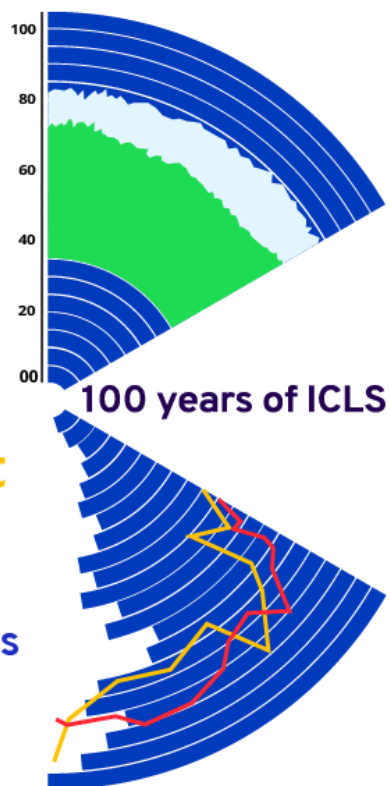




International  
Conference of  
Labour Statisticians  
11-20 October 2023



## DIGITAL PLATFORM WORK: STATE OF THE ART AND THE WAY AHEAD

## ▶ Agenda

- ▶ The prevalence of digital platform employment.
- ▶ The policy needs for data.
- ▶ Experiences from measuring the different components of digital platform employment.
- ▶ Towards a conceptual framework on digital platform employment.

# ► The prevalence of digital platform employment.

- ▶ **Data on the prevalence of DPE is not internationally comparable, and has mostly been collected in higher-income countries.**

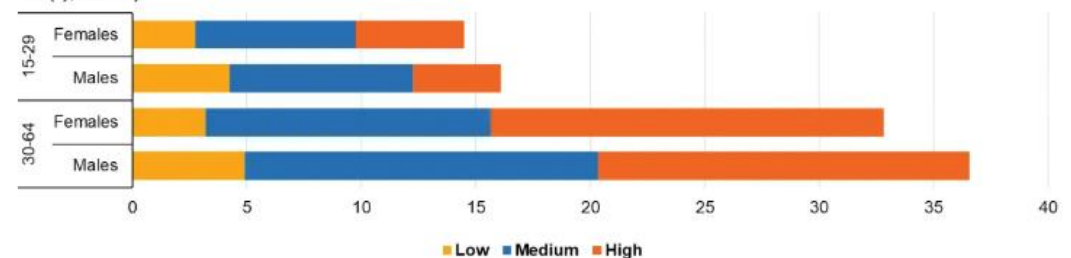
### Different statistical concepts and measurements.

Several countries have measured DPE in their own ways – through varying reference periods, concepts, definitions, sources, and methodology.

- ▶ The Eurostat pilot represents promising steps towards internationally comparable data, with the same definition, methodology, and reference periods used across 17 EU and EFTA countries.
- ▶ The prevalence of DPE in many other regions is not as well known, especially as measurement has largely not taken place in middle to low-income countries.

#### Digital platform workers by age, sex and level of education

(as % of all digital platform workers for at least 1h in the last year aged 15-64, Agg 17<sup>(\*)</sup>, 2022)



Note: (\*) Agg 17 refers to the aggregate of 17 countries listed in the definition section of the article  
Source: LFS ad-hoc extraction - pilot survey

eurostat

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(as % of all digital platform workers for at least 1h in the last year aged 15-64, Agg 17<sup>(\*)</sup>, 2022)

Source: Eurostat LFS ad-hoc extraction - pilot survey DPE

# ► The policy needs for data.

## ► Quality data is needed to inform policymakers on the various aspects of DPE.

**Data is needed to create a common understanding of the extent and situation of individuals carrying out DP work.**

Examples of this data include the following:

- The prevalence of DPE.
- The development of DPE over time.
- The impact of DPE on labour markets in different countries.
- Detailed statistics such as characteristics of people carrying out DP work.
- Status in employment category of individuals conducting DP work.
- Characteristics of the work relationship between DP workers and the platform companies.



► **Data is needed to understand the positive and negative impacts of DPE on the worker.**

Examples of needed data include the following:

- The intensity of work.
- Whether DPE is a primary or secondary job for the individual.
- Whether DPE entails high or low-skilled work for the individual.
- The income and earnings, or how many paid or unpaid hours are required from the individual.
- The form of compensation received by the individual, whether per hour or task.
- The autonomy of the platform worker, or level of control exercised by the platform.

