How sustainable is crowdwork?

Work and income security among workers in platform economy

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Motivation

➢ Perception that work 'online platforms or apps' algorithms and new technologies, "invisible workers", human labour behind technology.

➢ Empirical studies
  ➢ Task design, managerial practices, innovative mechanisms, control systems and mechanisms
  ➢ Motives for participation
  ➢ Speed and quality of work in the platforms
    ➢ Discussion about « social and financial incentive schemes » to manage quality and their effectiveness (Ipeirotis and Kokkodis, 2014; Huang et al., 2012; Shaw et al., 2011; Mason et al., 2010)

➢ Empirical studies scarce
  ➢ legal issues, working conditions, wages and social security (Berg, 2016; Stefano, 2016)
  ➢ Bergvall and Howcroft (2014) mention about workers not being entitled to any benefits that are made available by a Requester or M-Turk to their employees
    ➢ Holiday pay, sick leave, health insurance, retirement benefits, compensation in the event of injury

Research at the ILO

➢Different business models to undertake work
- ➢ Open worker platforms (AMT, Crowdflower, etc.)
- ➢ Free competition models (we do logos, designhill)
- ➢ Freelance bidding (Crowdguru, Upwork)
- ➢ Project Manager Lead (Microtask)

➢Open worker platforms
- ➢First Survey of crowdworkers (AMT – US and India; Crowdflower) 2015 (1200 and 600) (Berg, 2016)
- ➢Second Survey of Crowdworkers (AMT, Crowdflower, Clickworker, Mircoworker, Prolific Academic) 2017 – 2483 workers
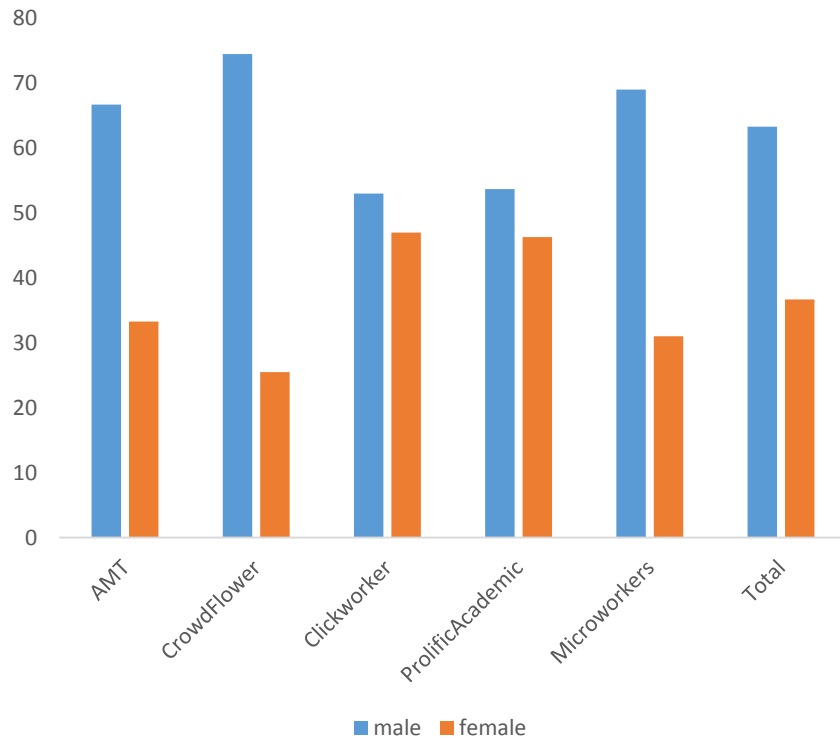
Where do these platforms operate?
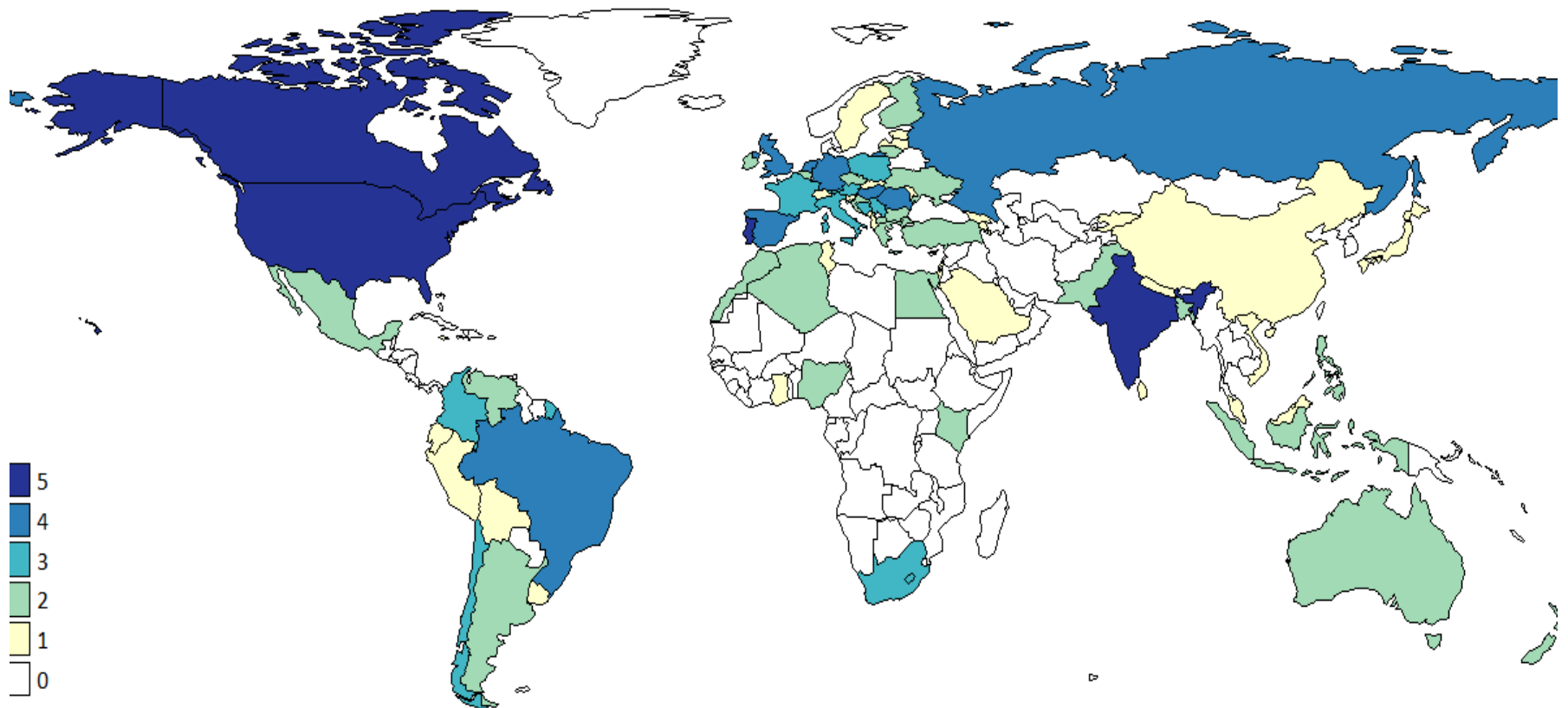
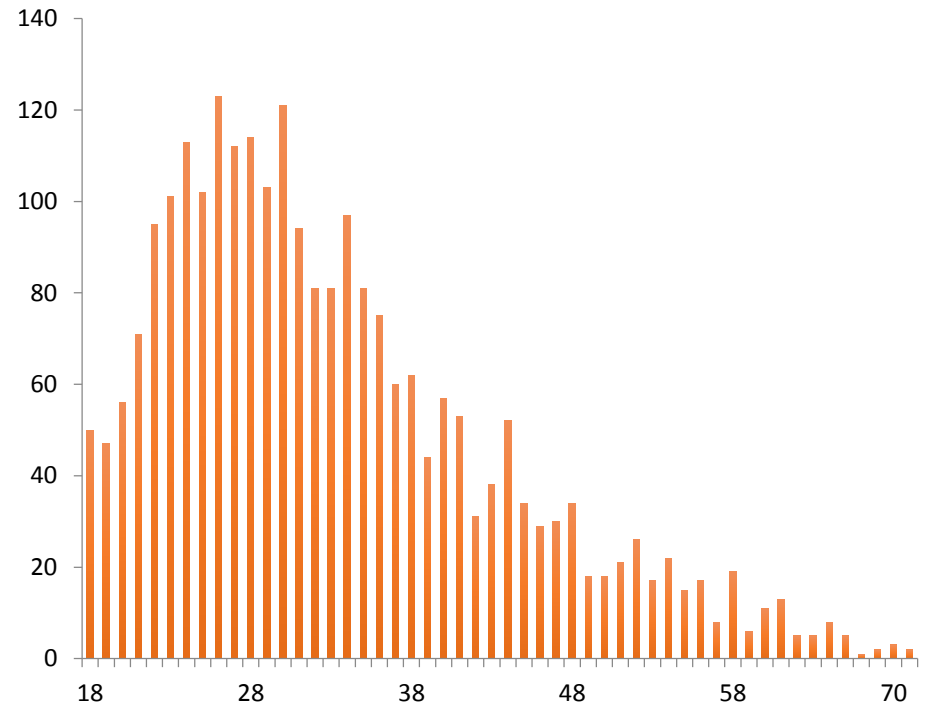# Where are the workers in these Platforms across countries?
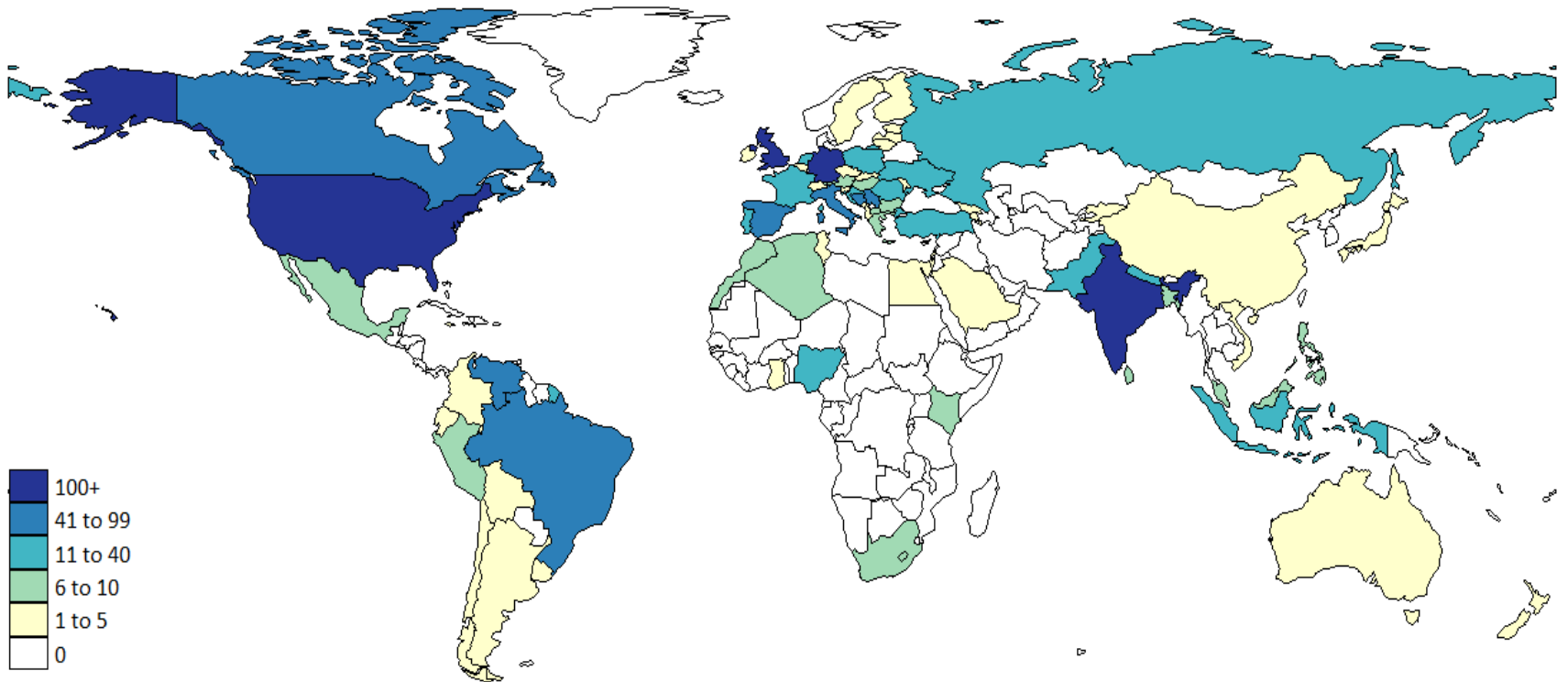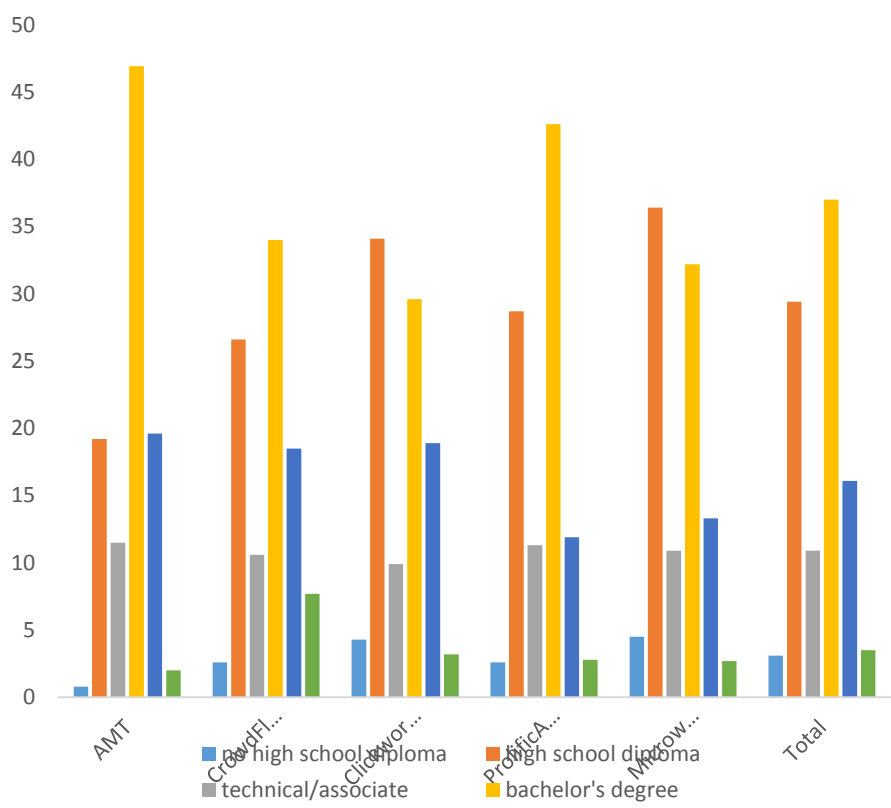
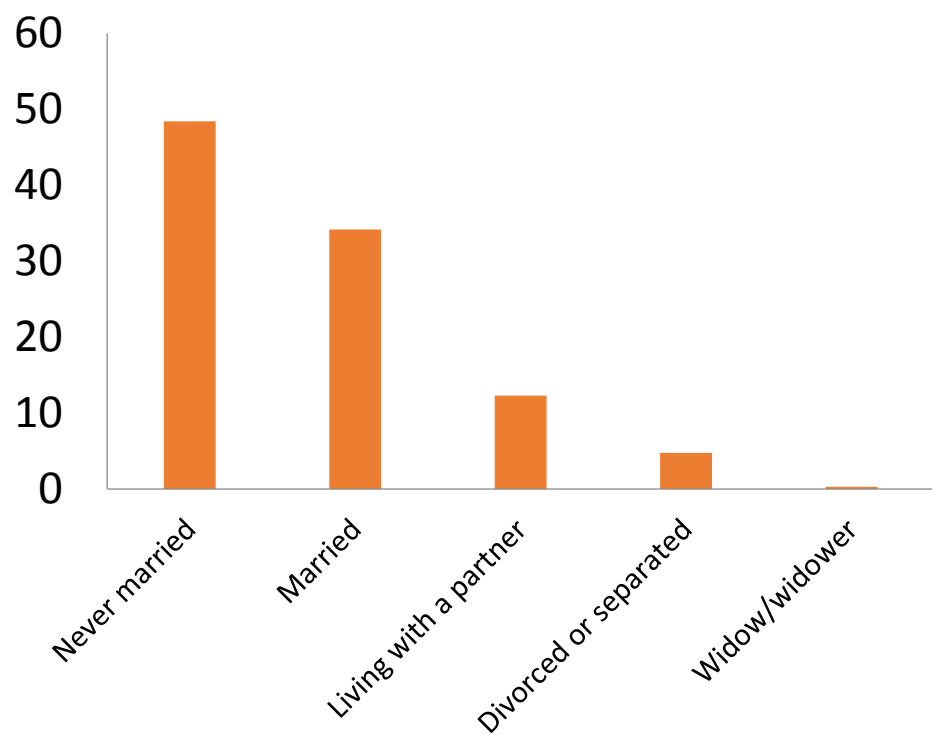# What are the basic characteristics of these workers?

