Fairwork Cloudwork Ratings 2025

ADVANCING STANDARDS IN DIGITAL LABOUR AND AI SUPPLY CHAIN GOVERNANCE

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

The Fairwork Cloudwork Ratings 2025 assesses and scores basic standards of fairness in working arrangements on 16 cloudwork digital labour platforms according to the five Fairwork Cloudwork Principles: fair pay, conditions, contracts, management, and representation.

The platforms studied in this report were selected based on their global reach (such as Upwork, Amazon Mechanical Turk, Freelancer, Fiverr and Remotasks), their position as regional market leaders (such as ComeUp, Terawork and SoyFreelancer), and companies focused on specific segments, for instance, academic research or translation (Translated, Prolific and Creative Words).

This year's scores show that platforms are still far from safeguarding the basic standards of fair work expressed in our five principles, but with notable improvements compared to the previous report[1]. Three platforms scored 8, and two platforms scored 7 out of 10 points. One platform scored 5, one 4, and one 3 out of 10 points. For the remaining nine platforms, the final scores did not surpass 2 out of 10 points. For three platforms, we could not find any evidence that they met any of the ten points.

In some cases, we found evidence that platforms met Fairwork's minimum thresholds with regard to ensuring mitigating precarity and labour oversupply (threshold 2.1, nine platforms), providing communication channels and due process and appeals channels for punitive actions, such as deactivation (threshold 4.1, eight platforms), ensuring workers were paid for completed work (threshold 1.1, seven platforms), and monitoring and addressing health and safety risks (threshold 2.2., seven platforms).

On the other hand, for the majority of the platforms studied in this report, we were unable to find evidence of policies to ensure that all workers earned at least their local minimum wage, that contracts were fair and transparent, and did not require workers to waive their rights to reasonable legal recourse, and that platforms engaged with freely chosen workers' bodies, such as unions and associations.

The study has shed light on the limits of internal governance mechanisms adopted by platforms to ensure fair labour standards, while acknowledging improvements in a few cases. Recognising the insufficiencies of self-regulated private governance, the Theme in Focus section highlights how external and state-led governance initiatives are growing, both at national, regional and international levels. However, these initiatives only partially include cloudwork platforms within their scope.

Although there is a long way to go before platforms fully comply with minimum standards of fair work, some platforms have been adopting changes to improve working conditions in dialogue with the Fairwork cloudwork research and scoring process. This year, a record number of 56 changes were adopted since the last report launched in July 2023, the highest for a Fairwork report. In the last report, 17 changes were adopted by the platforms scored. Some platforms have taken action to ensure health and safety remedies, minimum wage policies, fairer contracts, enhanced appeal channels and procedures, and freedom of association acknowledgement. We estimate that these changes will impact around two million workers worldwide.

Key findings

The platforms we scored remain far from safeguarding the basic standards of fair work expressed in our five principles. Three platforms scored 8, and two platforms scored 7 out of 10 points. One platform scored 5, one 4, and one 3 out of 10 points. For the remaining eight platforms, the final scores did not surpass 2 out of 10 points. For three platforms, we could not find any evidence that they met any of the ten points.

FAIR PAY

For seven platforms (ComeUp, Clickworker, Elharefa, Prolific, SoyFreelancer, Terawork and Translated), we found evidence that they had systems in place to ensure that workers were paid in a timely manner for all the work they completed.

The point for threshold 1.2, which states that the majority of workers should earn at least the local minimum wage, was awarded to four platforms: ComeUp, Translated, Elharefa, and Terawork. The latter two platforms implemented or strengthened their minimum wage policies.
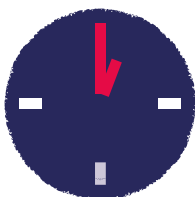
FAIR CONDITIONS

Nine platforms (Appen, ComeUp, Creative Words, Elharefa, Fiverr, Prolific, Remotasks, Terawork and Translated) were awarded a point for the first threshold because we found evidence of measures to manage the supply and demand of work and avoid unreasonable levels of competition between workers and overwork.

Out of the nine platforms that were awarded a point for 2.1, seven received an additional point for 2.2 (health and safety risks are mitigated): Appen, ComeUp, Creative Words, Elharefa, Prolific, Remotasks, and Translated.

FAIR CONTRACTS

Our research found evidence that seven platforms (ComeUp, Creative Words, Elharefa, Prolific, SoyFreelancer, Terawork, and Translated) met all the criteria for 3.1 relating to the availability of clear terms and conditions. Of these platforms, six (Creative Words, Elharefa, Prolific, SoyFreelancer, Terawork, and Translated) received a further point for threshold 3.2 (contracts are consistent with the workers' terms of engagement on the platform).
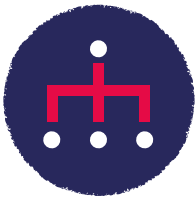
FAIR MANAGEMENT

We were able to find evidence that eight platforms (ComeUp, Creative Words, Elharefa, Fiverr, PeoplePerHour, Soyfreelancer, Terawork, and Translated) met all our criteria for threshold 4.1 (there is a process for decisions affecting workers).

We were able to award a point for threshold 4.2 to three platforms this year (there is equity in the management process): ComeUp, Creative Words and Terawork.

FAIR REPRESENTATION

Six platforms (Appen, ComeUp, Creative Words, Elharefa, Translated and Upwork) were awarded a point for fair representation related to the recognition of and engagement with collective workers' bodies. We were unable to award the second point (there is collective governance or bargaining) to any of the platforms evaluated this year.

Introduction

Cloudwork (online remote work) platforms have gained momentum in recent years as alternatives for workers, especially those who are marginalised in formal labour markets due to geography, discrimination, disability, care responsibilities, and other factors.[2]

Multiple factors have contributed to the expansion of cloudwork, including expanding global connectivity, the declining ability of formal waged workers to meet rising living costs, the growth of data-intensive industries, and the demand for data commodities.

A growing body of research has noted the increasing prominence of this new global labour market, although measuring it can be challenging. A report from the World Bank estimated that there are between 154 million and 435 million online workers[3]. Previous research estimated the online workforce in 2020 to be around 163 million, although this number could be higher due to the limits of current measurement efforts.[4]

The ILO mapped 283 web-based platforms in its 2021 *Work Employment Outlook,*[5] comprising 181 freelance platforms, 46 dedicated to microtasks, 37 based on content creation and circulation, and 19 focused on competitive programming.

Because much of the labour on cloudwork platforms can be performed by workers anywhere in the world, as long as they have access to the internet, cloudwork platforms effectively create what has been called a planetary labour market.[6] However, despite operating at a planetary scale, this market is shaped by geographically contingent features like language, time zone, and internet access – and as such, a key feature of cloudwork is the uneven geographies and regional inequalities that permeate these new work arrangements.

There is a high level of concentration in cloudwork, with a few powerful companies dominating the market, mostly located in global centres of power – especially the United States.[7] Most of the demand is from clients who are also located in the Global North, while the vast majority of the available workforce is located in the Global South.[8] These work arrangements tend to be characterised by uncertain relations, including problems of low and non-payment, fierce competition resulting from an oversupply of labour, long working hours, risks and harm resulting from dangerous tasks (for example, tasks involving exposure to distressing and/or violent content), lack of transparency in management systems (usually operated by automated, algorithmic means), and difficult dispute resolution processes, which often shift the balance of power towards clients.

The Fairwork project evaluates basic standards of fairness in working arrangements on digital labour platforms according to five principles of fair work, concerning payment, conditions, contracts, management, and representation. In this report, we present an evaluation of sixteen prominent cloudwork platforms, which were scored on a scale from 1 to 10. This year, we added two translation platforms — Creative Words and Translated — to the league table, which were scored previously in the Translation and Transcription ratings, also conducted by the Fairwork team.

The results show that the road towards fairness in cloudwork is still long. For a significant portion of platforms scored, we could not get evidence of basic standards of fairness, such as guaranteeing a minimum compensation for workers (proportional to a minimum wage), ensuring that risks and harms are flagged and avoided, providing transparent contracts, respecting workers' rights to legal resources, taking effective measures against discrimination, recognising workers' free association, and more.

This year's platforms in focus are Elharefa and Translated. Elharefa is an Egypt-based platform that coordinates a wide range of services targeting workers and requesters from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The company jumped from a score of 1 in the previous report to an 8 in this report after it updated its Terms of Service to include 14 changes aligned with the Fairwork Cloudwork Principles. Translated is a translation platform based in Italy that offers services internationally. The company maintained its score from the last report (8) and adopted new changes to improve its practices and processes.

Defining cloudwork

Digital labour platforms mediate the supply and demand of labour power (as opposed to allowing users to rent an asset or sell a product) through an online interface. Not all work intermediated by digital labour platforms can be performed remotely over the internet — indeed, digital labour platforms are prominent in the taxi industry, like Uber, Bolt, and DiDi, the food and last-mile delivery sector like Deliveroo, Glovo, and Postmates, and in personal shopping, home cleaning, beauty services, and more. We call this category of location-specific platform work "geographically tethered work". By contrast, work that can be performed remotely through a digital labour platform, we call cloudwork.[9]

Both cloudwork and geographically-tethered platform work are often characterised by the organisation of work into short-term, on-demand tasks mediated by the platform. Platform workers are usually paid per task (known as piece-rate pay), as opposed to receiving an hourly wage or salary. So, cloudwork is platform work that can be performed from anywhere on the planet with an internet connection, and cloudworkers are generally classified as self-employed or independent workers on paid piece rates.

Cloudwork can be further categorised based on the duration of the task typically performed on a platform. Some cloudwork platforms facilitate work, such as data labelling and processing, AI training, and image categorisation. Such tasks can take a matter of seconds or minutes to complete and are often referred to as microwork. By contrast, the second category of cloudwork platforms facilitate tasks (sometimes called freelance) that are longer in duration and that usually require a higher level of specialist training. These can include translation, design, illustration, web development, and writing.

The Fairwork Project

The Fairwork project studies working conditions on digital labour platforms and rates individual platforms based on their fairness to workers.

Its goal is to highlight the best and worst practices in the platform economy and to show that better and fairer platform jobs are possible. Fairwork, at its essence, is a way of imagining a different and fairer platform economy than the one we have today. By evaluating platforms against measures of fairness, we hope to not just show what the platform economy is, but also what it can be.

The project is based at the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford in the United Kingdom, and at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center in Germany, and is financed by, among others, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), commissioned by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

Fairwork has developed a set of five principles of fair platform work coalescing around the pillars of fair pay, fair conditions, fair contracts, fair management, and fair representation. The five principles were initially developed in 2018 at a multi-stakeholder workshop at the International Labour Organisation.

The Fairwork framework

The project has developed slightly different benchmarks of fairness criteria for geographically tethered work and cloudwork, in acknowledgement of small variations in the risks and harms facing workers in these two categories of work. The cloudwork principles were developed in 2020 and submitted to a process of further consultation with stakeholders, including platform workers, trade union representatives, and researchers.

The principles are periodically updated through a democratic process of revision within the Fairwork network to ensure they remain attuned to the key challenges facing platform workers. The latest renewal processes occurred in 2024, resulting in updated standards for this year's report. Further details on the thresholds for each principle and the criteria used to assess the evidence we collect to score platforms can be found in the Appendix.

Methods

The Fairwork project uses three approaches to effectively measure the fairness of working conditions at digital labour platforms: desk research, worker interviews and surveys, and interviews with platform management. Through these three methods, we seek evidence on whether platforms act in accordance with the five Fairwork principles.

We recognise that not all platforms use a business model that allows them to impose certain contractual terms on service users and/or workers in such a way that meets the thresholds of the Fairwork principles. However, all platforms have the ability to influence the way users interact on the platform. Therefore, for platforms that do not set the terms on which workers are retained by service users, we look at a number of other factors including published policies and/or procedures, public statements, and website/app functionality to establish whether the platform has taken appropriate steps to ensure they meet the criteria for a point to be awarded against the relevant principle.

