

## Size of Sweden's 'Gig Economy' revealed for the first time

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### Around 700,000 crowd workers in Sweden

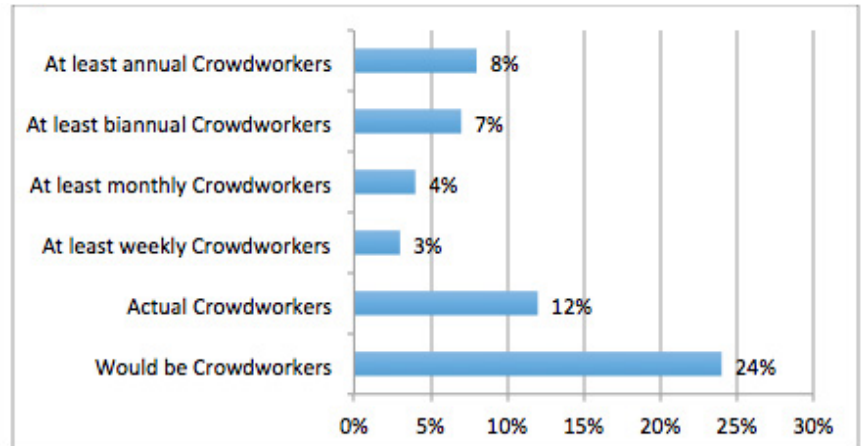
Joint study by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and UNI Europa, carried out by University of Hertfordshire and Ipsos MORI is investigating the size of the 'gig economy' in Europe. In Sweden, the research was co-sponsored by Unionen.

Following a successful trial of the methodology in the UK, the survey has now been carried out in Sweden. An online survey of 2,146 Swedish adults aged 16-65, was carried out between February 26th and March 7th, and found that 12% are working in the so-called 'sharing economy' for platforms such as Upwork, Uber or Skjutsgruppen, equivalent to around 737,000 people. Twice as many people (24%) used such sites in the hope of finding work – equivalent to almost a quarter of the working age population (Figure 1).

For many, work for these sites is occasional, but 4% (equivalent to approximately 245,000 people in Sweden) work in this way at least once a month, with 3% of men and 2% of women doing so at least once a week. Unlike the UK, where crowd workers are more likely to be female, in Sweden they are more likely to be male, with 13% of men, compared with only 10% of women saying that they work in this way.

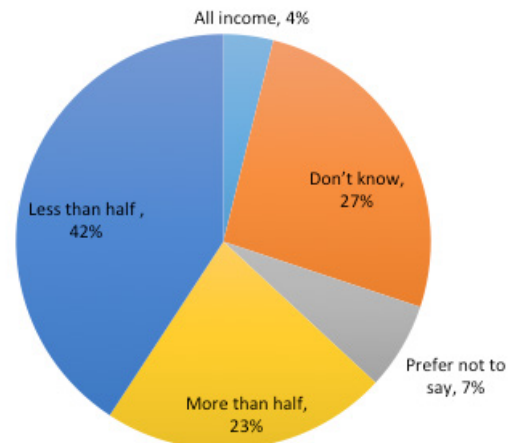
Around two thirds of the adult Swedish population (68%) are active in some way in the online economy, for instance selling goods online or renting out rooms on platforms like Airbnb. The proportion who are customers of crowd work (using online platforms to find taxi services, home help or other services) is 31%. Here too men (at 33%) are more likely

FIGURE 1: SWEDISH CROWD WORKERS – OVERVIEW



<sup>1</sup> Base: 2146 online adults aged 16-65 across Sweden

FIGURE 2: PROPORTION OF INCOME FROM CROWD WORK (% OF ALL CROWD WORKERS)<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Unweighted base: 231 Swedish adults aged 16-65 who have found paid crowd work online



than women (at 29%) to be using these services.

