Over 30, no couple, children
- Over 30, lives alone
- Young couple with chidren
- Young couple, no children
- Young, lives with family
- Young, lives alone

Chart data:

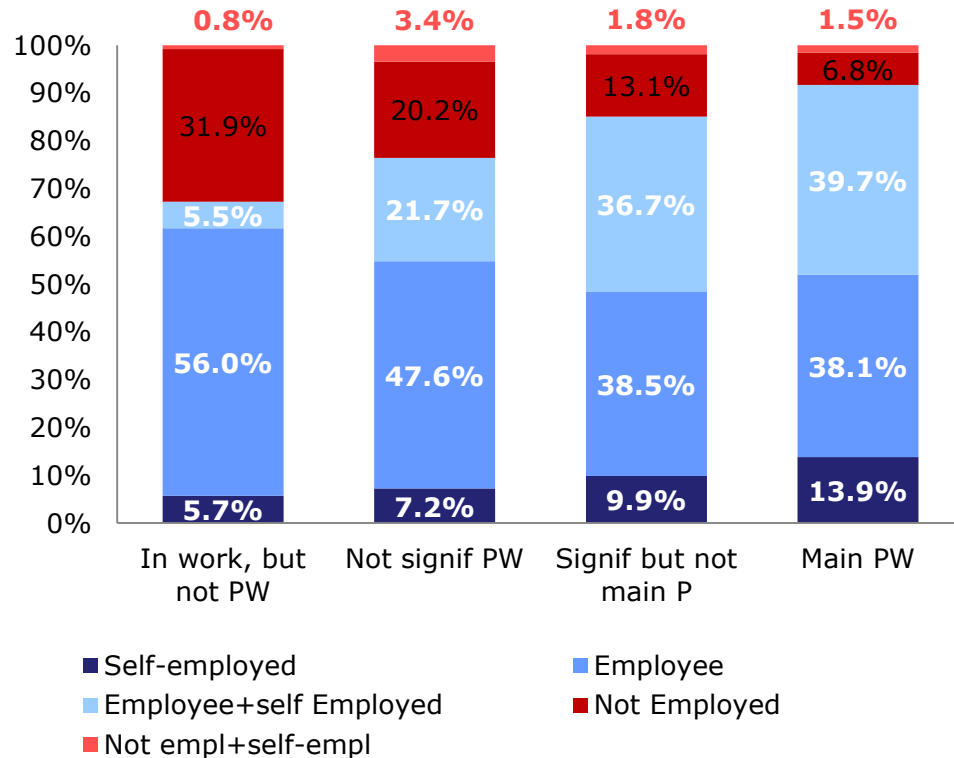|	In work, not PW	Not signif PW	Signif PW, but not main	Main PW
Over 30, couple with children	30%	27%	30%	38%
Over 30, couple, no children	25%	15%	11%	9%
Over 30, no couple, children		7%	8%	5%
Over 30, lives alone	6%	12%	9%	8%
Young couple with chidren	3%	7%	12%	20%
Young couple, no children	22%	6%	5%	4%
Young, lives with family	4% / 2%	9%	11%	8%
Young, lives alone	7%	18%	15%	9%

- Household composition appears to differ substantially between platform workers and other workers

- We already knew that PW are younger (blue colours)

- Regardless of their age, respondents who are part of a couple and have dependent children in their household are more frequently platform workers:

  - 34% and 33% of the non PW and non signif PW
  - 42% of signif but not main PW
  - and 58% of main PW

- Implication: regulation of platform work is likely to affect all those family members who may depend on PWs

