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Measuring digital platform employment in Viet Nam: Lessons learned from the pilot survey [1]

Key points

- Amid the recent proliferation of digital platforms, Viet Nam is hailed as the fastest growing digital economy in South-East Asia, primarily driven by its rapid adoption of digital financial services and strong support from the private sector and the government.
- To protect digital platform workers and promote digital platform employment (DPE), the Government, with the support of the ILO and development partners, has strengthened existing and introduced additional frameworks governing DPE.
- The lack of harmonized conceptual and measurement frameworks related to DPE constrain policymakers and researchers in conducting accurate and regular estimations of DPE.
- The General Statistics Office (GSO) of Viet Nam (now National Statistics Office since March 2025), with the support of the ILO, conducted a pilot survey to measure DPE by designing and including a questionnaire as a module in the labour force survey (LFS) and implementing it in two localities, namely Hanoi and Phu Tho province, in December 2023.
- Using the past four weeks as the reference period, the DPE-related questions include information on engagement in platform-based work, income, and working hours, among others. The sampling frame was only limited to employed workers.
- The pilot DPE survey provided important insights and inputs to the refinement of the conceptual and measurement framework of DPE, covering aspects, such as the reference population and sampling frame, questionnaire, and implementation and monitoring. These include:
  - extending the reference and the survey implementation periods longer than the past four weeks;
  - expanding the sampling frame beyond employed workers;
  - revising the survey questionnaire to limit false positives and false negatives;
  - adopting effective implementation and monitoring mechanisms (for example, formulation of detailed survey plans, flexible and direct data collection, and training sessions).

[1] This research brief was authored by Ian Nicole Generalao and is based on the General Statistics Office (GSO) of Viet Nam's Report on the Pilot Results of the Digital Platform Employment Integrated into the 2023 Labor Force Survey (Unpublished) in March 2024. The brief benefitted from overall guidance by Ingrid Christensen and contributions from Michael Thye Frosch, Tite Habiyakare, Phu Huynh, Nguyen Thi Huyen, Nguyen Ngoc Trieu and Felix Weidenkaff. The content of this brief reflects the institutional and administrative structures in place prior to the government restructuring that took effect on 1 March 2025. The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by their affiliated organizations of the opinions expressed in them.

▶ Introduction

Digital platforms have proliferated in recent years, reflecting the increasing role of rapid technological advances in transforming the world of work. Advancements in information and communication technologies (ICT), including the development of cloud computing, artificial intelligence, among other innovations, have driven the growth of the digital economy, where both individuals and businesses increasingly rely on digital platforms in their economic and social activities. Over the past decade, the number of digital platforms has increased fivefold, although investment has been concentrated in a few countries (ILO 2021).

The increased demand for digital platform services amid the COVID-19 crisis created employment opportunities, although without guaranteed decent working conditions. The new jobs created by the rise of digital platforms provided potential income opportunities to the working age population, especially women, people with disabilities, young people, and migrant workers, continued operations of businesses, including small enterprises, and maintained consumer links. However, these jobs do not always offer decent working conditions and are often characterized by irregular flows of work and income, poor working conditions (for example, occupational safety and health risks, excessive working hours), lack of social protection, and the inability to exercise fundamental rights at work, such as freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. Consequently, this form of work has also exposed gaps in labour regulations (ILO 2021).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has developed guidelines and frameworks to improve the understanding and measurement of the digital platform economy and work. ILO has underscored the importance of addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities associated with the digital transformation of work, explicitly including platform work in its ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (ILO 2019).[2] Relevant ILO analysis[3] are in place for reference of Member States, while multiple ILO Governing Body (GB) sessions[4] have discussed how to ensure decent work in the platform economy. In June 2025, this was further explored through the Standard-Setting Committee on Decent Work in the Platform Economy of the 113th International Labour Conference.[5] Finally, to address the lack of internationally agreed statistical standards, definition, and applicable related concepts for digital platform employment, the ILO, together with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Commission, developed the Handbook on Measuring Digital Platform Employment and Work (OECD et al. 2023).

While the Handbook provides recommendations for measuring digital platform work (DPW), it does not set a statistical standard but rather an important first step towards a more harmonized framework to measure digital platform employment (DPE). At the 21st International Conference of Labour Statistician (ICLS) in 2023, the ILO received a strong mandate to continue developing statistical standards to measure DPW and DPE, to be presented for the 22nd ICLS in 2028 (ILO 2024a).

Viet Nam is well-positioned to reap the full benefits of the boom in the digital economy, with strong commitments of businesses and the Government to digital transformation. Located within South-East Asia—one of the fastest growing digital economies globally—Viet Nam stands out as the fastest-growing digital market in the subregion, driven by its high number of smartphone users and the strong interest its digital industry attracts from both domestic and international players (Google et al. 2023). This sparked optimism and increased the willingness

[2] Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, through "policies and measures that ensure appropriate privacy and personal data protection, and respond to challenges and opportunities in the world of work relating to the digital transformation of work, including platform work." (Part III, C.(v), ILO (2019)).

[3] For a comprehensive analysis and discussion on the normative gaps on decent work in the platform economy, see ILO (2023a).

[4] These include, but are not limited to, its inclusion in specific items of the agenda of the ILO GB sessions, 347th Session (March 2023), 346th Session (November 2022), 344th Session (March 2022), 343rd Session (November 2021), and 341st Session (March 2021).