**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 proportion of crowd workers, it is the only or main source of income. As Figure 2 shows, over a third of those willing to divulge this information (a quarter of all crowd workers) say they rely on this income as their sole or main source of income.

**Earnings.** The income from crowd working is generally modest and crowd workers in Sweden are notably concentrated in lower income ranges. More than half (53%) of the crowd workers identified in the survey earn less than 300,000 KR a year before tax and other deductions and some 87% earn under 500,000 KR. By contrast, high earners (above 700,000 KR) comprise only 4% of crowd workers (Figure 3).

**What work are they looking for?** People looking for work via online platforms are often looking for several different types of work.

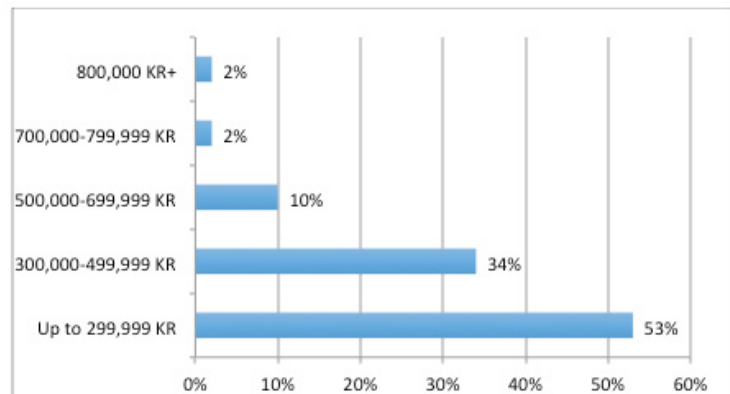
A large majority (87%) of the respondents seeking work in this way say they are looking for online work they can carry out from their homes on online platforms such as Upwork, Freelancer or Timeetc. This is work that can be done from anywhere, so they are in a global labour market, perhaps competing with workers in India, Eastern Europe, the Americas or other parts of the world.

At the same time, 62% say they are looking for work they can do offline, such as cleaning, carpentry or gardening in other people's premises via platforms such as Taskrunner, Baghitch or Offerta.

Finally, 35% say they are looking for work as drivers, via platforms like Uber POP or Skjutsgruppen.

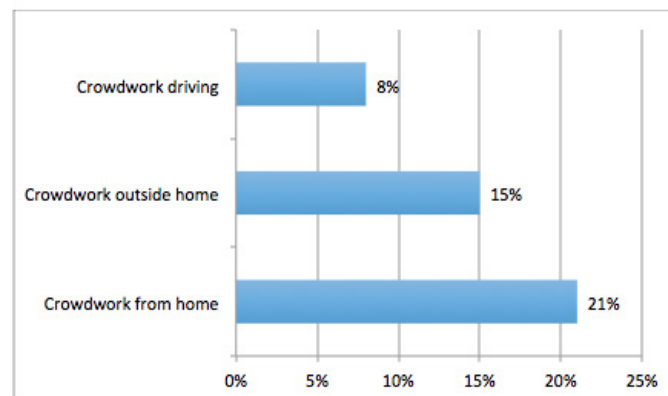
It is clear, therefore, that most would-be crowd workers are stepping outside their normal occupational roles and offering to do a variety of different types of work.

