

Character of Austria's 'Gig Economy' revealed for the first time

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It is generally known that online platforms such as Uber (for driving work), My Hammer (for household chores) and Upwork (for creative or IT work) are booming. But so far little has been known about who is doing this kind of work, with research confined to particular platforms. Now, a new report reveals for the first time the profile of Austrian crowd workers across the whole economy.

The University of Hertfordshire and Ipsos MORI, in association with the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), UNI-Europa and AK Wien carried out a survey that, for the first time, shows the characteristics of Austria's 'gig economy'. The Austrian survey is the most recent in a series of surveys already covering three European countries, with others expected to follow.

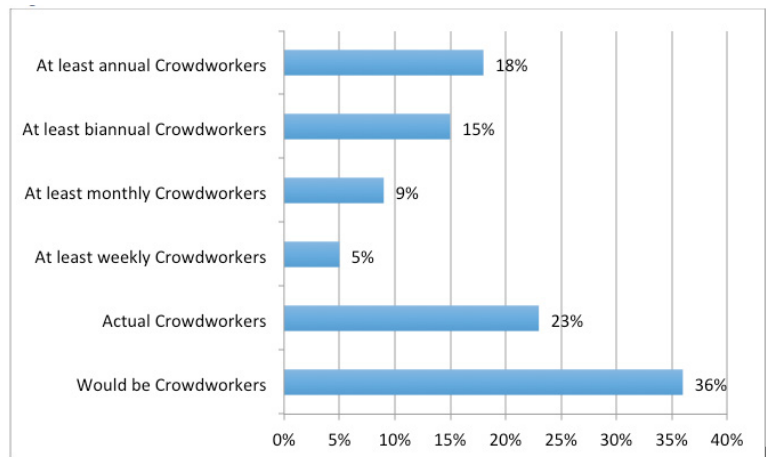
In an online survey of 2,003 Austrian adults aged 18-65, 36% (724) said they have tried to find work managed via so-called 'sharing economy' platforms such as Upwork, Uber or Handy during the past year (Fig.1). But only half of these, 18% (352), actually managed to find such work at least once a year.

Men are somewhat more likely than women to work in this way, with 39% of men who responded saying they had sought crowd work, compared with 34% of women.

For some, this work is only occasional, but a significant minority, 5% (102) of respondents, claim to find paid work via online platforms at least once a week, with 9% (175) finding such work at least once a month.

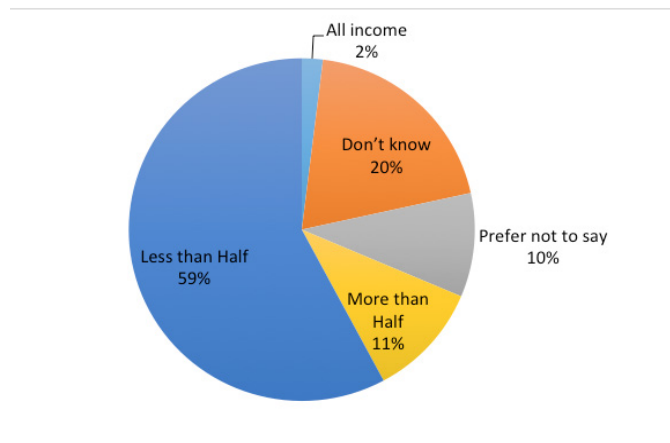
Main source of work or a supplement to a main job? It is often thought the gig economy is used either for altruistic reasons or as an occasional income top-up in addition to another main job. In fact, for a substantial minority of crowd

FIGURE 1: AUSTRIAN CROWD WORKERS – OVERVIEW



¹ Base: 2,003 online adults aged 18-65 across Austria.

FIGURE 2: PROPORTION OF INCOME FROM CROWD WORK (% OF ALL CROWD WORKERS)^{2 3}



² Unweighted base: 451 online Austrian adults 18-65 who have found paid crowd work online

³ Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" categories, or multiple answers.



workers, it is the only or main source of income with 2% saying it is their only source of income and 11% that it represents more than half. The majority, 59% say that it represents less than half their income (Fig.2). A substantial proportion (30%) did not know or did not wish to divulge this information.