[5] More information and key resources of the Standard-Setting Committee on Decent Work in the Platform Economy are available at: https://www.ilo.org/international-labour-conference/113th-session-international-labour-conference/committees-113th-session-international-labour-conference/standard-setting-committee-decent-work-platform-economy.

of firms and businesses to further invest in technology and the digitalization of their existing business, with the focus on digital payments, e-commerce, and artificial intelligence, to meet customers' expectations for digital convenience and improve efficiencies (HSBC 2024). Meanwhile, the Government of Viet Nam has mapped its national digital transformation strategy and introduced other various initiatives over the past decade, including reviews and reforms of the policy and legal frameworks governing digital platform work and DPE.

However, gaps persist in understanding and measuring digital platform employment (DPE) in Viet Nam. Similar to many countries, Viet Nam's efforts toward measuring the magnitude and scale of DPE are constrained by the lack of a clearly defined conceptual and measurement framework of DPE, as well as the statistical instruments needed to capture it. Thus, in 2023, the ILO provided technical support to the General Statistics Office (GSO and now is NSO) of Viet Nam, to conduct a study to pilot the measurement of digital platform work. The pilot results are expected to provide a basis to support the ILO in refining the conceptual framework and measurement methods for digital platform work suitable for many countries worldwide, including Viet Nam, and to contribute to ongoing developmental work for international statistical standards on DPE.

Against this backdrop, this brief summarizes the lessons learned from the pilot survey and outlines key recommendations in refining the method of measuring digital platform work in Viet Nam. It starts by contextualizing the digital economy and policy landscape in the country. This is followed by a brief discussion of the conceptual and measurement frameworks of DPE and its characteristics based on the literature. The next section then summarizes the pilot survey methodology, covering various implementation and measurement considerations. Then, a brief assessment of the pilot survey follows, with a focus on highlighting the lessons learned in its implementation, including the appropriateness and accuracy of each survey question in capturing DPE, as well as specific recommendations for improvement of the instrument. It concludes with a summary of key findings and discussion of ways forward.

▶ Digital economy and policy landscape in Viet Nam

Viet Nam is the fastest-growing digital economy in South-East Asia, primarily driven by the rapid adoption of digital financial services and strong support from the private sector and the Government. Viet Nam's digital economy expanded to around 30 billion USD in gross merchandise value (GMV) in 2023, equivalent to a 19 per cent increase from the previous year. Fuelled by strong expectations of economic growth, it is forecast to reach close to 45 billion USD by 2025 (Google et al. 2023). This is primarily driven by the increased adoption of digital financial services, characterized by shifting preferences towards digital channels for payments, lending, insurance, and asset management.

The growth of Viet Nam's digital economy is expected to continue and even accelerate for several reasons. For one, the country is considered a latecomer in this sector, which implies a lower base and thus higher potential. Its large population, which comprises of internet users and digital economy spenders, recorded positive changes in spending outlook and therefore greater potential growth of the digital economy (Google et al. 2023). These factors, coupled with the continued strong support from the Government such as the promotion of cashless payment services in rural and remote areas and investment from commercial banks, among others, are likely to keep boosting the growth of the digital economy in the country.

Digital platform employment in Viet Nam has expanded in recent years and has increasingly become a focus of policy discourse. With the increasing adoption of digital financial services in the country, the use of digital platforms also expanded, creating new employment and income opportunities. However, social insurance coverage is extremely low among platform-based workers, who are mostly considered informally employed (Le 2022). Thus, policymakers aim to not only understand and measure the scope and depth of digital platform employment but also ensure that existing policy and legal frameworks effectively cover digital platform workers.

With the support of the ILO and other development partners, Viet Nam has strengthened existing and introduced additional frameworks governing the digital economy over the years. The country's policy direction towards digital transformation is clearly set by the establishment of the National Digital Transformation Program to 2025, with orientation to 2030.[6] The Program sets the following targets of increasing the share of the economic contribution of the digital economy and the population share with an electronic payment account in 2025 and 2030. Specifically, it states that: "By 2025, the digital economy will account for 20% of GDP; by 2030 account for 30% of GDP; 50% of the population has an electronic payment account by 2025 and by 2030 80% of the population."

The shift was preceded by multiple efforts by the Government to integrate and promote digitalization in its policy frameworks, such as the promotion of information technology development through tax incentives[7] and capacity building initiatives[8], among others.[9] In 2019, the Prime Minister of Viet Nam approved the scheme on the promotion of the model of the sharing economy that promotes the interest of digital platform economy from all the Ministries in Viet Nam.[10]

On the legislative front, there have been efforts to amend relevant laws to the digital economy and platform economy, which take into consideration new global concepts and provisions related to the platform economy. These include the Law on e-transactions[11] and the Law on the protection of consumers' rights,[12] among others. More importantly, harmonization of the existing employment law and legal documents, such as the decree on occupational safety and health, has already been underway to address the prevailing digital platform employment issues. In addition, the Politburo's Resolution 57-NQ/TW (December 2024) aims to create breakthroughs in science, technology, innovation and national digital transformation, reflecting the aspiration to make technology a key driver of economic growth.

