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SUBJECT: Report on Cognitive Testing for the 2026 Contingent Worker Supplement

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics (OEUS) is revising the Contingent Work and Alternate Work Arrangement Supplement (CWS), which will be collected in 2026 as part of the Current Population Survey (CPS). Survey Methodologists in the Office of Survey Methods Research (OSMR) conducted questionnaire pre-testing from September to December of 2025 to help inform changes to the survey.

The CWS was last conducted in 2025. The current testing focus for the 2026 survey is on questions about digital labor platform app-based work that could be used to measure those who obtain work using an app or website to directly connect them with customers, sometimes referred to as digital platform workers. There are several criteria that may distinguish work obtained using apps or websites, such as whether payment for work is made through the app or website, whether the worker is paid by the task or project, whether the worker creates a profile or receives a customer rating through the app, and how long the typical task or project lasts.

With the changing landscape of work, CPS has been exploring the possibility of expanding the reference period for digital platform work beyond the one-week CPS reference week. This would allow the survey to capture workers who may have done this type of work outside the current one-week reference period and would be more representative of the labor market. For example, some digital platform work may occur sporadically, as people do short-term tasks, jobs, or projects when their schedules allow. Other surveys, such as the Survey of Informal Work Participation (SIWP) and the Survey of Household Economics and Decision-making (SHED) have used a broader reference period (e.g., 4 weeks or longer). To avoid issues with recall bias, a reference period should be employed that extends the current one-week reference period but remains within the recent past (e.g., the last 4 weeks). Additionally, expanding the universe of this question to those who are unemployed or out-of-the-labor force may help capture digital platform work that does not occur during the reference week.

For the 2026 CWS platform work testing, we assessed whether respondents understand the questions and can answer the questions as intended using a 4-week reference period. The purpose of the cognitive testing was to ensure that (a) the questions show construct validity and will serve to address the issues outlined above, (b) respondents understand the terminology used in the questions, (c) respondents have the requisite knowledge to answer the questions, and (d) whether respondents have difficulty or sensitivity answering the supplement questions. Testing included one round of cognitive interviews followed by a web-probing study and focused on evaluating

new questions developed since the 2025 supplement. The questionnaire was changed iteratively between studies to make improvements to the questionnaire and retest the questions.

COGNITIVE INTERVIEW METHODS

OSMR conducted one round of cognitive testing with a total of 17 participants. See Appendix A for the testing protocol. Participants who indicated that they worked full or part time doing one of the following types of work: task- or app-based work, freelancing, self-employed, work as an independent contractor, or lived with someone else who did so (i.e., proxy response) were prioritized while recruiting for the interviews. Some participants or proxies who had traditional wage and salary jobs or who were not currently in the labor force were included in the sample to determine how the questions functioned for them. Participants in the labor force were offered a \$50 incentive for a 60-minute interview; participants not in the labor force were offered a \$25 incentive for a 30-minute interview. OSMR interviewers administered a brief set of CPS labor force questions, as well as a household roster of other adults aged 15 and above. Afterward, participants answered the CWS platform work questionnaire for themselves and up to two additional household members. After completing the questionnaire, participants answered debriefing questions about their experience answering the questions.

Participants

A total of 17 (11 female, 6 male) participants were included in cognitive testing. The average age of the participants was 46 years old, with a range of 32 to 64 years old. Fifteen participants had a Bachelor’s degree or higher, 1 had some college, and 1 had a high school diploma. In addition to the 17 self-reports by the participants, 13 proxy reports were also provided. A total of 11 participants (8 self-response and 3 proxy-response) had multiple jobs. Twelve participants were digital platform workers (9 self-response and 3 proxy-response). When asked about their employment status, no participants responded Don’t Know, and no one refused to answer. Table 1 displays additional information about the participants’ employment status.

