

Comparing microworkers' and online freelancers' learning practices

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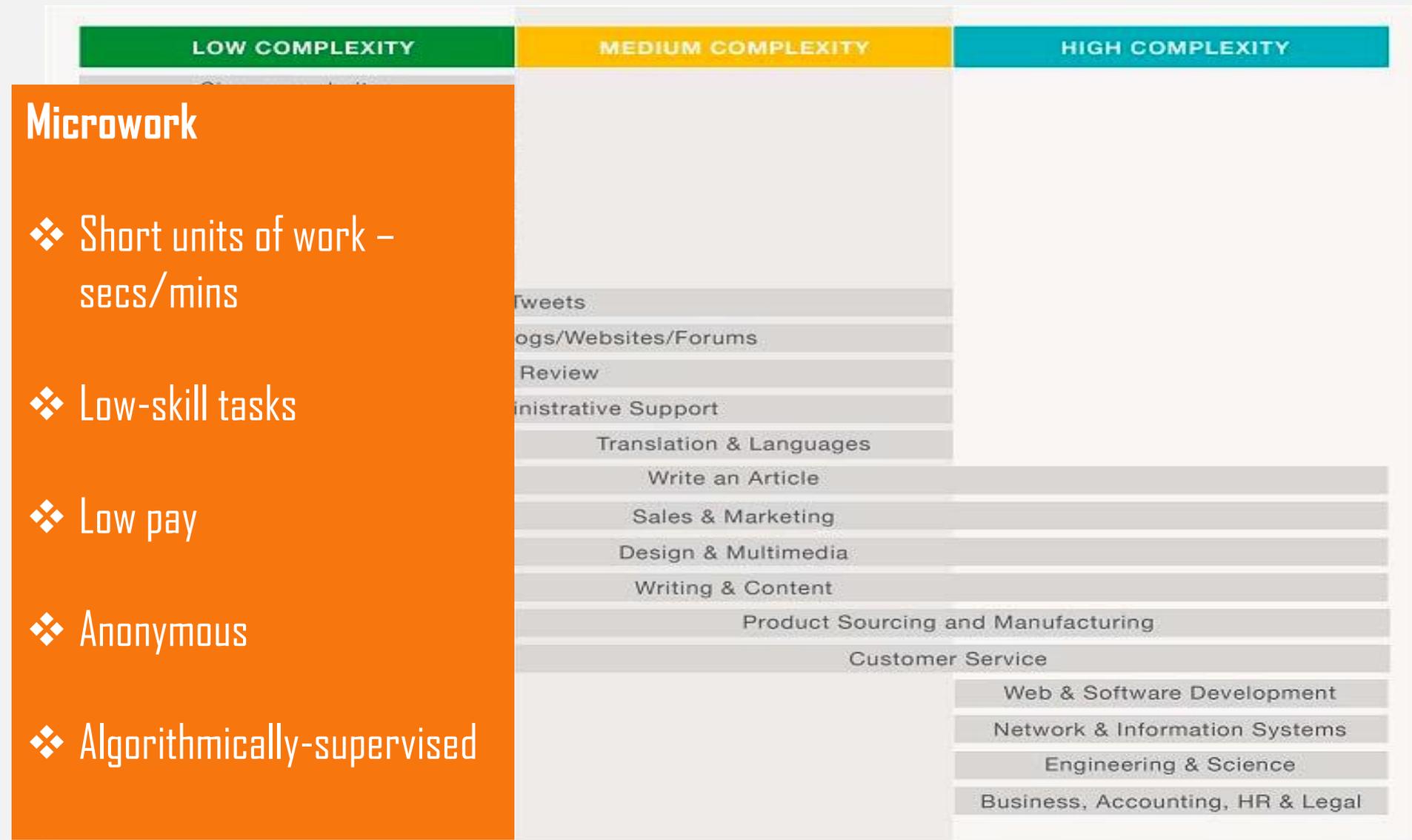
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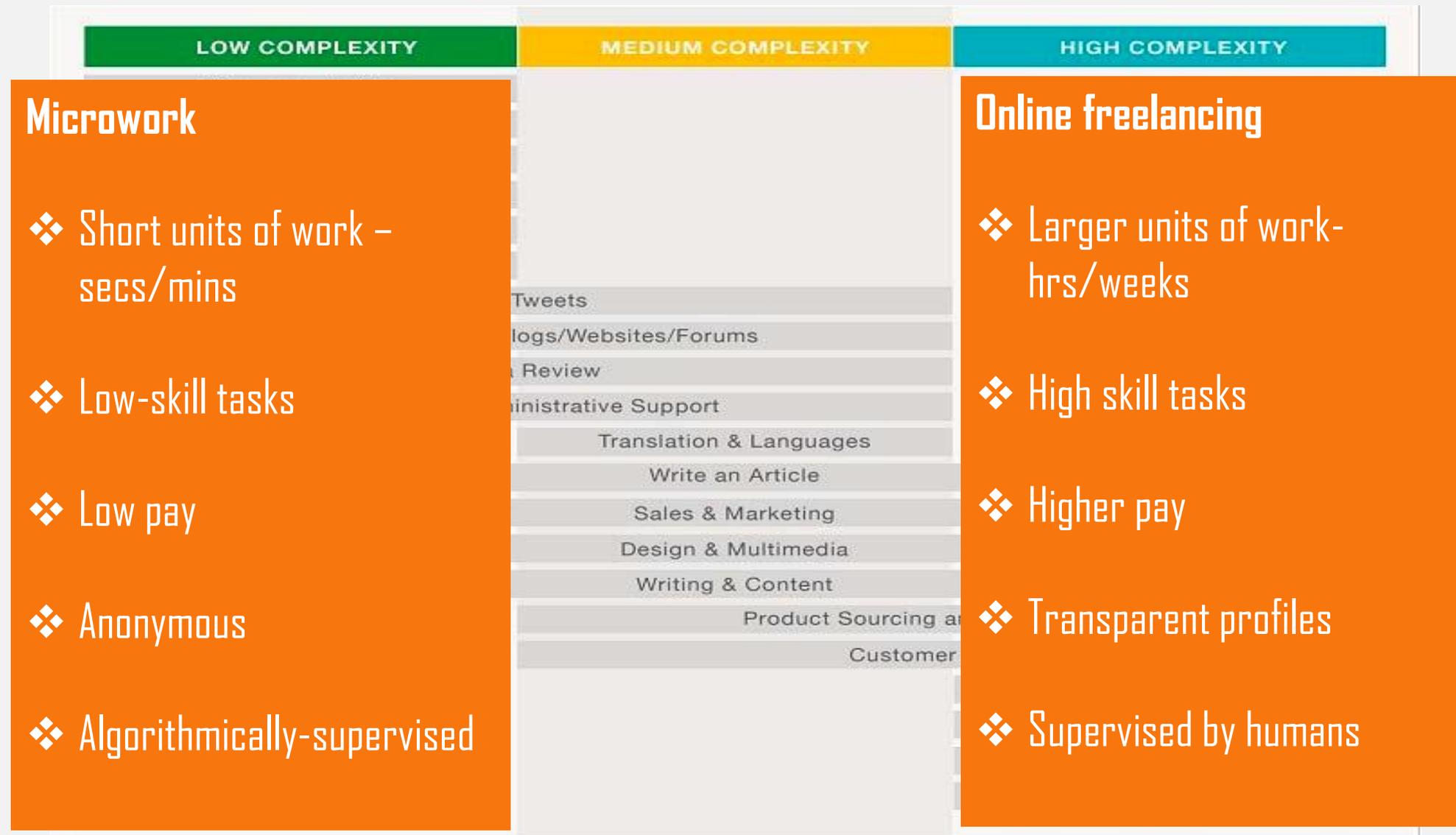
Types of crowdwork

