Digital platform work: implications for occupational safety and health

SAFE AND HEALTHY WORK IN THE DIGITAL AGE
Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2023-25

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

Healthy Workplaces

Overview

Defining digital platform work

Taxonomy

Facts and figures

Opportunities

OSH risks and challenges

Mapping responses to OSH risks

Takeaways

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

https://healthy-workplaces.eu

Healthy Workplaces

Defining digital platform work

> *"All paid labour provided through, on or mediated by an online platform"*

Online vs on-location digital platform work:

Tasks are always organised online, but can be performed virtually or in the physical world

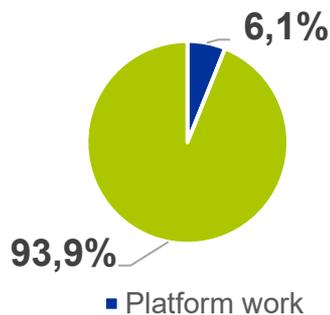Either online or on-location digital platform work

- Uses algorithmic management
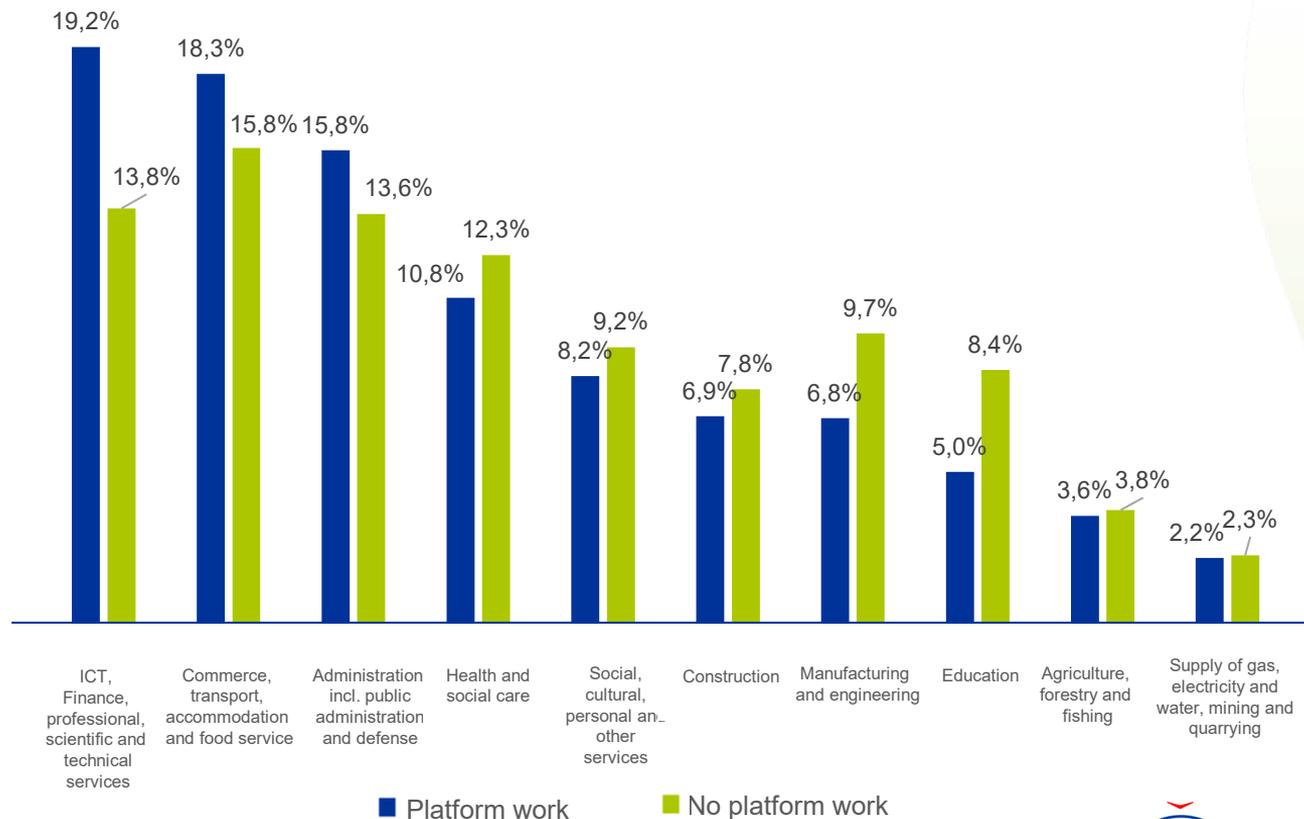- Usually has non-standard working arrangements