Earnings⁴ The income of crowd workers is generally modest (Fig.3). Almost half (48%) of crowd workers in the survey who divulged their earnings earn less than €18,000 a year, with a further 43% earning between €18,000 and €36,000, while only 3% earn more than €60,000 a year.

What work are they looking for?

People looking for work via online platforms are often looking for several different types of work (Fig.4).

Fully one third (33%) of the 2,003 Austrian adults surveyed say they are looking for online work they can carry out from their homes on platforms such as Freelancer, Upwork or Clickworker. This is work that can be done from anywhere, so they are in a global labour market, perhaps competing with workers in India, Eastern Europe, the Americas or other parts of the world.

At the same time, 20% of the Austrian adults surveyed say they are looking for work they can do offline, such as cleaning, carpentry or gardening in other people’s premises, for platforms such as Taskrabbit, Helping or Myhammer.

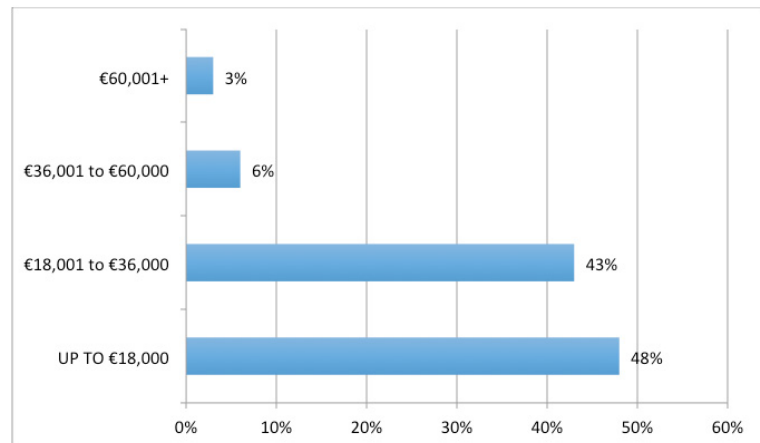
Finally, 16% say they are looking for work as drivers, for companies like Uber or Blablacar.

It is clear that many crowd workers do not restrict themselves to a single type of work but offer to provide several kinds of service.

What work are they actually doing?

When it comes to what crowd workers are actually doing, it is clear that some do a wide variety of work (Fig.5). The range is extremely broad, from high-skill professional work at one extreme to running errands at the other. The most common type of crowd work, done by some 74% of crowd workers, is

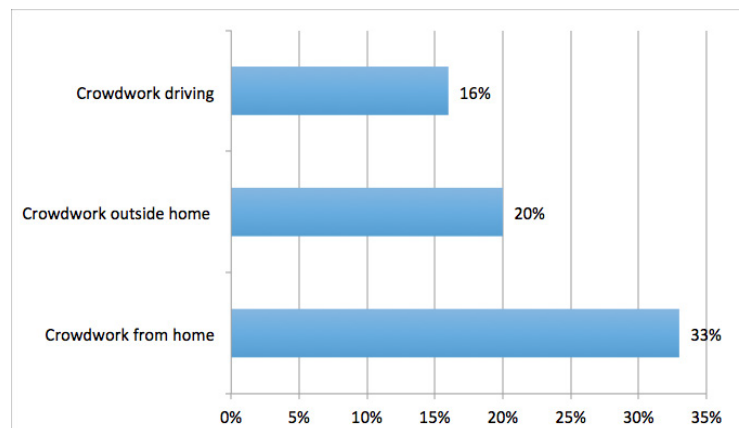
FIGURE 3: PERSONAL INCOME OF CROWD WORKERS³



⁴ This measure refers to total earnings from all sources of income, not just crowd work