Table 1. Employment Status of Participants in the Cognitive Interviews

Employment Status	Main Job			Second Job		
	Self	Proxy	Total	Self	Proxy	Total
Family Business	0	1	1	0	0	0
Government	1	0	1	0	0	0
Non-profit Organization	2	4	6	0	0	0
Not in the Labor Force	2	0	2	0	0	0
Private Company	5	6	11	1	2	3
Self-employed	7	2	9	7	1	8
Total	17	13	30	8	3	11

WEB-PROBING METHODS

Following the cognitive interview study, OSMR conducted a web-probing study with 472 participants recruited from a nonprobability web panel where participants take short surveys for pay. Data were collected between December 15 to 26 of 2025. Based on the findings and recommendations from the cognitive interview study, some questions were revised for testing in the web-probing study. See Appendix B for the web questionnaire and debriefing questions. Note that where applicable, we asked participants to exclude work they do completing online surveys. Participants who worked full or part time doing gig or freelance work were recruited, along with a subsample of participants who were not currently in the labor force and wage and salary workers. The web survey took an average of 12.8 minutes to complete, and participants were compensated \$3.25. Like the cognitive interviews, participants completed some basic CPS labor force questions, the CWS platform work questions, and answered a mix of closed and open-ended probes about their response process and comprehension of the questions.

Participants

A total of 472 participants completed the web-probing survey. Their mean age was 39.5 years old and ranged from 18 to 80 years. A total of 60.2% of participants were female and 39.4% were male. A total of 44.3% had a bachelor's degree; 38.3% had some college or associate's degree; 15.9% had a high school diploma, and 0.8% had less than a high school diploma. Table 2 below shows the type of work participants reported doing.

Table 2. Number and percentage of participants who reported doing app-based work, were not in the labor force, or did other freelance or wage and salary work ($N=472$).

	n	%
App-based work in the last 4 weeks, including the last week	213	45.1%
App-based work in the last 4 weeks, but not last week	30	6.4%
Not in the labor force	22	4.7%
Initially not in the labor force, but did app-based work in the last 4 weeks	4	0.8%
Other freelance or wage and salary work	203	43.0%

RESULTS

DP1 (Cognitive Interviews)

Next, I am going to ask about paid work people get through an app or website.

This work can include tasks, jobs, or projects like providing customers with transportation, food delivery, home health care, tutoring, or writing computer code.

Please include any work obtained through an app or website even if it wasn't your main job.

Did you use an app or website to get any of the paid work you did LAST WEEK? / If you HAD worked last week, would you have used an app or website to get any of that work?

1. Yes
2. No

This question was designed to introduce the concept of platform-based work. Participants in the cognitive interview study understood this question well. However, many thought their response should be limited to the five examples provided:

- “My reaction is when you start listing, that’s all you see.”
- “The way the question was framed seemed limited to the five examples.”

Several participants suggested that the phrase “examples include, but are not limited to,” could be added for clarification. The first two examples (i.e., transportation and food delivery) resonated the most with participants, likely because they are common categories for digital platform work. The last three examples (i.e., home health care, tutoring, and writing computer code) were less familiar, although participants could imagine that they existed. For the web-probing study, a new “read if necessary” statement was added to help respondents understand that the instrument is not meant to *just* collect instances of the five provided examples. The revised wording is displayed below.

DP1 (Web-Probing)

Next, I am going to ask about paid work people get through an app or website.

Examples of this work may include tasks, jobs, or projects like providing customers with transportation, food delivery, home health care, tutoring, or writing computer code.

- Please include any work obtained through an app or website even if it wasn't your main job.
- Include any paid work you got through an app or website, even if it was not one of these examples.

Did you use an app or website to get any of the paid work you did LAST WEEK? / If you HAD worked last week, would you have used an app or website to get any of that work?

In the web-probing study, a total of 433 participants answered this question. Responses were close to evenly split (51.7% answered yes and 48.3% answered no). In crossing this question

with the later question asking for the name of the app/website, participants mostly included the expected apps and websites people use to get work (e.g., food delivery, graphic design, training AI). No additional wording changes were recommended.

DP3 (Cognitive Interviews and Web-Probing)

Now we are switching the time frame from LAST WEEK to the LAST MONTH, that is the last 4 weeks.

In addition to last week, did you use an app or website to get ANY paid work in any other of the LAST 4 WEEKS? / Even though you didn't use an app or website to get the paid work you did last week, did you use an app or website to get ANY paid work in any other of the LAST 4 WEEKS?

1. Yes
2. No

This question introduced the change in reference period from last week to last month, or the last 4 weeks. Participants did not have any major problems with this question. All participants in the cognitive interviews noticed the switch from last week to the last 4 weeks. They did not find the switch to be “jarring.” One participant appreciated the expansion of the time frame because it reduced cognitive burden:

- “I appreciate the expansion because things change for me. I knew I was gone during one or two of those weeks, which made it difficult to answer it. [The time was] generally over those 4 weeks so I didn't have to think about it.”

