

Department of Statistics

Working Group for developing guidelines on Digital platform work and employment

Supporting paper

Measuring Digital Platform Employment: Country Practices and Approaches

Acknowledgements

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The paper is based on the contributions made from the countries responding to the ILO review questionnaire of digital platform employment and have been presented in the discussion paper *Issues to be addressed in the development of guidelines on Digital platform work and employment* circulated to the *Working Group for developing standards on Digital platform work and employment* at its first meeting in 2024.

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1. Introduction

This paper presents the findings from a review of national practices in collecting statistics on digital platform employment. It is based on the discussion paper *Issues to be Addressed in the Development of Guidelines on Digital Platform Work and Employment*, which was presented and discussed during the first meeting of the working group on developing statistical standards on digital platform work and employment.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a more focused account of country practices, in order to support the ongoing deliberations within the working group. By examining the current landscape of data collection efforts, the paper aims to inform the development of the statistical standards for measuring digital platform work and employment.

The structure of the paper is as follows:

- The **first section** provides an overview of the collection and production of statistics on digital platform employment, with a focus on the concepts applied and the statistical sources utilized, including labour force surveys and other instruments.
- The **second section** explores variations in the scope and boundaries of measurement across countries. This includes differences in the types of activities considered, the status in employment categories included, the target population, and the reference periods used.
- The **third section** examines the various methodological approaches adopted to minimize misclassification—specifically, efforts to reduce false positives (incorrectly identifying individuals as engaged in digital platform employment) and false negatives (failing to identify actual digital platform employment).
- The **final section** describes the types of additional information countries have collected beyond basic identification of digital platform employment, such as income levels, working conditions, frequency of engagement, and access to social protection.

Together, these findings enhance the understanding of current practices and challenges, which may contribute to facilitate the discussions.

2. Data availability, an overview

1. There have been different attempts to measure different aspects or components of digital platform employment. To understand the latest statistical developments in measuring digital platform employment among countries, the ILO circulated a questionnaire in 2024 to collect information regarding the different types of estimations undertaken by countries across various statistical sources. A total of 133 countries responded to the questionnaire.
2. ILO's review of country practices found that a third or 40 countries have made efforts to measure the prevalence of digital platform employment to date, including 8 which have already been producing estimates on digital platform employment regularly (Table 1). These are mainly countries in Europe and Central Asia (25 countries, of which 17 had conducted the EU pilot survey in 2022), followed by countries in Asia and the Pacific (8 countries)) and in Americas (6 countries). All countries which have made data collection efforts also indicated that they intend to measure this form of work arrangement again in the future. Conversely, countries in the Africa and Arab States regions are least likely to have measured digital platform employment.
3. Among the 93 countries that have yet to measure digital platform employment, it is encouraging to see that the large majority of 68 countries have either expressed interest in or have already made plans to measure this within the next five years or so. This includes the Africa and Arab States region where measurement efforts are currently lacking (20 countries in Africa and 4 in the Arab States expressed an intent to measure digital platform employment within the near future). The extensive interest by countries to either measure employment carried out on or through digital platforms or continue existing measurement efforts underscores the pressing need for standards and definitions setting.

Table 1: Countries that have measured or have intentions to measure digital platform employment.

Region	Have measured	Have not measured			Total
		Total	No intentions	With intentions	
Africa	1	25	5	20	26
Americas	6	17	2	15	23
Arab States	0	8	4	4	8
Asia and the Pacific	8	18	9	9	26
Europe and Central Asia	25*	25	5	20*	50
Total	40	93	25	68	133

* This includes 17 countries that participated in Eurostat's 2022 pilot survey and European Union countries that will conduct the ad-hoc LFS module on Digital Platform Employment in 2026.

Source: ILO country review questionnaire 2024

4. As part of the country review, data was gathered on the specific concepts and terminology used to measure digital platform employment. The findings reveal that *digital platform work/employment* were the most used terms, appearing in all but five cases. Of notable mention was the use of the term *digital platform employment* in the Eurostat pilot survey in 2022 where a consistent set of concepts and definitions were used across the 17 countries that participated. In the exceptions, alternative terms such as *digitally mediated work* or *gig workers* were utilized. While this does not necessarily imply that these terms were used at the national level or in official publications, nor does it guarantee or ensure consistent definitions and boundaries across different countries, it does underscore the widespread recognition and relevance of the terms *digital platform work/employment*.