Desk research

The team scrapes publicly available information to establish the range and types of platforms that will be rated. Platforms are selected on the basis of several different criteria, but we prioritise platforms that a) are especially large or prominent, and/or b) have made public commitments to voluntary regulation mechanisms or claims about fair treatment of workers. We also aim to include some geographical diversity in our platform sample. While we have not included every prominent cloudwork platform in this second cloudwork league table, we intend to expand our selection further in the ratings we release over the coming years. Desk research also serves to identify any public information that could be used to score a platform, for instance, documented platform policies, the provision of particular services to workers, or ongoing disputes. Through desk research, we also review all available contractual terms between platforms and workers that most platforms host on their interfaces.

Platform manager evidence

The second method involves approaching platforms for evidence. Platform managers are contacted and interviewed and evidence is requested for each of the Fairwork principles. For this report, a questionnaire was sent requesting evidence for each standard part of each threshold. This step provides insights into the operation and business models of the platforms and opens up a dialogue through which platforms can agree to implement changes. In cases where platform managers do not agree to engage with Fairwork, scoring is limited to evidence obtained through desk research and worker surveys.

Worker surveys

The third method involves platform workers completing an online survey. For this third report, we present data collected between February 2024 and January 2025. For the global platforms, we sampled up to 70 workers per platform, with a relatively even distribution of workers by continent. For the regional platforms, we sampled at least 30 workers per platform from that region. After cleaning the data, we were left with responses from 776 workers in 100 countries. These responses constituted part of the evidence for the findings presented in this report.

Survey participation was limited to workers with a reasonable amount of experience, or time on the platform, with the threshold being set at one month. We aimed to sample a range of experience and skill types where possible. Depending on the time spent completing the survey, all respondents were compensated at a rate that at least matched and usually exceeded the United Kingdom's minimum wage.

BY EVALUATING PLATFORMS AGAINST MEASURES OF FAIRNESS, WE HOPE TO NOT JUST SHOW WHAT THE PLATFORM ECONOMY IS, BUT ALSO WHAT IT CAN BE.

For 11 platforms, we recruited all participants through the platform interface, implementing measures to ensure the confidentiality of participants' responses. For three platforms, we recruited workers in social media groups or official workers' forums. For one platform, we used a mix of on-platform recruitment and survey invitation messages circulated by management. In this case, an oversample technique ensured that the platform could not know whose answers were included. On one platform, the platform collaborated by providing lists of anonymised workers to be contacted directly by the research team.

These surveys do not aim to build a representative set of experiences but instead seek to understand the work processes and how they are carried out and managed, as well as to identify and probe key emerging themes for digital labour platform research. The survey responses allow the project team to understand the recurring challenges faced by workers, identify patterns and common experiences, and verify the platform policies and practices that are in place.

Putting it all together

This threefold approach to our research provides a way to cross-check the claims made by platforms, while also providing the opportunity to collect evidence from multiple sources.

Final fairness scores were decided collectively by the core Fairwork team and based on all three forms of evidence. The scores were then peer-reviewed by three members of the wider Fairwork team at the University of Oxford and two reviewers from Fairwork's country teams. This provides consistency and rigour to the scoring process. Points are only awarded if clear evidence exists for each threshold examined.

How we score

Each Fairwork principle is broken down into two points: a first and a second point. The second can only be awarded if the first point has been fulfilled. Every platform receives a score out of 10. Platforms are only given a point if we have reliable evidence that they meet our principles. Failing to achieve a point does not necessarily mean that a platform does not comply with the principle in question; it simply means that the research team did not find any evidence and/or they were unable to prove its compliance. When we cannot find any evidence that a platform meets one of the 10 thresholds, this is signalled with a dash (−).

Fairwork Cloudwork Ratings 2025

Platform	Score										
ComeUp	8 /10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Elharefa	8 /10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Translated	8 /10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Creative Words	7 /10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Terawork	7 /10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Prolific	5 /10	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○
SoyFreelancer	4 /10	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Appen	3 /10	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Fiverr	2 /10	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Remotasks	2 /10	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Clickworker	1 /10	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
PeoplePerHour	1 /10	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Upwork	1 /10	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Amazon Mechanical Turk	0 /10	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Freelancer	0 /10	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Microworkers	0 /10	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

How platforms performed on the five principles

As this report's league table shows, the platforms we scored remain far from safeguarding the basic standards of fair work expressed in our five principles. Three platforms (ComeUp, Elharefa, and Translated) scored 8, two platforms scored 7 (Creative Words and Terawork), one scored 5 (Prolific), one scored 4 (SoyFreelancer), and one scored 3 (Appen). The other eight platforms scored no more than 2 points, and for three of them, we were unable to find sufficient evidence that these companies meet any of our 10 thresholds.

Fair Pay

Threshold 1.1 – Workers are paid on time and for all completed work (one point)

Threshold 1.1 — which assesses whether systems are in place to ensure workers are paid for all completed work — was one of the most commonly met, with seven platforms receiving a point: ComeUp, Clickworker, Elharefa, Prolific, SoyFreelancer, Terawork, and Translated. The mechanisms assessed included systems and rules to guard against unfair rejections of work by clients, as well as other instances of non-payment. The seven platforms adopted escrow explain systems[10] in which requesters need to make a deposit before the job begins, which can increase protection for workers. Examples of changes[11] related to mechanisms to ensure workers are paid were Appen's update of its pre-jobs tests policy and reduction in the amount of unpaid assessments, and Elharefa's and Terawork's adoption of rules ensuring the right to redo jobs at least once if the result is rejected by requesters.

Threshold 1.2 – Workers are paid at least the local minimum wage (one additional point)

This point was awarded to four platforms: ComeUp, Elharefa, Terawork and Translated. As a result of their engagement with our team, ComeUpe, Elharefa and Terawork adopted minimum wage policies. Terawork implemented a rule granting workers the right to report clients who offer fees below the local minimum wage, and established penalties for requesters who try to pay below the local minimum wage. It will also conduct educational actions with requesters and workers to clarify this policy. Translated provided enough evidence that workers receive at least their local minimum wage. Appen also provided evidence about a minimum wage policy, but we could not award the point since 1.1 was not awarded.
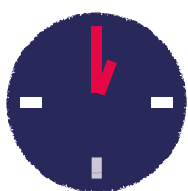
Fair Conditions

Threshold 2.1 – Precarity and overwork are mitigated (one point)

Nine platforms were awarded points in this threshold concerning measures to avoid unreasonable levels of competition between workers, overwork, and unpaid labour. This was the threshold for which the most platforms scored a point in this year's league table.

Remotasks implemented the highest number of changes related to this threshold, including compensation for time spent loading and reviewing tasks before annotation begins (to avoid unpaid labour), a limit on how many tasks a worker can claim (allowing unclaimed tasks to be quickly redistributed to others), and monitoring the number of active workers to better manage work supply. Terawork introduced a "smart advisory feature that guides freelancers during the application process", aimed at reducing time spent searching for jobs. Similarly, Prolific has added new job search methods such as email messages and browser extensions. Appen created an incentive programme to support workers in developing new skills.

Threshold 2.2 – Health and safety risks are mitigated (one additional point)

Out of the nine platforms awarded 2.1, seven received an additional point for threshold 2.2, which includes measures to mitigate health and safety risks, and ethical data management practices. This is a significant increase compared with the previous report, when only two companies got this point.

Prolific has updated its guidelines on health and safety to expand them to more situations, amplifying the coverage of these protection measures. Remotasks and ComeUp added to their policies the provision of punitive consequences for users who jeopardise the health and safety of workers. Terawork introduced a monitoring system for jobs and content circulating on the platform. According to the company, job posts undergo a "thorough review process before being approved to ensure they meet our community guidelines and maintain a psychologically safe space for freelancers."

Fair Contracts

### Threshold 3.1 – Clear terms and conditions are available (one point)

Seven platforms (ComeUp, Creative Words, Elharefa, Prolific, SoyFreelancer, Terawork, and Translated) were awarded a point for this threshold. We found that contracts (including terms of use and other policies) were mostly understandable and available to workers and, in most cases, were published on the platform's website. Remotasks, SoyFreelancer and Terawork edited their policies to ensure that changes are notified 30 days in advance.

However, for most platforms, we were unable to find evidence of contract-related standards, such as advance notification of contract changes. In addition, for the majority of platforms studied, we were unable to get evidence that their terms and conditions are free of wording that requires workers to waive their right to reasonable legal recourse against the platform, such as extensive limitations of the platforms' liability or class action waivers. To address this issue partially, Remotasks improved its terms to lower the barriers for workers to exercise their legal rights against the platform.

Threshold 3.2 – Contracts are consistent with the workers' terms of engagement on the platform (one additional point)

Of the seven platforms that received a point for threshold 3.1, six platforms were awarded an additional point (Creative Words, Elharefa, Prolific, SoyFreelancer, Terawork, and Translated). We were able to verify that they met all the criteria for this threshold, including not imposing non-compete clauses on workers, encouraging clients to give workers information about how their work will be used, and ensuring that workers can refuse tasks without consequences for their standing or reputation on the platform.

Remotasks and SoyFreelancer added to their policies guidance that states that workers will not be punished for not accepting tasks. Terawork implemented a cancellation policy where workers can drop out of a job in specific situations, such as emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.
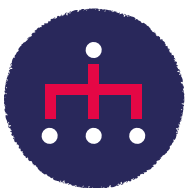
Fair Management

Threshold 4.1 – There is due process for decisions affecting workers (one point)

We were able to get evidence that eight platforms met all our criteria for principle threshold 4.1. ComeUp, Creative Words, Elharefa, Fiverr, PeoplePerHour, Soyfreelancer, Terawork, and Translated had policies governing disciplinary actions against their workers, including how these actions can be contested and appealed. These platforms also had channels whereby workers can communicate with a human representative of the platform. For instance, Fiverr's terms present the customer support channel and explain in multiple sections (orders, disputes and resolution) how work rejections can be appealed. Terawork and SoyFreelancer edited the Terms of Service to explain the appeal processes made available to workers.

Threshold 4.2 – There is equity in the management process (one additional point)

Of the eight platforms that were awarded with point 4.1, three also got 4.2: ComeUp, Creative Words and Terawork. This result was a slight improvement, considering that in the last Cloudwork Ratings, no platform was awarded this point. We were able to find evidence of anti-discrimination policies for these companies, but also for other platforms which were not awarded the point, as a result of not meeting other criteria (for instance, Appen, Fiverr, Prolific, and Upwork).

For the three platforms awarded this point, we could also find evidence of the provision of information available to workers about how work is allocated, including when algorithms are used. Remotasks and Translated clarified their methods to allocate work in their communication channels, including the use of automated systems.

Another aspect assessed by this threshold was if platforms consult workers before substantive changes are made to the methods for allocating work. ComeUp made a commitment to always consult workers for important changes and documented how workers can follow and take part in the companies' changes. Additionally, the platform has adopted multiple channels and forums to engage and gather feedback from workers about the work allocation methods.

Fair Representation

Threshold 5.1 – Workers have access to representation, and freedom of association (one point)

We found evidence of recognition of freedom of association or the adoption of dispute resolution mechanisms in six platforms (Appen, ComeUp, Creative Words, Elharefa, Translated and Upwork). This number has increased compared to the last report, when this point was awarded only to two platforms.

The growing number of platforms acknowledging freedom of association was a result of Fairwork's engagement. Three platforms added sections to their policies or published statements recognising workers' fundamental rights to organise and create their representation bodies: ComeUp, Elharefa and Translated. Creative Words published a similar statement for the previous report. Appen and Upwork have Modern Slavery policies acknowledging freedom of association.

Threshold 5.2 – There is collective governance or bargaining (one additional point)

We were unable to award this point to any platform in our study this year. We were unable to find any evidence of platforms engaging with workers' collective bodies, informing workers of their existence, and bargaining with them.

