World Employment and Social Outlook 2021

The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work
...the business model has common elements

Indicators for matching clients and workers

Allocation of work
- Determining pay rates

Client reviews: 60%
Ratings: 50%
Worker profile: 46%
Project history or portfolio: 27%
Rate proposed by the worker: 21%

Unilaterally determined by platforms:
- Exclusivity clauses
- Deactivation of accounts
- Dispute resolution

Commission fees and subscription plans are integral to platform revenue model

Monitoring, tracking and evaluating workers through digital tools and algorithms

Advancing social justice, promoting decent work
The report draws on the findings of surveys and interviews.

- 12,000 workers in 100 countries
  - Freelance, contest-based, competitive programming and microtask platforms
  - Taxi and delivery sectors

Representatives of:

- 70 businesses of different types
- 16 platform companies
- 14 platform worker associations

Advancing social justice, promoting decent work
Ratings and impact on workers

- Worker ratings and reputation very decisive for accessing work
  - Indicators to determine ratings a concern
  - Freelance platforms
    - At a Fee
    - Connects or proposal credits
    - Highlighting or featuring projects or proposals (improved visibility)
  - Subscription plans at various price ranges
  - Platform design and features (access to platform and work)
- Educational qualifications often do not play an important role on these platforms
Rejection of work / Cancelation of work and impact on workers

- Rejection of work (influences ratings and deactivation of accounts)
  - Microtask platforms
    - Automated decision-making
  - Freelance platforms
    - Clients review (often not much explanation provided)

- Taxi and delivery platforms (Flexibility to choose)
  - Little time to decide to accept or decline (15-40 seconds)
  - Cancellation of rides and orders without any repercussions (> 50%)
    - Lower ratings
    - Account being suspended or blocked
    - Fewer rides or orders
  - Penalty and fines
  - Longer waiting times
  - Reduced bonuses

Workers whose work was rejected
- Microtask platforms: 86%
- Freelance platforms: 35%
Regular monitoring process and impact on workers

- Workers are monitored on a regular basis
  - Freelance platforms

- Taxi and delivery platforms
  - GPS (defining the routes, monitoring the time spent)
  - Mandatory to share location, upload a picture in work clothes thru Social media platforms within 15 minutes

- Autonomy and control of work

Workers on freelance platforms
- 47% are monitored by their clients for hours worked...
- 46% are required to take screenshots of their work...
- 43% are required to be available during a specific time...
  - on a regular basis
Algorithmic management and continuation of work

Deactivation of accounts
- Taxi and delivery platforms (20%)
  - Taxi sector
  - Complaints from customers (28%)
  - Cancelation of rides (27%)
  - Violating the rules of platform’s terms of service agreements (25%)
- Delivery sector
  - Cancelation of orders (28%)
  - Violation of rules (22%)
  - Customer complaints (15%)

Many are unaware of formal process for filing a complaint or seeking help
Platforms redefining the relationship between formal education and access to work

- Workers’ education is not necessarily correlated with their income levels on platforms
- Freelance platforms: Skills often a good match (62%)
- Competitive programming platforms: Opportunity to learn new skills or upgrade their existing skill-sets
- Microtask platforms: Highly educated but performing tasks requiring low skills
- Location-based platforms: 20% are highly educated
A way forward through international policy dialogue and coordination

- Employment status
- Right to bargain collectively
- Adequate social security benefits
- Dispute resolution mechanism
- Fair termination process
- Fair payments and working time standards
- Non-discrimination
- Occupational safety and health
- Transparency and accountability in algorithms and ratings
- Access to local jurisdictions
- Data protection
- Portability of worker data and ratings
- Enabling environment for sustainable enterprises