

Size of Germany's 'Gig Economy' revealed for the first time

Authors:

Ursula Huws, University of Hertfordshire

Simon Joyce, University of Hertfordshire

- 22% of survey respondents in Germany have tried to find work via online platforms during the past year
- 4% of respondents said they have managed to find work in this way at least once a week

Research by the University of Hertfordshire and Ipsos MORI, in association with the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), UNI-Europa, ver.di, and IG Metall, has revealed, for the first time, the size of Germany's 'gig economy'.

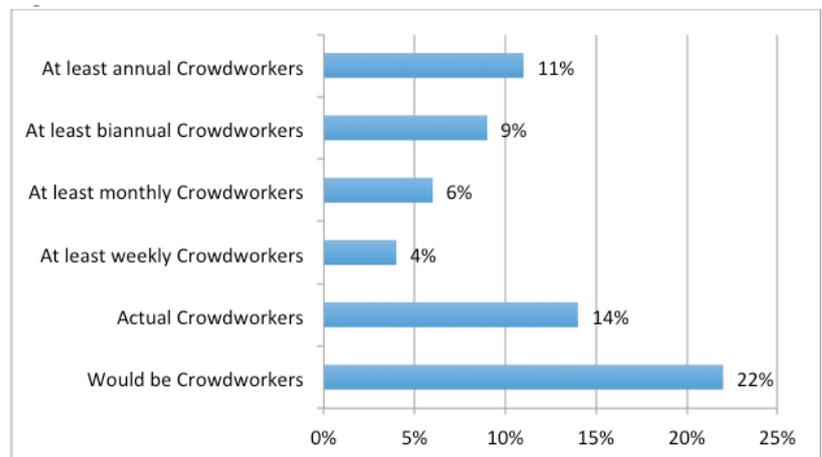
In the online survey of 2,180 German adults aged 16-70, 22% say they have tried to find work managed via online 'gig economy' platforms such as Upwork, Uber or Handy during the past year, equivalent to nearly 13 million people. Around one in seven (14%) of respondents said they had succeeded in doing so, equivalent to around 8.2 million people. Of these, 18% — equivalent to around 1.2 million people — are estimated to earn at least half (but not all) of their income from such platforms, and 2% more — equivalent to around 150,000 people — to earn all of their income this way.

Men are slightly more likely than women to work in this way, with 23% of men who responded saying they had sought crowd work and 16% actually obtaining it, compared with 21% and 12%, respectively, of women.

Four per cent of respondents claim to find paid work via online platforms at least once a week, equivalent to around 2.3 million adults, with 6%, or around 3.5 million, finding such work at least once a month.

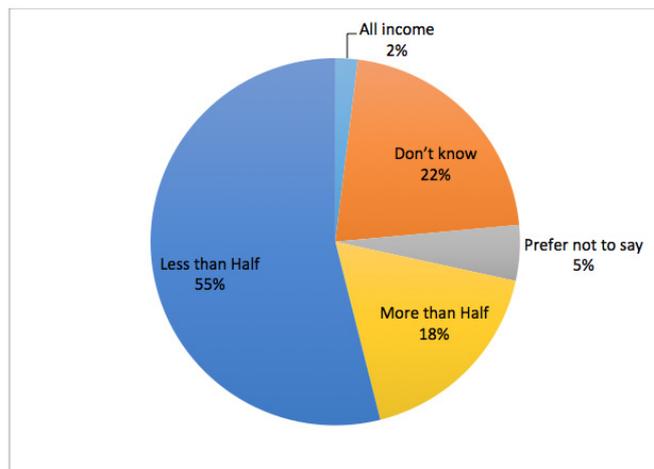
Main source of work or a supplement to a main job? It is often thought the gig economy is used either for altruistic reasons or as an occasional income top-up in addition to another main job. In fact, for a substantial minority of crowd workers, it is the only or main source of income with 2% saying it is their only source of income and

FIGURE 1: GERMAN CROWD WORKERS – OVERVIEW ¹



¹ Base: 2,180 online adults aged 16-70 across Germany. "At least monthly crowdworkers" includes "at least weekly crowdworkers"; "at least biannual crowdworkers" includes "at least monthly crowdworkers," etc. "Would be crowdworkers" includes "actual crowdworkers".

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



² Unweighted base: 330 online German adults 16-70 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.



18% that it represents more than half. The majority, 55% say that it represents less than half their income. A substantial proportion (27%) did not know or did not wish to divulge this information.

Earnings⁴ The income of crowd workers is generally modest. Four out of ten (40%) of the crowd workers in the survey earn less than €18,000 a year with a further 46% earning between €18,000 and €36,000, while only 3% earn more than €60,000 a year. Survey findings also suggest that crowd workers who depend upon this type of work for all of their income are heavily concentrated in the lower income brackets; however, the small number of respondents in this category means that further research is required.