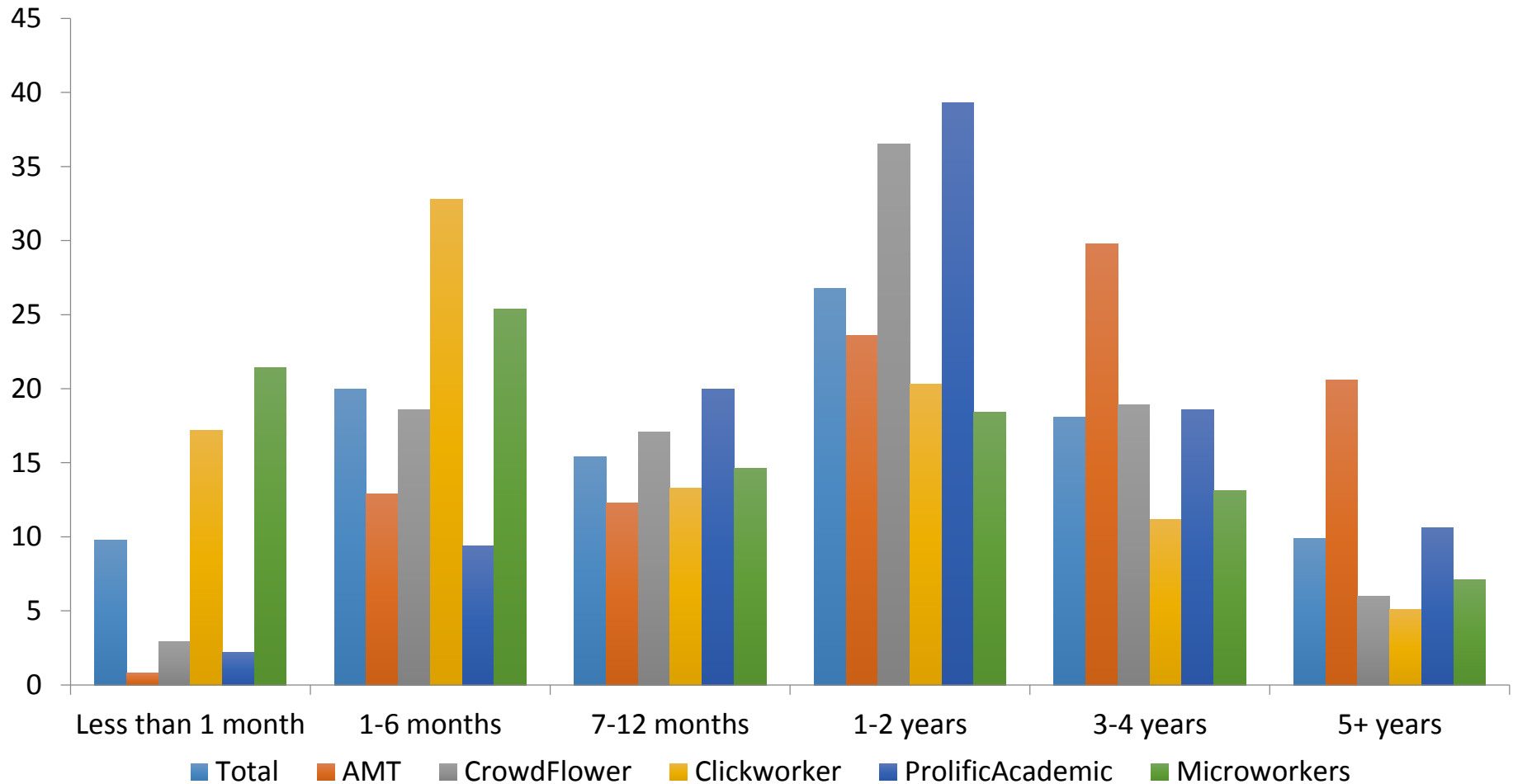# What are the basic characteristics of these workers?