The ILO has also provided support in developing a conceptual framework to measure digital platform employment in Viet Nam. This stems from the result of technical discussions of the National Advisory Taskforce on Formalisation involving key national stakeholders, including the General Statistics Office (GSO), identifying the strong need for a conceptual definition of digital platform employment that would facilitate the measurement of the magnitude and dimensions of digital platform workers in Viet Nam. The ILO has also provided support to the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA, now Ministry of Home Affairs since March 2025) to study the industrial relations (IR) aspect of digital platform work.

[6] This is through Resolution No. 52-NQ/TW and Decision No. 749/2020/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister.

[7] This is based on Resolution No. 41/NQ-CP dated May 26, 2016.

[8] This is through Directive No. 16/CT-TTg dated May 4, 2017.

[9] These include the promotion of information technology development to meet the requirements of sustainable development and international integration through Resolution No. 36-NQ/TW, dated July 1, 2014 of the Politburo and the setting of guidelines and policies to actively participate in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 through Resolution No. 52/NQ-TW on a number.

[10] This is through the issuance of the Decision No. 999/QD-TTg dated 12 August 2019.

[11] This is prepared and submitted by the Ministry of Information and Communication.

[12] Similarly, this is prepared and submitted by the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

▶ Digital platform employment: Concepts, measures, and correlates

Concepts

Currently, there are no internationally agreed statistical standards and related concepts to digital platform employment (DPE). The variation in the conceptual frameworks related to digital platform employment used, such as the length of the reference period used, definitions, concepts, boundaries, limit the comparability across countries. Thus, prior efforts have been undertaken to harmonize its scope and definition. For instance, the Resolution of the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) also addressed the group of self-employed workers "including the emerging group in the so-called 'gig economy'... where work organization or client access is often mediated through an Internet application controlled by a third party" (ILO 2018a, paragraph 120 and 202). The 20th ICLS also recommended "continuing work to develop concepts and methodologies for measuring people engaged in intermediary work through platforms or Internet-based applications" (ILO 2018b, paragraph 140.f)).

A harmonized conceptual and measurement framework is necessary to understand and estimate DPE. A guide[13], developed by the OECD, ILO, and the European Union (EU), harmonizes statistical practice across OECD countries by offering a flexible conceptual framework.[14] The flexibility of the framework allows for adjustments by national statistical agencies based on the objectives of the statistical analysis and on the exact specification of its scope, while still enabling harmonization among countries and agencies working in this area.

The same document outlines key conceptual and operational definitions of digital platform employment and work that account for the variety of types of digital platforms (OECD et al. 2023). It is a by-product of a stock-taking exercise of previous statistical initiatives by national statistical offices and derives statistical recommendations to formulate a general conceptual and measurement framework useful to other countries. Some recommendations include clear definitions of DPE concepts and the integration of filter questions to practically identify digital platform workers.

The Government has implemented a programme to promote the development and use of digital platforms in Viet Nam. A programme promoting the development and use of the national digital platform in Viet Nam was approved through the issuance of Decision No. 186/QD-BTTT on 11 February 2022. The same decision defines as a digital platform as an information system serving online electronic transactions operating under a model using digital technology to create a network environment that allows multiple parties to participate in transactions, providing services to organizations, individuals, which can be used immediately, simply, conveniently, flexibly on demand, easily disseminated widely, with participating parties not needing to invest, manage, operate, maintain.[15]

Meanwhile, the OECD-ILO-EU handbook (OECD et al. 2023) defines digital platform work[16] as:

- any productive activity performed by persons to produce goods or provide services carried out through or on a digital platform, and;
- the digital platform or a phone app controls and/or organizes essential aspects of the activities, such as the access to clients, the evaluation of the activities carried out, the tools needed for conducting the work, the facilitation of payments, distribution and prioritization of the work to be conducted; and
- the work is for at least one hour in the reference period.

[13] For a detailed discussion of the related definitions, concepts, and measures of digital platform employment, see the Handbook on Measuring Employment and Digital Platforms Work (OECD et al. 2023).

[14] The recommendations of the Handbook (OECD et al. 2023) are generally aligned with the Handbook on Forms of Employment by UNECE (2022) when measuring digital platforms work.

[15] It is also considered as the 'soft infrastructure' of the digital space, solving specific problems of digital transformation, establishing and storing user data; the more users there are, the more data there is, the cheaper the cost, the greater the value created (Decision No. 186/QD-BTTT).

[16] The guide used the definition of work, and employment as defined by the 19th ICLS resolution (ILO 2013).

DPE utilizes digital platforms for income generation and is only one of the many forms of digital platform work.[17] The main difference between DPE and the other forms of digital platform work is that its main intention is to generate pay or profit, while being carried out via the digital platform. It includes "a wide range of different activities such as persons selling goods through a digital platform or providing a variety of different services such as taxi and delivery services, clerical work, domestic cleaning and care services, posting videos or entertainment, web or logo designers, software developers, doctors, tutors and many more" (OECD et al. 2023, pp. 45-46). It is "independent on the type of services or goods produced by the person, as long as the activities are either carried out directly on the digital platform (e.g. in case of online web-based platforms) or through the digital platform, i.e. activities are carried out outside the digital platform but have been enabled or facilitated by the digital platform (e.g. in case of location-based platforms)" (OECD et al. 2023, p. 47).