What work are they looking for?

People looking for work via online platforms are often looking for several different types of work.

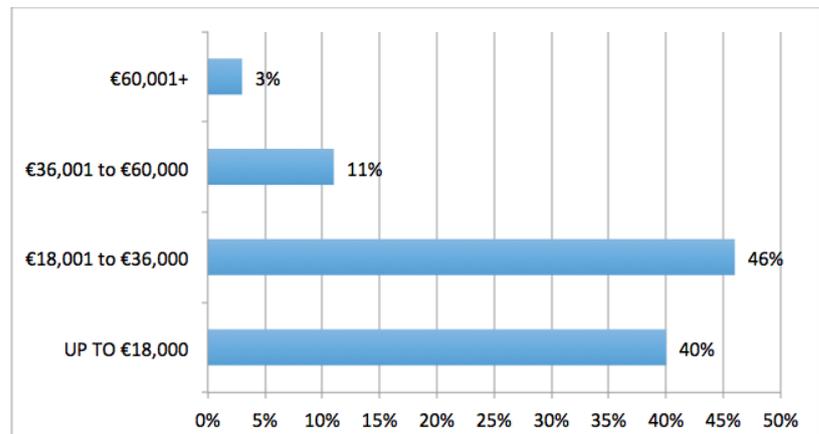
Eighteen per cent of the 2,180 German adults surveyed say they are looking for online work they can carry out from their homes on platforms such as Freelancer, Upwork or Clickworker. This is work that can be done from anywhere, so they are in a global labour market, perhaps competing with workers in India, Eastern Europe, the Americas or other parts of the world.

At the same time, 12% of the German adults surveyed said 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, the same proportion, 12%, say they are looking for work as drivers, for companies like Uber⁵.

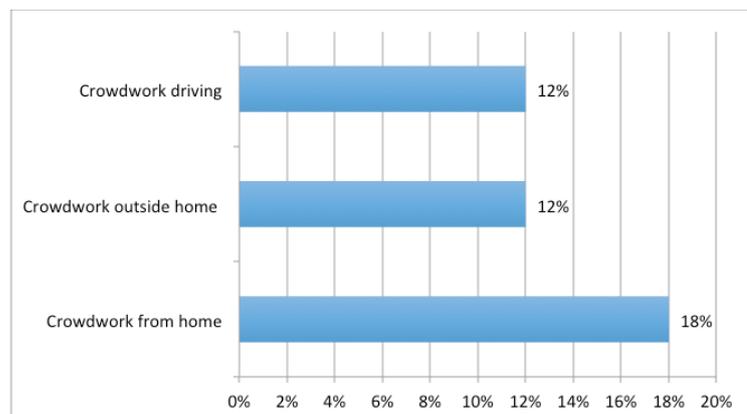
It is clear that many crowdworkers do not restrict themselves to a single type of work but offer to provide several kinds of service.

FIGURE 3: PERSONAL INCOME OF CROWD WORKERS⁴



⁴ Unweighted base: 330 online German adults 16-70 who have found paid crowd work online.

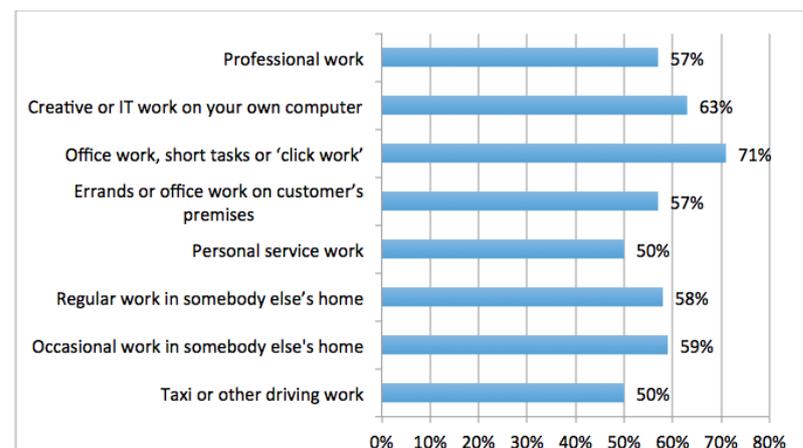
FIGURE 4: TYPE OF WORK SOUGHT ON ONLINE PLATFORMS⁶



⁵ After several court decisions the service UberPop was shut down in Germany in May 2015. It has been replaced by UberX. UberX drivers need a licence for passenger transport and are only allowed to use hired cars.