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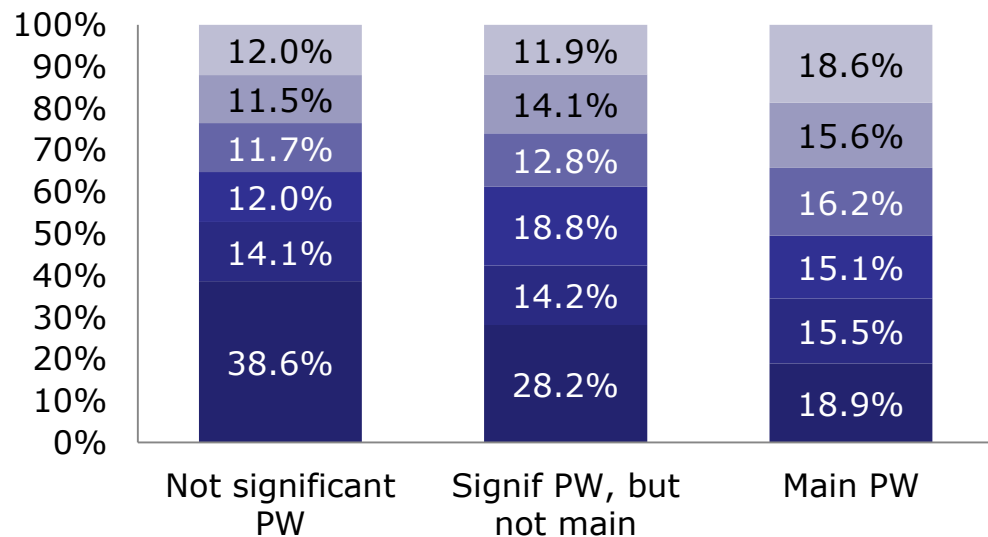
Platform workers are more educated
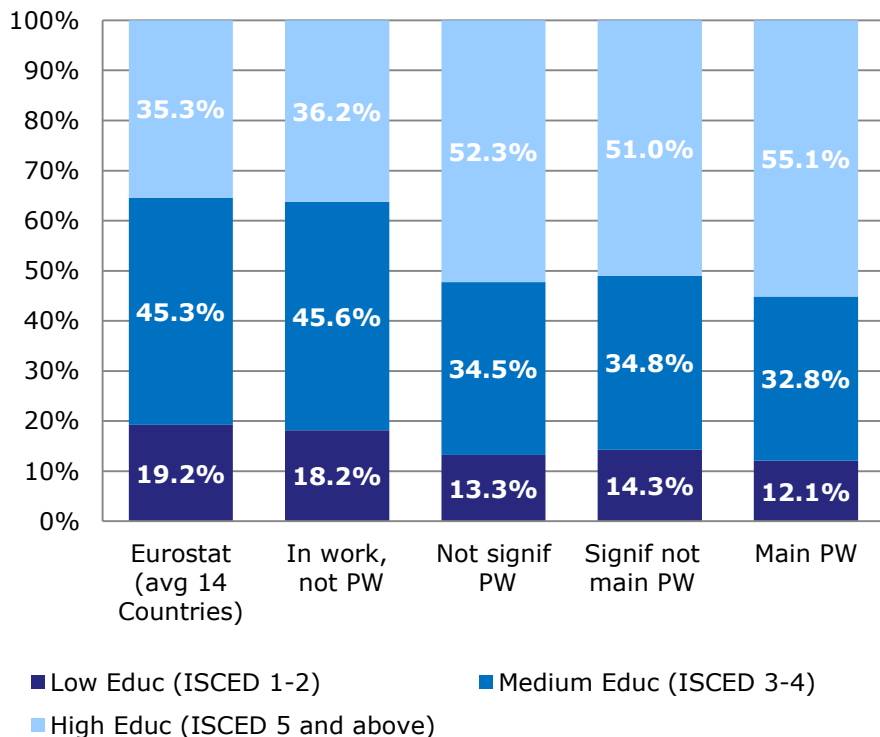
- COLLEEM is representative of high frequency internet users, so we may start from a higher baseline for educational attainment

- However, the distribution of education among workers in Eurostat and COLLEEM are remarkably similar

  - Note that we only consider workers aged 25 and over to minimise bias, as they will have completed tertiary education

- Significantly larger share of tertiary educated people among platform workers

  - Which increases with the intensity of PW (from 52.3% to 55.1%)

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Self-defined employment status

Chart data:

Category	In work, but not PW	Not signif PW	Signif but not main P	Main PW
Not empl+self-empl	0.8%	3.4%	1.8%	1.5%
Not Employed	31.9%	20.2%	13.1%	6.8%
Employee+self Employed	5.5%	21.7%	36.7%	39.7%
Employee	56.0%	47.6%	38.5%	38.1%
Self-employed	5.7%	7.2%	9.9%	13.9%