Education

Marital Status

Most important reason to undertake crowdwork

Bar chart showing the most important reason to undertake crowdwork, with categories measured on a scale from 0 to 40. Categories (top to bottom): Could not find other employment; I can only work from home; I prefer to work from home; Pay is better than other available jobs; To complement pay from other jobs; To earn money while going to school; As a form of leisure; I enjoy it; Others. Series legend: Total, AMT, CrowdFlower, Clickworker, ProlificAcademic, Microworkers.

# Active as a crowdworker for more than one year (54.8%)

Tasks performed by crowdworkers

➢ Information finding (metadata finding, search engine optimisation)

➢ Verification and Validation (content verification, validation, spam detection)

➢ Interpretation and Analysis (classification, categorisation, data selection, sentiment analysis, quality assessment)

➢ Content creation (media transcription, data enhancement, translation, tagging)

➢ Surveys (demographics, feedbacks and opinions)

➢ Content Access (testing, promotion)

Adapted from Gadiraju et al. (2014)

Crowdwork as a main source of income
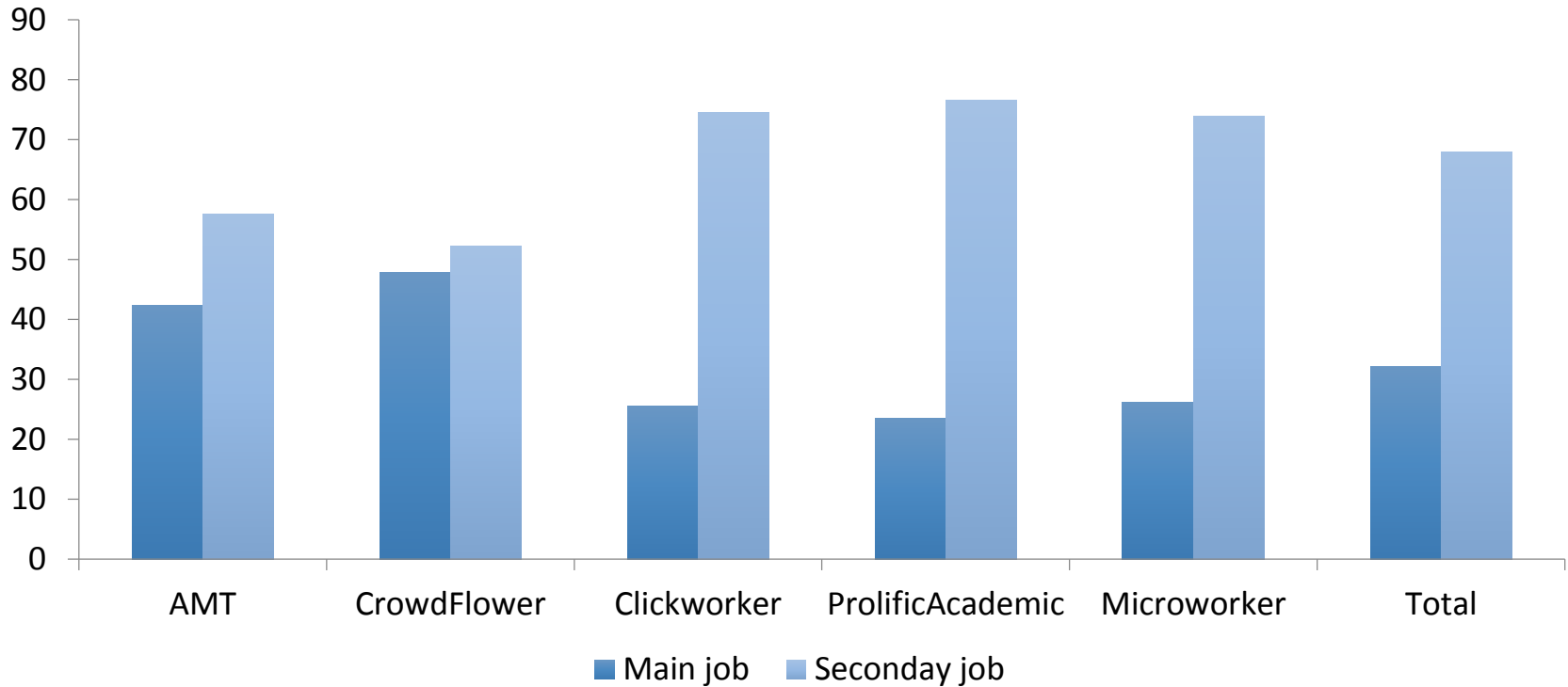
# Crowdworkers holding other jobs (68%)
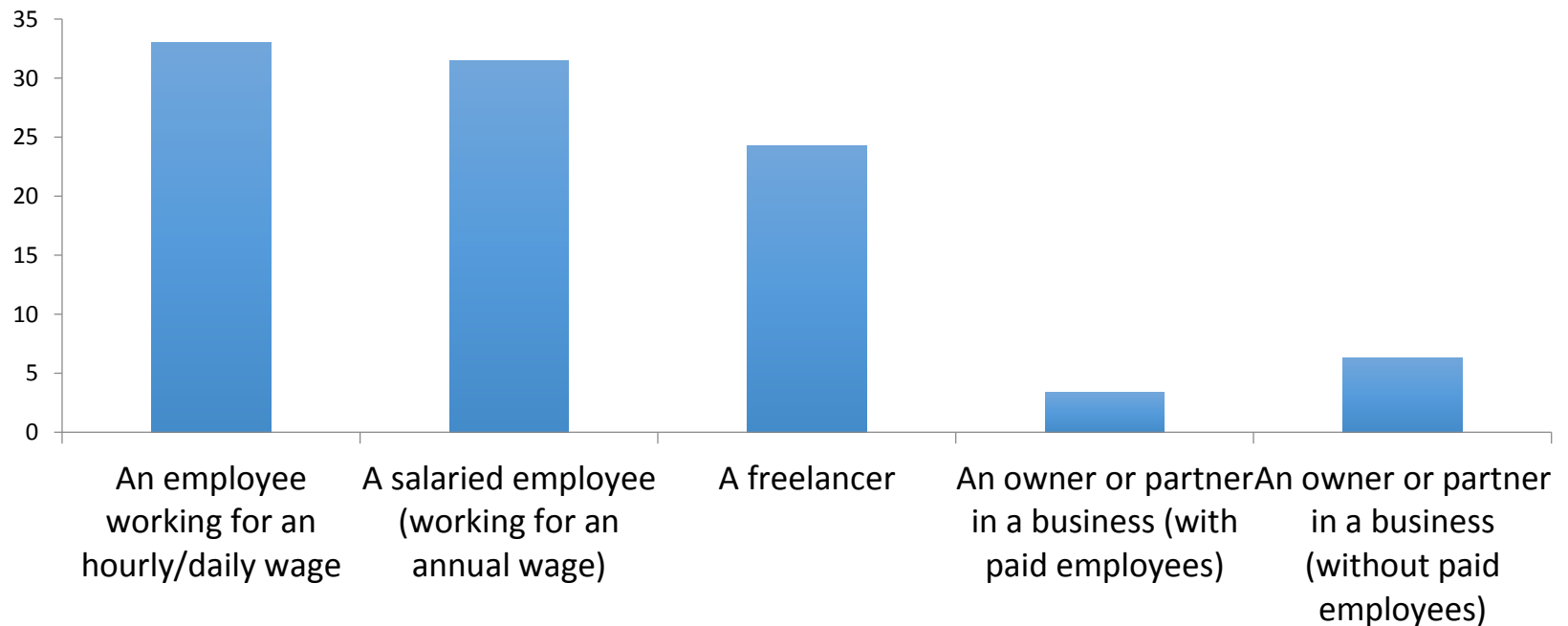
Spending time on crowdwork while on the other job