LOW COMPLEXITY	MEDIUM COMPLEXITY	HIGH COMPLEXITY
Sign-up websites		
Search + Click		
Bookmark Webpages		
Watch Videos		
Vote		
Download app + Install		
	Post Tweets	
	Post comments on Blogs/Websites/Forums	
	Write a Review	
	Data Entry & Administrative Support	
	Translation & Languages	
	Write an Article	
	Sales & Marketing	
	Design & Multimedia	
	Writing & Content	
	Product Sourcing and Manufacturing	
	Customer Service	
		Web & Software Development
		Network & Information Systems
		Engineering & Science
		Business, Accounting, HR & Legal

Types of crowdwork



Types of crowdwork



LEARNING IN CROWDWORK

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HOME

This project examines how people within crowdwork platforms learn and develop and skills in the context of everyday work. The focus is on informal workplace learning and self-regulated by crowdworkers, for example engaging in challenging tasks, professional literature, exchanging knowledge in professional fora, or help-seeking.

In this highly distributed and fragmented type of work where workers may not have learning support and professional development opportunities available within traditional employment (e.g. training or access to experienced colleagues) how do crowdworkers organise and manage their learning? What strategies do these crowdworkers use to meet their learning needs, source relevant knowledge, and find others to learn with and

Timeline: Oct 2016 – Mar 2018

Funder: Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung

Funding: Senior Fellowship Award

Collaborators: Work Sociology @ University of Frankfurt (Heather Hofmeister)

Key outputs: WLCQ survey instrument;
Typology of learning activities and learning strategies in crowdwork;

Methodology

Workplace Learning in Crowdwork Questionnaire (WLCQ)

- ❖ Demographic questions (14 items)
- ❖ Workplace Learning Activities – 14 items, based on a typology synthesised from WPL literature (Fontana et al, 2015)
- ❖ SRL Strategies – 34 items, based on Zimmerman’s 3-phase model of SRL (Zimmerman, 2005)
- ❖ Nature of Work Tasks – 15 items (from Davenport’s typology of knowledge work and Work Design Questionnaire by Morgeson & Humphrey)

Fontana, P., Milligan, C., Littlejohn, A., & Margaryan, A. (2015). Measuring self-regulated learning in the workplace. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 19(1), 32-52

Margaryan, A., Milligan, C., & Littlejohn, A. (2011). Validation of Davenport’s classification structure of knowledge-intensive processes. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 15(4), 568-581.