5. Characterizing for the measurements are the differences regarding fundamental statistical aspects such as the length of reference period used, the applied definition, concepts, boundaries and the statistical source and methodology used. All these factors impact significantly on the produced estimates concerning digital platform employment and severely limit the possibility for comparison across countries and sometimes over time.
6. For countries that have made attempts to produce statistics on digital platform employment, information was collected regarding the data sources used, as well as the conceptual and operational definitions and boundaries applied across sources. This means countries could have made measurement efforts via multiple source types. In fact, of the 40 countries that reported in the affirmative, 10 reported data collection efforts across multiple data sources, utilizing the Labour Force Survey (LFS) as well as other sources such as administrative listings or other survey vehicles. In cases where a country used a particular source multiple times over the years, the country was asked to provide its response based on the most recent collection experience.
7. The ILO's country review in Table 2 found that most measurement attempts were done via the use of the LFS, as it provides the opportunity to augment digital platform employment estimates with a rich amount of information from the LFS as the main survey vehicle for capturing core labour statistics. Even among countries that reported measurement attempts based on other survey sources (mainly of households via Information and Communication Technology (ICT) usage surveys, time use surveys etc.) or non-survey sources such as administrative listings and big data, most did so in addition to collection efforts using the LFS (6 out of 9 countries which used non-LFS surveys and all the 5 countries that used non-survey sources).
8. With the exception of three cases, the data collection was carried out with the objective to either test the measurement of digital platform employment by conducting a pilot or to collect data to produce estimates for publication, even though there is currently no internationally standardized measure of DPE. It attests to the urgent need for guidelines setting, to provide a consistent and transparent framework which will facilitate the production of comparable statistics across countries.

Table 2: Sources used for measuring digital platform employment.

Source used	Intent			Total
	Pilot	For production of estimates	Others	
Labour force survey	20*	16	1	37
Other regular household survey	2	5	0	7
Register-based/administrative listings	2	1	1	4
Specialized survey on digital platform employment	0	1	0	1
Big data	0	0	1	1
Establishment survey	0	1	0	1
Total	24	24	3	51

* This includes 17 countries that participated in the Eurostat's 2022 pilot survey.

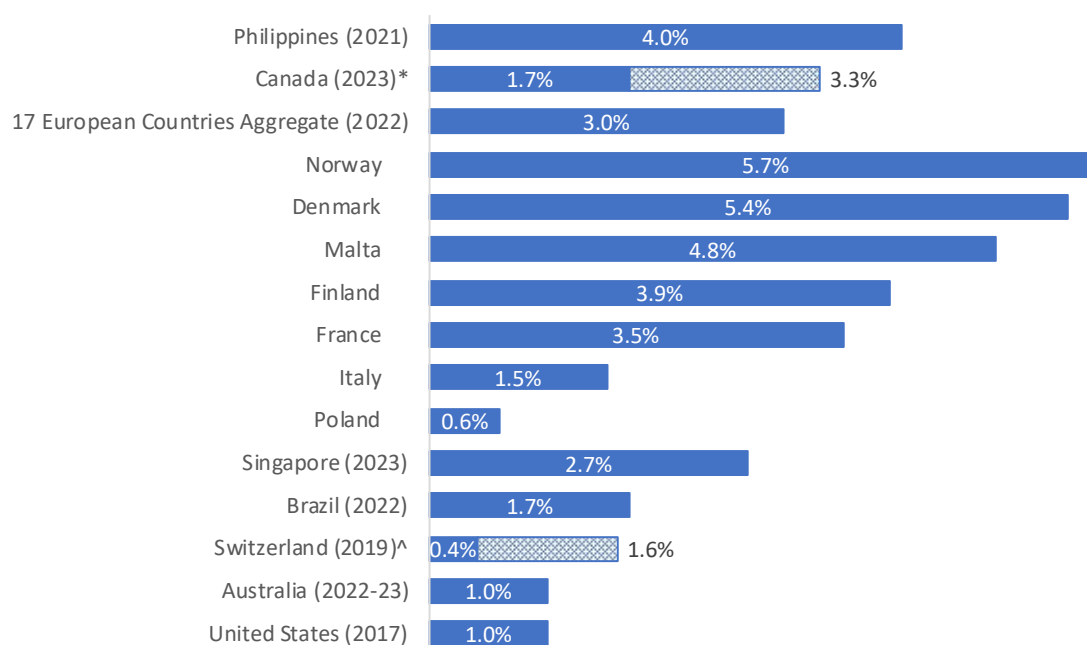
Source: ILO country review questionnaire 2024

9. Existing measurement efforts have been done using different reference periods, definitions, concepts, and methodology. These have a direct impact on the estimates produced and the estimates should thus be interpreted with great care. Promising first steps have been taken towards the production of more comparable data. In 2022, Eurostat conducted a pilot survey with the intention to develop an LFS ad-hoc module for implementation in all EU countries in 2026. This is expected to produce data which are comparable between different European countries, based on the same definitions, methodology and reference periods. A total of 17

EU and EFTA countries participated in the pilot survey, which showed that on aggregate, 3.0% of people aged 15 to 64 had performed at least an hour of digital platform employment in the last 12 months. Based on this more consistent methodology, the prevalence of digital platform employment differed across EU countries, for instance it was found to be 5.7% in Norway and only 0.6% in Poland (Eurostat 2023, Gustafsson 2023, Strzelecka 2024).

10. Besides the Eurostat pilot survey, other countries such as Singapore and Canada have also made more recent attempts to measure digital platform employment, similarly using a long reference period of the last 12 months. The COVID pandemic saw a rapid acceleration of digital transformation in businesses and the way people worked. However, post-COVID pandemic, the incidence of digital platform employment was observed to still be low (Singapore: 2.7% of all employed in 2023, Canada: 1.7%-3.3% of the population in 2023). Australia's survey, whilst based on a shorter reference period of the last 4 weeks, also showed that the proportion who undertook digital platform work was small in 2022-23, at just under 1% of the employed population (MRSD, MOM Singapore 2024, Statistics Canada 2024, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023).
11. These estimates are also not too different from those produced by other countries prior to the COVID pandemic, notwithstanding the differences in conceptual and methodological aspects between sources. In Switzerland, the percentage of the population who carried out work via internet-mediated platforms in the past 12 months ranged between 0.4% and 1.6% in 2019, depending on whether e-commerce and accommodation rental related activities were included. The United States found that 1.0% of employed persons had obtained short jobs or tasks through websites or mobile apps that both connected them with customers and facilitated payment for the tasks during the survey reference week in 2017.