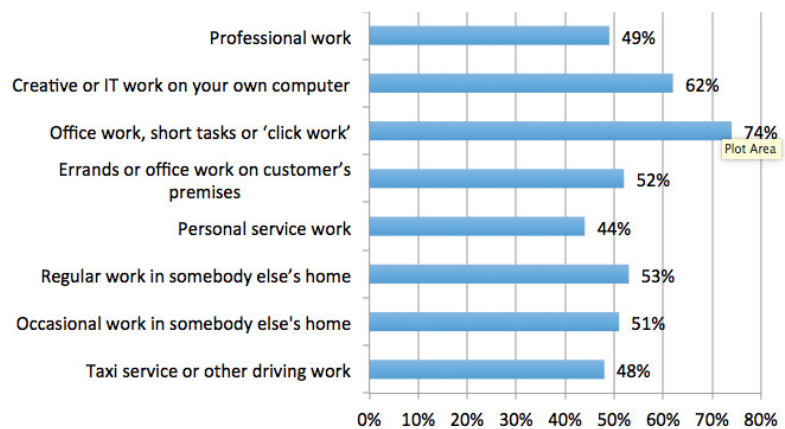
⁵ Unweighted base: 451 online Austrian adults 18-65 who have found paid crowd work online

FIGURE 4: TYPE OF WORK SOUGHT ON ONLINE PLATFORMS⁶



⁶ Base: 2,003 adults aged 18-65 across Austria

FIGURE 5: TYPES OF WORK BEING CARRIED OUT BY CROWD WORKERS⁷



⁷ Unweighted base: 451 online Austrian adults 18-65 who have found paid crowd work online





office work, short tasks or 'click work' done online. However large numbers (62%) are doing creative or IT work, or professional work (49%).

When it comes to work that is carried out offline (even though it is managed via online platforms) we again find high proportions of crowd workers active across several activities. Almost half (48%) do driving work and a similar proportion (44%) do personal service work. More than half (52%) do errands or office work on their clients' premises, and similar proportions do regular (53%) or occasional (51%) work in other people's homes. This reinforces the picture of people piecing together a livelihood from a range of different activities.

Who are the crowd workers?

Women are somewhat less likely than men to be crowd workers, with 43% of the crowd workforce female and 57% male.

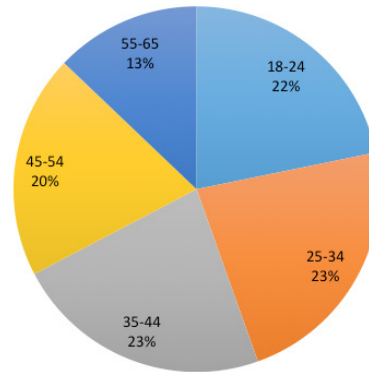
Crowd workers are more likely to be young than old, but not dramatically so (Fig.6). One in five (22%) is aged between 18 and 24, with a similar proportion (23%) between 25 and 34. The remainder are distributed widely across the older age bands, though with some reduction among older workers: 23% are aged 35-44, 20% 45-54 and 13% 55-65. Despite this tailing off, there are clearly significant numbers of 'silver surfers' among the crowd workforce in Austria.

It is often thought that most crowd workers are students. This is not the case. Only 11% of those actually doing crowd work in the sample were students, though this figure rises to 13% among those doing crowd work at least weekly.

Where are they living? Crowd workers can be found in all regions of Austria, approximately in line with the general distribution of population (Fig.7).

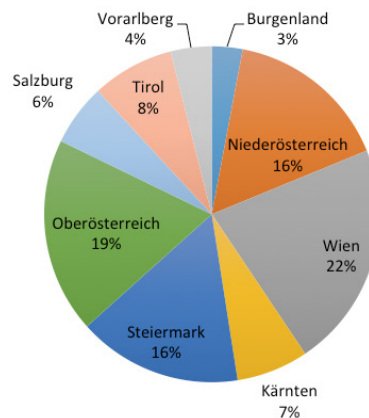
Who are they working for? More than one third of respondents (36%) in the survey said that they have bought services from a crowd worker in the last year (Fig.8). This figure relates only to work that is directly carried out for the client and does not

