

This document is an example draft of a platform profile for the Atlas of Platform-Based Work. Text in red is speculation or filler text; its sole purpose is to show what information is desired and how the text might be arranged. Red text should be replaced with correct data with an appropriate citation once it is found.

## Amazon Mechanical Turk

**Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT or MTurk)** is a US-based microtask marketplace run by Amazon.com, Inc. It was launched in 2005 [source]. It is one of the oldest microtask marketplaces, if not the oldest, and one of the largest [source/explanatory footnote]. Amazon charges clients, called "requesters", a fee of 20-45% on top of the payment to workers [source].

### Team

The size of the MTurk team is to our knowledge not public information, but is estimated by somebody to include about five developers and two managers [source]. As of 2015, the product manager is John Doe [source] and the engineering team includes Jane Smith and Dana McSmithersmith [source, source]. The MTurk team is based in Amazon's Appleton, Oregon office [source].

### Work process

The basic work process consists of three major phases. First, requesters design and post their tasks, including setting the price. Second, workers choose and do tasks. Third, requesters review the work submitted by workers and choose whether or not to pay ("approval" or "rejection"). [Explain work process and potential complications — accidental or malicious rejections, communication between workers and requesters through email and forums, requesters using API to post tasks, requesters using scripts or voting to evaluate submissions, workers using third-party tools to decide which tasks to do, etc.] Workers can receive payment in US dollars, Indian rupees, or Amazon gift card points. [Explain how workers get their money out of MTurk/Amazon Payments and into their bank accounts, including minimum withdrawal amounts, time limits, etc.]

### Clients and work

MTurk is used by all kinds of organizations to do data processing, including transcription, translation, metadata creation, categorization, and sentiment analysis. Organizations include software startups [examples here], large technology companies [examples here; split up this sentence if necessary to describe specific projects], and government organizations [examples]. MTurk is also used by academic researchers, especially computer scientists and social scientists. Computer scientists use MTurk mainly to train "machine learning" or "artificial intelligence" algorithms, while social scientists use it to recruit human subjects for surveys and experiments. [Describe both in more detail.] [Describe a few tasks in detail, including time and payment.] Clients must have a United States bank account, but intermediaries exist that allow non-US clients to post tasks for an additional fee.

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**Comment [1]:** It is okay to use first-person ("I", "we"), as long as it is clear who it refers to.

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**Comment [2]:** If this somebody is us, say so and explain how we arrived at the estimate (in a footnote if the explanation is more than half a sentence or so).

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**Comment [3]:** These are more or less filler; list the categories you think are most relevant. If you get a list from somewhere, list the source.

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**Comment [4]:** I am sort of making this up. I have seen these HITs, but I don't know if this is the main usage.

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**Comment [5]:** Don't name or link to the services if they are run by workers and we think they could get in trouble for doing this.

### Worker demographics

In 2011, Amazon announced that MTurk hosted over 500,000 registered workers from over 190 countries [source]. Researchers however find that the vast majority of workers are based in the United States and India. [What are the current nationality constraints on workers?] For example, in 2015 Panos Ipeirotis estimated that approximately 80% of workers are US-based and approximately 20% are based in India [source]. In 20XX, Jane Jeffries estimated about half of workers are female and about half male. Somebody Else estimated that XX% of workers have no education beyond high school, YY% have some college, ZZ% have completed college, and QQ% have postcollegiate education [source]. BB% of workers are younger than 25, CC% between ages 26 and 45, DD% between 46 and 65, and EE% older than 65 [source]. [Distributions of weekly hours worked, weekly and monthly earnings through the platform, total household weekly and monthly earnings (combined with the previous data, that gets us percentages of how much of household incomes platform income makes up), self-reported reliance on platform income, tenure in terms of time, tenure in terms of amount of work, motivation/relation to income earned.]

### Becoming a Turker

[How do people who become workers find out about MTurk? How do they decide to start working? How do they get along with it in the beginning? Is there a "turning point" where they "get serious"? How do people find out about worker forums? etc. I would like here, basically, to describe the "career" of a Turker in a sociological sense.]

### Worker profiles

[At least four interviews with/profiles of workers with a variety of experiences and relationships to Turking.]

### Worker perspectives

[What do workers think is good about the platform? What are the major challenges? What suggestions have they made for changes?] [These can be gathered from existing sources or we can collect new data somehow.]

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Comment [6]: <http://tinyurl.com/zaqdaq>

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Comment [7]: Let's use the most recent data we trust for every variable; for some variables (like gender) this might also be Panos' 2015 data, but there might be some psychology or social science study I missed that is somehow better.

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Comment [8]: Maybe we should have graphs for data with more than two or three "buckets"?

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Comment [9]: From the Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology (p. 55): "In commonsense usage, this is the progression of an individual through an occupation via a series of predefined institutional gateways which secure standing in the community, increasing levels of seniority within the occupation, and increasing levels of pay. The hierarchal structure of a university career provides a good example: from tutor, to lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, and, finally, professor. Max Weber argued in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905 [trans. 2002]) that the development of the career as a calling or vocation was a secular solution to the problem of salvation in Protestantism, providing a secular form of salvation through service to the community. Sociologists, particularly those in the symbolic interactionist tradition, have focused on the temporal sequencing of a career and particularly the problems that arise for organizations when individuals become blocked in their career aspirations. More broadly then, the concept of career can be applied to any ongoing sequences of changes of social status over time. Thus, the sequencing of the events that go to make a family can be conceptualized as a career. While careers are usually taken to be positive life experiences, as in a career in the professions, they can also be negatively evaluated. Erving Goffman drew attention to the negatively evaluated "moral career" of the mentally ill patient, who through a series of degradation ceremonies – the loss of an autonomous adult identity, the replacement of street clothing with institutional garments, and boundaries around their ability to interact with others – experienced a stigmatizing career. In criminology, there is also the notion of a "criminal career" in which an offender passes through a series of stages to ... [1]