➢ 45% perform crowdwork during the working hours of other jobs

    ➢ They are bored of the tasks they are doing or do not find them interesting and motivated

➢ 33% believe that the employer would be accepting of them performing crowdwork during working hours

Crowdwork a form of support for workers with ill-health

General health conditions
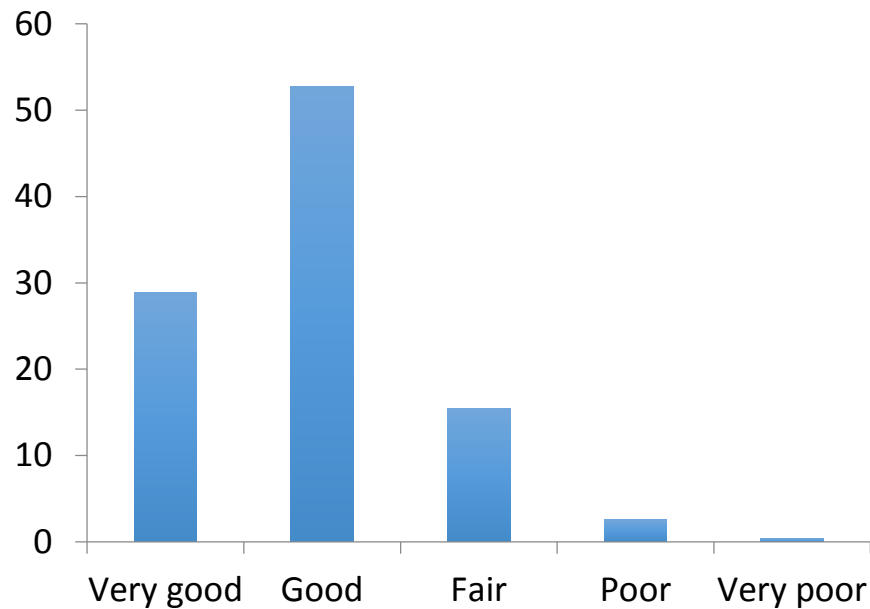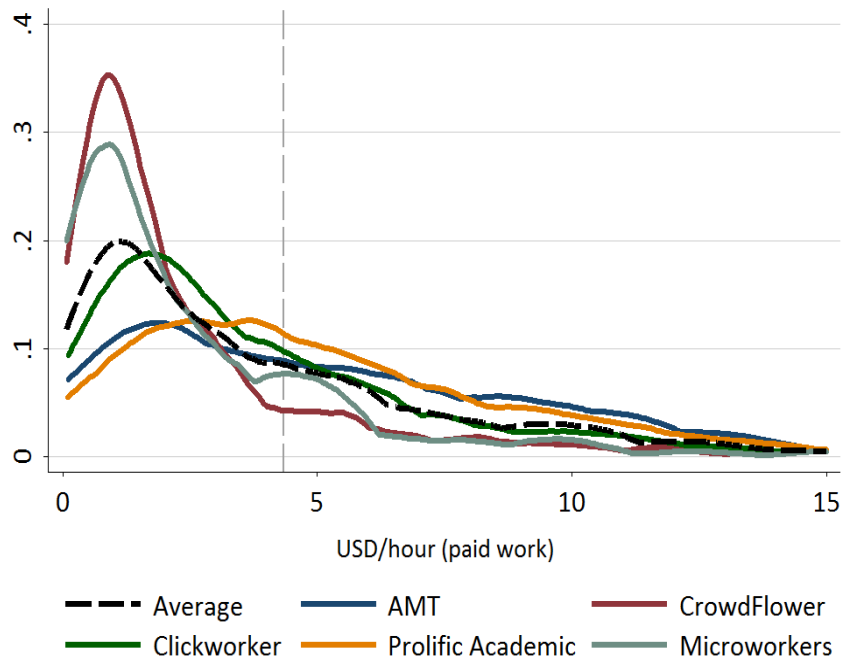