Legend:
- Self-employed
- Employee
- Employee+self Employed
- Not Employed
- Not empl+self-empl

- 12.4% of the respondents (who are not self-employed) claim to work as self-employed besides their main activity

- By combining information on employment status, platform work and additional self-employment, we derive the following categories:

  - **Self-employed** as main occupation and nothing else;

  - **Employee** as main occupation and nothing else;

  - **Employee + self-employed:** employees as main, self-empl as secondary;

  - **Not employed:** unemployed, retirees, students, and homemakers;

  - **Not empl + self empl**: respondents are not in the labour force as main activity, but work as self-employed as secondary activity

- Results suggest that many platform workers see platform work as a form of self-employment, but perhaps not all

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How much do platform workers earn?

Bar chart with three stacked columns:

Not significant PW
- Top decile: 12.0%
- 75th to 90th percentile: 11.5%
- 50th to 75th percentile: 11.7%
- 25th to 50th percentile: 12.0%
- 10th to 25th percentile: 14.1%
- First decile: 38.6%

Signif PW, but not main
- Top decile: 11.9%
- 75th to 90th percentile: 14.1%
- 50th to 75th percentile: 12.8%
- 25th to 50th percentile: 18.8%
- 10th to 25th percentile: 14.2%
- First decile: 28.2%

Main PW
- Top decile: 18.6%
- 75th to 90th percentile: 15.6%
- 50th to 75th percentile: 16.2%
- 25th to 50th percentile: 15.1%
- 10th to 25th percentile: 15.5%
- First decile: 18.9%

Legend:
- First decile
- 10th to 25th percentile
- 25th to 50th percentile
- 50th to 75th percentile
- 75th to 90th percentile
- Top decile

- A substantial proportion of platform workers (18.6%) earn enough to be in the top earning decile

- And the proportion increases with the significance of platform work

- However, we do not know if their income derives only from platform work or from offline work
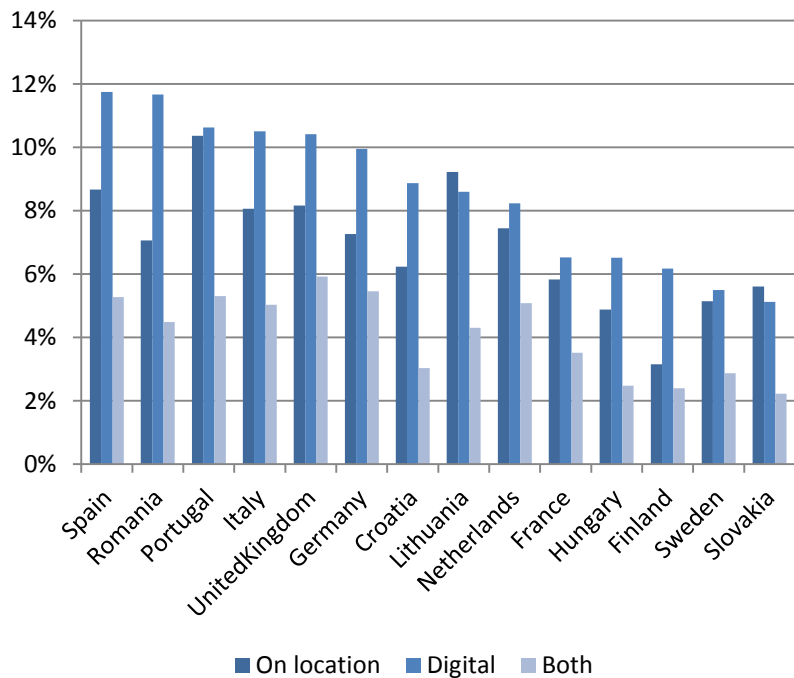
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4. What kind of work is provided in platforms?

This section provides a detailed analysis of the types of labour services provided via platforms

Summary of findings:

- Most platform workers have provided different types of labour services, often involving different levels of skills or task content (professional and non-professional, online and local).

- The most frequent type of specific service provided is clerical tasks. But in general terms, professional services are the most frequent category.

- The different task categories have different educational and gender profiles:

  - On-location and sales tasks are associated to lower skills.

  - While platform work is strongly gender biased, women are more frequently found in translation and on-location services, and less in software and transport.