Figure 1: The incidence of digital platform employment



Sources: (Esquivias 2021); (Eurostat 2023); (Gustafsson 2023); (Sutela, Challenges in measuring digital platform employment - the Finnish experience 2024); (Malta National Statistics Office 2022); (Remila 2023); (Italy Istituto Nazionale di Statistica 2024); (Strzelecka 2024); (Statistics Canada 2024); (MRSD, MOM Singapore 2024); (Brazil IBGE 2022); (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023); (Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO) 2020); (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018a)

Notes:

The estimates are based on different definitions, concepts, methodology, reference periods and sources.

* For Canada, the incidence of digital platform employment was 1.7% of the population, based on people who had worked through a digital platform or app to earn income in the previous 12 months and were paid by the platform for their work. Based on a broader definition of digital platforms encompassing those that pay workers directly, those that exercise another form of control, and those that simply connect workers with clients and let them arrange the payment by themselves, the incidence was higher at 3.3%.

^ For Switzerland, the incidence of digital platform employment was 0.4% of the population, based on those who had carried out work via internet-mediated platforms in the past 12 months. This is where a person performing a service is connected with a client through an internet platform and payment is (usually) also made via the platform. If persons who rented out accommodation through an internet platform or sold goods via an internet platform that were especially collected, sold or produced with the aim of reselling them were included, the incidence was higher at 1.6%.

12. While these findings are based on different definitions, concepts, reference periods, and methodology, they indicate that the prevalence of digital platform employment varies between countries and is relatively low in general, but not negligible.
13. It should also be noted that the measurement of digital platform employment has mainly taken place among high-income countries, and there is a general lack of data from low- and middle-income countries. This means it cannot be assumed that the low prevalence generally reported to date would be similar in other settings. Some attempts have been made, for example in Morocco and in Latin America. For instance, the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) conducted the CAF Survey in 2019, publishing the information as part of the Economy and Development Report, found that a total of around 16% of the workforce can be classified as registered platform workers. Of this percentage, at least 9.4% of workers in 11 major Latin American cities had provided a service through a digital platform in the preceding month, with the highest proportions arising from Panama City, Bogota, and Quito (Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) 2021). Work within the Latin America and the Caribbean region is ongoing within the collaboration of the Labour Market Indicators Working Group CEA-CEPAL (Statistical Conference of the Americas-Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) and statistical offices in Chile, Costa Rica, México, and Brazil have measured digital platform employment and are in the process of defining and analysing the topic with different degrees of progress.¹

¹ For more information see: [Taller regional sobre identificación de personas ocupadas que trabajan a través de plataformas digitales | Knowledge Transfer Network \(cepal.org\)](#) (visited: 11-07-2023)

3. Boundaries used

3.1. Types of activities included in the measurement

14. As part of the country review, a list of various types of activities linked to digital platforms was included, asking countries to indicate which were included as part of their measurement. This approach aimed to map the boundaries used in different measurements across countries. However, the results, presented in Table 3, should be interpreted with caution. The list of activities provided in the questionnaire was not exhaustive, and some activities were included because they fall on the borderline of what could be considered digital platform work or are generally considered to be outside the core definition. Additionally, providing a clear response might have been challenging, as interpretations and definitions of the different types of activities may vary significantly, and there might be a difference depending on whether countries have answered in relation to the conceptual boundaries used or the operational boundaries. For example, there might be the case that a specific activity, while being conceptually included have not been directly included through for example the screening questions used to identify digital platform employment. The questionnaire did not specify this aspect which might have impacted the results. Nevertheless, the responses offer a general indication of both similarities and differences between countries' scope of measurement.
15. From this assessment, it is evident that digital labour platforms constitute the core focus of most countries' measurements. Indeed, the measurement attempts for some countries explicitly restrict their conceptual definition to only the provision of labour services through digital platforms, for example in Australia, Brazil, and Singapore. In particular, location-based digital platforms—such as those offering taxi or ride-sharing services, or food and goods delivery—were almost universally included across the different types of statistical sources, with only a few exceptions. Similarly, though to a slightly lesser degree, online web-based platforms, such as those facilitating freelance, crowdsourcing and the provision of online IT services, were also included in nearly all country measurements. These types of digital platform employment activities can thereby be viewed as the core of countries measurements.
16. There are, however, some notable exclusions within the broad category of digital labour platforms. For example, lifestyle services, medical and health services, and, more significantly, online support or customer services, were excluded by several countries. In fact, seven out of the 19 countries that measured digital platform work using the LFS, but outside the scope of the Eurostat pilot, excluded online medical services and similarly lifestyle services, while 11 countries did not include online support or customer services in their definitions.
17. In addition to activities linked to digital labour platforms, a significant number of countries also included the mediation of goods as part of their measurement of digital platform employment. The selling of goods and products through digital platforms was part of the Eurostat pilot and was included in most LFS-based measurements not linked to the pilot, as well as in other statistical sources. Renting out rooms or houses through digital platforms was included to a similar extent. However, while renting out accommodations was commonly included, renting out tools or machinery was only incorporated in less than half of the non-Eurostat pilot LFS measurements. The rationale behind this exclusion is not entirely clear. One possible explanation is that renting tools and machinery might be perceived as requiring less labour input than renting accommodations, which often involves additional tasks like cleaning and handing over keys. Alternatively, as mentioned earlier, the concept of renting tools might have been included conceptually but was not operationally screened for during data collection on digital platform employment, perhaps as such platforms might be more uncommon.