Scores per threshold

	Principle 1: Fair Pay		Principle 2: Fair Conditions		Principle 3: Fair Contracts		Principle 4: Fair Management		Principle 5: Fair Representation		
	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	4.1	4.2	5.1	5.2	Total
AMT	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0
Appen	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	●	○	3
Clickworker	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	1
ComeUp	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	8
Creative Words	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	7
Elharefa	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	8
Fiverr	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	2
Freelancer	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0
Microworkers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0
PeoplePerHour	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	1
Prolific	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	5
Remotasks	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	2
SoyFreelancer	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	4
Terawork	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	7
Translated	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	8
Upwork	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	1

Elharefa

Elharefa is an Egyptian-based cloudwork platform that was founded in 2019. It coordinates a wide range of services, including content creation, technology development and support, audiovisual production, translation, marketing, and sales. The company has expanded its operations to seven countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan, Palestine, Kuwait, and Pakistan.

Currently, over 40,000 workers are registered on the platform, with an additional 20,000 able to access services through a social media group managed by the company. Similar to other traditional freelance platforms, Elharefa allows workers to advertise their services and enables requesters to post jobs for workers to bid on. The platform also hosts an active Facebook forum with tens of thousands of participants. This year, Elharefa achieved a score of 8, a significant improvement on its previous score of 1.

This progress is largely attributed to the revision of the company's terms and policies after engaging intensively with the Fairwork Cloudwork team. Additionally, Elharefa's managers joined the Fairwork Cloudwork Initiative to collaborate with other platform managers for knowledge exchange and capacity building. During the policy renewal process, Elharefa adopted 14 changes.

As part of addressing the first Fairwork Cloudwork Principle, Fair Pay, the company implemented a rule under threshold 1.1 to ensure that workers are guaranteed payment. In cases where work is rejected, a dispute resolution system has been established that includes mediation conducted by the company's team.

Additionally, the right to redo rejected jobs was also granted. In line with threshold 1.2, a minimum wage policy was implemented to ensure that rates are at least above the local minimum wage. Another aspect included in the Terms was the requirement of a time estimate by requesters, so workers can calculate if the fee offered is in accordance with the local minimum wage floors.

Regarding Principle 2, Fair Conditions, a guideline was included on the new Terms saying that job distribution and onboarding processes are actively managed "to ensure fair access to work opportunities while preventing excessive unpaid labour or unsustainable workloads."

New rules were introduced to tackle health and safety risks. A new guideline was introduced in the Terms stating that Elharefa will identify and mitigate "any potential health and safety risks associated with freelance work." Moreover, the Terms were amended to rule that "any Client or User found to be jeopardising the health or safety of Freelancers, or of any other user, may be subject to disciplinary actions."

For Principle 3, Fair Contracts, the company added to the Terms that workers "will be notified of any proposed changes to these Terms and Conditions within a reasonable timeframe" of 30 days prior to their implementation. Following threshold 3.2, a requirement for requesters was added to the Terms to describe in job proposals the purpose of the project so workers know how their work will be used.

For Principle 4, Fair Management, an appeal process was added to the Terms, including the provision of reasons when a disciplinary action is taken. An anti-discrimination policy was also implemented, as well as regular "audits of its job matching and rating algorithms to prevent biases that could unfairly impact freelancers' visibility or job opportunities." A commitment to consult workers before substantive changes was also published.

For Principle 5, the platform has added to its Terms a statement acknowledging freedom of association and the right of workers to organise and create representation structures. The review of policies was conducted in regular conversation with the Fairwork team to explore how the cloudwork labour standards could be incorporated into the terms. Since these revisions are recent, it is crucial to monitor and verify how these new rules and policies are concretely implemented and if they will benefit workers in practice.

Translated

Translated is a translation platform based in Italy. Founded in 1999, the company has been in business for over 20 years and has accumulated a network of more than 350,000 translators from over 200 countries. Throughout this period, 373,000 clients have utilized their services, with around 20,000 active clients each year. In 2017, the platform was recognized by the Financial Times as one of Europe's fastest-growing companies.

In addition to traditional translation services, Translated offers technology and AI-based translation and localization services. Their first AI model was launched in 2001. The company states that it employs a combination of human and automated systems, utilizing AI tools such as Matecat and ModernMT, alongside an algorithm called T-Rank for job allocation.

In 2023, Translated received a score of 8 in Fairwork's latest Translation and Transcription report, ranking second that year, just behind Creative Words, which achieved a perfect score of 10. The company maintained its score this year by upholding its policies and processes while implementing changes aligned with Fairwork's Cloudwork Principles and labour standards.

Translated has developed a system for revisions and quality control, featuring mediation teams that handle corrections while ensuring fair compensation for workers. Although the company does not have a formal minimum wage policy, it provided evidence that the majority of its workers earn above their local minimum wage. Additionally, Translated has taken steps to reduce instances of overwork and unpaid labour by removing references to voluntary work from its Frequently Asked Questions section. The company has established commitments and mechanisms to ensure a safe working environment, including channels for reporting any actions that could expose workers to hazards.

The translated terms have been evaluated and found to be consistent with Principle 3, which includes providing advance notifications before any changes take effect. Workers receive clear explanations about projects,

including how their contributions will be utilized. Importantly, refusing job assignments does not impact workers' ratings or reputations.

Regarding management practices, the terms clearly outline acceptable and unacceptable behaviours (in line with Principle 4). Workers have the right to appeal punitive actions through channels such as email. The appeal process is documented in the company policies, and deactivated workers can access this information.

The company also maintains an anti-discrimination policy and provides reporting channels for workers who experience discrimination. Translated's work allocation methods include the use of automated systems, particularly an algorithm known as T-Rank. A significant change implemented this year was the enhancement of the information provided to workers about how this system operates.

Additionally, a statement affirming the freedom of association and a commitment to respecting collective bargaining agreements was introduced. New specifications for additional independent dispute resolution mechanisms were also added to the company's institutional communication channels.
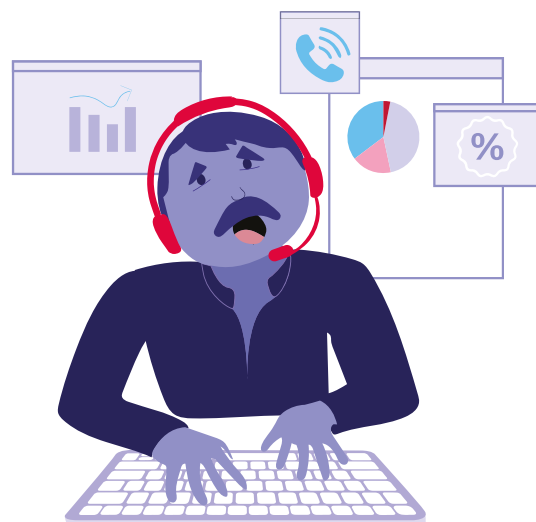
From internal to external platform governance to secure fairer labour standards

Platform governance has become an increasingly prominent topic in both academic circles and public discussions. It concerns how services provided by platforms are organised, the rules, policies and mechanisms in place to structure the activities and transactions mediated by those platforms, and the responses to the associated challenges and risks.

Platform governance involves various layers of relationships and processes among the different parties involved in the activities organised by these platforms. Governance systems include the policies and methods implemented by the companies themselves and by external actors, including government bodies.[12] The governance literature has evolved towards different perspectives, emphasising more or less state-centric approaches.[13]

Platform governance includes both governance by platforms (internal) and of platforms (external)[14]. Platform governance involves establishing rules, including terms and conditions, content and data management policies, and community guidelines. These rules help platforms define the requirements for registration and participation, outline acceptable behaviour within their interfaces, and establish terms of engagement, reputation and ratings systems, as well as revenue models.

In the context of digital labour platforms, governance policies and mechanisms play a crucial role in how these platforms operate. This includes their terms and conditions, which set rules for registration, profile management, job access and allocation, acceptable and prohibited conduct, bidding and hiring processes, work quality requirements and assessments, dispute resolution, payment procedures, and additional standards.

For instance, cloudwork platforms set rules to facilitate the buying and selling of labour power, which involves vast pools of workers dispersed across a global labour market. Payment systems may involve escrow services and digital wallet platforms to disburse workers' funds. Quality control is conducted through various assessment and rating systems.

The Fairwork project has highlighted the internal governance structures and practices of digital labour platforms. The Fairwork Cloudwork Ratings have demonstrated that the governance processes of these companies often fall short of ensuring minimum standards for fair work. This is typically represented by a score of 10 out of 10, but none of the assessed platforms achieved this score this year. Only one platform has ever achieved this score (once)—Creative Words in 2023.

In this report, we show that the platform's governance rules and mechanisms are insufficient to address the significant challenges workers encounter. The survey conducted as part of this study included 776 workers across 100 countries, painting a broad picture of their experiences. This is particularly noteworthy given that 58% of the surveyed workers reported that cloudwork is their primary source of income.

The lack of minimum fair rules and mechanisms in internal platform governance stimulates a "race to the bottom" dynamic, in which platforms feel pressured not to improve labour standards. The intense competition at the international level is one main obstacle for workers to accessing jobs, despite more than half of the platforms scored in this report providing evidence of governance mechanisms to promote job availability or balance the supply and demand of workers. However, these initiatives are still limited to addressing the fierce competition, especially in the largest international cloudwork platforms.

In many cases, the lack of appropriate governance processes and practices to promote job availability results in workers feeling pressured to accept lower fees and worse conditions (e.g., tighter deadlines) to access the available jobs. This situation is even worse for newcomers or less experienced workers. One example was a female worker from Australia registered on Fiverr, who reported that the main challenge she encounters is the "high competition driving down rates".

In addition to the race to the bottom exerting a downward pressure on fees, payment rules and mechanisms mean that workers sometimes do not even receive monetary compensation. "I wish I could get my money in my bank account rather than gift cards", said a cloudworker from Nigeria registered on Amazon Mechanical Turk.

Moreover, workers face non-payment and late payment. Of the pool of survey respondents, 31.2% reported experiencing non-payment situations and 38% reported experiencing late-payment situations, with 10% flagging this as a constant problem. "I have experienced late payments, ups and downs in cash flow, and a lack of long-term stability", commented a translator from Italy registered on Creative Words.

As a result of these problems, only 35% of workers surveyed reported feeling secure about their earnings from cloudwork platforms, all or most of the time. Workers from the Global South also experience discrimination and distrust when competing with workers from other regions. "I see a lack of trust in Africans due to factors such as the accent in certain departments that need to take calls", says a cloudworker from Benin registered on ComeUp.

These findings suggest that the governance mechanisms to ensure workers are paid are not in place or are not functioning appropriately. In some cases, these rules were implemented, but the survey indicated significant levels of payment-related problems, flagging weakness in their effectiveness. This scenario, combined with the lack of governance rules securing at least the local minimum wage for cloudworkers, is a warning of how governance initiatives adopted by platforms themselves are insufficient in most cases to ensure basic compensation rights to those workers.
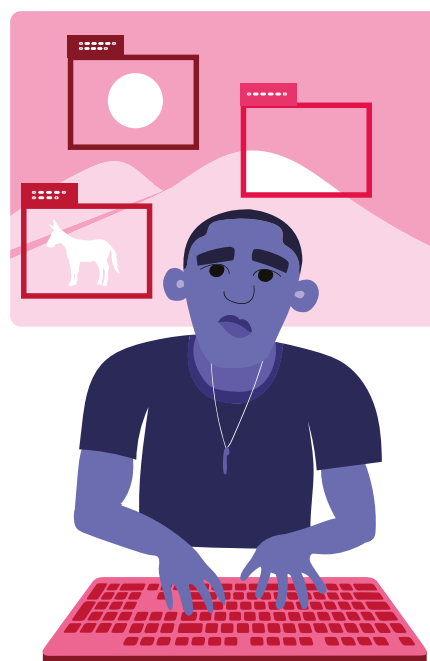
The internal governance structures adopted by platforms rely, generally, on management models that are supported by automated systems. Platform work studies have highlighted how algorithmic management accentuates opacity in decisions affecting workers. Additionally, ratings systems undermine workers' bargaining power with requesters and platforms themselves. "The automated system is, many times, cruel," says a cloudworker from Brazil registered on Appen.

