

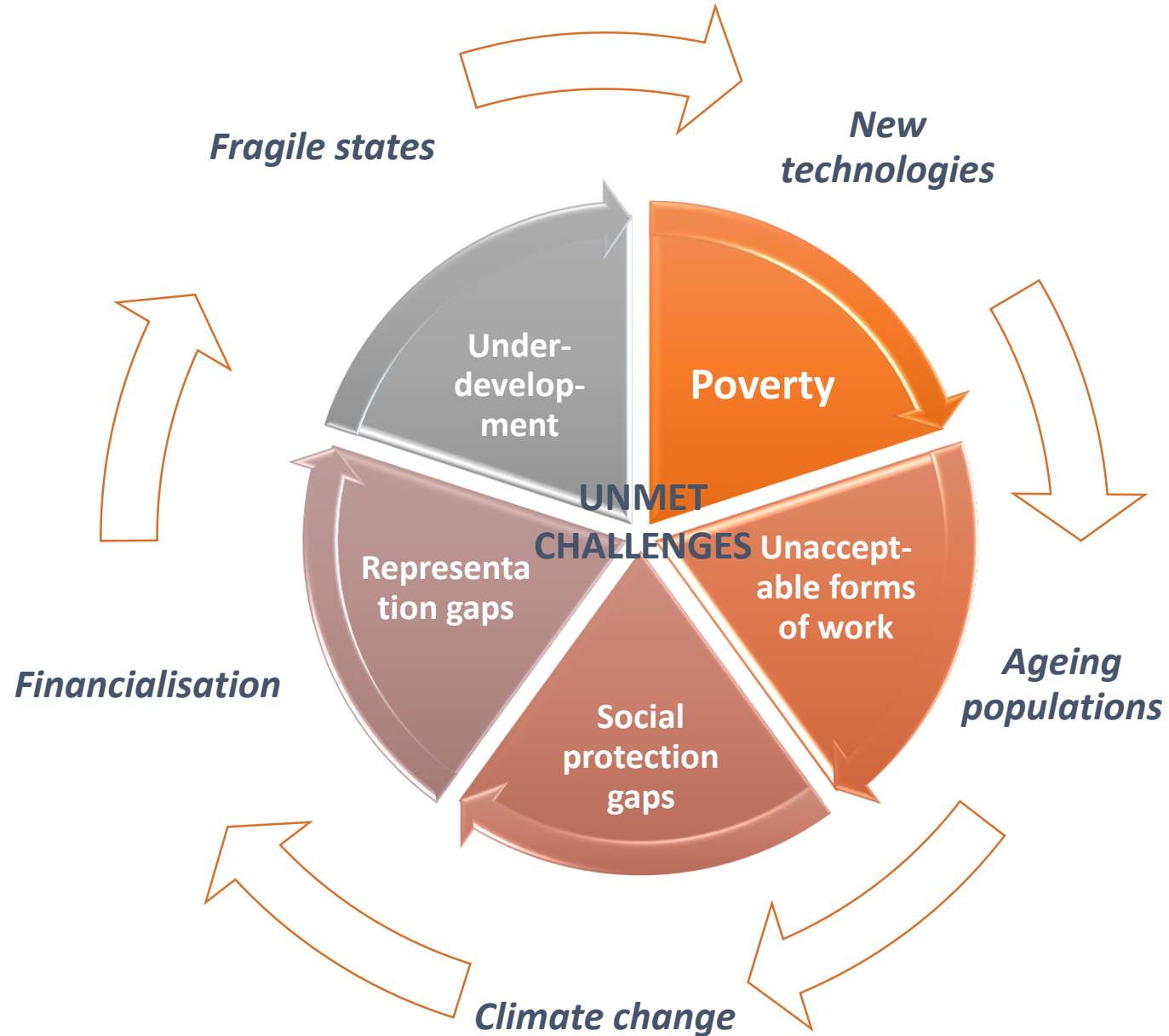
ILO Future of Work Research: Digital Labour Platforms

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Identifying both disruptive *future forces* and *today's unmet challenges*



What is *distinctive* about the ILO's approach to the future of work?