Survey sample

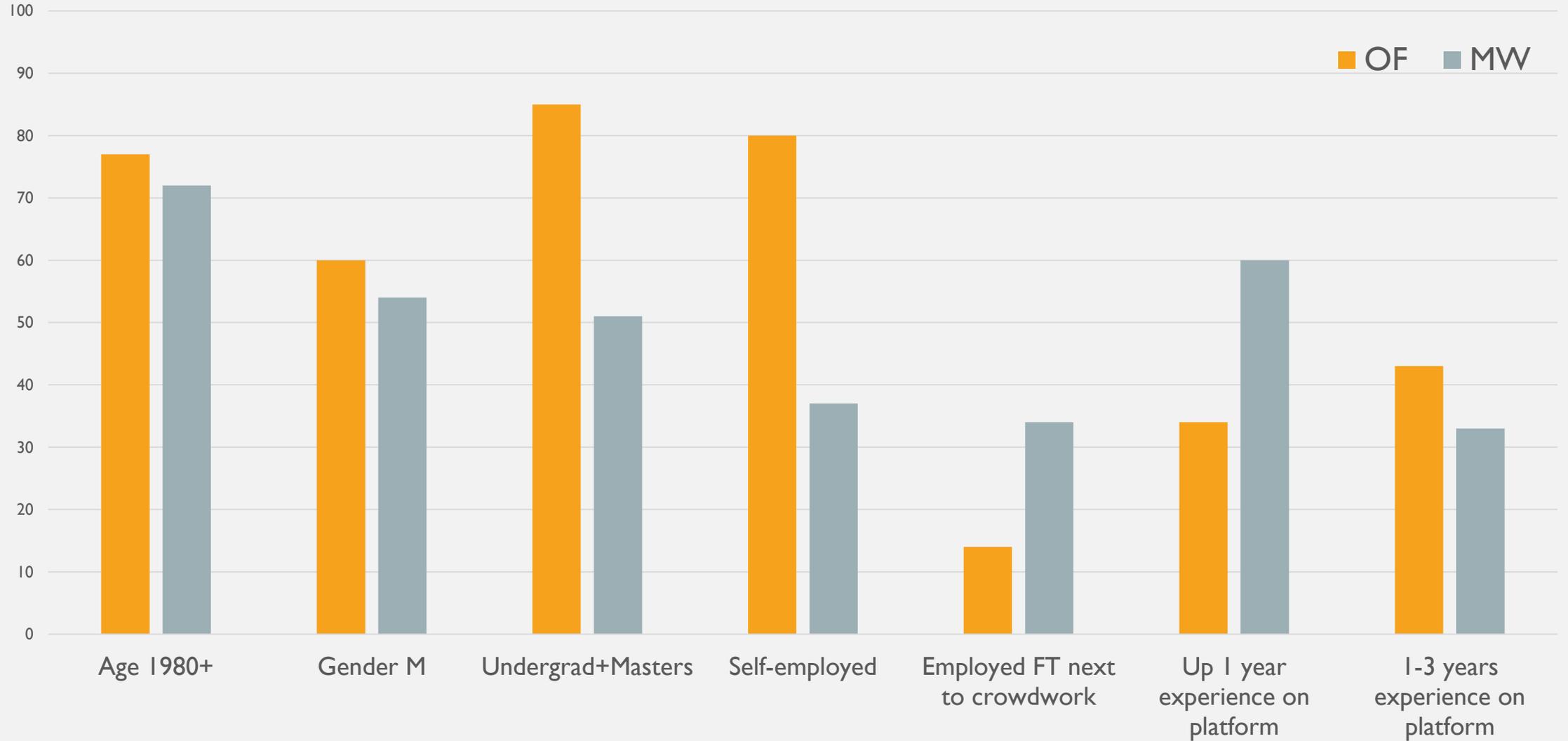
MICROWORKERS

- N=260 **FigureEight**
- Top **countries**:
 - Venezuela – 19%
 - Serbia – 8%
 - India -7%
 - Russia & Indonesia – 5%
- Top **task categories**:
 - Data categorisation – 45%
 - Transcription – 43%
 - Image annotation – 42%