⁶ Base: 2,180 online adults aged 16-70 across Germany.

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



⁷ Unweighted base: 330 online German adults 16-70 who have found paid crowd work online.





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. 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 more than 71% of crowd workers, is office work, short tasks and 'click work' done online. However large numbers (63%) are doing creative or IT work or (57%) professional work, creative work. When it comes to work that is carried out offline (even though it is managed via online platforms) we again find high proportions of crowdworkers active across several activities. Half (50%) do driving work and the same proportion do personal service work. Even more (57%) do errands or office work on their clients' premises, and similar proportions do regular (58%) or occasional (59%) work in other people's homes. This reinforces the picture of people piecing together a livelihood from a range of different tasks.

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.

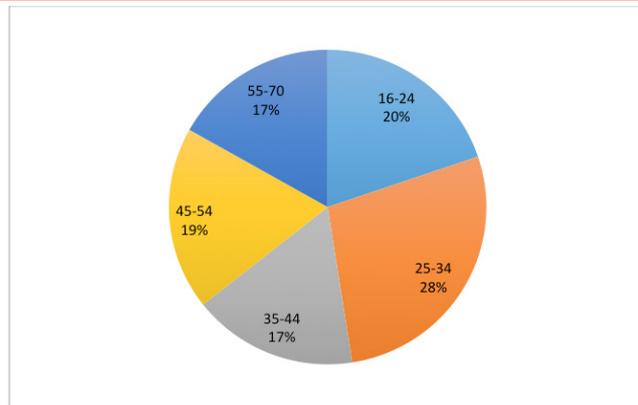
Crowd workers are more likely to be young than old, but not dramatically so. One in five (20%) is aged between 16 and 24, with over a quarter (28%) between 25 and 34. The remainder are distributed widely across the older age bands, with 17% aged 35-44, 19% 45-54 and 17% 55-70. There are clearly significant numbers of 'silver surfers' among the crowd workforce.

It is often thought that most crowd workers are students. This is not the case. Only 10% of those actually doing crowd work in the sample were students, a proportion that dropped below 5% among those doing crowd work at least weekly.

Where are they living?

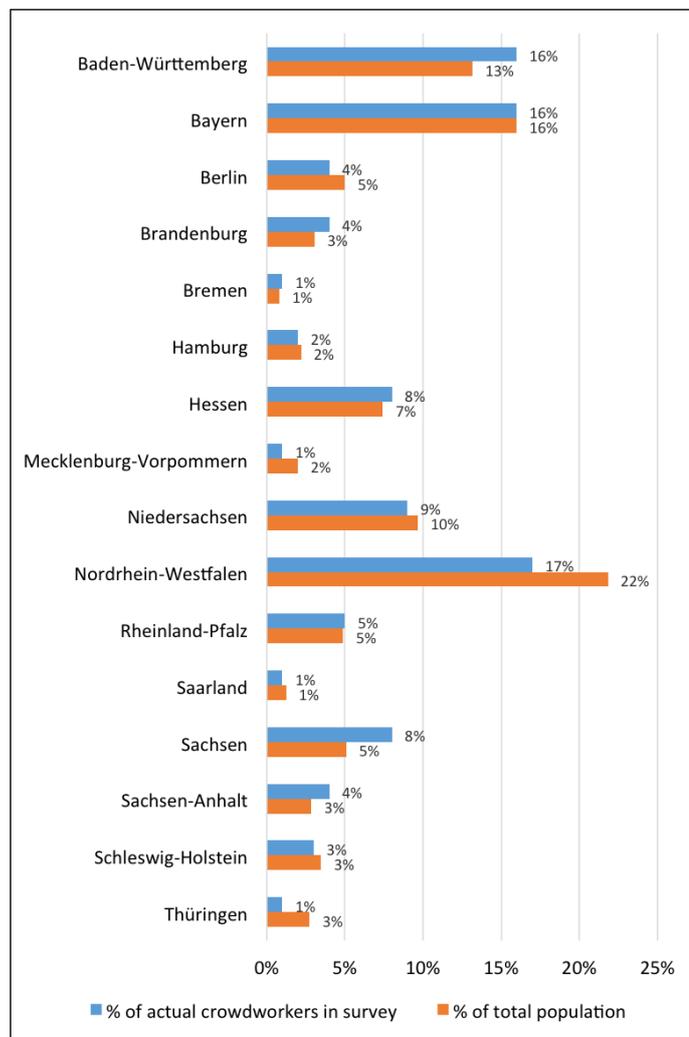
Crowd workers can be found in every German federal state. The percentage of crowd workers in each state, including Berlin, is roughly in line with the distribution of the overall population.