- to advance the cause of social justice around the world
- to identify and investigate all decent work deficits
- to analyse and question all forms of inequalities
- to interrogate economic policy and business practice for their decent work effects
- to promote humane conditions of work
- to consider what can be done from the perspective of governments, employers and trade unions to shape a future of work we want



Key themes

1. Inequalities (*new measures, opportunities & outcomes*)
2. Digital technologies, new business models
3. Pro-active labour market policy & social protection
4. Sustainable development (*green economy, rural economy, care economy, new growth and wellbeing measures*)
5. Globalisation (*trade, migration and global supply chains*)
6. Renewing the governance of work (making institutions more effective and strengthening social dialogue)



Digital technologies, new business models

Digital labour platforms

- i. Locally based labour platforms (work allocated via apps)
- ii. Web-based platforms (“crowdwork”)

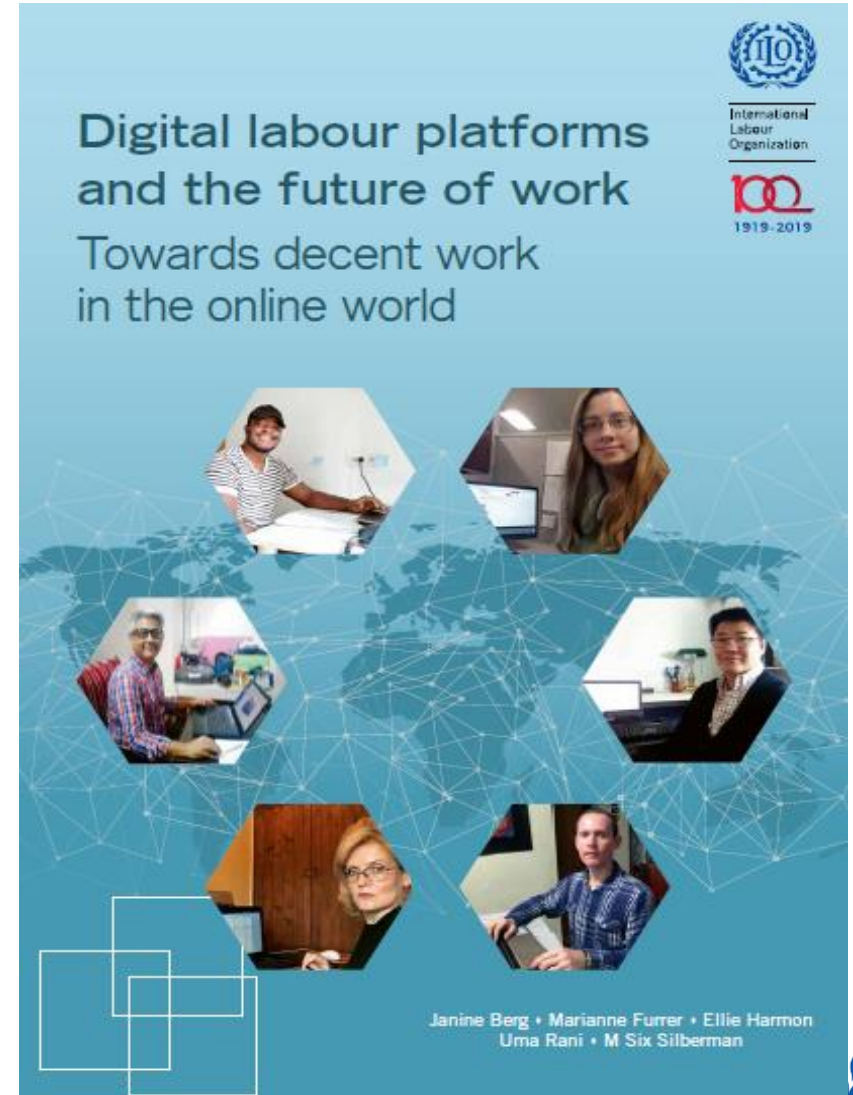
Questions for research and policy-makers

- What benefits for the consumer and for business operations?
- What effects on non-digital businesses/ local economy?
- What effects on working conditions (including social protection) and what regulatory response required?
- Do they increase job opportunities?
- Does the evidence support upskilling or deskilling?
- What impact on sex segregation and gender equity?



