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Global Freelance Economy Lures Workers With Average Pay Of \$19 An Hour



By Elaine Pofeldt

The global average hourly rate for freelancers is \$19, according to a new survey by the international payments platform Payoneer.

With more freelancers in emerging markets joining the freelance economy, the average hourly rate has declined from \$21 in a 2014/2015 survey. Recent research by Oxford University shows that India and Bangladesh are the largest suppliers of labor in the world in the online gig economy.

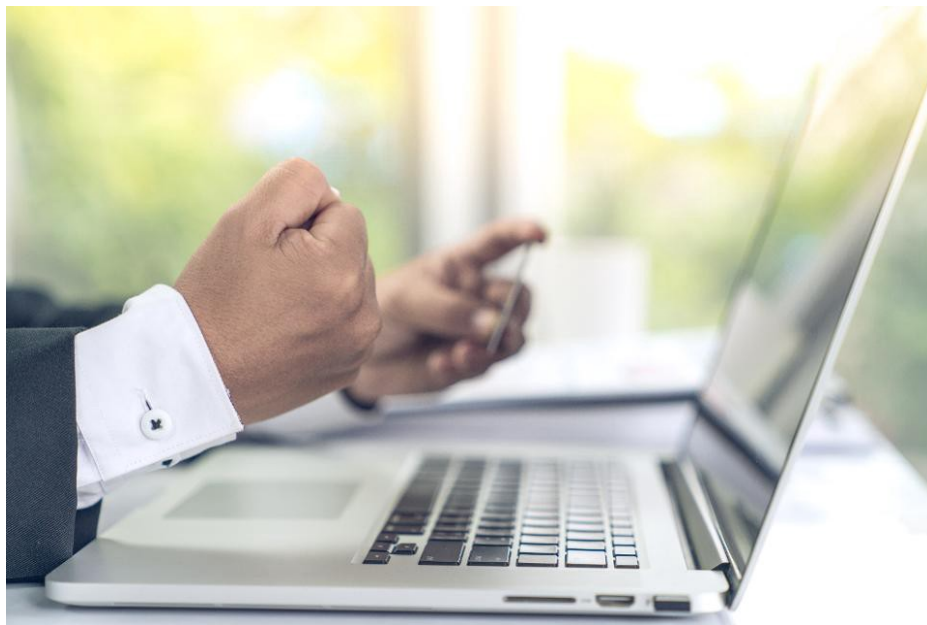
For context, the average hourly income for employees in the U.S. is \$26.55. Many employees receive compensation that includes benefits, while freelancers do not. Nonetheless the fact that the average freelancer's income in a survey like this is approaching the U.S. average hourly wage raises an interesting question: Are we heading toward a global economy where the pay gap between people living in developing countries and developed economies like the U.S. is closing?

Payoneer surveyed more than 21,000 freelancers in 170 countries in July and August. They included users of Payoneer, a platform that enables freelance platforms to make payments to customers, and freelancer who responded to the survey after hearing about it in social channels. The respondents live in Europe (35.4%), Asia (28%), Latin America (21.2%), Africa (10.1%), North America (4.1%) and the Middle East (1%).

Regardless of their location, nearly two-thirds work for clients in North America, with half working for clients in Europe. Many of the freelancers run their businesses full time, with respondents averaging 30 to 50 hours a week of work, the survey found. The majority of the freelancers are highly educated. Fifty-four percent of freelancers have a bachelor's degree—and in the Ukraine, 50% have a master's degree or Ph.D.

One great equalizer for many freelancers is access to online marketplaces. Nearly two-thirds find their jobs through these platforms.

“You’re limited only by your skills and your potential,” says Payoneer CEO Scott Galit. “If you are a really good graphic designer and can communicate through online platforms, does it really matter if you are sitting next to the person hiring you?”



Freelancing is attracting highly educated pros from around the world, a new survey found.

What unites many of the freelancers surveyed is something many Americans share: a hunger for work that can support them and their families. “When we go to a place like Bangladesh and have an event, hundreds of people will want to come, learn and take advantage of opportunities,” says Galit. “We see the same thing in Egypt, Argentina and the Philippines. It really is a global phenomenon.”



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