18. Another aspect of digital platform work that was explored was the intermediation of goods or services through bartering. Some platforms enable users to exchange services or goods directly, such as performing a service in return for another service or product, without any monetary payment. Despite this fitting within the concept of employment, as the activity is carried out with the exchange of in-kind payment, only a small number of countries included bartering in their measurement of digital platform employment. This limited inclusion might be due to the lack of monetary payment, even though receiving goods or services in kind still constitutes compensation, or due to that these types of platforms might still be relatively rare.
19. In relation to digital platforms providing services to individual users, a vast majority of countries included digital platform activities that involve the creation and sharing of content—such as videos or photos—with the intention of generating income, for example through social media platforms. However, there are significant variations in the types of activities considered within the broad category of digital platforms providing services. Nearly half of the countries excluded activities such as those that involve merely advertising goods or services on digital platforms, as well as booking trips or hotels through these platforms. These activities were similarly excluded from the Eurostat pilot conducted across 17 European countries. Only a few countries included the use of communication services for calling and collaboration such as teams, zoom etc, suggesting a rather broad consensus that communication services are more a tool for consumption, rather than an intermediary between the demand for and supply of labour.
20. Beyond the broad categories of platforms covered, the specific types of platforms included vary significantly across measurement attempts. Among survey sources, some are more targeted and capture fewer than 10 platform types (for instance Georgia, Hong Kong, and Australia), while others cast a wide net with less limitations on the types of platforms. Administrative or register-based data sources also tend to have more limited coverage in terms of platform types for example focusing on taxi or ride-sharing services and food delivery, perhaps reflecting limitations in the scope covered by the used source or a specific policy interest in these types of activities.

Table 3: Type of activities and digital platforms included, number of countries.

		Platform activities covered	Source used			
			LFS*	LFS (non-Eurostat pilot)	Other surveys	Non-survey sources
Mediate work -Digital labour platforms	Online web-based platforms	Freelance crowdsourcing (e.g., translation, web or graphic design.)	34	17	5	1
		IT services (e.g., coding, data annotation, data labelling, training AI models)	32	15	4	1
		Tutorials or teaching	31	14	4	1
		Medical and healthcare services (e.g., teleconsultations, locums)	29	12	2	1
		Online support or customer service	25	8	0	1
		Barter of services	22	5	0	1
	Location -based platforms	Taxi or ride-sharing services	36	19	6	3
		Delivery of food	35	18	6	3
		Delivery of other goods (e.g., parcels, grocery)	34	17	6	2
		Home services (e.g., cleaning, repairing, handyman services)	32	15	4	1
		Care services (child, elderly, pets etc.)	32	15	3	1
		Lifestyle services (e.g., massage, hair cut)	29	12	2	1
Facilitate and mediate exchange	Sale/exchange of goods	Selling of goods and products	29	12	3	1
		Renting out a room, a house	28	11	3	2
		Renting out goods such as tools, machinery etc	24	7	2	1
		Barter of goods	23	6	1	1
Provide services to individual users	Social media platforms and other digital services platforms	Creating and sharing content such as videos, photos, or articles	31	14	3	1
		Booking of trips, hotels, restaurants etc.	10	10	2	2
		Advertising of goods and products	10	10	2	1
		Providing communication services for calling and collaboration	6	6	1	1
Total number of countries answering the question			36	19	7	4

* This includes 17 countries that participated in the Eurostat's 2022 pilot survey.

Source: ILO country review questionnaire 2024

21. While care must be taken in interpreting the responses regarding which types of activities—and by extension, which types of digital platforms—were included or excluded in various country measurements, the findings reveal some important points. The mediation of labour services through digital labour platforms remains central to most countries' measurements. This is particularly evident for location-based platforms, such as those used for ridesharing, food delivery, and other on-demand services. However, online-based digital platform employment is also widely included, underscoring the focus on digital labour platforms on-location as well as on-line.
22. That said, the boundaries of what constitutes digital platform employment are often broader and not confined solely to these core digital labour platforms. Many countries extend their measurements to capture activities linked to other broad categories of digital platforms. These include the selling of goods and products through platforms like online marketplaces, creating and sharing content on social media with the intention of generating income, or renting out rooms, houses, or other assets. This wider scope means that digital platform

employment, as measured by countries, typically encompasses a broad array of activities across different types of platforms, reflecting the expanding role of platforms in various economic activities.