Physical and mental health problems
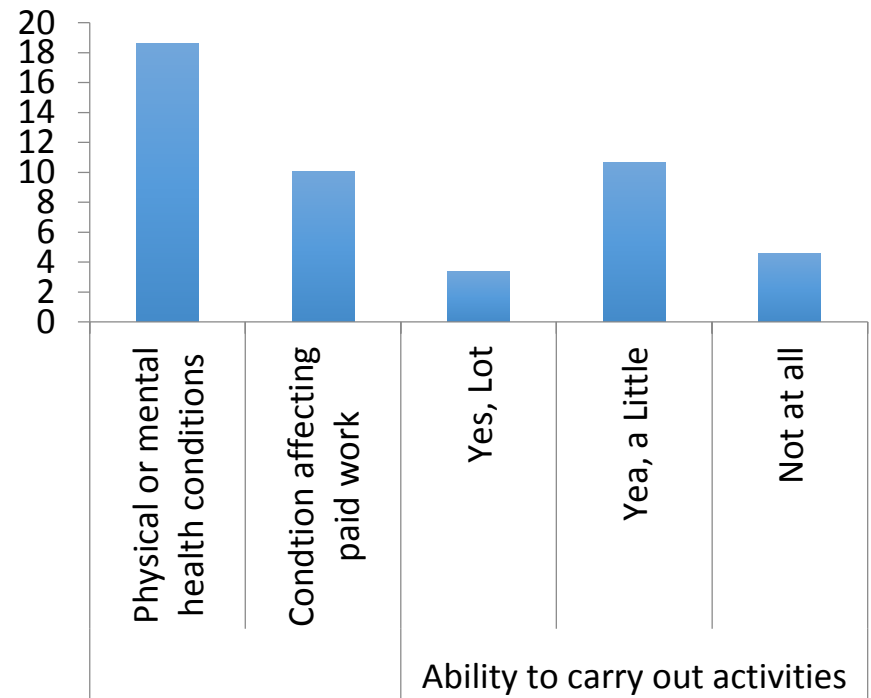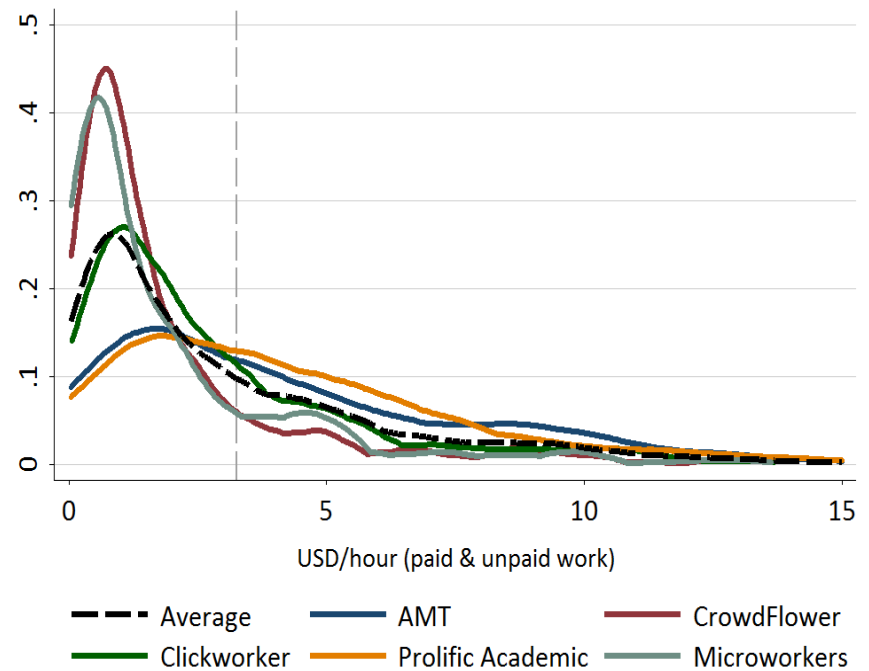
Work and income security

Issues of concern

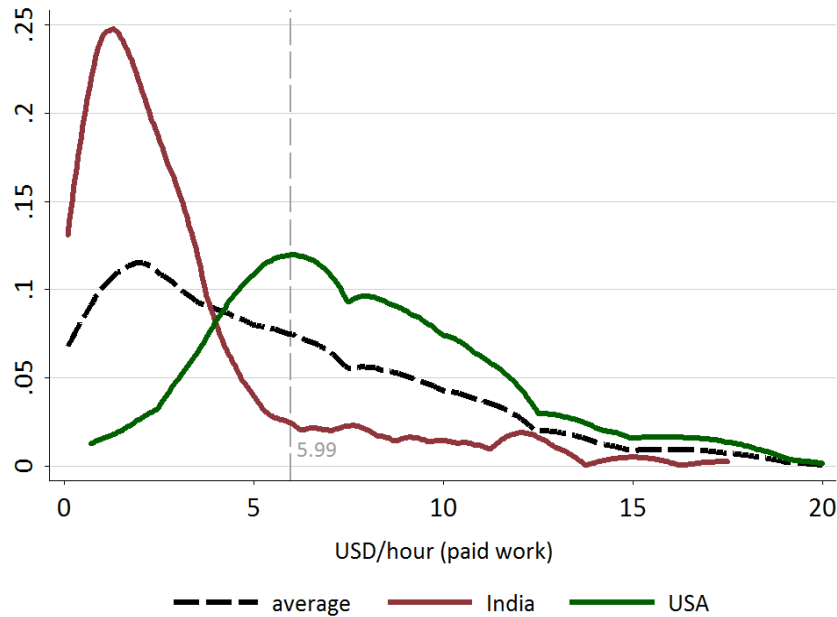# Distribution of hourly pay

Hourly paid work (US$)

Hourly paid and unpaid work (US$)

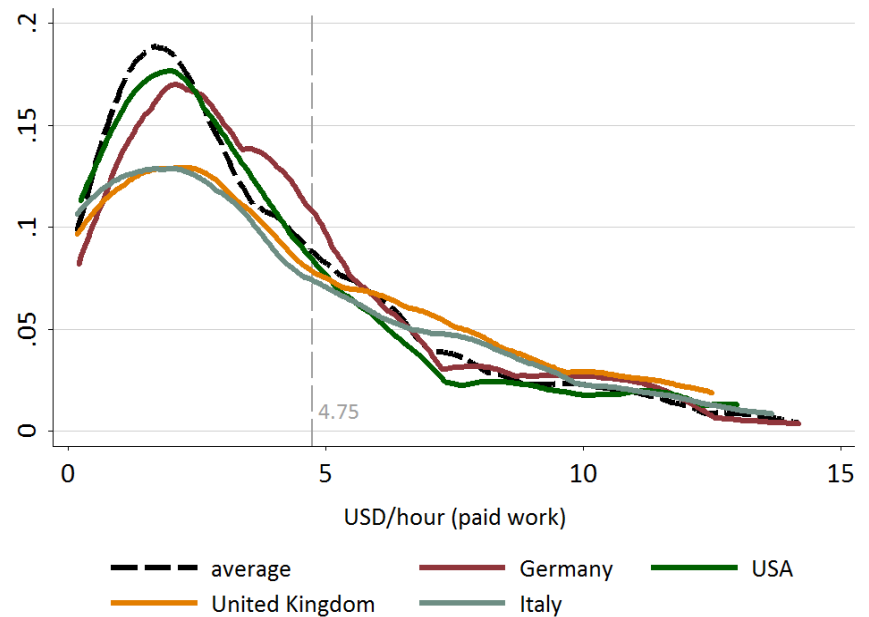# Pay differences and skewed distribution across countries in the same platform
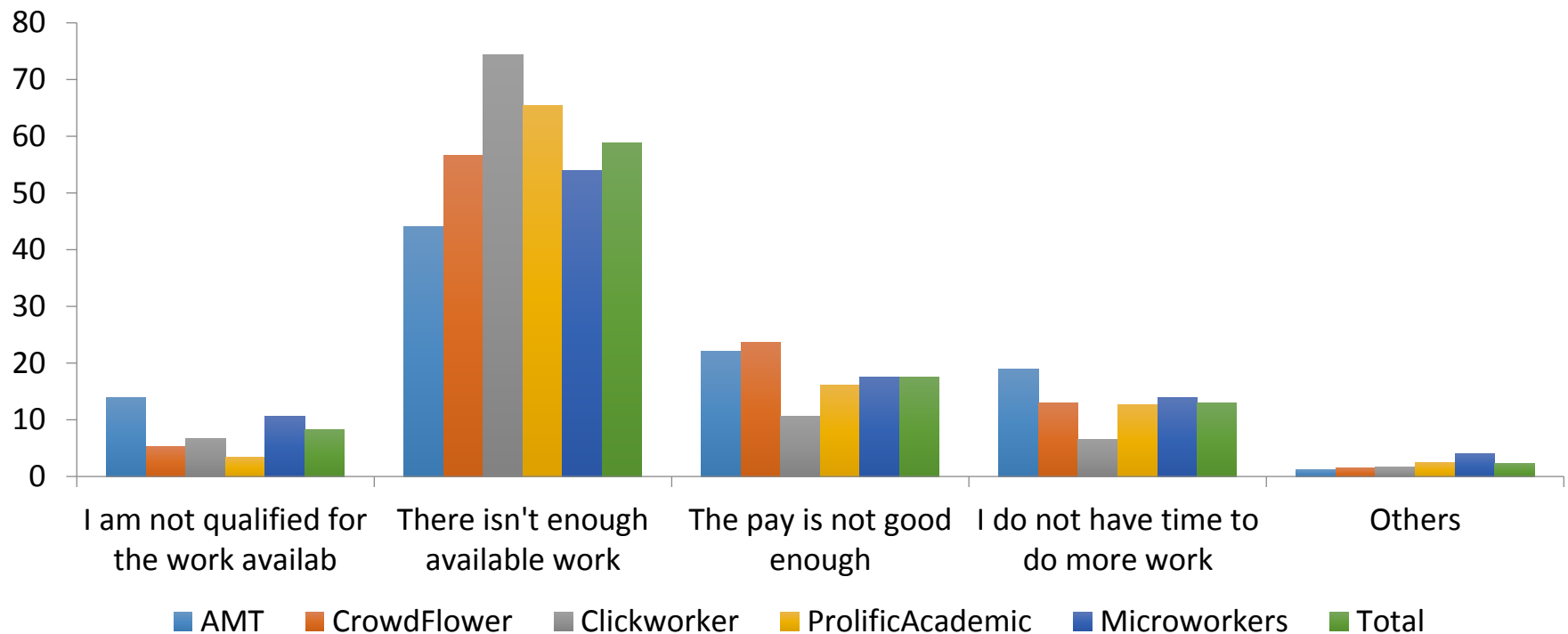
Insufficient work, 88% would like to do more crowdwork