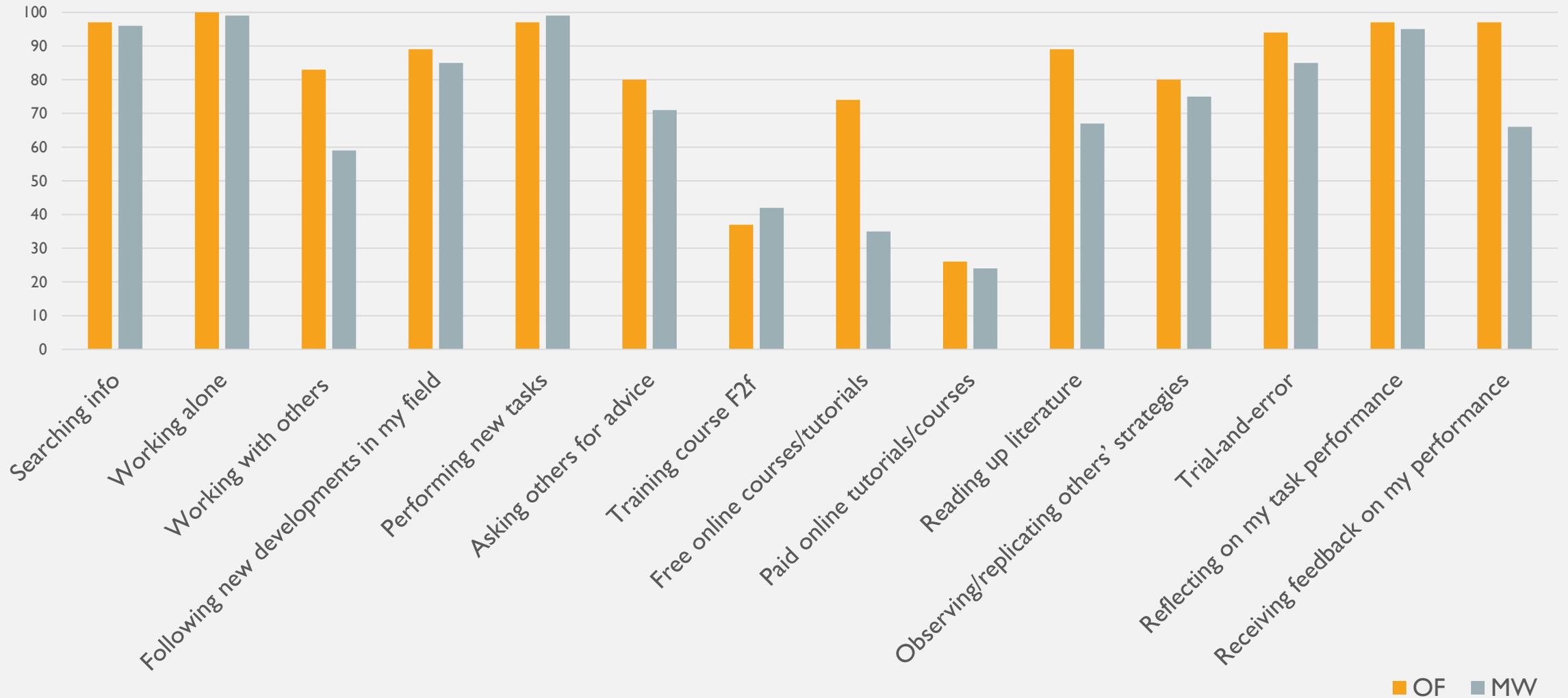
ONLINE FREELANCERS

- N=35 **Upwork**
- Top **countries**:
 - USA – 20%
 - Serbia – 17%
 - India – 14%
 - Philippines – 11%
- Top **task categories**:
 - Admin – 51%
 - Writing – 43%
 - Sales/marketing – 31%