When subject to unfair or questionable decisions and disputes with requesters, the main governance mechanism workers need to rely on is the appeal process. This study found that more than half of the platforms scored provide these resources to workers, usually via help or support channels. However, the survey also revealed that 40% of workers were not aware of appeal processes, which shows how this key resource to ensure dispute resolution and avoid unfair disciplinary actions must be made more visible by platforms.

Data work

One growing and increasingly notable sector of cloudwork is data services for artificial intelligence development in international supply chains. These services were initially seen as "microwork"[15], defined as "small tasks performed on cloudwork platforms".[16] These services are becoming increasingly complex, being referred to recently as "data work"[17] and, in AI supply chains, "AI data work".[18]

Those platforms offer multiple services, such as data annotation, labelling, mining and validation, image tagging, sentiment analysis, model evaluation, video scoring, and content moderation, among others. Among the clients requesting this work are the world's leading AI companies, such as Amazon, Google, Microsoft, and Nvidia.

In addition to the platforms traditionally known for microwork and data work — such as Amazon Mechanical Turk, Appen, and Clickworker — conventional freelancing platforms like Upwork, Freelancer.com, and Fiverr have also begun offering data services for AI development. Those companies are a key outsourcing option for AI-led firms, together with Business Process Outsourcing companies (BPO) spread across the globe.

This set of services has been incorporated into their governance structures and processes. In some cases, new governance rules were created as AI data services streams were launched (e.g. Prolific).

ONLY 35% OF WORKERS SURVEYED REPORTED FEELING SECURE ABOUT THEIR EARNINGS FROM CLOUDWORK PLATFORMS, ALL OR MOST OF THE TIME. WORKERS FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH ALSO EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION AND DISTRUST WHEN COMPETING WITH WORKERS FROM OTHER REGIONS.

The survey indicated how the governance mechanisms in place, or the lack of them, also cause additional problems to those outlined above, which are related to the nature of AI data work. This is an example of how platform governance intertwines with AI governance. In the latter field, a key concern is how the rules and practices can deal with risks and harms.

One problem found in the survey was the lack of transparency in the purposes of projects (one of the labour standards listed in Fairwork Cloudwork Principle 3). "Sometimes I record videos of myself performing some gestures for the webcam, but I don't know if the applicant will actually use it to train an AI to identify gestures", says a data worker registered on Amazon Mechanical Turk from Brazil.

Workers also expressed ethical concerns about the purpose of the AI system they are training. "Sometimes I worry about how the AI will be used", said a data worker from the U.S. registered on Clickworker. "I am concerned that visual recognition projects to train a tool with artificial intelligence, for example, in which I have to send videos or photos of myself, will be used for other purposes than those mentioned in the platform", added another data worker registered on Clickworker, based in Colombia.

A data worker from Sri Lanka registered on Microworkers suggested that ethical concerns should be subject to clearer standards and policies. "Platforms should establish clear policies and guidelines outlining ethical standards for tasks and projects on the platform. Ensure that workers understand their rights and responsibilities, as well as the platform's commitment to ethical conduct."

From internal to external governance

The gaps in governance policies and mechanisms to address these and other problems highlighted above have attracted the attention of multiple stakeholders. The Fairwork project has been showing how some platforms can improve their internal governance practices, as seen in the significant number of changes discussed in this report. However, the league table also shows how this is far from being a widespread reality, with none of the platforms assessed achieving 10 out of 10, and only five out of 16 platforms getting scores above 5.

The limitations of the ability of platforms to ensure more rights-based governance models have motivated the rise of external and state-led regulatory responses. These reactions by governments and international organisations have followed what authors call a "policy turn"[19] in platform governance initiated in the 2010s. In the case of digital labour platforms, this process ignited especially in the last five years.

That said, the efforts have mainly targeted on-location platforms, such as the case of laws passed in Spain and Chile, with cloudwork platforms being a much less visible topic for regulation debates. The EU Directive on Platform Work,[20] passed in 2024, is a notable exception, covering both on-location and cloudwork platforms and ensuring rights not only when an employment relationship is acknowledged, but also to what was called Persons Performing Platform Work. Among the rights assured are transparency in automated decision-making systems and data rights.[21]

In 2025, countries in the European Union began the transposition of the directive. During the process of translating the guidelines into concrete local legislation, it is crucial that European policymakers include cloudworkers' rights in their legal frameworks. For example, transparency and data protection rights are key to addressing problems that the Fairwork cloudwork assessments have found in platforms' management

and data governance, reducing the asymmetry of power between workers and platforms.

At the international level, the International Labour Organisation will discuss at its 2025 conference the proposal for a convention on platform workers' rights. This initiative is fundamental for two reasons. First, the convention can serve as guidance for future national and regional regulatory debates. Second, it can address the fact that a significant part of the problems faced by cloudworkers reside in these companies' multinational nature, and how they explore the differences between their and workers' jurisdictions to undermine workers' access to labour rights and social protection.

WE ASKED WORKERS WHICH RIGHTS THEY CONSIDER MOST IMPORTANT. AMONG THE 448 RESPONDENTS, THE TOP PRIORITIES WERE: RECEIVING AT LEAST THE LOCAL MINIMUM WAGE (33.3%), ENSURING PAYMENT FOR ALL COMPLETED WORK (18.3%), IMPLEMENTING MEASURES TO REDUCE UNPAID LABOUR (10%), ACCESS TO SOCIAL SECURITY (8.7%), AND LIMITING WORKING HOURS ON THE PLATFORM (7.14%)

At the beginning of 2025, the ILO published a new report on platform work to inform the convention discussions, titled the "Yellow Report". [22] The document brings recommendations for the convention to be discussed in 2025. It includes cloudwork in the definition of platform work, as "performance of work by a person for remuneration, regardless of whether that work is performed online or in a geographic location."

Platform workers are acknowledged "regardless of their status in employment or whether they are in the formal or informal economy", meaning that the rights to be included in the convention are not only for platform workers classified as employees. Those workers should be covered by international labour Conventions and Recommendations, "unless otherwise provided". However, the document suggests that rules can exclude

"limited categories of workers and platforms", which can be used as an open door to take cloud workers out of the guidelines' scope.

One of the main challenges faced by cloudworkers is the conflict of jurisdictions between the platform and workers in resolving disputes. In this regard, the report states that the terms and conditions of employment or engagement of digital platform workers should be governed by the laws and regulations of the country where the work is performed, "unless otherwise provided for in relevant international instruments or multilateral or bilateral agreements."

In addition to the fundamental rights and those ensured by international conventions that apply to platform workers, the document reinforces rights such as freedom of association, responsibilities to take appropriate steps to "prevent occupational accidents, occupational diseases and any other injuries to health arising out of, linked with, or occurring in the course of work" and protect "against violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence and harassment".

The report suggests the obligation to inform workers and their representatives about the use of automated systems (e.g., algorithms) "to monitor or evaluate work, or to generate decisions relating to work" and how these systems impact working conditions and access to work. Decisions taken by automated systems must be explained and be subject to human review. The document also addresses platform workers' data protection, with safeguards for the collection and processing of personal data.

The proposals bring a highly relevant set of standards, many of which are in line with recommendations from previous ILO documents and external initiatives, such as the Fairwork Principles.

Our survey highlights key areas where progress can be made to meet cloud workers' demands. We asked workers which rights they consider most important. Among the 448 respondents, the top priorities were: receiving at least the local minimum wage (33.3%), ensuring payment for all completed work (18.3%), implementing measures to reduce unpaid labour (10%), access to social security (8.7%), and limiting working hours on the platform (7.14%).Regarding AI supply chains, another key front is the recent discussions on the global governance of AI linked to the United Nations' Global Digital Compact. Effective global governance of artificial intelligence is essential for fostering international cooperation and addressing the risks associated with AI systems. A key human rights concern is the exploitation of workers across the AI supply chain, particularly those involved in data enrichment. Initiatives such as the proposed scientific panel and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance are critical to leading these coordinated international efforts.

The recommendations from UN AI expert panel included a scientific panel and a global dialogue on AI governance.[23] The Fairwork team has taken part in the consultations about these proposals and highlighted the need to include measures to ensure fairness in AI supply chains.

As stated in Fairwork's contribution submitted to a UN consultation on the topic, the Global Dialogue on AI Governance should be a forum for continuous engagement among Member States, the private sector, civil society, academia, and experts seeking to develop shared principles and strategies for governing AI responsibly. Its discussions would address topics such as safeguarding human rights, instituting ethical standards, and preventing the erosion of labour protections in digitally mediated contexts.

The Dialogue could generate policy recommendations, voluntary guidelines, and declarations that assist countries in navigating AI's transformative impacts. Global norms and principles would serve as essential guidance tools to promote international cooperation.

These initiatives highlight a growing recognition among governments, workers, and companies of the importance of international public governance in addressing the risks and harms posed by digital platforms and artificial intelligence. Such efforts are especially critical for workers, who often face greater vulnerability within the unequal power structures of these production networks. The frameworks developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations offer a valuable opportunity to advance governance models that promote fairer labour standards across digital work and AI supply chains. The evidence presented in this report builds on existing research and reinforces the pressing need for coordinated action at the national, regional, and global levels.

Workers' Stories:

The labour process on cloudwork platforms can often be depersonalised and hidden. When a worker is on the other side of the world and represented only by a profile on a platform interface, their stories and experiences become obscured.

The labour process on cloudwork platforms can often be depersonalised and hidden. When a worker is on the other side of the world and represented only by a profile on a platform interface, their stories and experiences become obscured.

Abdi*, Kenya. Freelancer, Fiverr.

* Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Abdi has lived in Kenya for the majority of his life. He graduated with a degree in a Technology-related career, having spent some time at a French university, which has broadened his academic and cultural horizons. His professional interests lie in automation, energy systems, and digital technologies. In 2021, when he was at university, a professor shared a story about students who were using online gigs, such as coding, to support themselves financially during their studies. Inspired by this, he decided to explore online platforms as a way to fund his education and cover living expenses.

After receiving an educational loan, he purchased a laptop and began his journey with online work. He started with Remotasks, later joined Gotranscript, Upwork, and finally Fiverr. His primary motivation was financial independence, along with the flexibility to work remotely, which allowed him to earn while studying.

Currently, online platforms serve as his primary source of income. He uses Fiverr, Upwork, Gotranscript, and others, depending on available opportunities. Managing multiple jobs alongside his studies has honed his time management skills. He has become proficient at prioritising tasks and balancing education with freelance work. This experience has taught him how to structure his workload to ensure that he meets both academic

deadlines and professional commitments, helping him to develop strong organisational skills.

Abdi believes that online work platforms offer numerous advantages. One of the most significant benefits is flexibility. Freelancers can work from anywhere in the world and set their own schedules, which allows for a better work–life balance. This flexibility is seen as especially valuable for students like himself who need to balance academic responsibilities with earning opportunities.

Abdi said that his journey so far has been rewarding. Working on various online platforms has not only provided financial support but also helped him to develop key skills such as communication, client relations, and time management. It has also taught him how to adapt to the fast-changing technological landscape. As some tasks and markets phase out, new ones emerge, and he has learned to stay relevant by quickly shifting focus. The flexibility to work remotely has also allowed him to experience different cultures, interact with a global client base, and expand his professional network.