Illustration: MicroTask Platform Work

- ILO conducted original surveys in 2015 & 2017
- Covered 3,500 workers across 75 countries
- 5 global microtask platforms (Amazon Mechanical Turk, CrowdFlower, Clickworker, Microworkers, Prolific)
 - <https://www.mturk.com/>
- A microtask platform provides business clients access to a “crowd” of online workers to complete short, mostly simple tasks paid by the piece.



A somewhat novel *Business model*

1. Evolution from early platforms (*multi-client call centres, competition of ideas*)
2. Distinctive advantages (*geographic dispersion to monitor local markets and provide 24 hours service*)
3. Unbundling of jobs into tasks (*digital tools to commodify labour*)
4. Piece-rate payment (*task not time*)
5. Algorithmic performance management (*replaces management evaluation*)



What are the MicroTasks?

- Data collection (meta-data finding, copy & paste)
- Categorisation (classification, tagging, book marking, colour determination)
- Transcription (audio, video and media transcription, image description)
- Content creation (blogs, encyclopedia, editing, translation)
- Content moderation (assessing objectionable/ illegal content)
- Sentiment analysis (emotional responses, ratings, mystery shopping)
- Content Access (promotion, search engine optimisation, testing apps)
- Verification and Validation (spam detection, data cleaning)
- Surveys
- Data Annotation/ Artificial Intelligence (captcha, audio recording, voice recognition, coding)



Example of a transcription task

Classify Receipt [View a HIT in this group](#)

Requester: [REDACTED] HIT Expiration Date: Nov 6, 2017 (6 days 23 hours)
Reward: \$0.03 Time Allotted: 60 minutes

Description: Looking at a receipt image, identify the business of the receipt

Keywords: image, receipt, categorize, transcribe, extract, data, entry, transcription, text, easy, qualification

Qualifications Required:
Total approved HITs is not less than 1000
HIT approval rate (%) is not less than 97
Location is US

This is a preview of hit, click ACCEPT HIT above to complete

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS: [Scroll HIT](#) [Accept HIT](#) [Close HIT](#)



Classify Receipt
Hit Reward: \$0.03

Real Readable original receipt
 Not a receipt or not readable

The following details can often be found at the top or bottom of the receipt.
Enter as much information as you can find.

Find and enter the business phone number:

Example: 323 Fake Street, Los Angeles, CA, 90210

Find and enter the business address:

Address

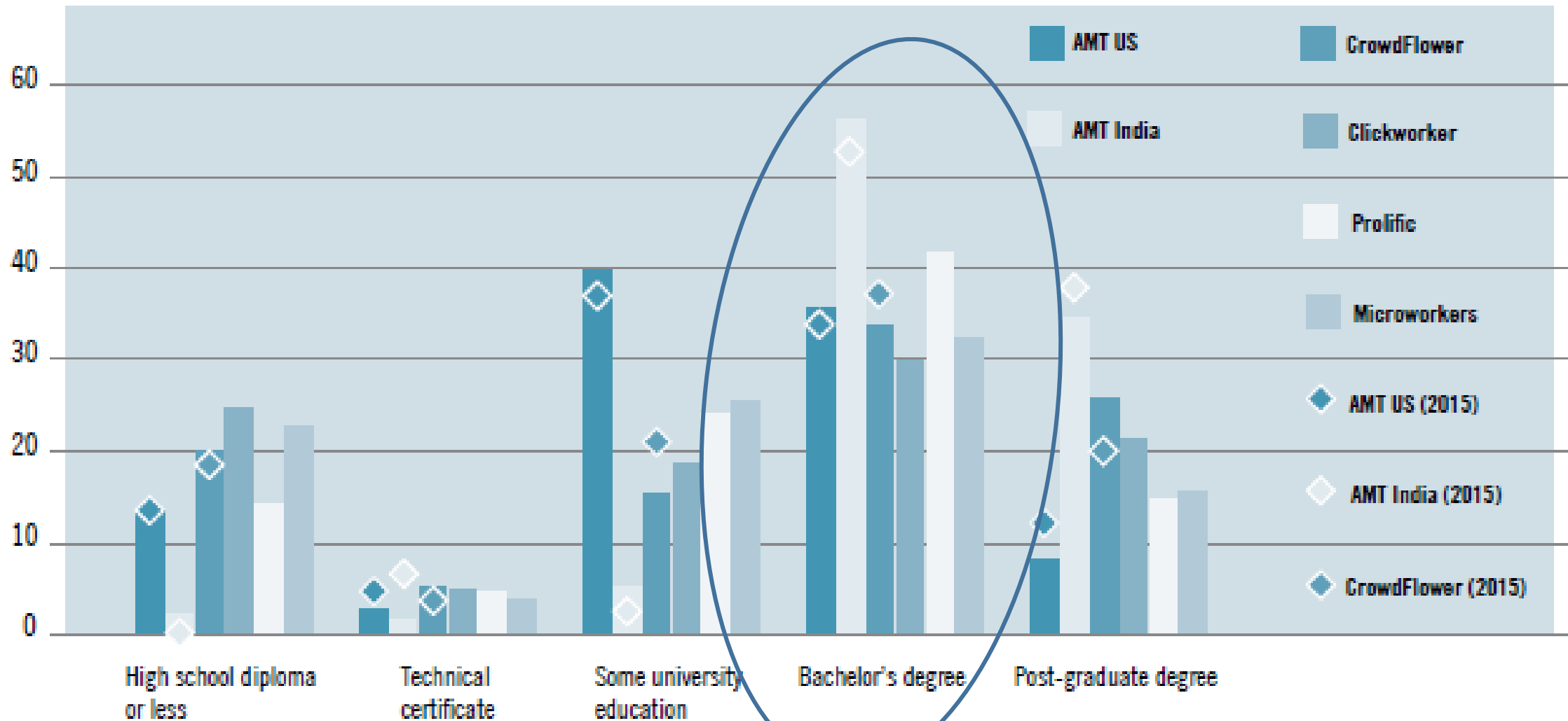
City

State Postal code
Example: 323 Fake Street, Los Angeles, CA, 90210

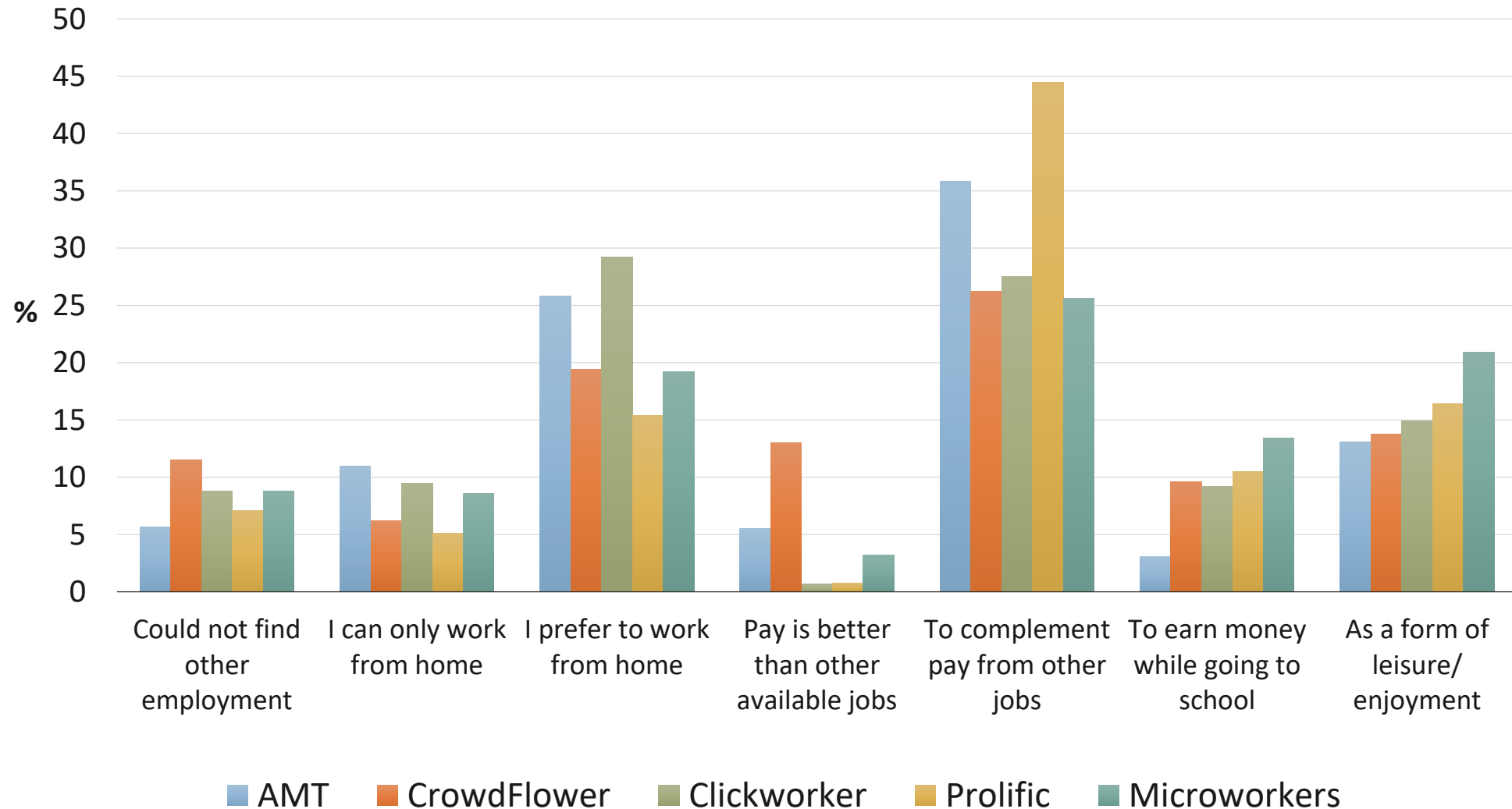
Skill mismatch

- Many mindless, low-end tasks
- No learning or upward mobility
- Highly educated labour force used inefficiently
- Cleaning internet trash using global labour at zero transaction cost
- Certain tasks can cause psychological stress