Measures

Multiple data and methods have been used and employed around the world by countries to measure DPE.[18] These include Labour Force Surveys (LFS), Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Usage, ad-hoc, household, and online surveys, among others (OECD et al. 2023). Each survey instrument has its own strengths and weaknesses, which should be carefully considered by the user depending on its objective.[19] Some complement each other and can be used simultaneously. Ultimately, the choice of method primarily depends on the research and policy objectives, the availability of resources, and the trade-offs faced by statistical agencies or researchers.

Correlates

Digital platform workers are typically younger and more educated, over-represented by migrant workers, with mixed distribution across genders. There is no clear age profile for digital platform workers, but they are usually younger than the overall working population (ILO 2024b). Meanwhile, existing evidence shows that workers in DPE recorded higher levels of educational attainment than those in traditional sectors. On the other hand, migrant workers engaged in DPE are over-represented on platforms, specifically online platforms and in the delivery sector.

Occupational segregation in DPE across genders exists and often aligns with the traditional labour market. Even though one in every three digital platform workers are men, the distribution of digital platform workers across gender presents a more nuanced picture, which depends on distribution by sector and by occupation and the type of digital platform (ILO 2024b). For instance, women are under-represented in DPE in the passenger transport and delivery sectors, but dominate in historically female-dominated sectors, such as care work, domestic work and beauty work. In contrast, women are over-represented in certain occupations in online platforms, such as in the retail trade, administration, and personal services sectors, corroborated by recent evidence in various studies.[20] Finally, a digital divide across genders in terms of access to digital technology and skills can observed, which has been more limited in women than men, particularly in developing countries.[21]

DPE is associated with high levels of informality. Beyond the negative implications of informality to public finances and economic competitiveness, informality raises issues on workers' access to adequate labour protection and social security (ILO 2024b). This is a critical issue among digital platform workers who often lack social protection. Moreover, widespread informality among DPE has been linked to the inability to exercise fundamental rights at work, such as freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, among others.

[17] The others include digital platform work for own-use, digital platform unpaid trainee work, digital platform volunteer work, and other work performed not for the purpose of receiving wages, salaries or profiting through a digital platform. For a detailed discussion of other forms of digital platform work, refer to OECD et al. (2023).

[18] For an analysis of official surveys with questions related to work on platforms conducted across countries, refer to ILO (2024b).

[19] For a detailed discussion of the pros and cons of each data and methodology, refer to OCED et al. (2023).

[20] This is according to a World Bank study by Datta et al. (2023) and recent evidence in the Philippines, as cited in ILO (2024b).

[21] See Kasliwal (2020) as cited in ILO (2024b).

▶ The pilot methodology: Measuring digital platform employment in Viet Nam

This section briefly discusses the pilot methodology conducted by the GSO to measure DPE in Viet Nam. It is divided into three parts, which covers a brief overview, the reference population and sampling of the survey, and the survey features and its implementation.

Overview

The GSO of Viet Nam conducted a pilot survey to address the lack of a measurement framework and data collection instrument to measure DPE. In 2023, with the support of ILO, the GSO of Viet Nam conducted a study to design a questionnaire for piloting the measurement of DPE. The content of the questionnaire was integrated in a separate module in the LFS and was implemented in two localities, namely Hanoi and Phu Tho province, in December 2023.

The Labor Force Survey (LFS) is a sample survey conducted nationwide under the direction of the GSO. The survey is conducted monthly to provide national and provincial labour force statistics. The quarterly data represent the entire country, 6 socioeconomic regions, and 2 major cities: Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Information collected by the LFS primarily include data to determine the employment status, unemployment, or economic inactivity of the population aged 15 years and above, as well as basic characteristics of employment.

Reference population and sampling

The survey sample consists of households surveyed in the LFS in December 2023 in Hanoi and Phu Tho. The surveyed population of the LFS includes residents aged 15 years and above from households, including those who are members of the armed forces and are residents of households, but excludes armed forces personnel residing in military camps managed by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Public Security. The pilot DPE survey targets individuals aged 15 years and above who are employed in the LFS conducted in December 2023 in the surveyed areas of Hanoi and Phu Tho. Those identified as employed in the survey were asked further questions in a separate module to determine digital platform employment in both their main job and secondary job (if any).

The reference period for questions related to the digital platform employment module is the past four weeks. This reference period is longer than the reference period of seven days, which is used to determine basic labour force and employment characteristics, to include additional cases that may have engaged in digital platform work before the past seven days.

Survey features and implementation

Survey content

Household and labour market information was collected on workers engaged in digital platform employment, including engagement in platform-based work, income, and working hours. The questions for measuring digital platform employment are designed to inquire about individuals identified as being employed. This content is collected after the respondents fully answered questions regarding their employment status and related characteristics, including economic sector, occupation, working hours, and income.

The questions measuring digital platform employment are packaged in a separate module to make it independent from other questions. There are six main questions with multiple follow up questions for some, to capture DPE.[22] The survey questions are designed to capture multiple aspects of DPE, including employment in specific digital platforms, type of DPE, significance of the digital platform in the performance of the work, derived income from the DPE, and relative time spent using the platform for work. To capture the nature of DPE, each set of questions is asked to individuals who are considered employed by the other questions in the same LFS, not only in terms of their primary occupation, but also to their secondary occupation.

[22] See Appendix Table A2 for the complete list of questions.