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Broad types of provided services by country

Chart Y-axis: 14%, 12%, 10%, 8%, 6%, 4%, 2%, 0%

Countries: Spain, Romania, Portugal, Italy, UnitedKingdom, Germany, Croatia, Lithuania, Netherlands, France, Hungary, Finland, Sweden, Slovakia

Legend: ■ On location ■ Digital ■ Both

Labour services provided by digital labour platforms can be broadly distinguished as:
- services **performed digitally** (i.e. micro tasks, clerical and data entry, etc.) or
- services **performed on-location** (i.e. transport, delivery, housekeeping, etc).

The figure reports the shares of platform workers who perform each task **not** exclusively.

On average **half** of the overall platform workers perform both digital and on-location services.

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Number of tasks performed

- **40%** of total platform workers in the COLLEEM sample perform **only one** task

- Another 40 % performs between two and three tasks

- The remaining 20% performs more than three tasks

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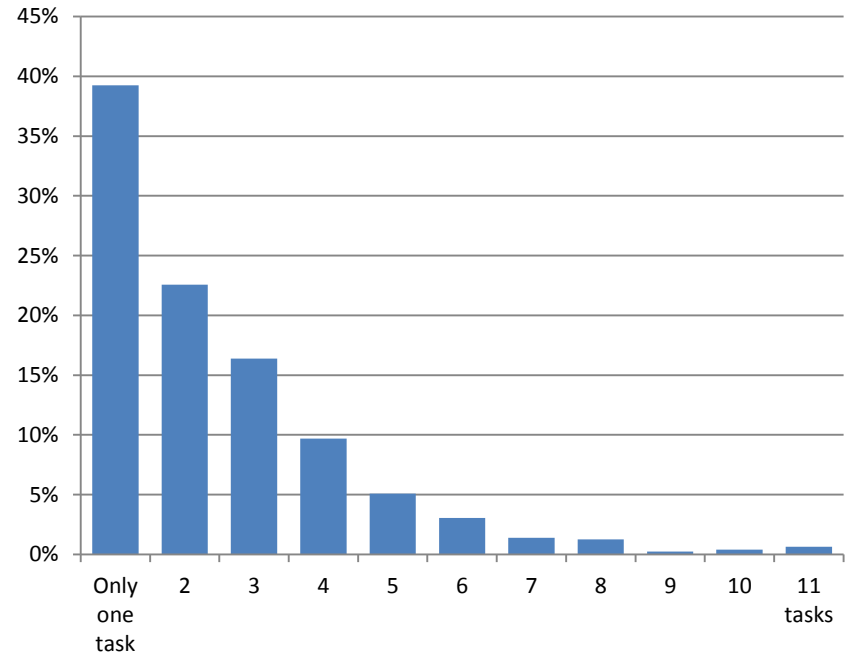
Types of provided services by category of PW
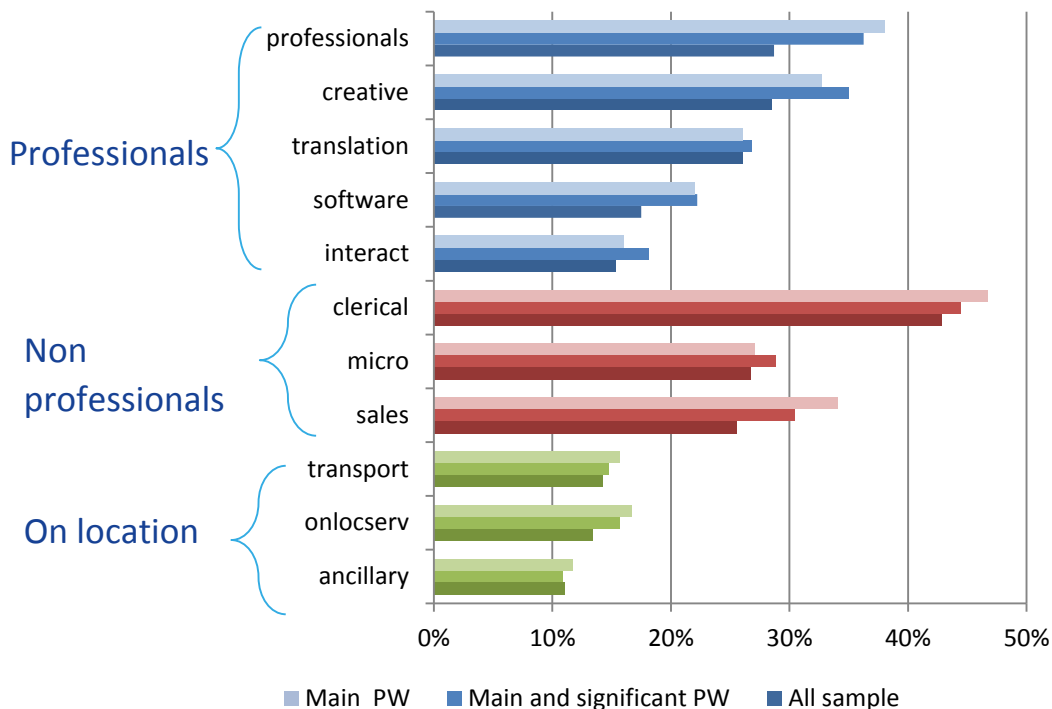
- The majority of the platform workers provide professional services.