23. At the same time, these differences in how countries define the boundaries of digital platform employment highlight the potential for significant variation in estimates. For instance, a country that excludes activities such as content creation, selling of goods, or advertising of products and services is likely to report substantially lower estimates of digital platform employment compared to one that includes these activities. Such discrepancies underscore the importance of establishing more precise definitions and clearer recommendations on what to include and exclude when measuring digital platform employment as well as the need for greater transparency regarding what is included in a given measurement.

3.2. Types of status in employment categories include in the measurment.

24. When assessing countries' practices regarding the inclusion or exclusion of specific status in employment categories as defined by the International classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-18) in the measurement of digital platform employment, it appears that many countries have adopted a broad inclusive approach. As shown in Table 4, across sources almost all countries included independent workers without employees who perform all or part of their work via digital platforms. While a slightly smaller proportion of countries included dependent contractors and employers who personally engage in platform-based work, the vast majority still accounted for these groups. Similarly, most countries included employees who carry out their tasks on or through digital platforms when measured through the LFS.
25. Contributing family workers were included in the Eurostat pilot, as well as in 12 out of 17 non-Eurostat pilot LFS measurements. In contrast, employees of non-digital platform employers who use digital platforms as part of their work were excluded from the Eurostat pilot but were included in 11 out of 17 non-Eurostat pilot LFS measurements. Both categories were rarely captured when using surveys other than the LFS. For non-Eurostat pilot LFS measurements that covered these categories, they tended to pose digital platform employment related questions to all workers with few exclusions based on status of employment.
26. The relatively high number of countries including contributing family workers and employees to non-digital platform employers reported by countries may, however, to some extent be the result of a potential misunderstanding of the question in the country review. The question might have been understood as whether digital platform employment was operationally screened among these categories of workers, rather than whether the conceptual definition includes them carrying out part of their regular job as a contributing family worker or employee on or through a digital platform.

Table 4: ICSE-18 categories included in the definition of digital platform employment, number of countries.

ICSE-18 aggregated categories included	Source used		
	LFS*	LFS (non-Eurostat pilot)	Other surveys
Employers that carry out (part of) their work related to their business on or through a digital platform	31	14	3
Independent workers without employees (i.e., own-account workers)	33	16	6
Dependent contractors	31	14	3
Employees to a non-digital platform that use a digital platform as part of their work for their employer	11	11	1
Employees to a digital platform that carry out their work on or through the digital platform	32	15	2
Contributing family workers working for a family business that use a digital platform as part of their work	29	12	1
Total number of countries answering the question	34	17	6

* This includes 17 countries that participated in the Eurostat's 2022 pilot survey.

Source: ILO country review questionnaire 2024

27. The findings do, however, highlight the use of broad boundaries by countries in the measurement of digital platform employment, particularly in including core categories such as independent workers without employees and dependent contractors. The general inclusion of employers and employees working on digital platforms further underscores this inclusive approach. However, practices differ regarding the inclusion of contributing family workers and, especially, the treatment of employees working for non-digital platform employers who are required to use digital platforms in their tasks.

3.3. Target population

28. The target population, that is the population in which digital platform employment is identified is not necessarily given particularly when household surveys, like labour force surveys are used. LFS aim to identify individuals who are employed during the reference period. Consequently, it is logical to restrict the identification of digital platform employment among the employed population only, to streamline the process and reduce the number of screening questions. This approach, used for example by INE Chile, offers the advantage of easily linking digital platform employment to the main or second job, utilizing the information collected for describing such employment.
29. However, this approach requires using the same reference period as employment measurement, limiting the option of employing longer reference periods. Moreover, restricting the identification of digital platform employment to only employed individuals might underestimate its prevalence. This is because sporadic activities of short duration may not be picked up by the screening questions used for identifying employment. Additionally, situations where digital platform activities serve as a third activity would also be overlooked as labour force surveys typically are restricted to main jobs and second jobs only, although this would likely have a lesser impact.
30. An alternative approach, endorsed by the US-BLS and tested by for example Eurostat, Switzerland and Australia suggest broadening the scope of analysis to encompass the entire population. This involves identifying digital platform employment among not only the employed but also the unemployed and those outside the labour

force. In Australia's 2022/2023 measurement of digital platform employment, screening questions also targeted all working-age individuals. While the overall prevalence was low (approximately equivalent to 1% of the employed population), 13% of respondents reported engaging in digital platform work within the last four weeks, even if they were not identified as employed. Furthermore, 53% of the employed persons undertook digital platform employment alongside their main job, though only 11% reported multiple jobholding in the standard labour force survey (Jarvis 2024). The Eurostat pilot results show that a small minority of 12.7% of digital platform workers reported themselves as “not employed” (Eurostat 2024). This could mean two things: (1) that some digital platform workers consider such work as a “side hustle” to supplement income rather than employment; and (2) from a technical perspective when the reference period used for capturing digital platform employment differs from that used for labour force status (typically reference week), it is possible for individuals to have engaged in associated tasks in periods other than the reference week owing to the often transient and sporadic nature of digital platform work, leading to such a discrepancy.