Work resembles 'casual labour' as there is continuous search for tasks and high intensity of work

➢ Crowdworkers are said to be at the high end of 'home work'
  ➢ For every hour spent on paid work, about roughly one-third (20 minutes) of additional time is spent on searching for the job (unpaid work)
  ➢ The work resembles that of casual work (developing countries) or zero hour contracts (UK)

➢ Intensity of work quite high
  ➢ Working more than 10 hours per day
    ➢ 10 hours for 10 days in a month (30%)
    ➢ 10 hours between 11-30 days in a month (16%)
  ➢ About 16% of the workers work for 6 days a week and 36% of them work for 7 days a week
  ➢ Working during night time (10pm to 5am) - 42.5%
  ➢ Working during evening (6pm to 10pm) – 68%
  ➢ About 50% of the workers work for more than 2 hours in the night for more than 15 days

Work being rejected and non-payment for work done (86%)

Whether the rejections are justifiable or not?

"No justification given, when I know I did the task how it should have been done, there is no recourse for action. There are no payments made and the dispute doesn't go anywhere."

Issue of ratings and being blocked by the platform without informing or providing a reason
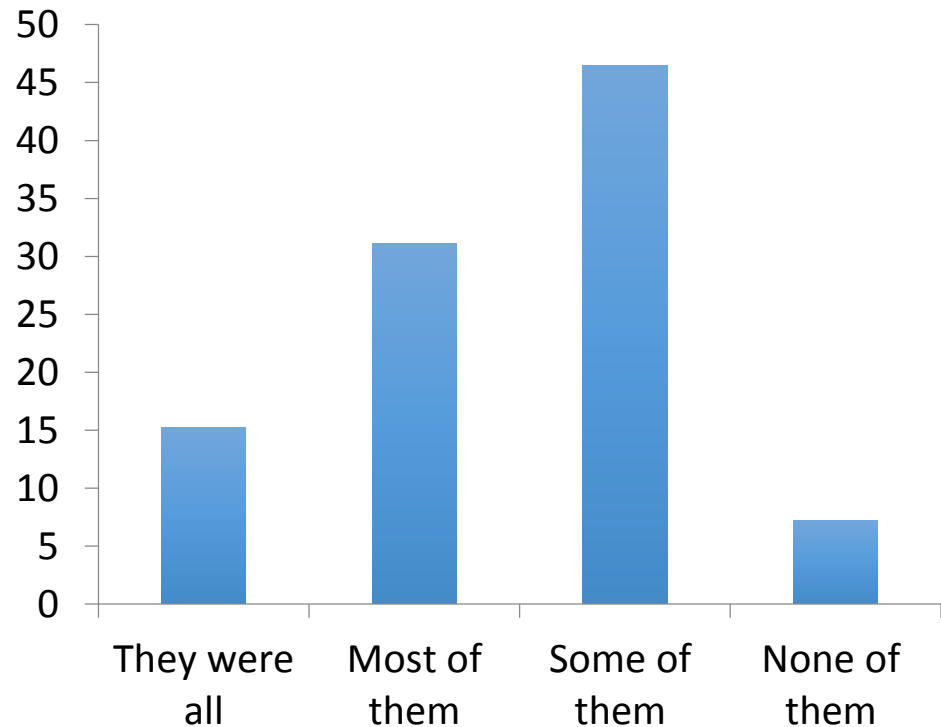
Different sources of household income 20% of the respondents find it difficult to meet basic needs