Crowdworkers are well educated

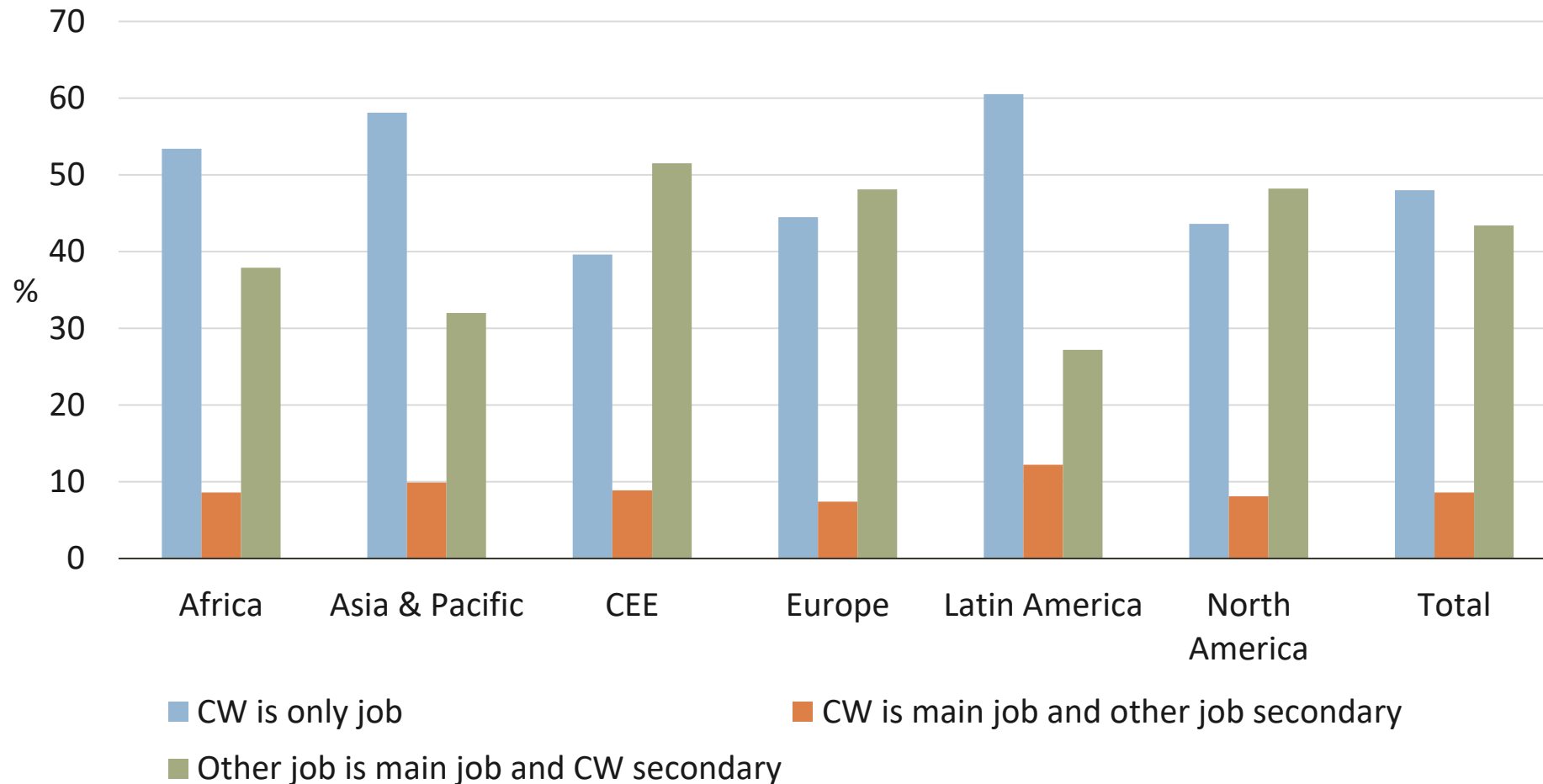


So why do it?