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

https://healthy-workplaces.eu

Healthy Workplaces

3

Taxonomy

Dimensions	Type of digital platform work			
	Type 1	**Type 2**	**Type 3**	**Type 4**
Format of labour provision	On-location	On-location	Online	Online
Skills level required to execute the tasks	Lower-skilled	Higher-skilled	Lower-skilled	Higher-skilled
Level of control exercised by the digital labour platform	High level of control	Moderate level of control	High level of control	Low level of control
EXAMPLE	Parcel delivery	Handiwork	Online content review	Remote programming

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

Healthy Workplaces

Facts and figures: workers by type of work and sector

6% of workers in the EU earned most or part of their income through a digital platform

6,1%

93,9%

■ Platform work

Source: OSH Pulse 2022 - EU-OSHA

Sector	Platform work	No platform work
ICT, Finance, professional, scientific and technical services	19,2%	13,8%
Commerce, transport, accommodation and food service	18,3%	15,8%
Administration incl. public administration and defense	15,8%	13,6%
Health and social care	10,8%	12,3%
Social, cultural, personal and other services	8,2%	9,2%
Construction	6,9%	7,8%
Manufacturing and engineering	6,8%	9,7%
Education	5,0%	8,4%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3,6%	3,8%
Supply of gas, electricity and water, mining and quarrying	2,2%	2,3%

■ Platform work   ■ No platform work

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

https://healthy-workplaces.eu

Healthy Workplaces

Facts and figures: workers by type of work and worker characteristics

Age of respondent

- 65 and more: No platform work 2,6% / Platform work 3,6%
- 55-64: No platform work 18,4% / Platform work 19,1%
- 45-54: No platform work 26,2% / Platform work 22,9%
- 35-44: No platform work 25,1% / Platform work 19,4%
- 25-34: No platform work 20,5% / Platform work 24,0%
- 16-24: No platform work 7,4% / Platform work 10,9%

Gender

- Woman: No platform work 46,5% / Platform work 44,4%
- Man: No platform work 53,5% / Platform work 55,6%

Nationality

- Country citizen: No platform work 94,3% / Platform work 93,6%
- Foreign citizen: No platform work 5,7% / Platform work 6,4%

- **People aged 25-34 are the majority in platform work**
- **Most platform workers are men**
- **Prevalence of platform work higher among immigrants**

■ No platform work ■ Platform work

Source: OSH Pulse 2022 - EU-OSHA

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

https://healthy-workplaces.eu

Healthy Workplaces

6

Facts and figures: workforce diversity

Migrants and ethnic minorities
- Overrepresented in lower-skilled on-location and online digital platform work
- Motivations: earning an income, escaping informal work, part of 'migration pathway'

Women
- Digital platform work is becoming less gender-segregated

Persons with disability, chronic illness or condition
- Involvement depends on nature of condition and task

European Agency
for Safety and Health
at Work

Healthy Workplaces

Opportunities

✓ Promotes labour market (re)entry and participation

✓ Includes vulnerable and marginalised groups

✓ Attractive income source

✓ Develops skills

✓ Provides experience to find better jobs

✓ Enables choice of work environment

✓ Reduces risks of violence and harassment

OSH risks and challenges

✓ Concentrated in occupations that are more dangerous

✓ Often involves additional work

✓ Its nature and work conditions aggravate OSH challenges and risks

✓ Workers encounter physical and psychological health and safety risks, which are insufficiently prevented and managed

https://healthy-workplaces.eu

Healthy Workplaces

Factors aggravating OSH risks and challenges

Unclear employment status and contract
- Workers become responsible for their own safety and health

Algorithmic management
- Concentrated power in the platform

- Rewards or penalties based on workers' performance

- Lack of transparency of the algorithm

- Reduced workers' autonomy, job control and flexibility

- Exhaustion, anxiety, stress

Factors aggravating OSH risks and challenges

Isolation and lack of social support
- Cause sleeping problems, exhaustion, stress, depression, etc.
- Limit worker organisation and collective bargaining
- Complicate implementation of preventive measures and access to OSH services

Work transience and boundaryless careers
- Job and income insecurity
- Lead to mental and physical health issues

Challenges for specific groups of workers

- Difficulties in proving experience, since portfolios cannot be easily transferred between platforms or included in a CV

- Overqualified workers take up tasks not related to their education

- Digital platform work can become a trap for those with few alternative work options