However, this has not come without problems and obstacles. He commented that freelancers (or "sellers") on Fiverr face several systemic challenges that create an unequal and often precarious working environment. The platform's oversaturated marketplace makes it extremely difficult for new workers to compete, as the algorithm favours established freelancers with existing reviews and ratings, leaving newcomers struggling for visibility.

Payment structures present another major hurdle, with Fiverr holding earnings for 14 days after order

completion and taking a 20% commission on all transactions, while offering sellers little protection against unreasonable client demands like endless revisions or unjustified cancellations. The platform's opaque policies frequently result in sudden account suspensions or gig removals without clear explanations, leaving freelancers without income or recourse.

Additionally, Fiverr's rating system, despite recent updates, remains vulnerable to abuse through unfair negative reviews that can significantly impact a seller's visibility and earning potential. Geographic disparities further compound these issues, as freelancers from developing countries often find themselves pressured to offer lower rates to remain competitive. These structural challenges create a power imbalance where sellers assume most of the financial and operational risks while having limited ability to influence platform policies or dispute resolutions.

Abdi listed measures implemented by Fiverr to address workers' concerns, though with mixed effectiveness. The platform introduced a two-year ratings window to prevent outdated reviews from penalising sellers. The so-called "Seller Protection Program" aims to prevent unfair cancellations, and Fast Pay reduces payment delays, but charges a fee for that.

The Resolution Centre is a formal dispute mediation mechanism, though Abdi says that workers often report bias in favour of requesters. The "Seller Plus" paid option ($29/month) grants priority support but remains inaccessible to many. The Kenyan worker highlights that while these changes show responsiveness, core issues like the 14-day payment hold, high commissions, and arbitrary account suspensions remain unresolved. Geographic disparities and pricing pressures also persist, leaving structural imbalances largely unaddressed.

While online platforms offer many benefits, there are still areas for improvement. One key change Abdi would like to see is enhancement of the dispute resolution process. Although Fiverr has an escrow system, the communication and resolution process can sometimes be slow and impersonal. A more transparent and timely dispute resolution system would help reduce frustration and ensure fair outcomes for both freelancers and clients.

Another improvement would be to make the requester's requirements more precise and more structured. Sometimes, project expectations can be ambiguous, which leads to misunderstandings or unsatisfied clients. A clearer and more detailed job description process could help both parties set accurate expectations from the beginning.

Finally, he believes that more detailed analytics would be beneficial for freelancers. This would allow them to track metrics such as conversion rates, client satisfaction, and job success rates, providing better insights to help improve our services and strategies.
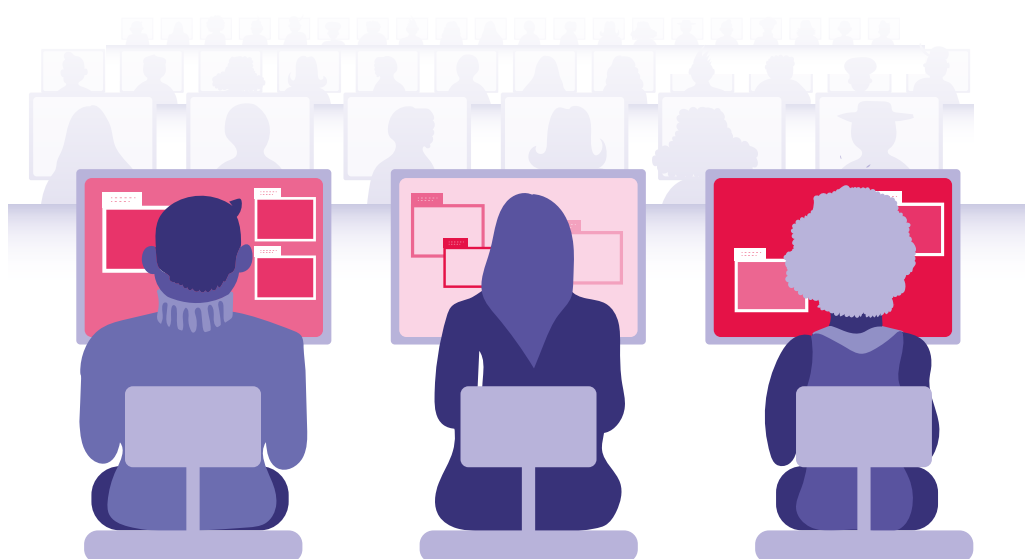
Alejandra*, Peru.
Data worker, Appen.

* Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Alejandra lives in Peru, has a degree in social sciences and has worked in social media, marketing, and content creation since graduating from university, including for institutions as a freelancer and consultant for small businesses and cultural events. Before COVID-19, she worked on a cultural project related to the performing arts as a social media content creator, video editor, and designer. Many cultural projects were cancelled, including the one she was working on.

Back then, she struggled to find a related or at least similar job, because she loves culture and felt great working in her old job. She didn't want a 9-to-5 office job, so she was looking for an online job to help her pay the bills. While searching for opportunities on LinkedIn, she found the platform Appen. After several steps — application, registration, opening a Payoneer account, training, and selection/qualification — she got a position.

When she started, this was her primary source of income, but she also kept other small jobs and worked at her own food business once a week From Monday to Friday, she worked between 6 and 9 hours on Appen, including training and qualifications, which were unpaid. Sometimes, she received alerts that tasks were available on weekends, so to avoid missing out, she worked similar hours on weekends. She says that, since the platform's slogans were "First come, first served" and "Work as hard as you can," she made herself available for tasks whenever they appeared.

At first, she saw the experience as exciting. She was paid promptly and had the opportunity to apply for other projects within the platform, which increased the chances of earning more money. Even when she was able to stop and rest between work hours, she sometimes found herself working until midnight or after 2 a.m. "It wasn't great for me, but I was doing my best, and I also had to take advantage of having several tasks available to work with", she says.

Sometimes, there weren't any tasks all day until 5 p.m., and the available ones would appear at 6 p.m., when she finished the hours dedicated to Appen. This made her check her phone several times a day, which caused her stress and anxiety. Since her income was increasing and she was paid on time, she reported feeling the need to take advantage of her job at Appen.

However, in August 2024, the Appen platform migrated to a new one called CrowdGen. Since then, Alejandra has commented that the entire experience has got worse. Until then, she had no issues with delays. However, since the migration, the platform started to have issues. She couldn't check the reports to see her earnings or the quality of her own work. These actions helped her stay motivated and keep working and improving.

However, the new CrowdGen wasn't working well; payments were delayed, not just for her, but for all the workers, or "judges", as the platform team calls them. She submitted many support tickets only to receive automated emails stating they were receiving many tickets and that it would take some time to respond, but she was assured that the payment issue was being resolved. She decided to wait, hoping they would send the payments soon. Two weeks later, the payment finally arrived.

Regarding competition, she always felt anxious and stressed. "Sometimes I would receive alerts indicating that there were hitapps available, but when I accessed the platform from my computer, there were none; they would disappear, and that was because so many people were competing for that opportunity", Alejandra says. Sometimes, she had to work late into the night to earn at least some daily earnings.

Her goal was to earn between $10 and $15 a day (working 6 to 9 hours a day), but sometimes she only earned $1 or $3 a day. It was as if she had to be on her computer all day just to get the available jobs, and that was impossible because she had things to do at home: taking care of her pet, spending time with family and friends, or relaxing.

AS FOR THE CONDITIONS AND RISKS, SHE SAYS IT WAS CERTAINLY NOT HEALTHY FOR HER OR ANYONE ELSE TO SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN FRONT OF THE COMPUTER. SHE REPORTS SUFFERING FROM BACK PAIN AND EYE STRAIN. IN APRIL 2023, SHE SUFFERED A RETINAL TEAR AND HAD TO UNDERGO LASER RETINAL SURGERY.

As for the conditions and risks, she says it was certainly not healthy for her or anyone else to spend a lot of time in front of the computer. She reports suffering from back pain and eye strain. In April 2023, she suffered a retinal tear and had to undergo laser retinal surgery, which cost US$300 (almost the basic salary of a worker in Peru).

She could only afford one session, and her parents helped her with the two additional sessions she needed. After that, she had to rest and couldn't work for two months, so she didn't earn anything, which increased her worry about the bills she had to pay.

She mentioned always receiving a response and resolution to support requests, but after the migration to the new platform, things got complicated. "They were unresponsive to my requests and took too long to address my concerns. In September 2024, after a day in which I earned US$30 (the limit they had allocated for me for a day), I woke up to the news that my account [in an Appen's client platform] had been deactivated", she reports.

She submitted a support request, but since they were still fixing the platform, she received an automated email informing her that they had the right to suspend her account if she worked from another country, used a VPN, or produced poor quality work. She says that she was already aware of all this and hadn't committed any violations. The work quality was between 90% and 95%, down from 100%; and she didn't use a VPN or work from abroad. "They didn't help me understand. So I couldn't continue working for them."

She submitted several support tickets with no response. She requested that monthly reports be emailed to her because she couldn't access the client's platform account to check them, but the platform didn't respond. Then her account went from deactivated to suspended. After two months, they responded to the ticket, stating that the account was under investigation and that the process would take some time. After four months, she still hadn't received a response to that investigation or the real reason for her account suspension.

She reports discovering that many people working for Appen were facing the same issues. She joined a closed Facebook group where people said they hadn't received their salaries since the platform migrated to CrowdGen or that they had been kicked off a project without warning or reason. There were people from Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and the Middle East. She faced problems sharing her experiences on the platform's chat, or even publicly on social media or Reddit. She says she commented in that closed Facebook group only because she wanted to understand what had happened. Now, Alejandra says she doesn't expect anything from them and is more focused on getting her information removed from the platform.

Mahmoud*, Egypt.
Freelancer, Elharefa.

* Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Mahmoud is a university student from Egypt in a technology career. In addition to his studies, he works with website translation and programming, having acquired experience translating content from Arabic to English and vice versa, and on various web development projects.

He started working on online platforms to gain financial independence and professional experience. As a student, he wanted a flexible job that would allow him to earn an income while continuing his studies. In his view, online platforms provided an ideal solution, as they allowed him to work remotely, choose the projects, and develop skills that align with his field of study.

Another key motivation was the opportunity to connect with international clients. "Working on global freelancing platforms has given me exposure to different work cultures and allowed me to build a diverse portfolio, which will be beneficial for my career in the long run", he says.

Currently, online work is his primary source of income, but he considers it a stepping stone rather than a permanent career path. While freelancing provides financial stability, he aims to gain corporate experience after graduating, to develop his expertise further. He has been trying to coordinate his schedule effectively and manage online work and his University studies by prioritising high-value projects and setting clear deadlines.

Overall, he considers the experience positive. "Online work has allowed me to work with clients from different parts of the world, which has broadened my understanding of various industries and improved my communication skills."

However, his work on Elharefa and other cloudwork platforms he has been active on, has not come without its challenges. Regarding payment, one of the biggest concerns is delayed payments or, in some cases, non-payment for completed tasks. Some clients disappear without paying, and while platforms have dispute resolution mechanisms, they are not always efficient.

The competition is intense, especially on global platforms where freelancers from different countries bid for the same jobs. This often leads to price undercutting, making charging fair rates for quality work difficult.

Mahmoud says that some job postings lack clear terms regarding deadlines, revisions, and payment terms. This ambiguity can lead to misunderstandings between freelancers and clients. Additionally, not all clients communicate their expectations clearly, and some platforms, such as Elharefa, do not offer effective dispute resolution processes, leaving freelancers with little recourse if conflicts arise. Unlike traditional jobs, freelancers do not have unions or formal channels to collectively voice their concerns. This makes it difficult to push for better working conditions and fairer policies.

While some platforms provide tools to mitigate these challenges, improvements are still needed. Some platforms offer escrow services to ensure payments are secured before work begins, but not all clients use them. Rating and review systems help filter out unreliable clients, but they are not full proof. More robust policies on fair wages, contract clarity, and dispute resolution would significantly improve the freelancer experience.