Value	Category
0.43	Crowdwork
0.27	Other job
0.22	Spouse
0.02	pension
0.01	unemployment benefits
0.01	social security
0.02	Capital
0.03	Private transfers
0.03	Other sources
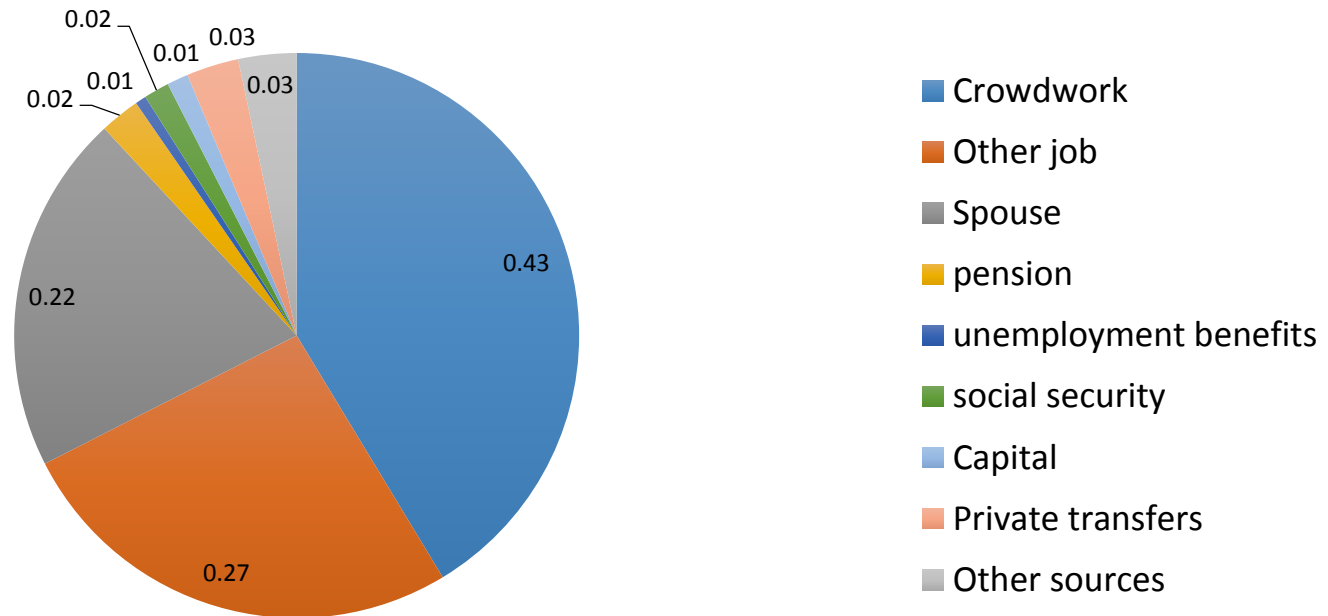
Access to any form of social protection benefits

	Total	AMT	CrowdFlower	Clickworker	Prolific Academic	Microworkers
Retirement	34.8	32.5	33.6	40.2	37.7	30.9
Unemployment benefits	16.1	9.1	18.7	28.0	8.8	17.1
Workers' compensation	20.4	18.5	25.1	24.2	9.8	25.0
Disability benefits	13.1	9.9	12.0	17.8	11.0	14.6
Others	3.4	4.7	2.4	4.0	2.2	3.5

Source: Crowdwork Survey 1 conducted by the ILO

# Challenges for workers in platform economy

Is this work sustainable for workers in the platform economy?

➢ Global nature of the on-demand work
  ➢ What market and social rules are appropriate for plaform economy and society?
  ➢ How are the wages or prices determined for the tasks to be performed?
  ➢ Is this the most efficient model, and to use workers' time, skills and capability?
  ➢ How to deal with platforms where workers are global and in countries where labour laws and social protection system are weak or rudimentary ?

➢ First challenge, how can existing legal and institutional frameworks be adapted to these forms of work?

➢ How to deal with situations of complex or unclear employment relationships, as crowdworkers are often categorised as 'indeendent contractors' and not as 'employees'?

➢ How to ensure minimum wages are paid to workers at their locations?

➢ To develop grievance mechanisms against mistreatment, under payment or non-payment

Social protection system

➢ Second challenge, how to develop a coherent social protection system that can cover all types of work?

➢ How to deal with multiple employers, volatile earnings and unclear emplyoment relationships?

➢ Guaranteeing a basic level of social security for all (social protection floors) are essential, combined with social insurance that can ensure adequate levels of protection, constituting an effective channel of redistribution.

➢ How can we develop tools within the platforms, which would allow workers and employers to contribute to social security, and be adequately protected?

➢ What role can technology play to shape work and employment practices?

Mechanisms to voice worker concerns
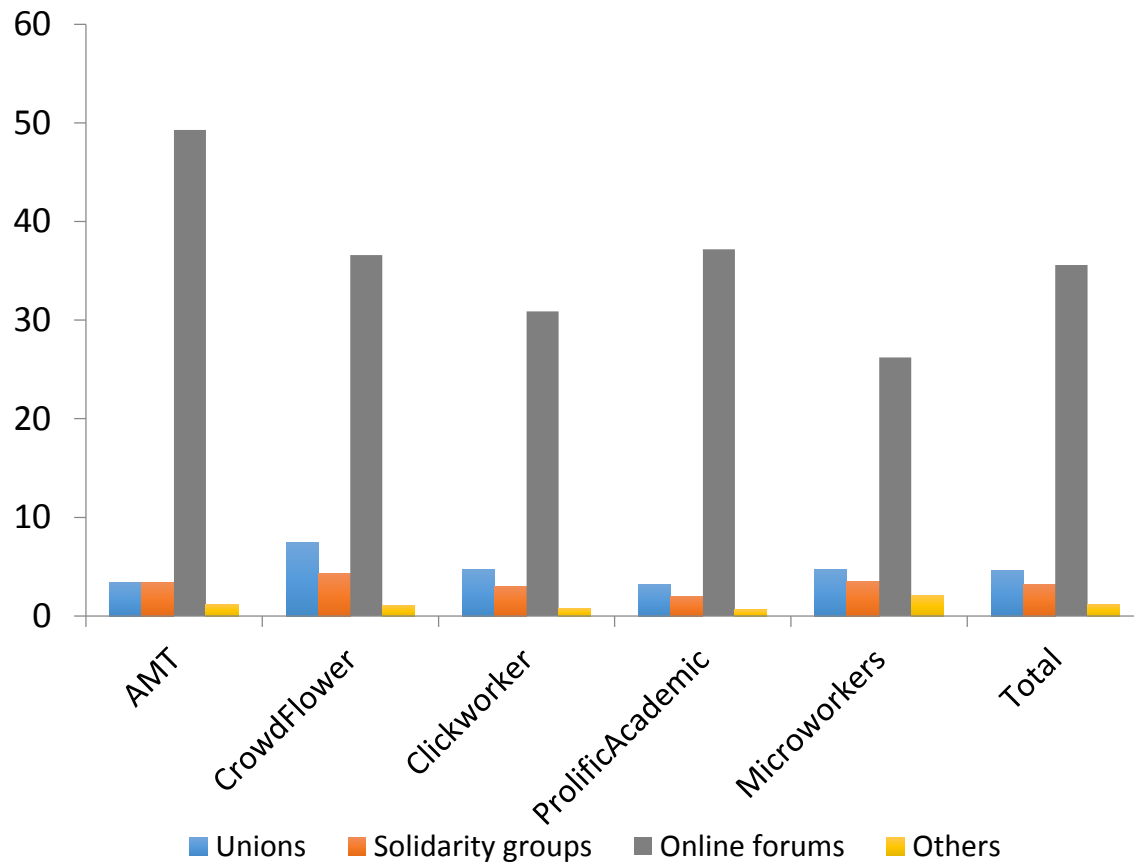
- Cooperative platforms
- Worker forums like turkernation or mturk provide social support
- Technology could be used effectively to engage with crowdworkers (human)