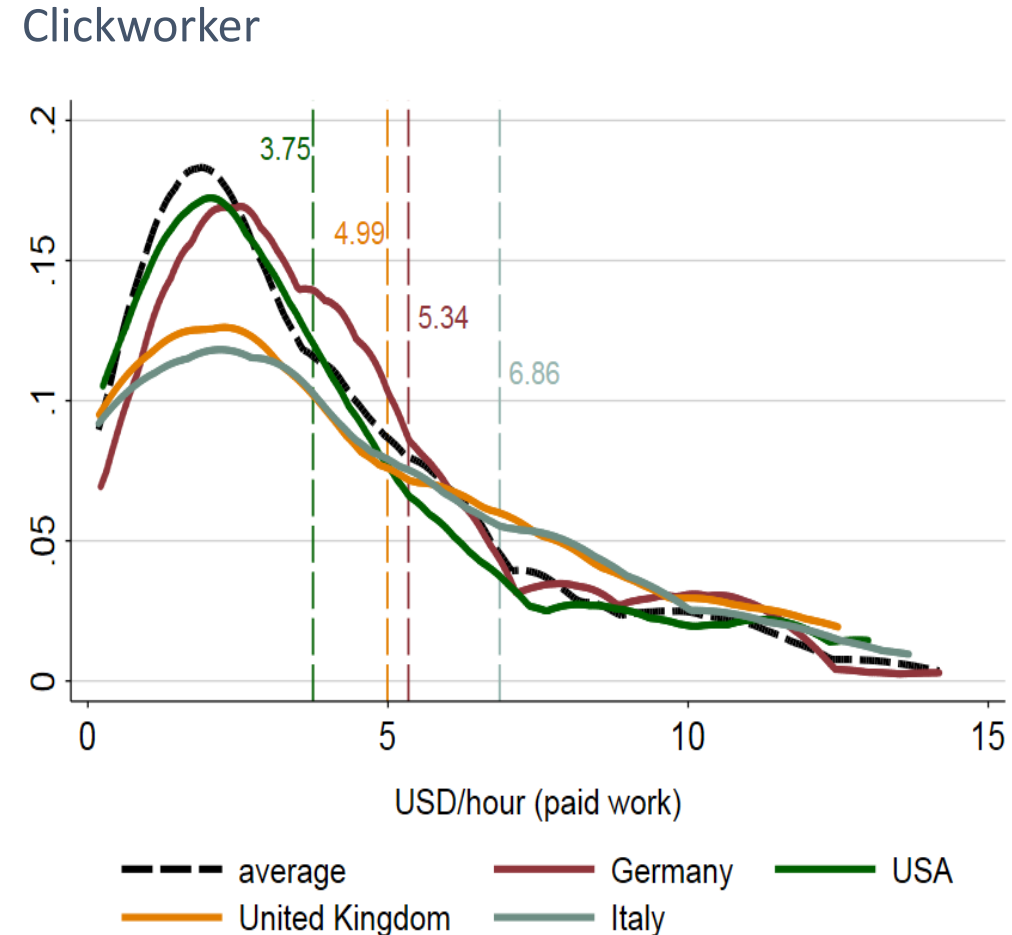
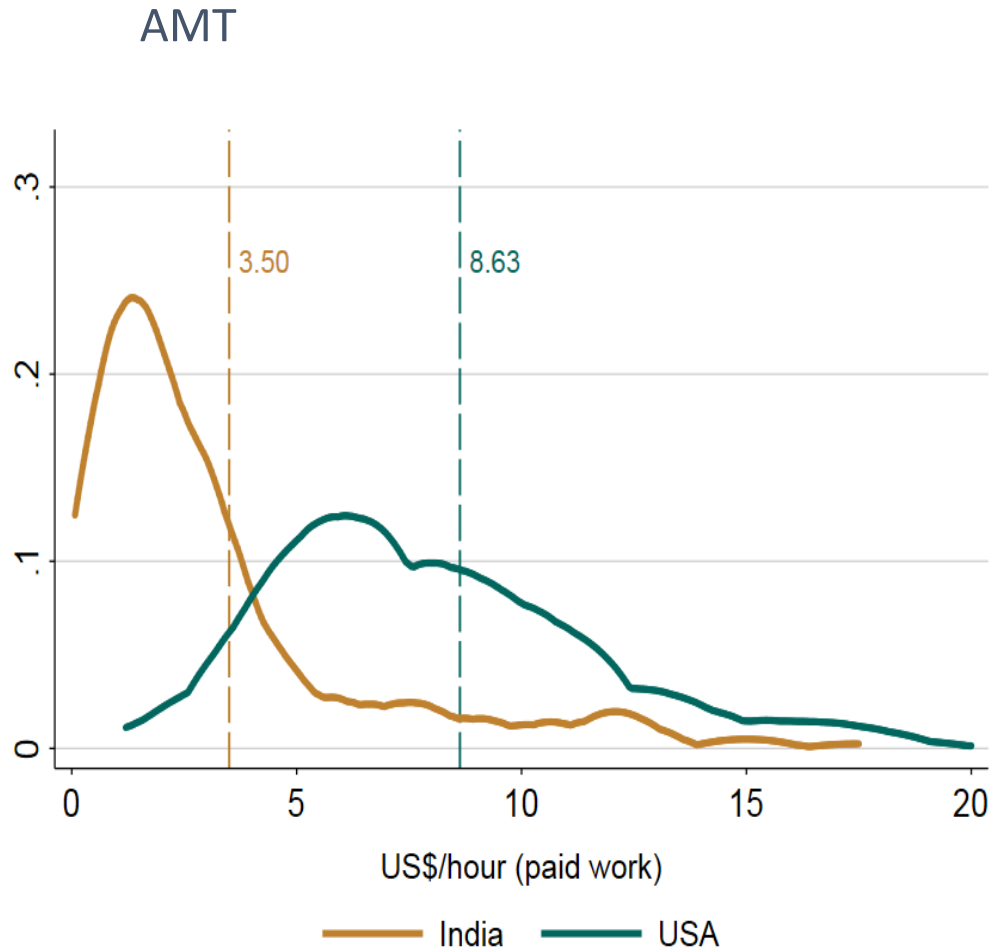
It is the main source of income for almost one in two