► **Data can help policymakers ensure that DP workers have sufficient social protections.**

Examples of data needed to inform discussions on the level of protections for workers include the following:

- Workers' access to social insurance.
- Workers' access to employment benefits.
- Formal or informal status of DP workers.



# ► Measurement experiences and learning points.

## ► Current measurement experiences are experimental attempts, rather than established methodologies.

**These are some methodological advantages and challenges when measuring through surveys.**

Household or labour force surveys (LFS) have a representative sample, already collect relevant factors like occupation, industry, working time, and job characteristics.

- However, they must be tweaked in order to accurately capture DPE.

Specialized surveys are able to pose detailed questions, and thus capture a more in-depth picture of DPE. They can provide data on vulnerabilities of workers, niche types of DPE, and impact of policies.

- However, these are not as representative as LFSs.



## ► The correct identification of digital platform workers through surveys is an important first step, and a challenging one.

**There are risks of false positives/negatives as respondent awareness is low.  
Various approaches have been taken to reduce misunderstanding.**

- Minimalistic approaches reduce respondent strain, but may also lead to misunderstanding.

Some people find short, IN-PERSON tasks or jobs through companies that connect them directly with customers using a website or mobile app. These companies also coordinate payment for the service through the app or website. For example, using your own car to drive people from one place to another, delivering something, or doing someone's household tasks or errands.

- a. Does this describe ANY work (you/NAME) did LAST WEEK?
- b. Was that for (your/NAME's) (job/(main job, (your/NAME's) second job)) or (other) additional work for pay?

Some people select short, ONLINE tasks or projects through companies that maintain lists that are accessed through an app or a website. These tasks are done entirely online, and the companies coordinate payment for the work. For example, data entry, translating text, web or software development, or graphic design.

- a. Does this describe ANY work (you/NAME) did LAST WEEK?
- b. Q2a Was that for (your/NAME's) (job/(main job, (your/NAME's) second job)) or (other) additional work for pay?

Source: Contingent Worker Supplement (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018)

- Lengthier questionnaires may capture more details pertaining to a broad range of DPE activities.

In the last 12 months, did you use an Internet Platform or App for phones or tablets to carry out any of the following services or work for pay or profit?

- a) Taxi services, using for example XX or YY?
- b) Renting out a room, a house, or any accommodation, using for example XX or YY?
- c) Selling (or advertise for sale) any good, using for example XX or YY?
- d) Cleaning or handiwork, including plumbing, electrician works or similar, using for example XX or YY?
- e) Child or elderly care, such as baby-sitting and shopping for elderly people, using for example XX or YY?
- f) Tutorials or teaching, using for example XX or YY?
- g) Online support or checks for online content, using for example XX or YY?
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Source: (Eurostat, 2021)

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Source: (Eurostat, 2021)

## ► Important operational decisions.

**These have methodological and conceptual implications, such as differing boundaries and scope, and the data indicators produced.**

### Reference period.

- By using one reference week, data produced is closely aligned with the official definition of employment.
- A longer reference period may capture more sporadic incidences of work, but are also limited by respondent recollection.
- A hybridized form of both methods has been employed by Eurostat in 2021.

### Activity-based/income approach.

- When respondents are asked about goods/services provided through digital platforms, data produced aligns closely with standard definitions of employment.
- The collection of income data may not align closely with work performed, although it may be easier for respondents to provide.



# ► Towards a conceptual framework

*Electronically Mediated Employment*  
*Digital platform work*  
*Gig-work*  
*INTERNET-MEDIATED PLATFORM WORK*  
*Online worker*  
*Crowd Employment*  
*Sharing Economy*

- ▶ We need to be sure of what to measure, before we can decide on how to measure it.
- ▶ This topic is characterized by the existence of several different terms, concepts and definitions. There may be different underlying objectives, boundaries and scope.
- ▶ Sometimes different terms are used interchangeably, and sometimes the same term is used for different phenomena.
- ▶ This hampers discussions and the understanding of statistics.

## ► Need for further work

### 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS in 2018

- “Employment through digital platforms” was discussed as part of the adoption of the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS resolution.
- Final conclusion that it was too premature to address this topic.
- The ILO was recommended to undertake further conceptual and methodological development work.

### Work conducted since the 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS

- Assisted a few countries in their attempts to measure DPE.
- Participating in the Eurostat TF on DPE
- Contributing to the OECD, ILO and Eurostat *Handbook on measuring digital platform employment and work*
  - Published in 2023
  - First step towards addressing the need for a more comprehensive and harmonized statistical framework that builds on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> ICLS resolutions.