FIGURE 6: AGE OF CROWD WORKERS⁸



⁸ Unweighted base: 330 online German adults 16-70 who have found paid crowd work online.

FIGURE 7: CROWD WORKERS BY REGION^{9 10}



⁹ Unweighted base for "% of actual crowdworkers in survey": 330 online German adults 16-70 who have found paid crowd work online.

¹⁰ German federal state population figures from Eurostat 2013, adults aged 16-70.



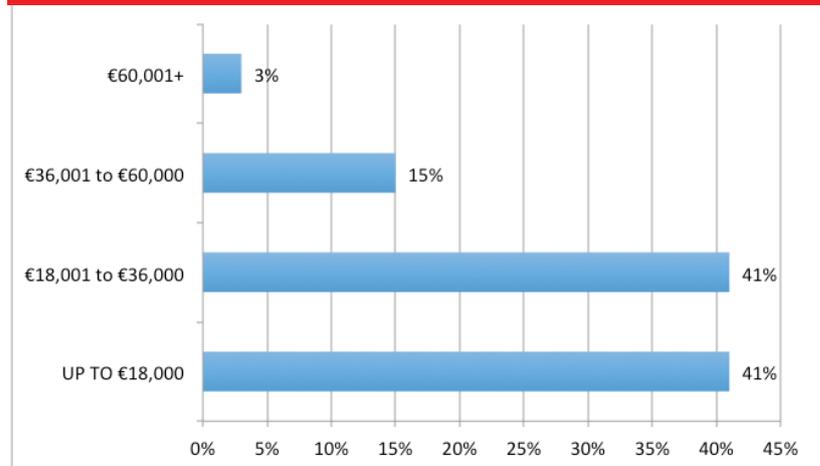


Who are they working for? A quarter of respondents (25%) in the survey said that they have bought services from a crowd worker in the last year, equivalent to an estimated fourteen and a half million German adults. This figure relates only to work that is directly carried out for the client and does not 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. The same small proportion (3%) earn more than €60,000 per year. And the proportion earning less than €18,000 is even slightly higher, at 41%, compared with 40% for crowd workers. While this study did not examine business customers of 'gig economy' services, this finding gives credence to the idea that the 'private-person-to-private-person' part of the 'gig economy' is, at least with respect to income, 'peer-to-peer'.

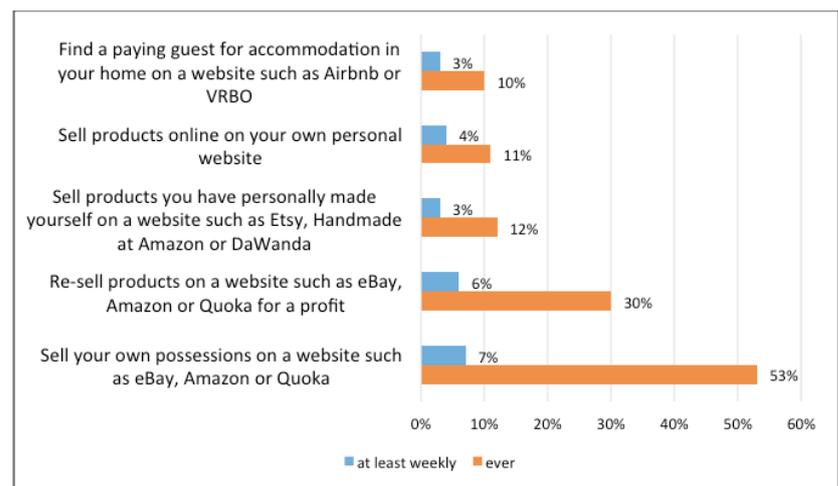
Broader involvement in the online economy Looking more broadly at the German population's involvement in the online economy (excluding online grocery shopping) 66% of respondents are either making an income from online activities or buying labour from others – giving an estimated equivalent of nearly 38.5 million people across Germany as a whole. Around 1% of respondents are involved in home rental schemes like Airbnb only (with no other involvement in the online economy).

FIGURE 8: CROWD WORK CUSTOMERS BY PERSONAL PRE-TAX INCOME ¹¹



¹¹ Base: 535 online German adults aged 16-70 who have purchased crowd work services online.

FIGURE 9: OTHER SOURCES OF ONLINE INCOME IN THE UK POPULATION ¹²



¹² Base: 2,180 online adults aged 16-70 across Germany.

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 German survey was co-sponsored by Ver.di and IG Metall. In Germany, 2180 adults aged 16-70 were interviewed. Interviews took

place between 1-4 April 2016. Data are weighted by age within gender, region, working status, population density of respondent settlement, chief income earner of the household and household size to match the profile of the adult population aged 16-70 in Germany.