31. Based on the country review in Table 7, all countries across sources, naturally enough, included the employed. In addition, 21 out of the 36 countries that used the LFS and provided input to the question also extended the scope to include persons identified as unemployed or outside the labour force. This broader approach reflects an effort to capture digital platform employment beyond those that has been identified as employed by the standard LFS questions. However, it is important to note that a significant number of these countries participated in the Eurostat pilot study, and by that used harmonized boundaries. When excluding those linked to the Eurostat pilot, only 4 out of the remaining 19 countries expanded the scope beyond the employed, indicating that, in general, most countries have prioritized focusing on employed persons only for measuring digital platform employment via the LFS.
32. In contrast, when examining other household surveys beyond the LFS, the prevailing trend is to include all working-age individuals, regardless of their labour market status. This broader inclusion is for example relevant for surveys such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) surveys, which target the entire population with questions on access and the use of ICT. It is therefore logical to consider persons both inside and outside of the labour force when questions on digital platform employment is integrated as part of the measurement of ICT access and usage.

Table 7: Categories of labour force who were asked about digital platform employment, number of countries.

Labour force status	Source used		
	LFS*	LFS (non-Eurostat pilot)	Other household surveys
Employed	36	19	6
Unemployed	21	4	5
Outside the labour force	21	4	5
Total number of countries answering the question	36	19	6

* This includes 17 countries that participated in the Eurostat’s 2022 pilot survey.

Source: ILO country review questionnaire 2024

33. The findings among countries that have included all persons in working age in the measurement of digital platform employment suggest that a potentially significant portion of persons engaged in digital platform employment may not be identified as employed in the standard LFS (either because these activities are not captured during the employment screening or because the activities were not performed in the reference week, but in an extended reference period if this was used). In addition, potentially employed persons carrying

out digital platform employment might do so as an additional activity without being recognized as having multiple jobs in the standard labour force survey.

34. Expanding the target group to screen for digital platform employment among all persons in working-age can help address some of the challenges associated with identifying all digital platform employment through conventional employment screening questions, particular in countries where this group might be significant. This broader approach would also facilitate the incorporation of multiple reference periods, as further discussed in next chapter.

3.4. Reference period

35. The reference period used to identify digital platform employment plays a critical role in shaping the resulting estimates and their comparability across countries. The choice of reference period affects both the ability to capture sporadic forms of platform work and the possibility of aligning statistics on digital platform employment with standard labour market indicators. Based on the ILO's 2024 country review, countries have employed a range of reference periods in their measurement efforts, often depending on the source used.
36. The most commonly used reference period is the reference week, reported by 31 countries using labour force surveys), including 17 that participated in the Eurostat 2022 pilot. Among non-Eurostat pilot LFS efforts, 14 countries used the reference week, as did one country each using other survey types and non-survey sources. This prevalence reflects the alignment of the reference week with international standards for employment measurement as defined by the 19th ICLS resolution concerning statistics on work employment and labour underutilization.
37. In contrast, longer reference periods—most notably the last 12 months—have also been widely used. A total of 23 LFS-based measurements (including 6 non-Eurostat pilots), 5 other surveys, and 3 non-survey sources used a 12-month period. This approach is particularly relevant for capturing more irregular and episodic participation in digital platform work, which may be missed in shorter timeframes.
38. The last month was used less frequently, appearing in 18 Eurostat-linked LFS cases, and only once each among non-Eurostat LFS and other surveys. Importantly, no countries reported using intermediate periods such as the last quarter or last six months. This suggests a preference either for very short (weekly) or extended (annual) reference periods, likely balancing data reliability with respondent recall accuracy. Australian Bureau of Statistics also decided to change the use of a reference month to a 12-month reference period to improve the statistics on digital platform employment.
39. A small number of countries (3 for LFS, and similarly across other source types) reported using "other" reference periods, possibly indicating experimental or country-specific designs that diverge from standard intervals.

Table 8: Reference periods used in measuring digital platform employment, number of countries.

Reference period	Source used			
	LFS*	LFS (non-Eurostat pilot)	Other surveys	Non-survey sources
Reference week	31	14	1	1
Last month	18	1	1	0
Last quarter	0	0	0	0
Last 6 months	0	0	0	0
Last year	23	6	5	3
Others	3	3	3	1
Total number of countries answering the question	37	20	9	5

* This includes 17 countries that participated in the Eurostat's 2022 pilot survey.

Source: ILO country review questionnaire 2024

40. Overall, these findings highlight a dual trend. On one hand, the reference week remains dominant due to its compatibility with core employment definitions. On the other, the 12-month period is used to enhance the detection of digital platform employment in a low-prevalence, often supplementary form of work and by that increase the number of observations. Additionally, a significant number of countries combines the reference periods (short and a longer) and by doing that draws on the advantages of both.