# OECD-ILO-Eurostat handbook on measuring digital platform work

► The statistical framework consists of a component-based framework that incorporates different layers of digital platform work and employment:

- **Type of work:** The different forms of work as defined by the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS resolution
- **Type of production:** Production of goods versus provision of services
- **Type of digital platforms:** Four broader groups of digital platforms
- **Type of status in employment:** External versus internal digital platform employment

Type of work	Type of production	Type of digital platform	Type of status in employment	
Employment	Goods	Labour platforms	Own account workers	External digital platform employment
Unpaid trainee work		B2B/P2B	Dependent contractors	
Volunteer work	Services	Hybrid digital platforms	Employers	
Other work activities		Digital services	Employees	Internal digital platform employment
Own-use production work				

# A flexible framework

- ▶ Enables the measurement of the components of DPE that are of interest, depending on objectives and available sources, while ensuring transparency of the specific boundaries used.
- ▶ A measurement can focus on the “total” DPE or on a specific component(s).

## Intended conceptual scope

*Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) 2017*

Type of work	Type of production	Type of digital platform	Type of status in employment	
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*Eurostat pilot 2022*

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- ▶ The framework can contribute to create more statistical transparency around the intended scope, components included etc. while being flexible.

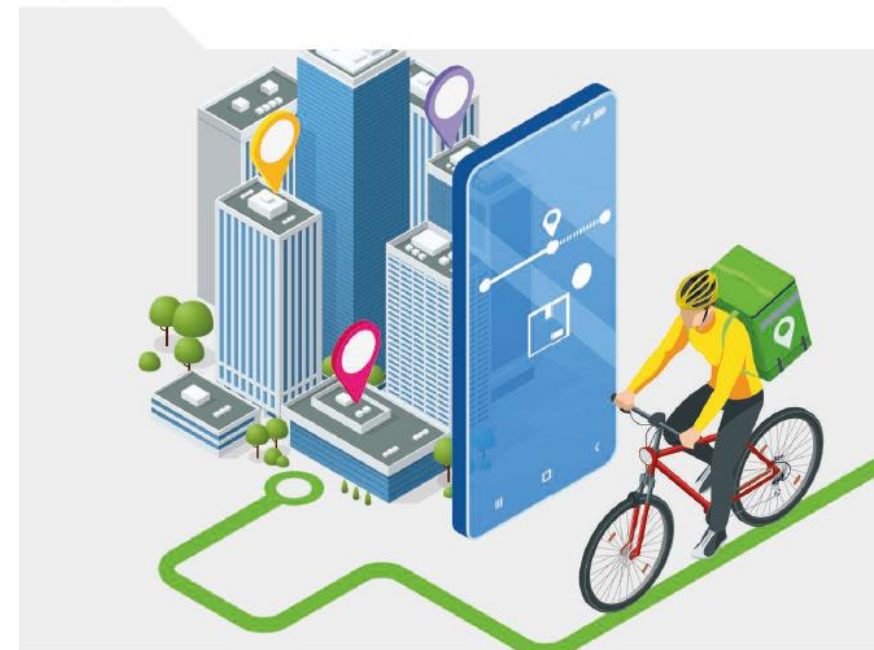
▶ The ILO-OECD-Eurostat handbook is an important step forward.

**More discussions and development are needed to ensure:**

- ▶ That any future standards effectively meet the different needs for data, while taking into account the specificities of DPE.
- ▶ That any future standards reflect the needs and perspectives of countries from different regions and contexts, as well as the requirements of social partners.
- ▶ That the framework is sufficiently robust to deal with the expected dynamic evolution of DPE in future.