FIGURE 6: AGE OF CROWD WORKERS⁸



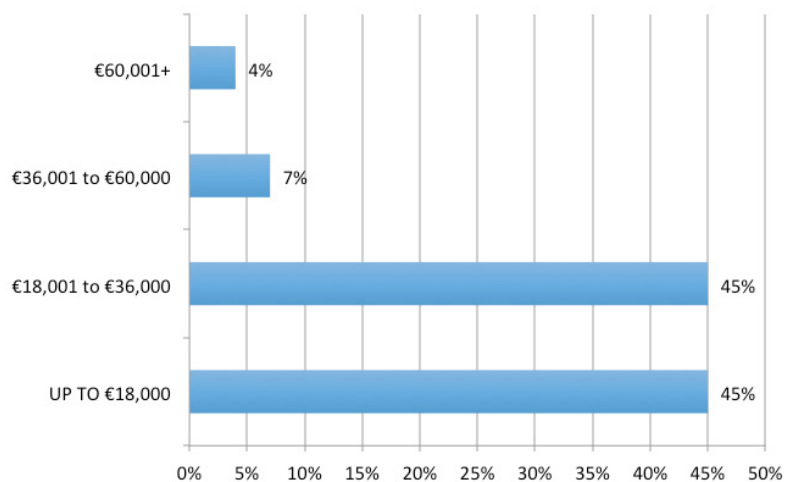
⁸ Unweighted base: 451 online Austrian adults 18-65 who have found paid crowd work online

FIGURE 7: CROWD WORKERS BY REGION⁹



⁹ Unweighted base: 451 online Austrian adults 18-65 who have found paid crowd work online

FIGURE 8: CROWD WORK CUSTOMERS BY PERSONAL PRE-TAX INCOME¹⁰



¹⁰ Unweighted base: 711 online Austrian adults aged 18-65 who have purchased crowd work services online





include services where people rent out their properties, like Airbnb.

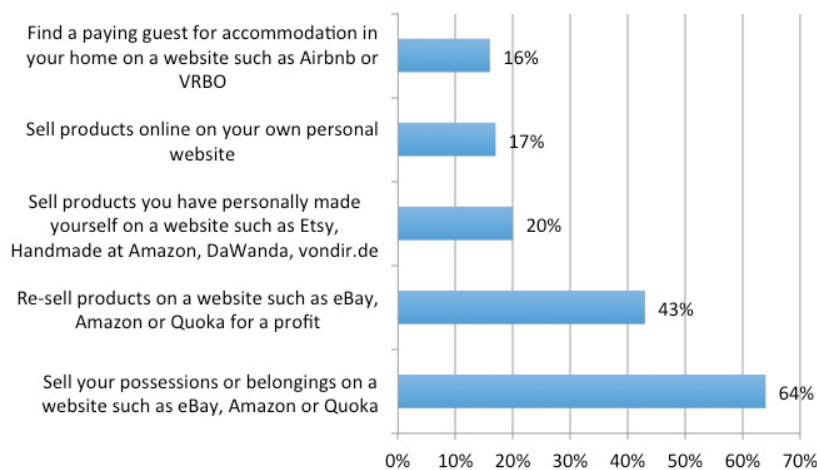
It might be expected that customers for crowd work would be somewhat richer than the crowd workers who supply them with services, but in fact their income profile is remarkably similar. Of those who divulged information about personal

income, only 4% earn more than €60,000 per year, while 45% earn less than €18,000 and a further 45% earn €18,001-36,000 per year.

Broader involvement in the online economy. Looking more broadly at involvement in the online economy (excluding online grocery shopping) almost four fifths (79%)

of respondents are either making an income from online activities or buying labour from others. Around 1% of respondents are involved in home rental schemes like Airbnb only (with no other involvement in the online economy).

FIGURE 9: OTHER SOURCES OF ONLINE INCOME ¹¹



¹¹ Base: 2,003 online adults aged 18-65 across Austria

About the research. University of Hertfordshire, European think tank FEPS and European service workers' union UNI Europa are collaborating on a year-long research project to explore the scale and impact of the growth of crowd working, and provide a more comprehensive picture of the digitalised labour market across the European Union.

For the first stage of this project, Ipsos MORI interviewed an online sample across the United Kingdom using i:omnibus, Ipsos MORI's online omnibus. This survey has now been replicated in several other European countries. The Austrian survey was co-sponsored by AK Wien. In Austria, 2003 adults aged 18-65 were interviewed. Interviews took place

between 1-4 April 2016. Data are weighted by age, gender, region, and working status to match the profile of the adult population aged 18-65 in Austria.

Population estimates are derived according to Eurostat 2014 population figures for adults aged 18-65 in Austria, estimated at 5,523,273.