Implementation and monitoring

The GSO conducted training sessions to all survey personnel to ensure an accurate and effective collection of digital platform employment information using the pilot survey. The GSO organized a professional training session to directly instruct supervisors and e-surveyors from Hanoi and Phu Tho on how to collect information for the questions measuring digital platform employment through the Zoom software on 24 November 2023. The training session helped trainees understand the purpose and significance of piloting the DPE survey. It covered methods on observing, questioning, and recording information for each question in the DPE module.

Surveyors visited selected households sampled in December 2023 in Hanoi City and Phu Tho Province. Data collection was conducted in the field from 1–10 December. To ensure that the information collected met the quality standards and survey enumeration was completed within deadline, a survey monitoring process was facilitated. The monitoring primarily focused on the survey process in the field, checking and approving forms on monitoring software, and deployment at three levels: central, provincial, and district.

Supervisors at the district and provincial levels that were tasked to monitor the survey attended interview sessions with the surveyors to ensure that the interview process was conducted effectively and efficiently and to identify and address bottlenecks and issues that had arisen during the survey process. The former was done through strict and regular monitoring of the progress, while the quality of information on survey forms were checked using an error checking programme. Meanwhile, those at the central level organized two supervisory delegations to work directly with the two provinces to listen to reports on the implementation of the survey by local authorities. Supervisors across all levels also closely coordinated by sharing information regarding any emerging business or technical issues in using smart electronic devices during the survey process and address these accordingly.

The results of the survey forms were also checked and processed at the central and local levels. Aggregated data were transferred to the GSO, where officers verified completeness and logical consistency across data fields. Cases which required further verification were sent to the provincial statistical department to contact the survey subjects for verification. Then, they reviewed, classified, and sent the information down to the district statistical offices for verification with each survey subject. Once verified, the information was sent back to the district statistical unit for review, ensuring completeness and logical consistency before being sent back to the GSO.

▶ Assessment of the pilot methodology: Lessons learned and recommendations

The pilot DPE survey conducted by the GSO revealed important considerations and recommendations on how to improve the conceptual framework and methodology to capture DPE not only in Viet Nam, but in similar countries. This section presents an assessment of the pilot methodology, focusing on the advantages and disadvantages of using LFS as the data collection instrument and highlighting key considerations and lessons learned derived from the implementation of the pilot survey.

Using a labour force survey to capture DPE

Measuring DPE using LFS offers numerous advantages, such as a relatively more accurate estimate than other sources and comparability over time.

Integrating survey questions that capture DPE-related concepts, ideally in a separate, and hence an independent module, in a regularly conducted and nationally-representative household survey, such as the LFS, allows for a common sampling frame. This ensures comparability with national and local estimates of key labour market indicators. The regular conduct of the LFS, in the case of Viet Nam on a monthly basis, allows for a longer time series of DPE estimates and enables comparisons over time,

relative to other irregularly conducted data sources, such as ICT, ad-hoc, and time use surveys, among others (OECD et al. 2023).

Despite its potential advantages, using an LFS to capture DPE has its own shortcomings.

These include difficulties capturing a worker's secondary occupation and misalignment of conceptual frameworks of DPE and existing instruments. For instance, most LFS do not accurately capture the secondary job of the worker and its characteristics, which is likely the case for most digital platform work (OECD et al. 2023). The pilot survey conducted by GSO dealt with this issue by asking the same set of DPE-related questions to workers with secondary jobs. Also, the existing LFS already includes key questions on the status in employment and nature of contracts of the employed worker, which addresses potential unreliable coverage of self-employed and those in contractual arrangements.

The task-based nature of digital platform employment may also be incompatible with existing occupation-based concepts used by the LFS (OECD et al. 2023). In the pilot survey in Viet Nam, this was addressed by integrating a set of questions in the DPE module that focuses on specific digital platform-related tasks performed in the work of the respondent.[23]

Also, using the LFS typically aligns the reference period of DPE with the other standard employment concepts. This is usually during the previous seven days as with Viet Nam's LFS, which allows comparability of estimates across indicators, but may not be suitable to capture those who only occasionally work on digital platform. This was addressed in the pilot survey by extending the reference period from one week to four weeks.

Other measurement issues, some of which are not exclusive to the LFS, remain. For example, an accurate analysis of digital platform workers' characteristics is constrained by its small absolute number. This can still be observed in the pilot survey of GSO.

Other remaining issues are inherent and can be prevented by an effective survey implementation. These include potential difficulties and divergences in understanding the questions and related concepts of DPE. In effect, inaccurate, albeit small, differences in wordings of questions have significant implications on the estimates (OECD et al. 2023). Attempts to resolve these issues, such as providing a more detailed description of DPE may help the respondent but may be impractical in the implementation of regular surveys such as the LFS.

Lessons learned and recommendations

The conceptual and measurement framework implemented by the GSO of Viet Nam to capture DPE resulted in low estimates of digital platform workers. The sample is not representative enough to conduct data analysis on DPE in Viet Nam. However, it is sufficient enough to assess the feasibility of the designed questions in order to further refine the conceptual framework for DPE. Also, the pilot survey exercise revealed important practical lessons that can be adopted in the next rounds of the survey and by other countries.