FIGURE 3: PERSONAL INCOME OF CROWD WORKERS<sup>3</sup>



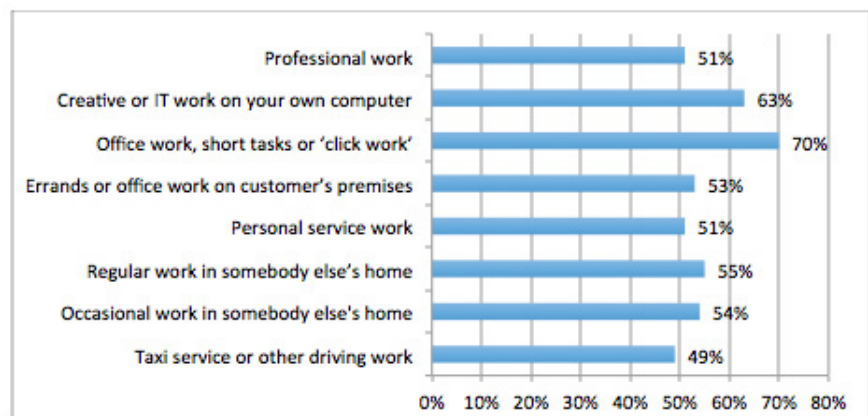
<sup>3</sup> Unweighted base: 231 Swedish adults aged 16-65 who have found paid crowd work online

FIGURE 4: TYPE OF WORK SOUGHT ON ONLINE PLATFORMS<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Base: 2146 online adults aged 16-65 across Sweden

FIGURE 5: TYPES OF WORK BEING CARRIED OUT BY CROWD WORKERS<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Unweighted base: 231 Swedish adults aged 16-65 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 many 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. Figure 5 shows that the most common type of crowd work, done by some 70% of crowd workers, is office work, short tasks and 'click work' done online. Around 63% of crowd workers carry out creative or IT work from home. At the same time, however, a significant proportion (over 50% in each category) are doing professional work, providing a range of services in other people's homes, or doing office-type work on a customer's premises. Almost as many (49%) are providing taxi services. The picture that emerges is of people piecing together a livelihood from a range of different tasks.

**Who are the crowd workers?** As already noted, men are somewhat more likely than women to be crowd workers.

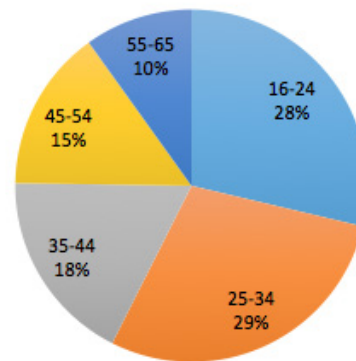
As Figure 6 shows, they are also more likely to be young, with 29% of the total aged 16-24 and 29% aged 25-34. Eighteen per cent are in the 35-44 age group, and 15% are aged 45-54. Nevertheless, some 10% are aged over 55 years.

It is often thought that most crowd workers are students. This is not the case. Around 12% of those actually doing crowd work in this sample were students, and around 15% of those doing crowd work at least weekly.

As Figure 7 shows, crowd work in Sweden is heavily concentrated in the main centres of population. Nevertheless, rates of participation in crowd work is relatively even around the country, varying between 10% in Smaaland med Oearna and 15% in Vaerstsverige – perhaps reflecting the high level of Swedish internet connectivity.

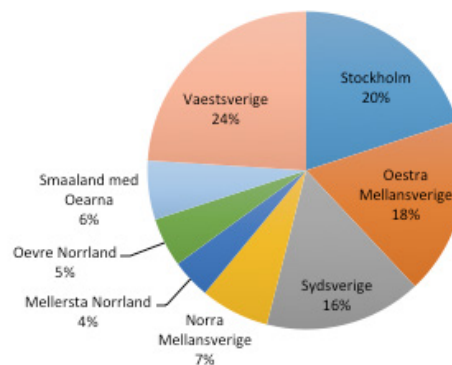
**Who are they working for?** More than three in ten (31%) of respondents in the survey said that they have bought services from a crowd