Interpretations of “last month” and “last 4 weeks” varied slightly. Some participants lumped last month and the last 4 weeks together, indicating they were the same time frame:

“If you had said last month, right away I thought of all of August. I think it means the last 4 weeks.”

Other participants specifically focused on the weeks, tried to count back the days, used a calendar, or decided the time frame didn't matter because their answer wouldn't change:

“I thought of 4 weeks ago from today and then last month. Then decided it didn't matter since the answer was yes either way.”

Participants who regularly used an app or website to get paid work used their typical work schedule and pay schedule as time references. The change in reference period did not make a difference to their answer:

- “Easy because I did it all 4 weeks.”
- “I could delineate between work I did last week and work I did last month.”

- “I always do it, so it applies no matter what time frame you put in there.”

The same question wording was used in the web-probing study. A total of 433 participants received this question, and 54.0% responded yes and 46.0% responded no; this may have been somewhat lower than expected due to the instructions to exclude work doing online surveys. Of those, 30 participants did app-based work in the last month, but not the last week. These participants reported doing similar types of work to other participants. Based on these findings, no changes to the question wording were recommended.

DP4 (Cognitive Interviews and Web-Probing)

Even though you didn't do any work for pay in the last week, people sometimes may have worked for pay in the last month, that is the last 4 weeks.

In the LAST 4 WEEKS, did you do any work for pay (or profit)?

1. Yes
2. No

This question was designed to collect data from respondents who initially indicated they had not done work for pay in the last week but may have worked in the last month. Of the 17 cognitive interview participants, only four received this question either for themselves or a proxy due to the universe being only those unemployed or not in the labor force. Most of the participants answered the question easily, despite the expanded time frame. One participant was disabled so she didn't do any work for pay or profit. For this individual, the time frame didn't make a difference: “Somebody paid me to do a job. The time frame is very fresh in my mind.” One participant who had some difficulty answering the question initially answered “yes” but changed their answer to “no” after rethinking the time frame. This participant said they would have answered “yes” if it were within the last five weeks. The same question wording was tested in the web-probing study, with 39 participants receiving it. A total of 33.3% selected yes and 66.7% selected no. No additional problems were observed, and no additional question wording changes were recommended.

DP5 (Cognitive Interviews and Web-Probing)

Now we are interested in a specific type of work, that is, paid work people get through an app or website.

This work can include tasks, jobs, or projects like providing customers with transportation, food delivery, home health care, tutoring, or writing computer code.

Did you use an app or website to get ANY of the paid work that you did in the LAST 4 WEEKS?

1. Yes
2. No

This question was a follow-up to see if work done in the last 4 weeks was digital platform work. Few participants received this question due to the universe being not-employed people who worked in the last four weeks. However, those receiving the question understood its meaning correctly. Like the previous questions, all participants in the cognitive interviews noticed the shift in the reference period. When probed on how they calculated the “last four weeks,” most participants said they counted back from the current week rather than thinking about specific dates, suggesting that participants were relying on a ballpark estimate of the last four weeks rather than an exact date. Most participants were unaffected by the shift mainly because they did app-based work regularly. In the web-probing study, only 13 participants received this question, with just four responding “yes.” Those four participants reported doing work that aligned well with digital platform work, such as food delivery, grocery delivery, and online content creation. No additional wording changes were recommended.

DP6 (Cognitive Interviews and Web-Probing)

In how many of the last 4 WEEKS did you do paid work that you got through an app or website?

Please include weeks when you did this kind of work for only a few days or hours.

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4 (Every week)
5. Didn't do it in the last month

The next question collected the number of weeks respondents had done digital platform work of the last four weeks. Most participants understood this question as intended and found it easy to answer. Participants in the cognitive interviews understood that the question was asking about

how many of the last 4 weeks the work was done. Most recalled this information from memory, though some looked at records to verify the information. Because most participants tended to have very structured work schedules, they sometimes answered based on their general work schedule, for example:

- “If I had only worked 2 out of the 4 weeks, it would have been more difficult to remember, but I still would have gotten there.”
- “The question was easy to answer - I worked for pay through an app or website all 4 weeks. That would include any amount of work I've done in the last 4 weeks.”

Most participants felt even a very short amount of work during any particular week would “count” as a yes toward this answer:

- “I take as if you've done any at all. It could be just minutes, but that would sound weird. You should include anything you did.”
- “No - not a certain amount, as long as you did it. Even 5 minutes and get income.”