For 48% crowd work is the only source of income



The pay distribution is skewed to the left (more so when unpaid search and preparation time is considered)

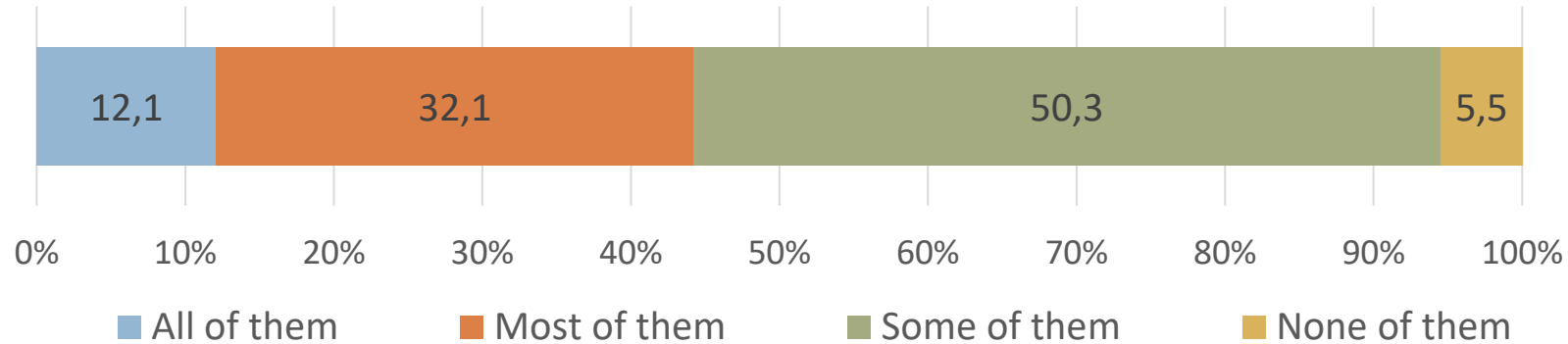
Skewed pay distribution, low mean and large country differences for the same platform



Note: Data trimmed at 1 and 99 per cent. Dashed vertical lines represent mean. Source: ILO Survey of crowd workers 2017.



High risk of having work rejected (and not paid)



- ***"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."***
- *"I would improve the evaluation of tasks related with sentiments. It is unfair your accuracy is affected because you "feels" in a particular way"*
- *"It is just that it is frustrating when you are doing the job right and you are being rated and judged by a computer which says the opposite."*
- Entry and exit to the platform determined without providing a reason:
"It's a precarious employment situation as you're entirely at the mercy of the crowd work platform. They could disable your account overnight and there's no protection against it."



How to build decent work in the digital world?

- Currently no government regulation of crowdwork platforms – the rules are made by the platforms (terms of trade, rules of entry, form of contract, etc – Agrawal et al. 2013)
- Offers new opportunities around the world... But evidence suggests a decent work deficit
- Efforts to date are lead by trade unions and platform workers
 - Turkopticon
 - FairCrowdWork
 - Crowdsourcing Code of Conduct
 - etc.



Policy instruments for Fairer Microwork

- Rights
 - address employment misclassification, minimum wage and freedom of association rules
 - transparent payments, fair rules for non-payment, right to contest non-payment
- Task sovereignty
 - ability to decline tasks, compensation for lost work due to technical problems
- Platform Code of conduct
 - clear terms of service & code of conduct for all users
- Freedom
 - allow business with client off the platform without large penalty fee
- Information & communication
 - develop system of client review, access to work & reputation history
 - provide information on client and purpose of work
- Protections
 - ensure protections for psychologically stressful tasks
 - extend coverage of social insurance (contributions & benefits)