Reference population and sampling frame

Adjust the reference period for DPE, as well as the survey implementation. Determining the appropriate reference period is one of the common measurement issues taken into consideration by statistical agencies of countries estimating the scale of DPE. It primarily hinges on the research and policy objectives and the overall labour market situation within the digital platform economy. This is reflected by the significant variation in terms of reference periods across countries. For instance, some use singular reference periods with coverage as short as the past week (e.g., Indonesia and Brazil) to three months (e.g., United Kingdom), while others use multiple reference periods (e.g., Australia and the European Union) (see table 1). Both surveys conducted by Australia and the European Union used three reference periods, namely past week, past month and past year, to capture DPE information. They also explore the multiple characteristics of DPE by exploring the frequency of DPE-related tasks undertaken (e.g. weekly, monthly, etc.), the specific task types performed, working hours and work safety, proportion of income earned, benefits, and work modalities (ILO 2023b).

[23] See questions 60b to 60f of Appendix Table A2.

▶ **Table 1. Reference period of digital platform employment (DPE) in selected countries**

Country	Reference period/s
Australia	Multiple: last 12 months, last four weeks, and past week
Indonesia	Past week
Brazil	Past week
United Kingdom	Past three months
European Union	Multiple: last 12 months, last four weeks, and past week

Source: Authors' compilation based on ILO (2023b).

Meanwhile, limiting the reference period to one week, which is a common timeframe for key employment indicators in LFS, leads to very low estimates and may lead to underestimation in some countries. Thus, the GSO of Viet Nam extended the reference period to one month.[24] However, the low estimates of DPE in Viet Nam suggest the possible exclusion of temporary or part-time digital platform workers in the sampling frame. As mentioned in the preceding discussion, occupations engaged in DPE are typically secondary in nature. Thus, one month is a short reference period which may not capture those who are temporarily not engaged in this type of work and therefore excluded in the survey sample.

This indicates that, similar to other countries such as Australia and the European Union, the GSO of Viet Nam and other statistical agencies can consider extending the reference period by adding questions not only related to work in the reference month, but also extending it to the past 6 or 12 months. Alternatively, questions about the employment information for the past 12 months can be integrated into the LFS without extending the reference period. Also, for secondary jobs, the reference timeframe can be increased or additional questions asked about the reference period, which could be the past 3 months or 6 months instead of the one-month reference period in the LFS.

Finally, the current pilot implementation period of one month can be extended to at least one quarter per year. Ideally, this can be done for all four quarters to identify potential patterns of seasonality of DPE estimates within a year. This should be done while ensuring the feasibility of the questionnaire and maintaining data quality for analysis and indicator calculation.

Expand the sampling frame of the survey beyond employed workers. The target groups of existing DPE surveys vary across countries. Some surveys only examine private employment (e.g., Brazil) and own-account workers (e.g., Singapore), while others look into the broader population cohorts, such as the labour force (e.g., Canada and Denmark) and the entire adult population (e.g., Italy, Switzerland, Norway, and European Union) (see Appendix Table A1). One of the most common sampling frames of DPE surveys target the employed workers, which is also the case for the GSO pilot survey. That is, only those who are tagged as employed in prior questions in the conduct of the LFS are asked the DPE-related questions.

However, this is in stark contrast with the reality that digital platform employment has been found among both economically inactive and unemployed groups. Therefore, GSO's pilot survey may be accurate for those employed but may not fully reflect the number of people using digital platforms for work purposes in Viet Nam. Thus, the sampling frame can include all individuals aged 15 years and above. This can be applied not only to primary, but also secondary digital platform employment.

Questionnaire

Adjust the survey questionnaire by adding and revising questions to increase the accuracy of estimating DPE. Additional elements or concepts are needed to be accounted for in measuring DPE. These include: the amount of time spent on platforms; the level of income gained through digital platforms; and the frequency of provision of labour services through a longer reference period than the typical period to measure employment (e.g., past week) (ILO 2023b).

There were six questions added to the LFS, organized in a separate module, to measure DPE in Viet Nam. Three of these questions were used to determine DPE, while the remaining three questions supported additional analysis. This makes it feasible to continue its practical implementation at the national level. However, additional questions need to be added, including the need to identify the specific platforms to assess and analyze the commonly used platforms and determine whether these platforms

[24] See question 60a in Appendix Table A2.

actually influence work or provide workers with certain rights or features.[25]

Revising the set of questions should aim to limit, if not eliminate, false positives and false negatives in DPE estimates. Specifically, the framing of questions 60a and 60b (Appendix Table A2) are susceptible to false positives or the overinclusion of workers that should not be considered digital platform workers. One way to ensure that affirmative answers to question 60a is indeed DPE is to verify whether their jobs depend entirely on digital platforms. This means that without these platforms, they would not be able to find or perform their work. The strict implementation of this approach may have led to lower-than-expected estimates of DPE in Viet Nam.

Meanwhile, question 60b, which includes social networks (e.g., Facebook, Zalo, Messenger, TikTok, Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, LINE, WhatsApp, Telegram, Social Loyalty) as one of its platform options used by the individual, may have misled the respondents and survey personnel to tag individuals who use these applications for meetings or communication purposes as digital platform workers. This is also an issue for the other platform categories, wherein the mobile app or digital platform supports work execution or organization but only through advertisement of products on platforms and apps, and not the selling, delivery, and payment aspects of the transaction. False positives from this question can be prevented by adding additional open-ended questions about the names of mobile apps or digital platforms and determine whether it supports their work execution or organization and whether it supports customer search or payment processing. Together with question 60c, this would provide information that allows for data quality assessment and data cleaning, if necessary, and reduce false positives and negatives.