Like in the cognitive interviews, most participants in the web-probing study (68.6%) reported doing app-based work every week. Because this question worked well in both the cognitive interviews and web-probing study, no wording changes were recommended.

DP7

In those weeks that you did work that you got through an app or website, how many DAYS per week did you typically do this work?

1. ____ days (1-7)
2. It varied.

[If it varied, ask: Is it typically 4 or more days per week? Yes/No]

The next question asked about the typical number of days per week respondents did digital platform work. Participants in the cognitive interviews understood what this question was asking. Those with consistent schedules were easily able to answer since the days worked tended to stay the same. However, for some it was harder to answer because the days per week worked varied for them:

- “It's not consistent. It does vary from week to week. You might have a really good week where you have 4 or 5. Or you may have a slow week where you only have 1. I know lately I've had really good weeks where the work is consistent.”
- “On average it's 2. Some weeks I do 2, some weeks I do 1, some weeks I do 4. In general it's 2.”

In the web-probing study, a total of 249 participants received this question, and of those, 61.4% entered in a number of days per week they do app-based work. The average number of days

worked was 5.0 (SD=1.5). A total of 38.6% of participants answered that “it varies.” Participants who indicated “it varies” (n=96) were then asked if it is typically 4 or more days per week; a total of 62.5% indicated yes and 37.5% said no. Because respondents can indicate that their days per week vary, and all understood the question, no wording changes were recommended based on these findings.

DP8 (Cognitive Interviews and Web-Probing)

On the days that you did work that you got through an app or website, how many HOURS per day did you typically spend doing this work?

1. ____ hours
2. It varied

[If it varied, ask: Is it typically 4 or more hours per day? Yes/No]

The next question collected the typical number of hours spent on digital platform work. Participants in the cognitive interviews understood this question well. Some participants mentioned that they might forget to count days where they only did a very short task. However, most participants considered any amount of work to count as a day: “No. If I used the app to work, it was a day.” In the web-probing study, a total of 249 participants received this question, and 50.2% entered a number of hours. The mean number of hours worked per day was 4.8 (SD=2.5), consistent with responses to the previous question. For the 124 participants responding that it varied (49.8%), a total of 63.7% answered they typically work 4 or more hours per day, and 36.3% answered they did not. Based on these findings, no additional wording changes were recommended.

DP9 (Cognitive Interviews)

In the weeks you got work through an app or website, was this your only paid work or did you also have other paid employment?

Read if necessary: In other words, did you combine the work you got through an app or website with another job or other paid work?

1. Only paid employment
2. Had other paid work

The next question asked whether respondents only did digital platform work during the reference period or also had other paid work (not through an app/website). During the cognitive interviews, some confusion occurred with this question. Participants who had full-time jobs and did not consider app work their main job answered “other paid work.” When asked what “other paid employment” meant to them, they mentioned the context of the question and assumed all app or website work should be lumped together: “Since this question is specifically about apps and

websites, other paid employment would be like my full-time job.” However, some participants also wondered if using multiple apps or websites counted as more than one job: “I guess I could have more considering however many research projects I have or surveys I do...So I guess that you could technically count that as more.”

The read if necessary (RIN) language was also confusing to some participants. One participant said using the word “combine” made the statement unclear: “When you combine something, you’re also excluding other. If you’re combining something, you’re not going to say other.” In contrast, another participant said “combine” made the question easier to understand. One participant thought the read if necessary language was redundant because the question asked the same thing. When comparing the question to the read if necessary language, one participant stated employment meant full time employment, and work could be less specific or refer to apps or websites: “Probably employment is a little clearer, because employment would mean your other [job], like a full-time job. Where other paid work I guess could be kind of the same [as] through the apps or websites.”

Because participants who held multiple app-based jobs had problems answering this question, for the web-probing study, it was recommended that the question be revised to make clear the intention is to collect data on additional employment that is *not* through an app or website. The response options were reworded to reflect the question wording change. We also recommended removing the read if necessary language and added a follow-up probe (for testing purposes) to get a description of the other paid employment.

DP9 (Web-Probing)

In the weeks you got work through an app or website, was this your ONLY paid work or did you also have other paid employment that was not through an app or website?

1. Only work through an app or website
2. Had other paid employment NOT through an app or website

DP9_Probe

(If 2) What was that other paid employment that was not through an app or website?