4. Strategy to deal with false positives.

41. Measuring digital platform employment often encounters the challenge of false positives, particularly when surveys are used as source. For instance, respondents may be incorrectly identified as engaging in digital platform employment based on their responses, when in reality, they have only used a digital platform as a tool for specific tasks, such as conducting an online meeting or searching for information via a search engine. Another common issue arises when respondents report using digital platforms as consumers, leading them to answer affirmatively to screening questions even though they have not performed work on or through a digital platform but instead have bought a good or service online through a digital platform. False positives create the need to post-process and clean data. This is an aspect, that based on the feedback from countries, can be time consuming and resource demanding.
42. To address these situations, a strategy for handling false positives is necessary. Some countries addressed this by including examples of names of digital platforms as part of the screening questions. At the same time, others shared from experience that this approach might contribute to an increase in false negatives as respondents might not answer affirmatively if a given platform is not mentioned among the examples. Collecting the name of the digital platform(s) used for conducting the work has however, proved to be one important part of a strategy to deal with false positives in particular. By obtaining this information, it is possible to assess the quality of the data post-collection. This also enables cleaning of data to remove cases that clearly fall outside the defined boundaries, thereby improving overall data quality. Based on the country review, collecting the name of the digital platform is often a key part of the measurement process. As shown in Table 6, two-thirds of measurements that conducted a LFS included the collection of digital platform names. However, this high proportion is largely influenced by the Eurostat pilot, which accounts for 17 of these measurements.
43. When excluding measurements related to this pilot, less than half of the remaining LFS measurements included platform names to support the operational definition. It is important to view this in the context of the ongoing development of improved data collection tools for capturing statistics on digital platform employment via the LFS as many of the cases that did not collect the name of the digital platform were relatively early measurements. In some instances, platform names have also been utilized in other statistical sources, such as surveys and administrative data, highlighting their potential usefulness when employing these sources as well.

Table 6: Collecting and using the name of digital platforms for the identification of digital platform employment, number of countries.

Name of digital platforms	Source used			
	LFS*	LFS (non-Eurostat pilot)	Other surveys	Non-survey sources
Collected	25	8	3	3
Used to decide if worker is considered DPE	20	7	3	2
Not collected	12	12	6	2
Countries that have carried out a measurement	37	20	9	5

* This includes 17 countries that participated in the Eurostat's 2022 pilot survey.

Source: ILO country review questionnaire 2024

44. In most cases, this information was used to determine whether the platform—and consequently, the work conducted on or through it—should be included in the measurement. Some countries, such as Chile, do so by

matching the name of the digital platform with a pre-defined list of digital platforms that were considered within the boundary as well as digital platforms outside the boundary of the measurement.

45. While some find the list-approach effective others have concluded that the approach was too burdensome and experienced that it was challenging to create a comprehensive list in the rapidly evolving landscape of both national and international digital platforms. For example, the statistical office of Finland tried the approach as part of the pilot conducted but decided against using it due to these challenges. Some countries, such as Italy and Canada, attempt to frontload this effort by creating a list of platforms that is integrated directly in the questionnaire for respondents to select from, in the case of an affirmative answer to the screening questions used for identifying if the respondent has carried out a specific type of digital platform activity.
46. Statistical offices in countries such as Switzerland and Canada are exploring an alternative approach by incorporating additional questions to verify that respondents have actually conducted digital platform employment, rather than merely using a digital platform as a tool for tasks like conducting meetings or as consumers instead of providers. For instance, Switzerland includes two confirmation questions following a positive response to the screening questions. The questions are asked in relation to the specific type of digital platform employment identified using the screening questions. For example, if a person has answered positively to providing taxi services through a digital platform, then the additional verification questions are as follows:

5. Additional information collected

47. In addition to identifying persons engaged in digital platform employment, countries have taken steps to collect more detailed information on the nature and conditions of such work. The results from the review show that a considerable number of countries have integrated supplementary indicators into their data collection.
48. One of the most commonly captured indicators is the working time spent on digital platform employment, reported by 26 countries through LFS, with additional coverage via other sources. Closely following this, 25 countries collected information on whether digital platform employment constituted the respondent's main or secondary job. Social protection coverage and work injury coverage were also frequently captured, by 24 and 23 countries respectively, highlighting the policy relevance of understanding employment-related protections for platform workers.
49. Several countries also gathered data on the organization of work by digital platforms, such as the extent of platform control or intermediation. Similarly, 22 countries sought to identify whether individuals worked through multiple platforms—an indicator of diversification in platform engagement. Income-related information was collected in various forms: 22 countries asked about the share of digital platform employment in total employment income, while 9 countries estimated the actual income or profits generated from digital platform employment activities.
50. Other indicators included the frequency of digital platform employment (collected by 21 countries), employment status classification (12 countries), occupation (8 countries), and motivations for engaging in digital platform employment (3 countries). Only a few countries explored more qualitative aspects, such as employment quality or challenges faced by platform workers, indicating potential areas for further development in data collection methodologies.

Table 9: Indicators relating to digital platform employment captured, number of countries.