European Agency
for Safety and Health
at Work

Healthy Workplaces

Challenges for specific groups of workers

Digital platform work can be a lever to escape from discrimination, harassment and unfair treatment

- Anonymous profile, without sensitive information

But these problems still happen…

- Existing inequalities and biases can be reinforced

- Algorithmic management based on biased data

- Workers underreport issues

European Agency
for Safety and Health
at Work

https://healthy-workplaces.eu

Healthy Workplaces

Mapping responses to OSH risks: examples of initiatives

POLICY-MAKERS

- Mandatory occupational accident insurance for on-location platform workers
- Transparency requirements to platforms using algorithmic management
- Working time limits, road safety protections, right for workers to be informed about technological changes
- Calls for public consultations
- Labour inspections and awareness campaigns

European Agency
for Safety and Health
at Work

htt   kplaces.eu

Healthy Workplaces

Mapping responses to OSH risks: examples of initiatives

PLATFORMS

- Provision of OSH protections such as personal protective equipment, physical and mental safety and wellbeing strategies, healthcare assistance, work-related injury insurance, tailored OSH training

- OSH policies for road safety and violence and harassment

- Industry pledges and codes of conduct

European Agency
for Safety and Health
at Work

htt   kplaces.eu

Healthy Workplaces

Mapping responses to OSH risks: examples of initiatives

PLATFORM WORKERS

- Informal exchanges of information on work-related issues or self-organising initiatives through chat forums, social media, face-to-face interactions

- Informal safety measures and precautions to protect themselves from task-specific risks

- Opportunities for cooperation, negotiation of working conditions, organisation and representation

htt   kplaces.eu

Healthy Workplaces

Policies and practices

European Commission's proposal for a directive to improve the working conditions of digital labour platforms

- ✓ **Clarification of the legal employment status**
- ✓ **Transparency in algorithmic management**
- ✓ **Better enforcement and higher traceability**
- ✓ **Addresses topics related to OSH**
- ✓ **Fills a gap left by regulation within the EU**

European Commission

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

Healthy Workplaces

Examples of national policies

Spanish 'Riders' Law' (2021):

- Right to algorithmic transparency
- Presumption of a dependent employment relationship

Bologna's charter (2018):

- OSH protections for platform work
- Inspired changes to the Italian legislation

French legislative framework:

- Range of rights and protection to platform workers

Learn about the initiatives: https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/occupational-safety-and-health-digital-platform-work-lessons-regulations-policies-actions-and-initiatives

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

Healthy Workplaces

Takeaways on digital platform work

1. Focus efforts on understanding OSH challenges and opportunities
2. Introduce measures to reduce information asymmetries and power imbalances between platforms and workers
3. Raise awareness on OSH risk prevention and management
4. Increase transparency to facilitate OSH work
5. Strengthen monitoring and enforcement of OSH regulations
6. Involve platform workers and representatives in OSH management

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

Healthy Workplaces
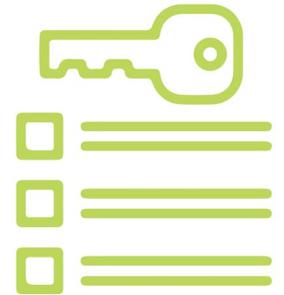
Further information
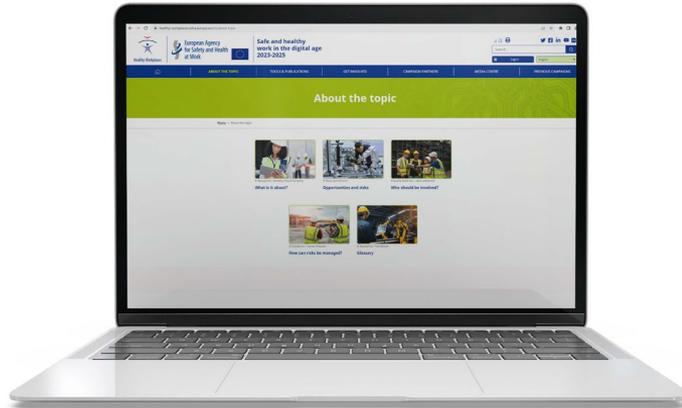
- **Check out all related content under priority area "Digital platform work":**

https://healthy-workplaces.osha.europa.eu/en/about-topic/priority-area/digital-platform-work

- **Consult all publications on the topic:**

https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications-priority-area/digital-labour-platforms

European Agency
for Safety and Health
at Work

https://healthy-workplaces.eu

Healthy Workplaces