While Mahmoud highlights the positive aspects of doing cloudwork, including flexibility, the opportunities to work with international clients, the learning experiences and the possibility of building a reputation, he also believes that there is much room for improvement on these platforms.

He believes platforms should implement stricter payment security measures to prevent non-payment and late payments. Companies should adopt better job matching systems, with algorithms prioritising skilled workers over low-cost bidders to ensure quality work is valued.

He also thinks platforms should require job postings to include specific details regarding deadlines, revision policies, and payment terms to reduce disputes. Moreover, he argues that these companies should adopt more structured support systems, including legal advice, mental health resources, and community forums.

Worker resources: Useful tools and links

While work on cloudwork platforms is often characterised as isolated and anonymous, cloudworkers have found ways to collaborate with one another and, in some instances, organise to improve their earnings and conditions.

In fact, we are seeing a growing number of unions and workers' associations, especially for freelance work, such as the Freelancers Union in the United States. Still, the most common way for cloudworkers to collaborate is through online forums and communities, either hosted by the platform or by workers themselves. Cloudworkers and advocacy organisations have developed a series of worker support tools.

Gigpedia[24]

Gigpedia provides an overview of available information about the global platform economy, including on existing legislation, court cases, and ratings of labour standards for specific platforms.

Wage indicator[25]

The WageIndicator Foundation is a global non-profit organisation working with other organisations to gather and disclose information on actual wages, minimum wages, living wages, labour laws, gig and platform work, and collective agreements. The organisation provides labour market information for 206 countries through more than 200 websites in more than 50 languages.

Turkopticon[26]

Perhaps the most notable example of worker-led organising in the cloudwork economy, Turkopticon is a plugin that allows Amazon Mechanical Turk workers to rate their relationships with employers, helping other workers to avoid negative experiences. Turkopticon operates as a mutual aid tool by which workers can report

exploitative practices by employers, as well as an activist group advocating for better working conditions on the platform.

Fair crowdwork[27]

This website provides ratings of working conditions on different cloudwork platforms based on a 2017 survey with workers.

Campaign for Trade Union Freedom[28]

The campaign promotes actions to defend trade unionism and disseminates information about platform workers' organisations.

Crowdsource wage pledge[29]

The project lets crowdsourcing requesters publicly commit to paying at least a certain wage level and lets workers inquire about issues they have had completing tasks posted by requesters who have signed the pledge.

Crowdsourcing Code of Conduct – Ombuds Office[30]

The code of conduct is a voluntary guideline for cloudwork companies that sets minimum standards with respect to working conditions and relations between workers, clients, and platforms. Workers on platforms that have signed the Crowdsourcing Code of Conduct (including Clickworker in this study) have access to independent representation and dispute mediation through an Ombuds office provided by the initiative.

Platform changes

Since Fairwork started to score and engage with cloudwork platforms in 2020, some important changes have been promoted by these companies to improve working conditions and strengthen working standards.

In this report, a record number of 56 changes were implemented by eight platforms; the highest number for a Fairwork report. The changes were diverse, spanning from minimum wage policies to statements acknowledging freedom of association. A number of platforms have employed new methods to manage more fairly the supply and demand of work and promote job availability, adopted measures to mitigate risks and hazards, and documented and strengthened their appeal process, among many other pro-worker policies and processes.

Elharefa adopted 14 changes, Remotasks 11 changes, Terawork nine changes, ComeUp seven changes, Prolific five changes, Translated and SoyFreelancer four changes, and Appen two changes. Adding the number of workers registered on these platforms, we estimate these changes to affect over two million workers globally.

Elharefa

1.1

- The platform has stated in the Terms that they are committed to ensuring that freelancers receive full payment for completed work within the agreed timeframe. A dispute resolution process was added in case requesters are not satisfied with the job.

- Workers were granted via a new Terms clause the "right to revise or redo the delivered work at least once upon the Client's request."

1.2

- A minimum wage policy was introduced. Additionally, the company informed the Fairwork Clouwork team that payment structures will be "transparently communicated to all users".

- The provision of a time estimate to complete the job was added to the Terms as a requirement for requesters.

2.1

- The company added to the Terms a clause stating that work allocation is managed to guarantee fair access to work opportunities.

2.2

- Elharefa committed to identifying and mitigating potential health and safety risks associated with cloudwork.

- Users jeopardising the health and safety of workers are now subject to punitive measures.

3.1

- A 30-day notice period for contract changes was added to the Terms.

3.2

- Terms have been amended to require clients to add "detailed descriptions, requirements, deadlines and intended purpose of the project" to projects.

4.1

- An appeal process for platform decisions was added to the Terms. This section includes a rule stating that workers "will be notified of the reason for such action via email or through their account dashboard" in the case of disciplinary actions.

4.2

- Elharefa adopted a non-discrimination policy.

- The company announced audits in the work allocation automated systems to assess the existence of bias and other exclusionary outcomes.

- The company registered in the Terms the commitment "to consulting freelancers before making significant changes to contract terms that may impact their work conditions or earnings."

5.1

- Elharefa added a public statement acknowledging freedom of association and collective bargaining to the company's Terms.

Remotasks

2.1

- The company implemented what they called "Secondary Assignments" to increase work Access. Workers who finish work on a primary project can be automatically assigned to a secondary project if work is unavailable on their primary assignment. According to the company, this prevents contributors from idling unpaid due to project fluctuations.

- The company implemented a "max claim time", ensuring tasks are returned to the queue and remain available to active workers. According to the company, the aim was to reduce "unproductive claim periods".

- Remotasks' algorithms include a base payout per task, which "compensates for the time spent loading and reviewing a task before annotation begins", which according to the company "ensures that contributors are not performing unpaid labour during task setup."

- The platform informed the Fairwork Cloudwork team that they continuously track workers' activity to maintain an accurate measure of active workers, which helps "assess job availability to maintain a fair and balanced work distribution."

2.2

- The Community Guidelines were updated with new rules making explicit the punitive actions for harassment and other problematic conduct.

3.1

- The Community Guidelines were amended to provide workers with a 30-day notice period for contract changes.

- Remotasks updated the platform's Indemnification section on their Terms to lower the barriers for workers to take legal action against the platform.

3.2

- Remotasks added to its Community Guidelines a new item explaining that "task participation is voluntary, and declining a task will not negatively impact ratings or reputation."

4.1

- The company implemented "Account Deactivation Support", which explains how workers can get further explanations and appeal disciplinary decisions.

4.2

- Discriminatory behaviour was added as a prohibited conduct that will lead to punitive actions.

- Remotasks has added information about the methods to allocate work to the FAQ, including the automated systems employed to this end.

A RECORD NUMBER OF 56 CHANGES WERE IMPLEMENTED BY EIGHT PLATFORMS; THE HIGHEST NUMBER FOR A FAIRWORK REPORT.

Terawork

1.1

- The company added a rule prohibiting the use of rejected work. A guideline has been introduced granting workers the right to request a revision of rejected work at least once.

1.2

- The minimum wage policy was improved by adding an explicit enforcement rule granting workers the right to report and establishing penalties for requesters who try to pay below the local minimum wage.

- The company informed us that their management will enhance freelancer education on their minimum wage policy. Among the educational actions will be clarification materials.

2.1

- Terawork introduced "a smart advisory feature that guides freelancers during the application process, informing them if they may not be the best fit for a particular job. This helps reduce time spent on

unsuccessful applications, allowing freelancers to focus on higher-probability opportunities and improving overall efficiency on the platform."

2.2

- The company adopted a "Content moderation and profanity content blocking". According to managers, the platform "actively filters and blocks inappropriate language and harmful content across all chats and job posts".

3.1

- The company rectified the Terms of Use to ensure that prior notification of contract changes applies to all changes, not only significant ones. The rule also includes a reasonable timeframe of 30 days.

3.2

- A cancellation policy in line with Cloudwork principles was added to the Terms, allowing "cancellations due to emergency, unforeseen circumstances, or mutual agreement with the client" to not result in penalties. Valid reasons include "illness, problematic client behavior, or other reasonable causes."

4.1

- Terawork edited the Terms of Service to explain the appeal processes made available to workers, and the managers also added a dispute resolution section. The clause "Appealing Disciplinary Decisions" explains that workers can appeal any disciplinary decision taken by the platform.

ComeUp

2.1

- ComeUp has updated the homepage and improved the user interface aimed at "increasing the number of orders on the website and creating more work opportunities for workers." The homepage was redesigned to make it "easier for clients to navigate and find services."

2.2

- The company made changes to their Terms of Use, clearly stating that users should not jeopardise the health and safety of workers.
- The company added to their FAQ that any unethical or abusive behaviour will be investigated. Additionally,

it was reinforced to users that workers can report any health and safety risks.

- The company adopted a policy that is GDPR compliant and meets the standards outlined in the Fairwork Cloudwork Principles.

4.2

- The company has adopted different ways to consult workers about different aspects of the platform, including the methods to allocate work, including social media and other platforms where workers can provide feedback directly and in groups.
- The company added an FAQ article explaining how workers can participate in consultations and follow changes. ComeUp made a commitment to always consult workers for important changes.

5.1

- The company has added to the Terms of Service a section (10) in line with the Fairwork Cloudwork Principle 5, acknowledging workers' rights to organise themselves freely.

Prolific

2.1

- Prolific's team has adopted multiple notification and recruitment methods, lowering the search time spent by workers. Among them are email messages, browser extensions and on-platform messaging services.
- Participants are remunerated for pre-screening assessments, ensuring that assessments do not involve unpaid labour.

2.2

- Prolific updated the guidance on health and safety extending it to all studies and all workers.

4.1

- The platform edited the disciplinary actions' rules, explaining to workers the reasons that can lead to disciplinary action.
- The appeal process was made more visible and better explained through a specific Help Centre article. Additionally, appeals can now be initiated through the contact form or via a support chatbot in the Help Centre.

Translated

2.1

- Translated excluded a mention of voluntary work in their Frequently Asked Questions section on the company's website. This change was consistent with the 2.1 threshold standard of avoiding unpaid work.

4.2

- The company edited the FAQ to specify better the automated methods to allocate work, using an algorithm they call T-Rank.

5.1

- The company published a new statement acknowledging freedom of association and collective bargaining. "Translated respects all national agreements about collective bargaining through trade unions for more favourable working conditions. Translated does not inhibit the freedom of association and supports access to worker representation through unions and associations."

- The company published on their FAQ new dispute resolution mechanisms linked to the mediation system of the firm's headquarters (Italy).

SoyFreelancer

3.2

- SoyFreelancer documented in the Terms and Conditions that workers will not be punished for not accepting jobs (section 6.1.1).

4.1

- A section was added to the Terms and Conditions explaining the appeal process (6.1).

- Information about the support channel and the appeal process was provided in the company's newsletter to give more visibility to this resource.

5.1

- The platform added a statement to the Terms and Conditions acknowledging freedom of association and mentioning the support workers need to organise collectively.

Appen

1.1

- Appen has informed the Fairwork Cloudwork team that it is changing its qualifications model. Instead of designing qualification assessments for each individual project, the company is moving toward pre-qualifying contributors based on levels of task complexity. According to the company, this will reduce the number of unpaid assessments that contributors are expected to complete.

2.1

- The company is implementing an "incentive program" to support workers in developing new skills. Workers already "pre-qualified at a certain complexity level" but struggling to find work will be able to make use of upskilling materials and simulators as well as receive compensation for these training practices.

Pathways of change

For workers, cloudwork in general has lower barriers to entry than conventional employment. For clients, it is usually less expensive to use a cloudwork platform than to hire a geographically proximate worker or contractor.

With a staggering range of tasks and services now available through cloudwork platforms, and the increasing normalisation of remote and online working enabled by technological infrastructure, the cloudwork economy will continue to grow. However, on most cloudwork platforms, costs are externalised and risks transferred to workers — saving clients money but leaving workers vulnerable.