- However the most common service provided is 'online clerical and data entry' task and accounts for 44% of the total services provided, followed by professionals (36%) and creative (35%).

Specific types of services provided (tasks) by country for main and significant PW
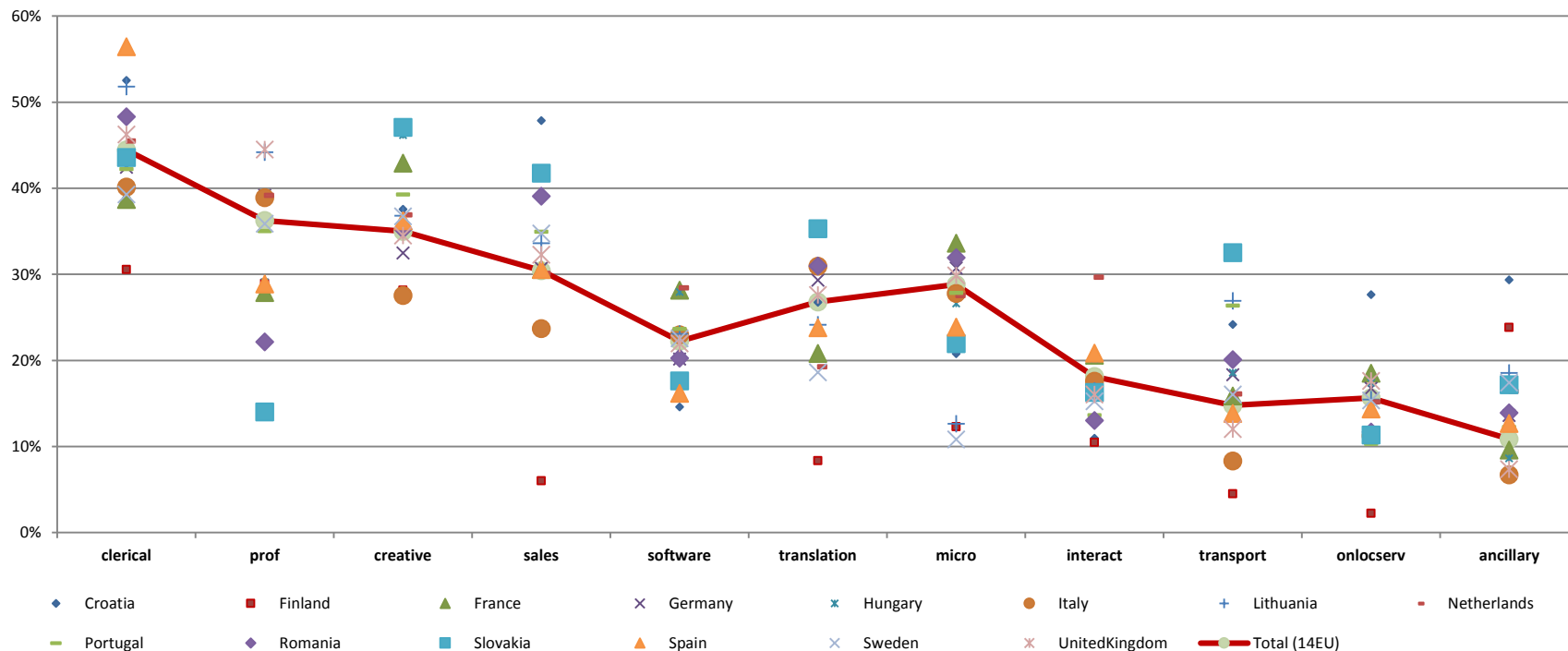
- The graph reports the distribution of tasks for main and significant platform workers by country.