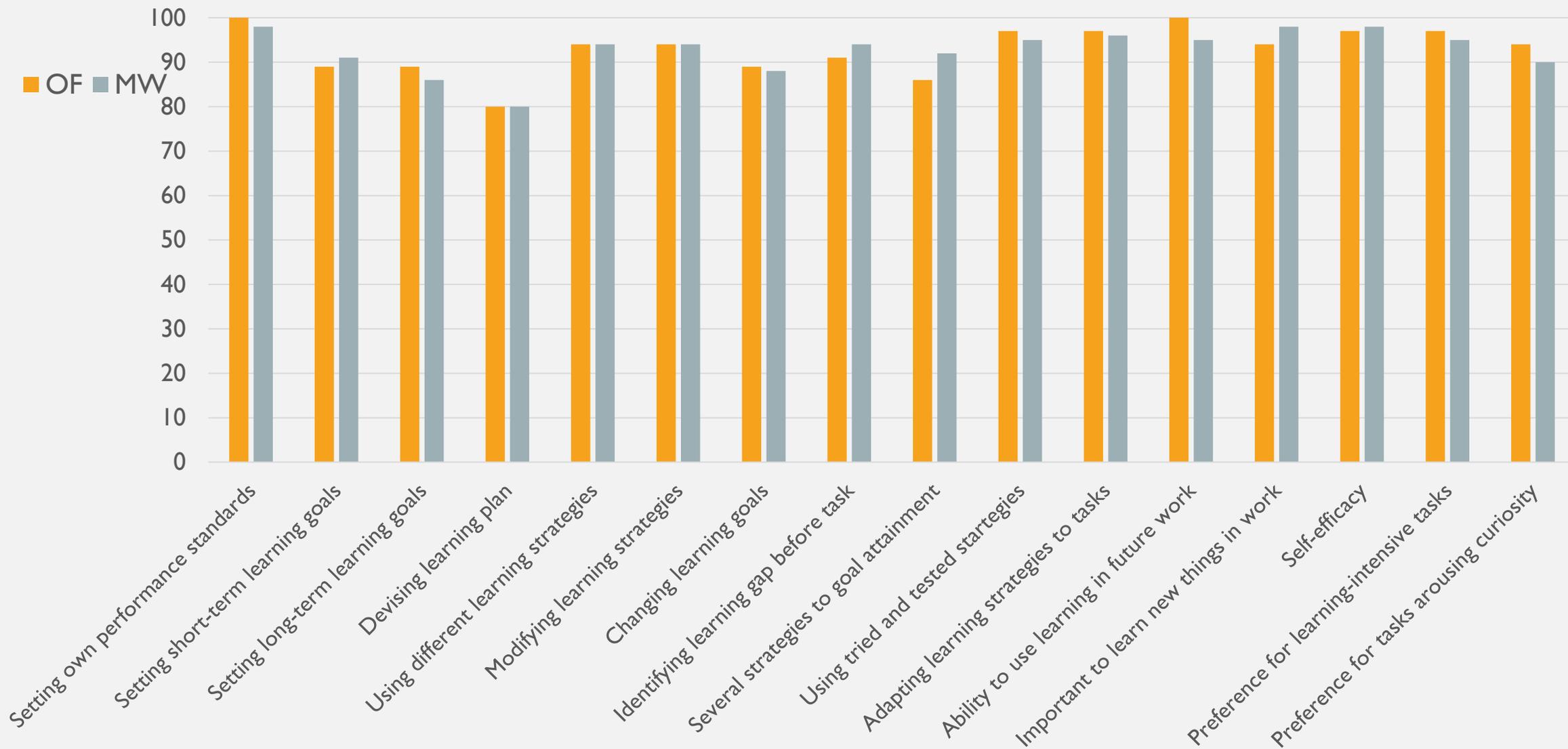
Key demographics



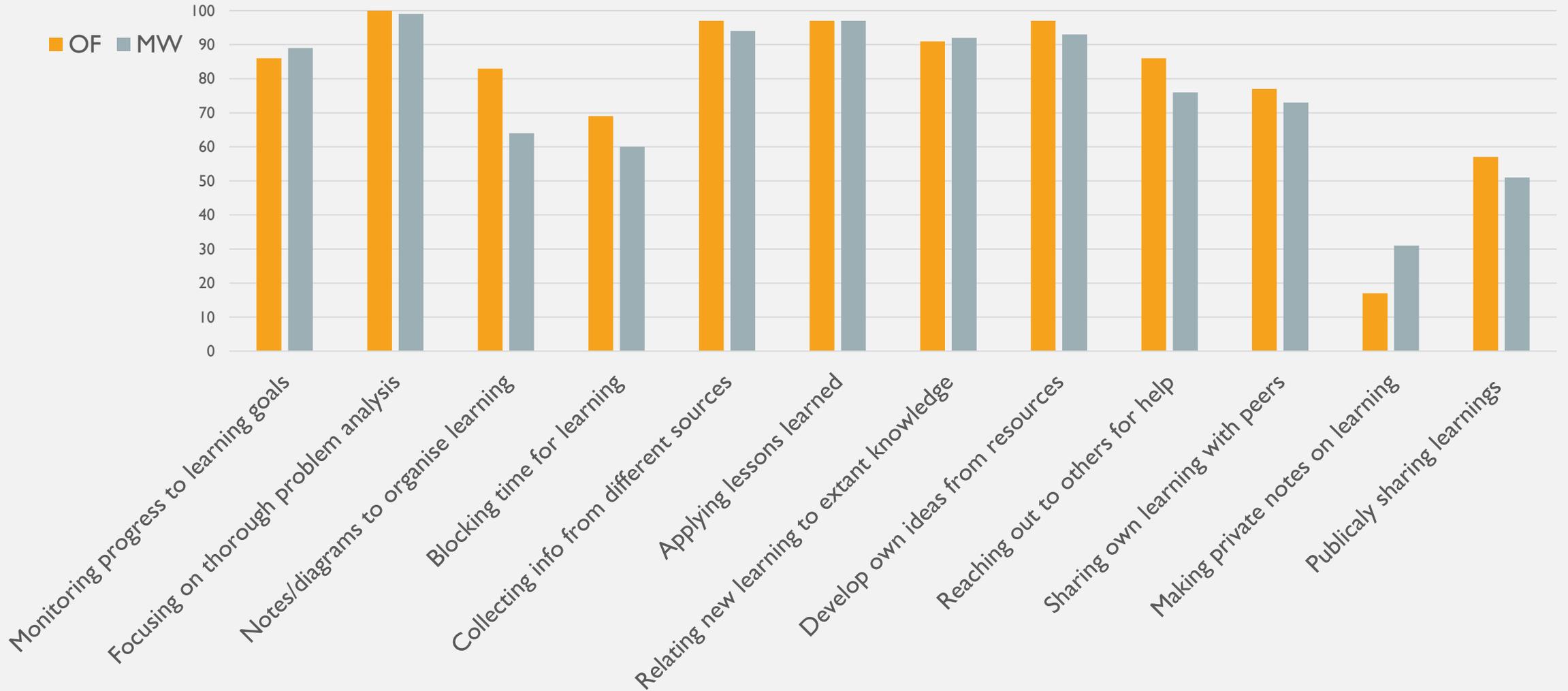
Workplace learning activities



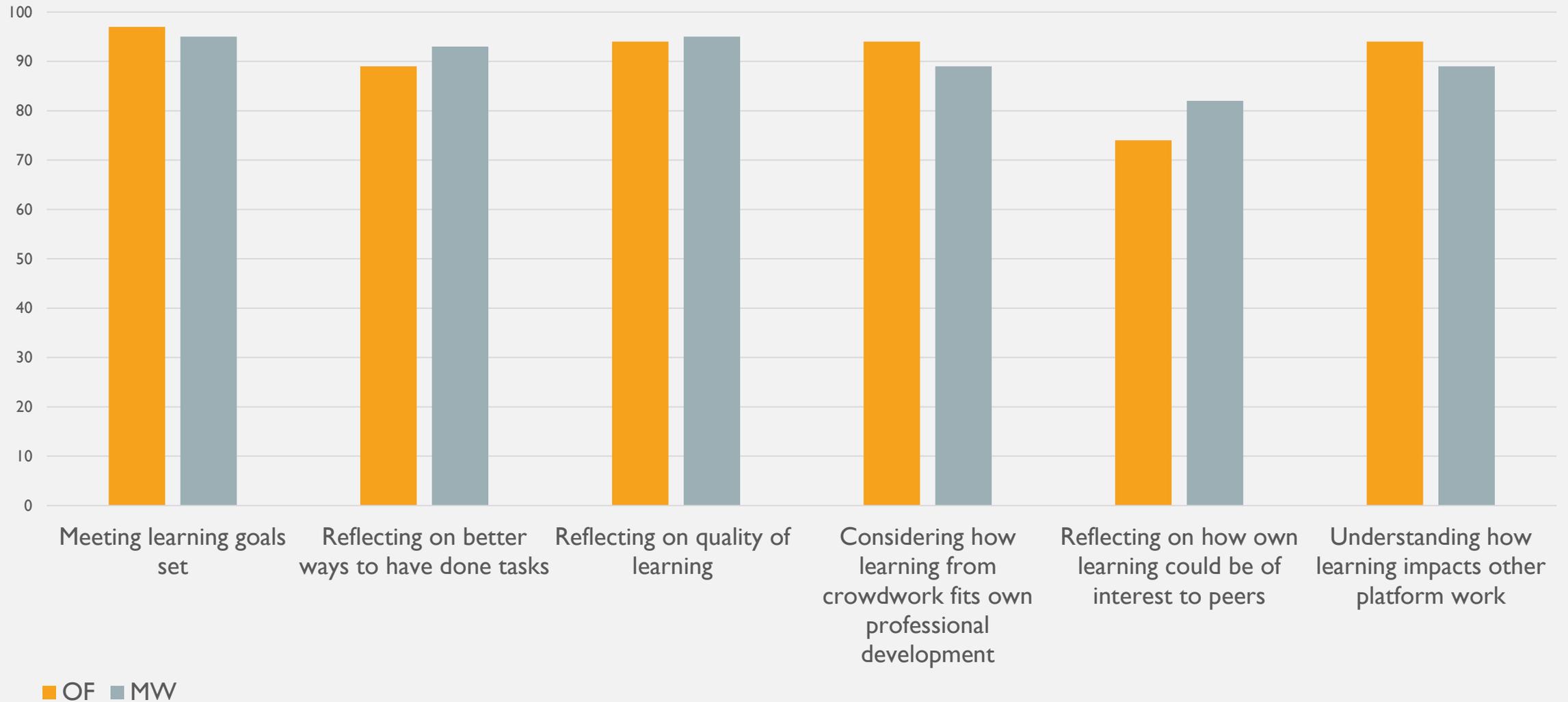
SRL strategies: Planning



SRL strategies: Implementation



SRL strategies: Reflection



Differences between MWs & OFs

Moderate or moderately strong differences:

- ❖ Online freelancers more likely to report undertaking free online courses or use free online tutorials and other online resources to support their learning
- ❖ Online freelancers more likely to learn by receiving feedback on their tasks from others

Differences between MWs & OFs

Weak or very weak associations (marginally acceptable):

- ❖ Online freelancers more likely to:
 - collaborate with others
 - self-study professional literature
 - make notes or diagrams to organise their learning
- ❖ Microworkers more likely to report making private notes about what they have learned

Conclusions

- ❖ Both types of crowdwork appear learning-intensive
- ❖ Both types of workers appear self-efficacious, intrinsically motivated, learning-oriented and self-regulated