As more and more workers from a large variety of sectors and professions become absorbed into the planetary labour market, it is becoming increasingly difficult to apply and enforce national labour protections that include workers' right to a minimum wage, to collective voice and representation, to protection from discrimination and unfair dismissal, and to health and safety at work. Our scores show that unfair and insecure work is the norm on most cloudwork platforms — a situation that calls for regulatory responses at national and international levels.

Some national and regional policy proposals, including legislation on cloudwork and global supply chains, may provide a point of regulatory leverage to consider and improve cloudworkers' pay and conditions. One notable recent example is the European Union Directive passed in 2024 (see Theme in Focus). Another example is the law on due diligence passed by Germany to enforce the protection of human rights and environmental standards along global supply chains.[31] However, there remains a mismatch between globally operating cloudwork platforms — like the platforms included in our study — and comprehensive global policy responses to this new digital world of work.

The Fairwork Cloudwork Ratings 2025 provide a resource for workers, consumers and policymakers to do just that. They establish benchmark standards of fairness in cloudwork, which we can collectively advocate for and strive towards. They also detail where and how prominent platforms are falling short of these benchmarks and set out a roadmap for positive change to be implemented. Finally, and importantly, they highlight where platforms are in fact stepping up to their responsibilities to workers, meeting standards of fairness, and taking steps to improve workers' experiences.

This finding is a powerful reminder that precarity and insecurity aren't an inevitable outcome of technological advancement, nor a necessary trade-off for flexible work. Some of the platforms in our study have chosen to provide fairer work. When platforms are not meeting minimum standards of fairness, this is also a choice.

Fairwork reached out to every platform in this study, and suggested clear changes they could make in order to improve working conditions on their platforms. Following constructive dialogue with our researchers, eight platforms implemented a total of 56 pro-worker changes. In turn, these actions strengthened their Fairwork score, an outcome that will help to differentiate these platforms to clients and workers, as examples of better practice in the cloudwork economy. The changes represent a step towards a more equitable balance of power between workers and platforms. They give workers bases on which to hold platforms to account. Both smaller and larger platforms implemented changes.

Since the last report, the Fairwork Cloudwork team has made significant progress in its engagement strategies. In 2024, a working group was established, consisting of seven cloudwork platform managers who gathered to exchange knowledge and explore the adoption of best practices aligned with the Fairwork Principles. The participating platforms include Appen, ComeUp, Creative Words, Elharefa, Prolific, Terawork, and Translated.

Named the Fairwork Cloudwork Initiative, the discussions held by this group aim to influence internal conversations within the platforms, with the hope of enacting concrete changes that benefit workers and address the challenges they face in their day-to-day experiences on the platforms. Furthermore, the approaches developed by this working group can serve as guidelines and examples for other cloudwork platforms. The success of this initiative can be seen in the record number of changes adopted by platforms this year.

We find fault with the common characterisation of platforms as disruptors of the status quo, due in part to the fact that precarious piece-rate work has a long legacy and is not especially innovative or historically distinct. However, one hopeful takeaway is platforms' willingness to listen to feedback and improve, and to recognise that we are still in a moment of possibility in the development of the cloudwork economy; these institutions are not yet characterised by high levels of inertia and path dependency. Just as cloudwork platforms can nimbly enter and exit markets, and can nimbly evade regulations, they can also do better.

It will take a broad coalition of actors, including platforms, workers, and legislators, to bring about a fairer future of platform work, but the actions taken by platforms in response to Fairwork scoring show that it remains within reach. We commend those companies who are choosing to step up to their moral obligations to their workers. However, the low scores in our study also demonstrate what happens when an industry is left to regulate itself, and underscore the urgent need for governments to step in to find ways to protect workers in the planetary labour market.

The Fairwork Pledge

As part of this process of change, we have introduced the Fairwork Pledge. This pledge leverages the power of organisations' procurement, investment, and partnership policies to support fairer platform work. Organisations like universities, schools, businesses, and charities who make use of platform labour can make a difference by supporting the best labour practices, guided by our five principles of fair work.

The pledge constitutes two levels. This first is as an official Fairwork Supporter, which entails publicly demonstrating support for fairer platform work, and making resources available to staff and members to help them in deciding which platforms to engage with. A second level of the pledge entails organisations committing to concrete and meaningful changes in their own practices as official Fairwork Partners, for example by committing to using better-rated platforms where there is a choice.

A diverse range of stakeholders can promote actions to support the Fairwork Pledge. NGOs and charities can help committing to only using platforms scoring at least 7 out of 10 in the most recent applicable Fairwork ratings or other platforms that comply with the Fairwork principles. Government and administrative bodies can create policies that favour well-rated platforms in public funding or licensing agreements. Companies can make Fairwork principles and ratings a criterion when contracting services (for example, translation, transcription or data entry and cleaning services) through digital platforms. For academic institutions, research ethics bodies, in particular, may increasingly be involved in decisions around research involving cloudworkers.

MORE INFORMATION ON THE PLEDGE, AND HOW TO SIGN UP, IS AVAILABLE HERE:

FAIR.WORK/PLEDGE

Fairwork
Official Partner
Together for Fair Platform Work

Certification

In addition to the Pledge, Fairwork is encouraging AI lead firms to embed Fairwork standards into their supplier agreements and procurement policies, and is offering a certification scheme. As AI spreads across industries, businesses increasingly rely on data enrichment, annotation, and other business process outsourcing (BPO) services to power their systems. These essential AI services often depend on dispersed, opaque workforces located in regions with weak regulatory oversight, making labour rights violations difficult to detect and address. However, regulators and policymakers are paying attention. New measures like the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D) demand greater transparency and accountability—not only in agriculture or manufacturing but also in digital and AI-driven supply chains.

No matter the sector, if their operations depend on data, their supply chain must be fair. Fairwork offers an AI supply chain audit. Why is this important?

- Regulatory Preparedness: Proactively align with emerging labour laws and global standards to mitigate legal and ethical risks before they impact compliance or reputation.

- Transparency and Trust: Demonstrate responsible labour practices, building credibility with customers, investors, and regulators, and positioning your organisation as a leader in ethical AI.

- Resilient Workforce: Ensure fair wages, job security, and decent working conditions to attract and retain skilled data workers, creating a stable and productive AI supply chain.

- Sustainable Commitment: Adopt Fairwork's flexible, continuous-improvement model to embed lasting fair labour standards in your organisation.

Fairwork's evaluation model

Fairwork's structured, four-phase evaluation model helps companies identify risks, implement improvements, and embed fair labour practices throughout their AI supply chains. We offer both audit-only assessments and certification pathways tailored to your organisational goals and desired level of engagement.

- Discovery & Risk Assessment. The process starts with collaboration between Fairwork and the lead firm to align supplier agreements, contracts, codes of conduct, and audit procedures. We map the supply chain to identify data-enrichment locations, conduct worker interviews and document reviews to detect risks, and carry out a comprehensive audit based on the Fairwork Principles.

- Action Planning. Once risks are identified, Fairwork helps companies prioritise them by severity and impact. Together, we develop tailored remediation plans, establish clear metrics for tracking progress, and ensure accountability. To date, our work has led to over 300 positive changes in company practices across 40 countries, significantly improving working conditions.

- Implementation & Training. Companies deploy ethical sourcing and labour protection strategies at this stage. Fairwork facilitates training for suppliers and internal teams, embedding effective due diligence practices into operational and procurement processes.

- Monitoring & Reporting. Fairwork works closely with companies to track initiatives and evaluate progress. Follow-up audits, conducted 1-2 years after initial implementation, assess adherence to Fairwork Principles and effectiveness of remediation measures. Transparent, research-backed reports document outcomes, supporting regulatory compliance and accountability.

Certification

Companies pursuing Fairwork Certification commit to all four evaluation phases, unlike the audit-only option, which covers just Discovery & Risk Assessment and Action Planning. Lead firms earn the Fairwork Onboard certification during Discovery & Risk Assessment, indicating their initial commitment to fair labour practices. By meeting expectations in follow-up audits, firms maintain their Fairwork affiliation and achieve the Fairwork Endorsed certification, recognising their sustained commitment to fair and responsible supply chains.

Fairwork Scoring System

The five Principles of Fairwork were developed through an extensive literature review of published research on job quality, stakeholder meetings at UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and the ILO (International Labour Organisation) in Geneva (involving platform operators, policymakers, trade unions, and academics), and in-country stakeholder meetings held in India (Bangalore and Ahmedabad), South Africa (Cape Town and Johannesburg) and Germany (Berlin).

These principles have been adapted to the realities of Cloudwork and fine-tuned through a process of further consultation with stakeholders including worker representatives, researchers, and labour lawyers. The criteria for each principle were voted on and finalised by the Fairwork team.

This document explains the Fairwork scoring system for Cloudwork Platforms. Each Fairwork principle is divided into two thresholds. Accordingly, for each principle, the scoring system allows one first point to be awarded corresponding to the first threshold, and an additional second point to be awarded corresponding to the second threshold (see Table 1).

The second point under each principle can only be awarded if the first point for that principle has been awarded. The thresholds specify the evidence required for a platform to receive a given point. Where no verifiable evidence is available that meets a given threshold, the platform is not awarded that point. For this year, platforms were scored against an updated set of the Fairwork Cloudwork Principles.

Table 1 Fairwork: Scoring System

Principle	First point	Second point	Total
Principle 1: Fair Pay	Ensures workers earn at least the local minimum wage after costs	Ensures workers earn at least a local living wage after costs	2
Principle 2: Fair Conditions	Mitigates task-specific risks	Provides a safety net	2
Principle 3: Fair Contracts	Provides clear and transparent terms and conditions	Ensures that no unfair contract terms are imposed	2
Principle 4: Fair Management	Provides due process for decisions affecting workers	Provides equity in the management process	2
Principle 5: Fair Representation	Assures freedom of association and the expression of collective worker voice	Supports democratic governance	2

Maximum possible Fairwork Score 🔴 Fairwork **10**/10

Principle 1: Fair Pay

Threshold 1.1 – Workers are paid on time and for all completed work (one point)

Workers must have full confidence that they will be paid for the work they do. Workers can sometimes face the risk of a client not paying for work that has been completed. To achieve this point platforms must guarantee that this is not possible. Where a client considers that work is not completed satisfactorily, there must be a clear and reasonable process for rejection decisions. Additionally, timeliness and regularity of payment are crucial to evidencing fair pay.

The platform must satisfy ALL of the following:

- Non-payment is not an option for clients and there are mechanisms to ensure workers are paid.[32]

- Payments are made within an agreed timeframe.

- Workers can choose to be paid in a recognised national currency.

- Workers can request funds from their account on a regular basis with reasonable withdrawal thresholds.

Threshold 1.2 – Workers are paid at least the local minimum wage (one additional point)

The rate of pay after costs (like platform fees) must meet the minimum legal threshold in the place where the worker works, regardless of whether the worker earns an hourly wage, or engages in piece-rate work.

The platform must satisfy EITHER 1) or 2) depending on their payment model:

1. For hourly-paid work, workers earn at least their local minimum wage after costs. For piece-rate work: The vast majority of workers earn at least their local minimum wage after costs,[33] and

2. A reasonable estimate of the time it takes to complete each task is provided to each worker before they accept the work.

Principle 2: Fair Conditions

Threshold 2.1 – Precarity and overwork are mitigated (one point)

Workers may spend a significant amount of their working day applying for jobs, especially if they are competing with a lot of other workers. This can include sending credentials to prospective clients, or developing pitches. This constitutes working time, but it is time that the worker is not being paid for. In order to reduce this unpaid working time, platforms should ensure that jobs are available to workers on the platform, and there is not an unmitigated oversupply of labour.

The platform must satisfy the following:

- The allocation of work and/or supply of new workers is managed to promote job availability, and reduce unpaid work and overwork.[34]

Threshold 2.2 – Healthy and safety risks are mitigated (one additional point)

Health and safety risks to workers can include, amongst other things, exposure to psychologically harmful material, financial scams, and breaches of data privacy and security. To achieve this point the platform must demonstrate policies and processes that minimise risks to workers.