- The red line shows the average value for the 14 Member States.

- Croatia presents above average values for tasks that require a low-medium level of education (transport, on-location and ancillary services, and sales).

- The Netherlands shows above average values for tasks that require high digital skills such as software and interactive.

- Finland on the other hand reports very below average for all the on-location services (transport, ancillary , etc) and for the digital services that require medium-low skills (i.e. sales and micro tasks).

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Types of provided services by education

- The graph reports the ratio of high educated to medium-low educated platform workers by country and tasks.

- Germany (the dark blue line) shows a quite stable distribution of platform workers'levels of education across tasks.

- France (the red line) shows an increase in educational levels consistent with the skills required by the task.

- The UK instead has a less clear pattern across tasks.
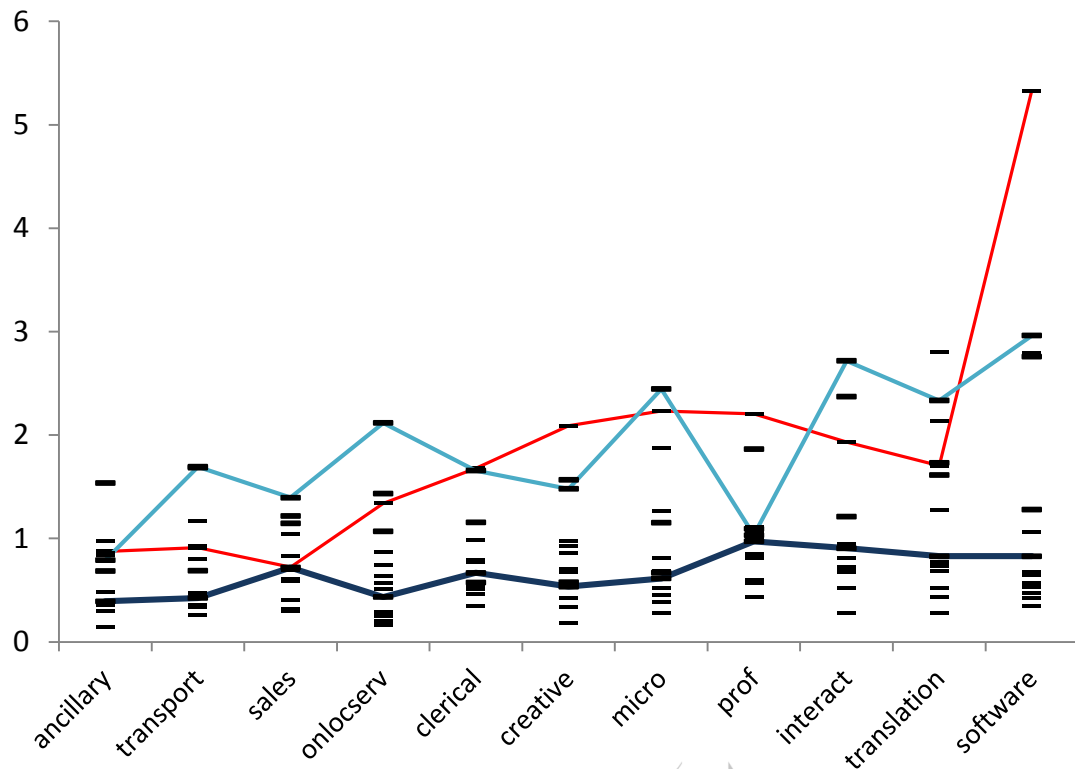
Types of provided services by gender
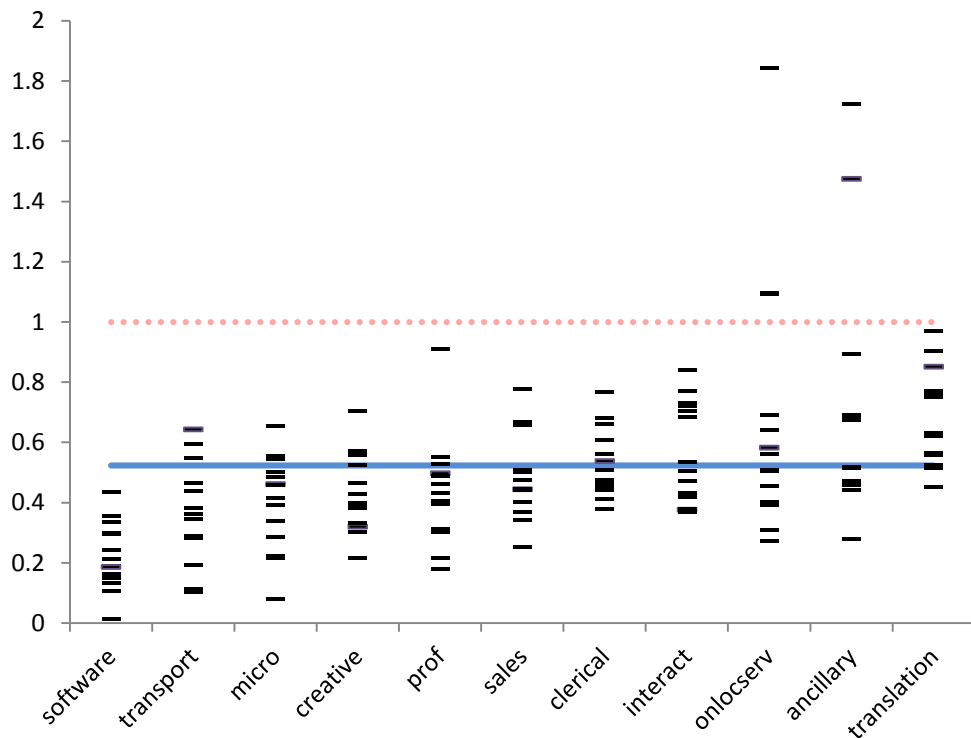
- Men represent 63% of total platform workers.