Finally, minor tweaks can be done for the other three questions which explore other specific aspects of DPE. Question 60d can be similarly retained and placed after 60c to assess the level of dependency of the respondents on the application of the digital platform. The results from questions 60e and 60f, which cover issues relating to income and time spent doing digital platform work, respectively, can be improved by eliminating the option of "Don't Know" and to facilitate data analysis afterwards.

Implementation and monitoring

Formulate detailed survey plans to collect DPE information. To ensure the quality and progress of the survey implementation, the provincial and district statistical agencies developed detailed plans, coordinated with local authorities and contacted survey participants to facilitate interviews. The progress of data collection in the field was ensured to adhere to the guidelines in the operational documents and the content covered during pilot survey training.

Implement flexible data collection mechanisms and directly conduct the interview process to improve accuracy of DPE information. Beyond ensuring clarity of the interview purpose and relevant concepts and following the prescribed interview process, the data collection required flexibility and directness in the conduct of interviews. To facilitate easy information retrieval from respondents, surveyors demonstrated flexibility in asking questions to gather relevant information. To obtain more accurate information, it can also be observed through supervision of the pilot survey implementation that asking DPE-related questions necessitates direct interaction with respondents.

Conduct rigorous training sessions for all survey personnel to facilitate more proactive and dynamic interaction among them. GSO's professional training session designed to directly instruct supervisors and e-Surveyors from Hanoi and Phu Tho on how to collect DPE information was instrumental in the survey implementation. It led to more proactive action among surveyors and supervisors at various levels, which improved the accuracy of capturing DPE. During fieldwork, surveyors proactively contacted supervisors at various levels to discuss and determine whether certain cases constituted work on digital platforms. For example, cases where individuals only used platforms for group work on platforms like Zalo or Facebook, or for tasks on accounting software like MISA, or e-government services with the State Treasury, were not considered as work conducted through digital platforms.

[25] The discussion here excludes questions pertaining to additional and longer reference periods, which was implied in the preceding question.

Conclusions and ways forward

The recent proliferation of digital platforms underscores the increasing influence of technological improvements in changing the world of work. During this phase, Viet Nam has been one of the countries which has successfully harnessed these tools into a competitive advantage, becoming the fastest growing digital economy in South-East Asia. This growth, which is expected to continue, can be primarily attributed to the rapid adoption of digital financial services and strong support from the private sector and the government.

Consequently, the rise in digital platforms led to several developments in Viet Nam. As expected, DPE also increased over the years. In order to protect digital platform workers and promote DPE, the Government, with continued collaboration with the ILO and other development partners, has strengthened existing and introduced additional frameworks governing DPE. Various assessments have revealed that one of the glaring gaps in policy and research is the lack of a conceptual and measurement framework to capture DPE. In effect, there is no accurate and regular estimate of DPE nationwide and across demographic groups, sectors, and geographical areas, among others. Similar to other countries, policymakers and researchers face a multitude of key challenges in measuring DPE, which include, but are not limited to, the lack of an internationally agreed and harmonized statistical standards, conceptual, and measurement frameworks related to DPE.

Thus, the GSO of Viet Nam, with the support of the ILO, conducted a pilot survey to measure DPE in 2023. Specifically, a questionnaire was designed and put in a separate module in the LFS. Then, this was implemented in two localities, namely Hanoi and Phu Tho province, in December 2023. The questions related to DPE were continuous in nature and packaged in a separate module and were asked to employed workers. It is important to note that the past four weeks was used as the reference period for DPE. Specific DPE information was also gathered in the pilot survey, such as engagement in platform-based work, income, and working hours. The implementation of the DPE pilot survey included training sessions to all survey personnel on how to collect DPE information and direct visits by surveyors to selected sampled households. Meanwhile, the monitoring process involved checking and approving forms on monitoring software, and deployment at three levels, namely at central, provincial, and district.

Key observations can be derived from the results of the DPE pilot survey. The number of digital platform workers identified by the pilot survey is low, and the surveyed sample is not representative enough to conduct disaggregated data analysis on DPE. Common false negatives and false positives were also identified. Nevertheless, the pilot survey exercise revealed several key practical lessons, which can be applied to the next DPE survey rounds and by other countries. This can be grouped into three aspects: reference population and sampling frame, questionnaire, and implementation and monitoring.

Adjusting the reference period for DPE beyond the past four weeks can capture digital platform workers who are temporarily not engaged in this type of work. Meanwhile, extending the survey implementation from a month to a quarter can significantly improve the accuracy of DPE estimates. To better reflect the number of digital platform workers, the sampling frame of the DPE survey can also be expanded to include the working age population and those who are economically inactive and unemployed.

Also, the survey questionnaire can be carefully revised by adding and revising screening questions designed to effectively contextualize DPE and limit false positives and false negatives. Aside from the identification of specific platform names and excluding digital platform users, these questions can cover various DPE aspects, such as level of dependency of the respondents on the application of the digital platform, income proportions, and time spent using apps/platforms by survey respondents.