**Handbook on Measuring  
Digital Platform Employment  
and Work**



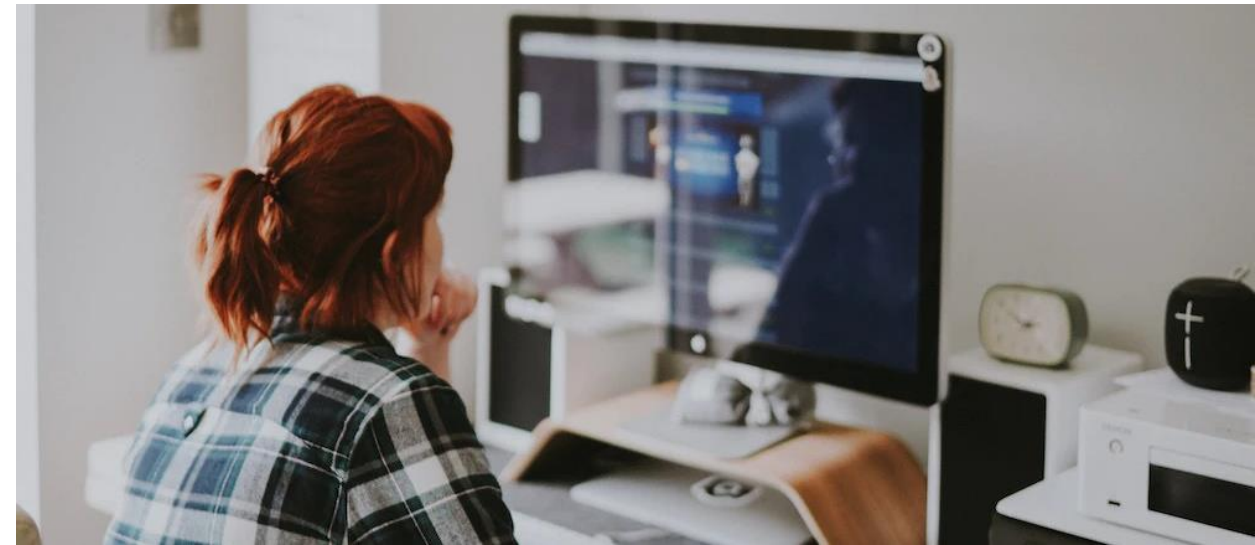
# A need to further explore

## Definition of digital platform work and employment

- ▶ One of the main challenges is to provide a definition with clear and effective boundaries.
- ▶ The definition provided in the OECD handbook is an important step forward but still creates ambiguous cases, which need to be addressed.
- ▶ Important to create a robust definition that can “stand the time” and continue to be valid amidst rapid development.

## The different components and layers.

- ▶ A more careful assessment/discussion around the different components/layers of the DPE framework is needed.
- ▶ Do they capture the different relevant components of DPE, taking into account the different needs?
- ▶ Are additional layers needed?
- ▶ Do some of the layers need to be adjusted/changed?
- ▶ Or is something entirely different needed?



# Potential additional layers to explore.

## Control exercised by digital platforms

- ▶ The extent and type of control exercised by digital platforms differs substantially amongst different digital platforms.
- ▶ Much of the policy interest around DPE is linked to the control exercised by them.
  - the impact on the work relationships
  - working conditions
  - status in employment category etc.
- ▶ Some work has been done (e.g. Eurofound) but there is still a lack of conceptualization and methodologies to capture the aspect of control.

## Online versus on-location DPW.

An essential characteristic that holds high policy interest.

- ▶ Online digital platform work: where the work can exclusively be performed online through the use of digital tools provided by the digital platform. Has the potential to be cross-border, a “global market place”.
- ▶ On-location digital platform work: where the work activities are carried out in the physical world and at the same location as the person that receives the service.
- ▶ Integrating this dimension would be an important dimension for policy makers.



## ► **Intensity of, and workers' reliance on the work.**

As digital platform employment can be sporadic and of short durations, and can be done in combination with activities of same type that are conducted outside digital platforms, it could be important to provide data that can:

- Separate between these different situations,
- Contextualize DPE depending on the degree of the reliance and intensity of the work.

**In addition, there are several different issues that need to be addressed:**

- How to most effectively identify DPE.
- How to deal with the use of multiple digital platforms.
- The potential need to use and integrate different reference periods.
- How to most effectively measure earnings and working time (both paid and unpaid working) in relation to DPE.
- What additional data should be collected, informality, social protection coverage etc.?
- Relevant indicators to produce.

**It would be of essence to carry out any conceptual work in parallel with further methodological work to ensure that the result ends up being relevant and useful for countries, taking their data needs into account.**

## ► Advice on the possible development of guidelines on digital platform work and employment is sought on the following.

- a) the need for developing statistical guidelines on digital platform work including a conceptual framework and recommendations for data collection;
- b) whether the development of a conceptual framework of digital platform work and employment should use the framework provided by the OECD-ILO-Eurostat handbook on digital platform work and employment as a starting point that should be further developed;
- c) if the focus on the conceptual work should be on the identified issues as presented in this room document or if additional or other dimensions would be essential to address as well.
- d) the call for countries to actively contribute to the methodological development including opportunities for testing different essential aspects;
- e) whether participants think that the ILO work related to developing a statistical guideline on digital platform work and employment should be carried out with a view to presenting new standards for discussion at the 22nd ICLS, necessitating the establishment of an Expert Working Group, or if not how else this work could be advanced.

► **Thank you.**

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