- The red dotted line displays the 'gender parity' line. Women exceed men only in few services (on location services) and for some specific countries.

- The blue line represents the actual female/male ratio in the sample. The most male dominated services is software. On the opposite, translation services are mostly provided by women.

4. Motivation and conditions of platform work

Final section discussing the motivations for doing platform work, and its conditions of work and employment

Bigger limitations than other sections: more difficult measurement, and problematic link between specific task provided and conditions declared

Still, some interesting findings:

- In terms of motivations for doing platform work, respondents mentioned autonomy and attractive work but also lack of alternatives. For main platform workers, perhaps some polarization (to be further explored)

- In terms of conditions, respondents consider their work via platforms relatively flexible and safe, but also routine and stressful. The negative conditions are more frequently mentioned by main platform workers.

- Work in platforms tends involve short working hours, and the vast majority would qualify as very short part-time work. However, a significant minority of main platform workers report very long (platform) working hours.

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Motivations

	F1: Itself	F2: Autonomy	F3: Lack alternative	Uniqueness
Flexibility of location	0.1644	0.8322	0.1646	0.2533
Flexibility of time	0.2333	0.8046	0.127	0.2821
To work part-time	0.0462	0.3095	0.7656	0.3159
Difficult to find standard work	0.2165	0.0876	0.7941	0.3149
Attractive remuneration	0.7633	0.1839	0.1598	0.358
Interesting work	0.8078	0.2805	0.0476	0.2665
Allows me to get by	0.7573	0.1177	0.2781	0.3353
Family compatibility	0.6196	0.3116	0.3544	0.3934
Health or disability	0.4258	0.0824	0.6423	0.3993
Find more clients	0.5361	0.3333	0.3953	0.4452
Be my own boss	0.3721	0.5732	0.2232	0.4832

	F1: Itself	F2: Autonomy	F3: Lack alternative	
Explained variance	46%	10%	9%	

	F1: Itself	F2: Autonomy	F3: Lack alternative
Not significant platform work	-0.0987689	-0.049429	-0.1451759
Significant but not main	0.0826744	0.008541	0.1672881
Main platform work	0.1082489	0.0849488	0.11621

- Factor analysis suggests three main types of motivations for doing platform work:
  1. Attractive in itself
  2. Offers autonomy
  3. Lack of alternatives

- Lack of alternatives is most frequent in those that do a significant amount of platform work, but not as main job

- Those doing mainly platform work show high values for intrinsic motivation but also lack of alternatives: polarized group?