The platform must satisfy ALL of the following:

- There are policies to protect workers from risks that arise from the processes of work.

- There are processes for job-related health and safety risks (including psychological risks) to be identified and addressed.

- Risks related to a specific job are flagged to workers before they accept the job (such as indicating that they might be exposed to violent content).

- There are clear reporting channels and documented penalties for clients who jeopardise workers' health and safety.

- There are adequate and ethical data privacy and security measures applicable to workers, laid out in a documented policy.[35]

Principle 3: Fair Contracts

Threshold 3.1 – Clear terms and conditions are available (one point)

The terms and conditions governing platform work are not always clear and accessible to workers. To achieve this point the platform must demonstrate that workers are able to understand, agree to, and access

the conditions of their work, and that they have legal recourse if the platform breaches those conditions.

The platform must satisfy ALL of the following:

- The contract is written in clear and comprehensible language that the worker could be expected to understand.

- The contract is available for workers to access at all times.

- Workers are notified of proposed changes in a reasonable timeframe before changes come into effect.

- Changes should not reverse existing accrued benefits and reasonable expectations on which workers have relied.

- The contract does not require workers to waive rights to reasonable legal recourse against the platform.

Threshold 3.2 – Contracts are consistent with the workers' terms of engagement on the platform (one additional point)

Platforms mediate the contact and the transaction between workers and clients. Therefore, they have a responsibility for oversight of the relationship between workers and clients, and to protect workers' interests. This also includes a duty of care in ensuring that direct contracts (such as NDAs) raised between clients and workers do not unfairly disadvantage the worker or reduce the worker's labour market prospects. Additionally, where workers are self-employed, contracts should allow for freedom to choose their own working schedules, and the jobs they accept or refuse on the platform.

The platform must satisfy ALL of the following:

- Clients are encouraged to inform workers about how their work will be used.

- The worker is not subject to non-compete clauses.

EXCEPT, in cases where the worker is in a standard employment relationship the platform makes clear to workers that:

- Working schedules cannot be imposed upon workers.[36]

- The worker retains the freedom to choose which tasks to accept or refuse.

- When workers choose not to accept tasks, this does not punitively impact their rating or reputation.[37]

Principle 4: Fair management

Threshold 4.1 – There is due process for decisions affecting workers (one point)

Platform workers can experience deactivation; being barred from accessing the platform, sometimes without due process, and losing their income. Workers may be subject to other penalties or disciplinary decisions without the ability to contact the platform to challenge or appeal them if they believe they are unfair. To achieve this point, platforms must demonstrate an ability for workers to meaningfully appeal disciplinary actions.

The platform must satisfy ALL of the following:

- There is a channel for workers to communicate with a human representative of the platform. This channel is documented in policies that are easily accessible to workers, and communications are responded to within a reasonable timeframe.

- There is documentation of things the worker isn't allowed to do, and workers receive an explanation for all punitive actions, including reductions in their rating/ platform standing, non-payment, work rejections, penalties, account blocks, deactivation and any other disciplinary actions.

- Explanations for actions and work rejections include information on how they can be appealed.

- The process for workers to appeal actions and work rejections is non-arduous, documented in the contract, and available to workers who no longer have access to the platform.

Threshold 4.2 – There is equity in the management process (one additional point)

The majority of platforms do not actively discriminate against particular groups of workers. However, they may inadvertently exacerbate already existing inequalities through their design and management. To achieve this point, platforms must show that they have policies against discrimination that can occur between different user groups, and that workers are assured that they will not be disadvantaged through management processes.

The platform must satisfy ALL of the following:

- There is a policy which guarantees that the platform will not discriminate against persons on the grounds of racial, ethnic, social or minority background, caste, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, language, gender, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, geographical location, or any other status.

- There are mechanisms to reduce the risk of clients discriminating against workers on any basis listed above.

- The platform specifies the methods used to manage and allocate work (including when algorithms are used). Substantive changes to methods of managing and allocating work are preceded by a worker consultation.

Principle 5: Fair representation

Threshold 5.1 – Workers have access to representation, and freedom of association (one point)

To observe workers' right to fair representation, platforms must ensure that workers have information about their options for representation in a dispute, as well as ensuring they have access to an independent advocate. Platforms must also guarantee that workers have freedom of association, as enshrined in the constitution of the International Labour Organisation and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The platform must satisfy ALL of the following:

- The platform commits to a dispute resolution process in which workers can access an independent representative freely chosen by them or an unbiased, independent, and accessible dispute resolution system.[38, 39]

- Freedom of association is not inhibited and groups of workers are not disadvantaged in any way for communicating their concerns, demands and wishes to management.

Threshold 5.2 – There is collective governance or bargaining (one additional point)

The ability for workers to organise and collectively express their voice is an important prerequisite for fair working conditions. Workers must be able to assert their demands through a representational body which is free from any influence by platform management. Where such a body does not exist, it is incumbent on platforms to ensure workers' voices can be represented by encouraging its formation.

The platform must satisfy EITHER 1), 2) or 3):

1. It is democratically governed by workers.

2. It formally engages with an independent collective body of workers, an elected works council or trade union, and has not refused to engage with collective bodies who seek representation and/or bargaining. New workers are advised of the existence of these bodies.

3. If such a body does not exist, or such bodies have not requested recognition by the platform, the platform has engaged in a formal process of dialogue with local and/or international representative bodies of workers to discuss what structures and processes of representation could look like for platform workers.

Platform Comments

This year, the Fairwork Cloudwork Ratings 2025 opened space for the platforms assessed to provide a comment about their score. All platforms rated were contacted and invited to share this comment. The comments below were kept as sent by the platform managers.

ComeUp

Thank you to the Fairwork team for helping us continue to improve ComeUp and recognising our changes. Raising our score from 5 to 8 this year confirms we're heading in the right direction. We still have work to do to make our platform the ideal freelance marketplace for people to use.

Our goal has always been to build a platform that offers genuine solutions to freelancers. A fair and transparent platform that empowers them to deliver their best work. This year's rating reflects the work we've put into making the experience better for everyone on ComeUp, and we're proud of what our team and community have achieved together. We look forward to continuing to work with Fairwork. Their research and help is a valuable resource in helping us shape ComeUp's future.

Scale/Remotasks

At Scale, we deeply value the global community of contributors who power Remotasks. We've made meaningful investments to improve the contributor experience—while the report acknowledges several of these improvements, we believe the evaluation remains overly subjective in key areas.

- **Fair Contracts (Principle 3)**-- We updated our Terms to provide 30-day advance notice of contract changes and clarified that task participation is voluntary and does not impact contributor ratings.

- **Fair Management (Principle 4)**-- We introduced Account Deactivation Support for clearer explanations and appeals, added an anonymous contributor hotline, and increased transparency around automated work allocation.

While we appreciate that some of these changes are recognized in the report, the score does not capture the full scope of our progress. On the platform side, we rolled out secondary project assignments, task timers, and base payouts to improve access to work and reduce unpaid time. On the community side, we updated our Community Guidelines and expanded contributor support systems. We remain committed to ongoing improvements and believe future evaluations should better reflect the work we've done—and continue to do.

Translated

We thank Fairwork for guiding us in solidifying our fair approach to the community of freelancers we work with every day. Our commitment to Fairwork's principles is reflected both in the best practices that were recognized and in the changes we made following Fairwork's recommendations, particularly in clarifying our positions on our public FAQs. For example, our website previously encouraged recent graduates to gain experience by volunteering. While we saw this as a way to develop skills through solidarity-based work, Fairwork helped us understand how such a message could be interpreted as an invitation to accept unpaid work, something we strongly oppose.

We are also proud to have affirmed our commitment to industry standards and to the freedom of association for freelancers. We acknowledge that there is still work to be done, and we fully recognize our role in building healthy relationships between the company and freelancers, both individually and as part of collective bargaining bodies. Transparency remains a cornerstone of our approach, and we strive to ensure that freelancers have visibility into the criteria and data points used for project assignment: availability, capacity, quality, performance, rate, and expertise. We also encourage all collaborators to contact us directly if they wish to better understand how specific project assignments are made.

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32. As a guideline for ensuring non-payment is not an option, see criteria developed by Harmon and Silberman 2018, in their Rating Working Conditions on Digital Labour Platforms:

    In cases where rejection mechanisms exist for delivered work:

    • Workers should be able to contest rejection decisions.
    • Workers receive a clear and reasonable explanation for any rejections.
    • Workers may attempt to redo rejected work at least once.

    If the worker contests the rejection decision, the case is reviewed (a second time) by a neutral third party, who makes a binding decision; the platform agrees not to punish the worker in any way if the third party decides, in favour of the worker.
    If the work is rejected, it is not able to be used, by the client.

33. This can be evidenced either through a policy, or by provision of aggregated earnings data. The vast majority of workers is understood as 85% or more of all workers, engaged on the platform. This is in recognition of the fact that all the time between when a worker starts, and submits a task, may not necessarily be working time. We compare worker's piece-work earnings against minimum wages, based on United Kingdom government guidelines. The calculation is as follows:

    Number of tasks of a given kind, completed by workers on average per hour = A.
    This number is divided by 1.2 to calculate A*, an estimated average number of tasks completed per hour, that accounts for the disadvantage that relatively inexperienced workers face.
    Therefore, $A* = 0.83A$.
    Local minimum hourly wage = M.
    This figure varies across jurisdictions.
    Where a jurisdiction's laws do not specify a minimum wage, a reasonable alternative can be used.
    Fair piece rate corresponding to the minimum wage = $F = (M \div 0.83A)$. This calculation must be repeated across task types. To receive this point, platforms operating on a piece-work model must demonstrate that 85% or more of workers on their platform, earn more than F per hour, in each task type.

34. This could include regular guaranteed hours, managed supply and demand, or minimum and maximum hours.

35. To fulfil this criterion, platforms must have clear policies about what kind of data is collected from workers, when it is collected, how long it is kept, and how it is processed. They must take responsibility of data handling, storing and management processes, and ensure that personal data is kept safe, and secure, and is not sold or shared with third parties, without workers' specific consent.

36. The platform shall encourage clients to adopt working time arrangements, that are consistent with the contractual terms of the worker–client relationship. While workers may be required to meet project deadlines, or to attend meetings, in the absence of an employment relationship. The platform shall discourage clients from unreasonably interfering with a worker's ability, to choose their own working time schedule.

37. When a worker drops out from an ongoing job, this does not punitively impact their rating or reputation if it is for a reasonable cause, or if the worker leaves the job before it started and if the requester has been given sufficient notice. Platforms might choose to categorise, filter and order inactive profiles without directly changing their reputation score or rating on the platform.

38. The platform publicly commits to support any effort by its workers to collectively organise or form a trade union. This could be done by, for instance, adding the following text in their contracts: "[company] will support any effort by its workers to collectively organise or form a trade union. Collective bargaining through trade unions can often bring about more favourable working conditions". Platforms are also required to provide a directory of international labour unions and confederations and advocates to workers on request.

39. An example is the German Trade Union IG Metall's Ombuds Office, that arbitrates disputes between workers and platforms, that have signed up to the Crowdsourcing Code of Conduct.

Credits and Funding

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Please cite as:

Fairwork (2025). Fairwork Cloudwork Ratings 2025: Advancing Standards in Digital Labour and AI Supply Chain Governance.

Please note that this report contains sections in common with other Fairwork reports, notably the Fairwork Framework, parts of the Impact and Pathway to Change section, and the Appendix.

Images:

The images in this report were sourced from cloudworkers in the study.

Funders:

Special thanks to:

Conflict of interest statement: None of the researchers have any connection with any of the platforms and the work undertaken received no funding or support in kind from any platform or any other company, and we declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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