Indicators captured	Source used			
	LFS*	LFS (non-Eurostat pilot)	Other surveys	Non-survey sources
Working time spent on DPE	26	9	4	1
Whether DPE was the main or secondary job	25	8	4	0
Social protection coverage	24	7	2	1
Work injury coverage	23	6	3	1
Aspects of organization exercised by the digital platform	23	6	3	1
Whether the person works through multiple digital platforms	22	5	4	1
Income/profits made from DPE, as a percentage of total employment income	22	5	3	1
How frequent DPE was carried out	21	4	1	1
Classification of status in employment	12	12	3	2
Estimation of income/profits made from DPE	9	9	5	3
Occupation of DPE	8	8	4	1
Reasons for engaging in DPE	3	3	4	0
Quality of employment	3	3	1	0
Challenges faced by the person in DPE	0	0	1	0
Total number of countries answering the question	34	17	8	4

51. The ILO country review also asked countries to provide more detailed information on the forms of organization exercised by digital platforms is captured by their surveys/data sources, and if so, the specific elements that were captured. The findings in Table 10 show that besides the Eurostat pilot, it is not common for measurement attempts to cover the organizational aspects of digital platforms. Only 5 out of 19 countries with LFS that were conducted outside the scope of the Eurostat pilot shared that they had captured such. Across source types, the top organizational elements captured include the ability to set or negotiate prices of the goods and/or services transacted, the access to or matching of clients/tasks/project to labour suppliers as well as restrictions set on hours worked, pointing at the potential usefulness of these specific elements as part of an operationalization of the aspects of organization of the transactions and related work activities. Among the LFS data collection efforts that were not part of the Eurostat pilot, there was some interest in collecting digital platforms' use of algorithmic management, suggesting that the automation of decision-making and organizational procedures could be an emergent area of policy concern.
52. On the other hand, restrictions relating to whether digital platform workers can work for multiple platforms/parties or whether the work can be subcontracted out to other workers are the least commonly collected elements of interest.

Table 10: Organizational elements of digital platforms that are captured, number of countries.

Organizational elements of digital platforms captured			Source used			
			LFS*	LFS (non-Eurostat pilot)	Other surveys	Non-survey sources
Organization of transactions	Access and interaction between client and provider	Access to or matching of clients/tasks/projects	22	5	1	1
		Algorithmic management	5	5	1	0
	Pricing and payment	Ability to set/negotiate the price of good/service	21	4	3	1
		How payment for work done is arranged	3	3	2	0
Organization of work activities	Operational rules	Restrictions on working hours	20	3	2	0
		Rules for appearance and conduct	1	1	1	0
		Restrictions on performing work for a different platform/party	0	0	1	0
		Restrictions on using subcontractors/substitutes to perform work	0	0	1	0
	Performance management	Provides incentives or penalises underperforming workers	19	2	1	0
		Work performance is supervised/rated	1	1	0	1
	Total number of countries answering the question	22	5	3	1	

* This includes 17 countries that participated in the Eurostat's 2022 pilot survey.

Source: ILO country review questionnaire 2024

53. Overall, the findings reflect a recognition among national statistical offices of the complexity and diversity of digital platform employment, and the need for a broader set of indicators beyond basic identification, to inform policy and labour market analysis.

6. Summery and Conclusions

- 54.** This paper has examined the national approaches to measuring digital platform employment, based on the responses from 133 countries to the ILO country review conducted in 2024. It documents a growing global interest in capturing digital platform employment, with 40 countries having already undertaken measurement efforts and 68 others planning to do so in the near future. The results indicate a generally low prevalence of digital platforms but with variations between countries. There are still large data gaps in regions and most measurements attempts have been done by high-income and emerging countries. However, the efforts made by countries are crucial to inform the development of international statistical guidelines and ensure the comparability and policy relevance of statistics on digital platform employment.
- 55.** The review reveals considerable diversity in definitions, conceptual boundaries, statistical sources, and reference periods. Countries differ in whether they include only labour services or also activities such as content creation, rental and selling goods on our through digital platforms; in whether they identify digital platform employment only among the pre-identified employed persons or across the entire working-age population; and in their choice of short (e.g., reference week) versus long (e.g., 12-month) reference periods. These variations affect data comparability and the interpretation of prevalence estimates. Countries also face challenges in managing false positives and designing effective survey instruments.
- 56.** At the same time, the review highlights notable commonalities. Across nearly all country efforts, location-based labour services (such as ridesharing and food delivery services) and online based labour services (such as those for IT services, translation, and design) are consistently included, reflecting a shared understanding of core digital platform activities. S substantial number of countries do also include additional activities such as creating content, renting out apartment and houses and selling goods through digital platform, which points at the need among countries to capture a broader range of digital platform activities. Most countries also include independent workers without employees and dependent contractors in their measurement frameworks. Similarly, even though reference periods vary, many countries—especially those using labour force surveys—adopt a hybrid model that combines short and long reference periods to capture both regular and sporadic forms of platform work.
- 57.** In terms of target populations, there is growing recognition that restricting measurement to only the currently employed may miss significant segments of digital platform workers. Several countries, particularly those aligned with the Eurostat pilot, have broadened their approach to include the entire working-age population, helping to account for side activities and episodic forms of engagement with digital platforms.
- 58.** Moreover, a substantial number of countries collect complementary information such as working time, income derived from digital platform employment, social protection coverage, and the use of multiple platforms. This reflects a shared aim to move beyond simple identification toward a richer understanding of working conditions and employment quality in platform-mediated work.
- 59.** While countries are at different stages in their experiences with measuring digital platform employment, there is both divergence and convergence in current practices. These findings affirm the need for internationally harmonized standards and clear operational guidance to support countries in generating reliable, comparable, and policy-relevant statistics on digital platform employment.

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