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Conditions

	F1: Flexible and safe	F2: Intense and routine	Uniqueness
Pay is fair	0.2783	0.5084	0.6641
I have flexibility over timing of work	0.7679	0.135	0.3921
I have flexibility over hours of work	0.8184	0.0866	0.3228
I have flexibility over the order of task	0.7985	0.1707	0.3334
I have flexibility over how I do my wor	0.7383	0.1956	0.4167
My work is safe	0.6885	0.1954	0.4878
The tasks are routine	0.2815	0.5478	0.6207
The tasks require me to learn new thir	0.4348	0.5614	0.4958
I often have tight deadlines	0.16	0.7718	0.3788
I often work under stress	0.0204	0.8219	0.3241
I can set price for my services	0.2974	0.6174	0.5303

Explained variance	41%	14%

	F1: Flexible and safe	F2: Intense and routine
Not significant platform work	0.063312	-0.1582112
Significant but not main	-0.0446086	0.118067
Main platform work	-0.0615057	0.1475167

- Factor analysis suggests two main dimensions in the conditions of platform work:
  1. Flexible and safe (positive)
  2. Intense and routine (negative)

- The second dimension (intense and routine) is clearly linked to the intensity of platform work. Main platform work is more intense and routine

- Flexibility and safety not so strongly linked to the intensity of platform work (some link to tasks: worse for on-location than for online)

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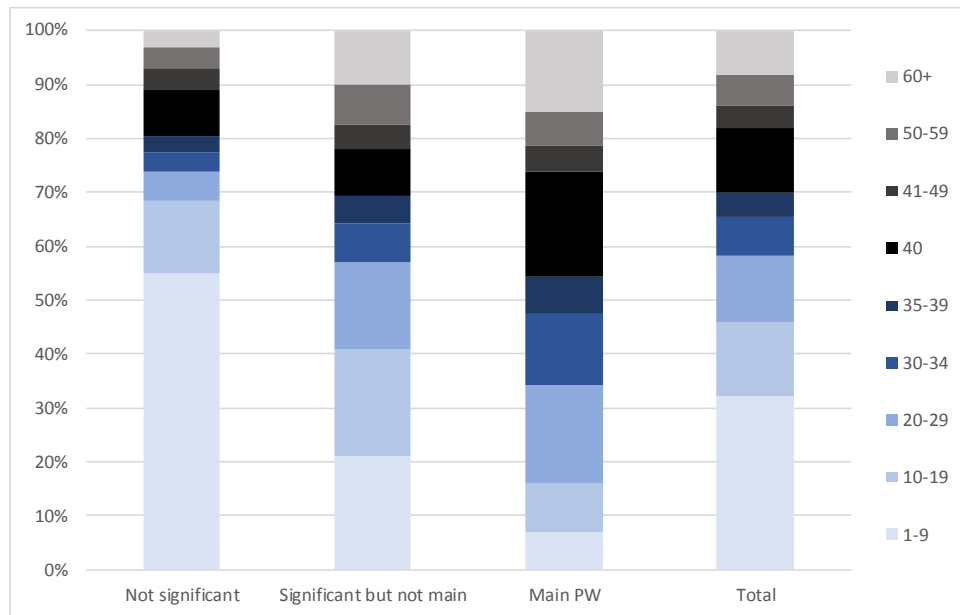
Working time

- Working hours of platform workers are generally much shorter than the general population: most of them would be short part-time.

- Still, a significant amount of very long schedules, especially for people doing mainly platform work.

- Otherwise, platform work has a very flexible timing, although it is also often considered as intense (tight deadlines and monotonous tasks)

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Thank you!

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