FIGURE 6: AGE OF CROWD WORKERS <sup>6</sup>



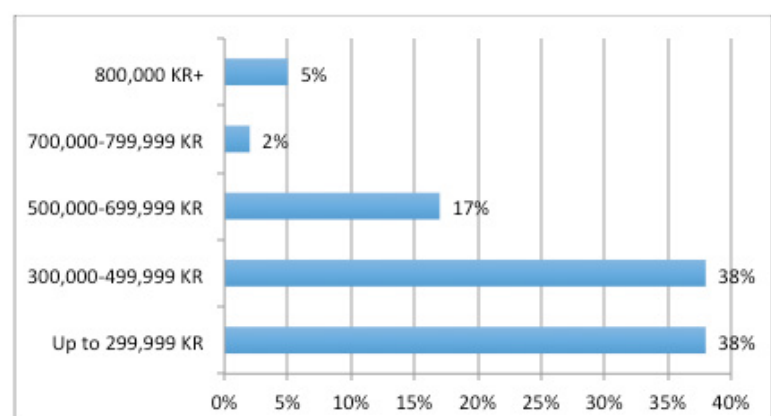
<sup>6</sup> Unweighted base: 231 Swedish adults aged 16-65 who have found paid crowd work online

FIGURE 7: CROWD WORKERS BY REGION <sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Base: 667 Swedish adults aged 16-65 who have purchased crowd work services online

FIGURE 8: CROWD WORK CUSTOMERS BY PERSONAL PRE-TAX INCOME <sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> Base: 667 Swedish adults aged 16-65 who have purchased crowd work services online





worker in the last year, equivalent to an estimated 1.9 million people. 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.

Customers for crowd work are somewhat richer than the crowd workers who supply them with services, though not dramatically so. The proportion earning more than 700,000 KR per annum is 7% (compared with only 4% for crowd workers) while the proportion earning less than 500,000 KR is 76%

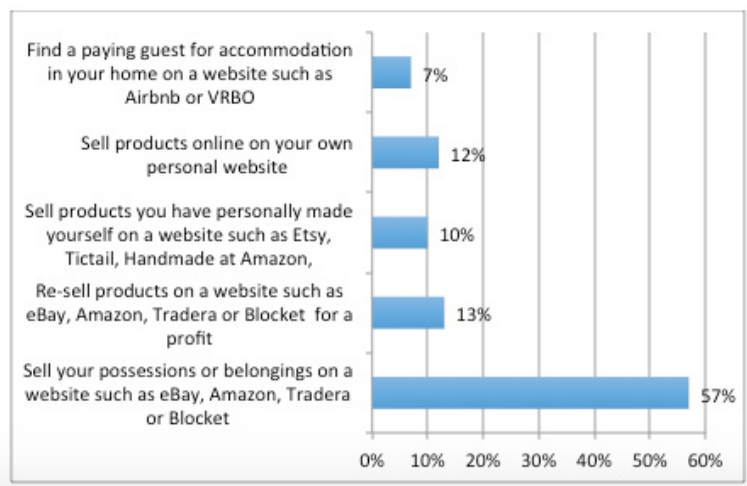
(compared with 87% for crowd workers).

**Broader involvement in the online economy.** Looking more broadly at the Swedish population's involvement in the online economy (excluding online grocery shopping) 68% of respondents (equivalent to nearly 4.2 million people) 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). If these are excluded, the number

involved in the online economy comes down to around 4.1 million.

As was the case for online working, people participating in the wider online economy often do so in a mixture of different ways. As Figure 9 shows, of the 2146 people in this survey, 57% sell possessions on websites such as eBay, Amazon, Tradera or Blocket, while 13% use those websites to re-sell products for a profit. Twelve per cent sell products on a personal website.

FIGURE 9: OTHER SOURCES OF ONLINE INCOME IN THE UK POPULATION <sup>9</sup>



<sup>9</sup> Base: 2146 online adults aged 16-65 across Sweden

**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. In Sweden, the research was co-sponsored by Unionen.

For this stage of the project, Ipsos MORI interviewed an online sample of 2,146 adults aged 16-65 across Sweden using i:omnibus, Ipsos MORI's online omnibus.

Interviews took place between 26th February and 7th March 2016. Data are weighted by age, gender, region and working status to match the profile of the adult population aged 16-65 in the Sweden.