Finally, statistical agencies of other countries can adopt good practices in terms of implementing and monitoring a pilot DPE survey. These include the formulation of detailed survey plans, integration of flexible data collection mechanisms and direct interviews, and rigorous training sessions for all survey personnel.

The pilot DPE survey of the GSO of Viet Nam provided important insights and inputs to the refinement of the conceptual and measurement framework of DPE. Although with certain limitations, the exercise is sufficient enough to assess the feasibility of the designed questions and identify important practical lessons that can be adopted in the next

rounds of the survey and by other countries. The collaboration between the ILO and GSO (now NSO) on DPE underscored the need for continued capacity building on measuring DPE. It also highlighted the increasing demand from key stakeholders for statistical information and analysis on DPE to better inform the design and implementation of DPE-related policies.

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▶ Appendix

▶ Table A1. Examples of official surveys with questions related to work on platforms

Country	Year	Survey	Reference period	Prevalence	Definition/target population
Brazil	2022	Household Survey	1 week	1.7% of private employment	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers (main job)
Canada	2015–16	Labour Force Survey	12 months	0.3 % of the population aged 18 and older	Only passenger transport platforms
	2018	Canadian Survey of Consumer Expectations	Unknown	1.2% of labour force	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers
Chile	2021 onwards	Labour Force Survey	1 week	0.5% of employment	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers (main job)
Denmark	2017	Labour Force Survey	12 months	1% of labour force	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers
France	2017	Labour Force Survey	1 week	0.8% of employed	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers
Italy	2018	INAPP-PLUS	12 months	0.49% of adult population	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers
Philippines	2021	Labour Force Survey	1 week	4% of employed	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers
Singapore	2020	Labour Force Survey	12 months	3.6% of own-account workers	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers
Switzerland	2019	Labour Force Survey	12 months	0.4% of adult population	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers
United Kingdom	2022	Labour Force Survey	12 months	no estimates yet	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers
United States	2017	Labour Force Survey	1 week	1% of employed	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers
Multi-national					
16 EU countries and Norway	2018–19	Eurostat Community Survey on ICT	12 months	3% of adult population	Platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers

Source: ILO (2024b).

▶ Table A2. Digital platform employment (DPE) module of the LFS

QUESTION / NAME AND ORDINAL NUMBER											
	60. How long has [NAME] been doing the above work?										
			UNDER 1 MONTH.....	1							
			FROM 1 TO LESS THAN 3 MONTHS.....	2							
			FROM 3 TO LESS THAN 12 MONTHS.....	3							
			FROM 12 MONTHS TO LESS THAN 3 YEARS....	4							
			FROM 3 YEARS TO LESS THAN 9 YEARS	5							
			9 YEARS OR MORE	6							

60a: During the last month, did [NAME] perform the above work through any mobile applications or web platforms? (Examples of mobile applications or web platforms may include: Shopee, Lazada, Grab, Uber, Facebook, Youtube, Zalo, Twitter, Sendo.vn, Shopee.vn, Tiki.vn, Chotot.com.. .)

YES 1
NO 2 => Q61

	60b. What is the mobile application or web platform that [NAME] uses at work?	YES	NO
	b1. Social Media: Facebook, Zalo, Messenger, Tik tok, Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, LINE, WhatsApp, Telegram, Social Loyalty,...	1 ☐	2 ☐
	b2. E-commerce marketplaces: Shoppe, Lazada, Sendo, Tiki, Cho Tot, Price, Muaban, Amazon, Alibaba,...	1 ☐	2 ☐
	b3. Ride-sharing, transportation, delivery applications: Grab, Uber, Bee, Now, Gojek, Dichung Taxi	1 ☐	2 ☐
	b4. Apps providing healthcare, teaching, caregiving, online counseling services, etc.: Freelancer.com, Aihealth.com, hoctructuyen.vn, giupviectot.vn, xego,...	1 ☐	2 ☐
	b5. Other applications (specify): _____	1 ☐	2 ☐
	60c. For what purposes does [NAME] use the apps or platforms below? (MULTIPLE CHOICE)	YES	NO
	c1. Importing goods for commercial purposes.....	1 ☐	2 ☐
	c2. Online sales.....	1 ☐	2 ☐
	c3. Driving technology.....	1 ☐	2 ☐
	c4. Delivery of goods and food..... .	1 ☐	2 ☐
	c5. Medical examination/treatment, teaching, online consultation.	1 ☐	2 ☐
	C6. Stock market investment	1 ☐	2 ☐
	C7. Renting real estate and assets.....	1 ☐	2 ☐

	C8. Providing other services (specify)_____									1 ☐	2 ☐
	60d. Without the above application, would [NAME] be able to perform his/her job? YES..... 1 NO 2										
	60e. The income earned from the job using the mobile application/web platform mentioned above accounts for approximately what % of the total income from [NAME]'s main job? *LESS THAN 50%*..... 1 *50% AND OVER* ..... 2 DON'T KNOW..... 3										
	60f. Time spent working using the mobile application/web platform mentioned above accounts for approximately what % of [NAME]'s total time spent doing main work? *LESS THAN 50%*.....1 *50% AND OVER* ..... 2 DON'T KNOW..... 3										
	61. In addition to this job, does [NAME] do another job to receive wages or have own production / business to generate income? (excluding jobs that generate products mainly for family use)										
			YES	1							
			NO.....	2	=> Q72						

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