- ❖ In both types of crowdwork workers undertake social rather than only individual learning activities and strategies
- ❖ Whilst some crowdwork tasks – especially in microwork platforms - may not require advanced skills to complete, it is misleading to suggest that workers performing these tasks are themselves low-skilled and have no opportunities to develop skills when working on platforms

Next steps

- ❖ Follow-up study funded by Cedefop: November 2019-July 2020
- ❖ Comparing CrowdLearn survey data on OFs with extant & new data on MWs
 - ❖ RQ1. What are the similarities and differences in the **scope and frequency of use of WLA and SRL strategies** between online freelancers and microworkers?
 - ❖ RQ2. What if any correlations are there between the **complexity and interdependence of crowdwork tasks** as perceived by the workers and **the scope, frequency and nature of learning processes** workers undertake?
 - ❖ RQ3. What if any correlations are there between the differential **primary motivations** that lead individuals to undertake crowdwork and **the scope, frequency and nature of learning processes** workers undertake?
 - ❖ RQ4. What if any correlations are there between the intensity of workers' **engagement in crowdwork** and the **scope, frequency and nature of learning processes** workers undertake?
 - ❖ RQ5. What if any similarities and differences are there in the **scope and frequency of use of WLAs and SRL strategies** between microworkers and online freelancers who report **low, medium and high levels of self-regulated learning behaviour**?
 - ❖ RQ6. What **hypotheses** could we formulate about the possible causes underpinning these potential correlations, to be explored in future research?

References

- Margaryan, A. (2019). Workplace learning in crowdwork: Comparing microworkers' and online freelancers' practices. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 31(4), 250-273.
- Margaryan, A. (2019). Comparing crowdworkers' and conventional knowledge workers' self-regulated learning strategies in the workplace. *Human Computation*, 6(1), 83-97.