In the web-probing study, of the 248 participants who received this question, 62.9% indicated that their only work was through an app or website, and 37.1% indicated that they had other paid employment NOT through an app or website. We added a follow-up probe to obtain descriptions of the other paid employment. Of the 92 participants who received the follow-up probe, we found that most provided descriptions matching what they reported to be their main job, most of which did not appear to be app-based work (e.g., tourism sales, shop manager, or retail worker). In fact, many just wrote “my main job,” suggesting most participants understood the question. Overall, comprehension of the question seemed to improve in the web-probing study. Thus, the revised wording of the question was recommended.

DP10 (Cognitive Interviews and Web-Probing)

In the weeks you did both work you got through an app or website AND had other paid employment, on which type of work did you spend the most time?

1. Work through the app
2. Other employment
3. It varies

This question was designed to determine which type of work respondents spent the most time doing (app-based work or their other employment). During the cognitive interviews, this question was simple to answer for people with traditional jobs (i.e., wage and salary). In these cases, “other employment” was easily differentiated from work obtained through an app or website and these participants tended to answer the question correctly. However, answering this question was more difficult for people who did several types of app-based work, especially if they answered the prior question incorrectly and considered additional app-based work to count as their “other employment” even though all their work was obtained through an app or website. In the web probing study, a total of 92 participants received this question. Just under half (48.9%) responded that they spent most time on other employment, while 22.8% answered they spent most time on their app-based work, and 28.3% indicated that it varied. Due to the improvement made to the previous question (DP9), no other problems with the question were anticipated and no additional changes were recommended.

DP13 (Cognitive Interviews)

Using [fill name/this app or website], what kind of work did you do?

1. Provided personal transportation, ride services
2. Delivered food or other goods
3. Cared for people (childcare, eldercare, home health care) or pets
4. Home maintenance (furniture assembly, cleaning, repair work, painting)
5. Computer programming or coding
6. Translation, proofreading, editing
7. Tutoring or training
8. Data entry/annotation, training/testing for AI
9. Created online content such as videos, blogs, or podcasts
10. Property rental
11. Sold or advertised goods online (including used or handmade goods)
12. Other [*specify*]

This question was designed to collect what type of work respondents do using the app or website. It was asked as an open-ended question during the interviews, and the researcher coded the response to 12 available categories. During the cognitive interviews, no major issues were

observed with this question. Participants viewed the 12 response categories during the debriefing and provided feedback on which category fit their work best. In general, participants did not have difficulty categorizing the kind of work they did when seeing the response options during the debriefing. They thought the categories were clear and easy to understand. They described the list of categories as “comprehensive,” “expansive,” and “spelled out really well.” Most participants said their work would fit best under 2: Delivered food or other goods; 6: Translation, proofreading, editing; or 12: Other. Some participants selected “other” because none of the categories accurately described the kind of work they did. For example, one participant picked up jobs working at events. Other participants worked as a mystery shopper, recruiter for online studies, and in clinical trials.

When asked if there were missing categories that should be included, participants mentioned graphic design, website design, catering, creating social media content, and mystery shopping. A few participants wondered where freelance work platforms should be placed. Because several participants stated that they expected graphic design to be included as an option, we recommended that graphic design be added to category five. The question was revised for the web-probing study to include this category.

DP13 (Web-Probing)

Using (fill name/this app or website), what kind of work did you do?

1. Provided personal transportation, ride services
2. Delivered food or other goods
3. Cared for people (childcare, eldercare, home health care) or pets
4. Home maintenance (furniture assembly, cleaning, repair work, painting)
5. Computer programming or coding, software engineering, and graphic design
6. Translation, proofreading, editing
7. Tutoring or training
8. Data entry/annotation, training/testing for AI
9. Created online content such as videos, blogs or podcasts
10. Property rental
11. Sold or advertised goods online (including used or handmade goods)
12. Other, specify

Table 3 below displays the response frequencies for DP13 in the web-probing study.

Table 3. Percent each response category was selected in the web-probing study for DP13 (n=248)

Response Category	Percent selected
Provided personal transportation, ride services	1.2%
Delivered food or other goods	15.3%
Cared for people (childcare, eldercare, home health care) or pets	2.4%
Home maintenance (furniture assembly, cleaning, repair work, painting)	0.0%

Computer programming or coding, software engineering, and graphic design	5.6%
Translation, proofreading, editing	4.8%
Tutoring or training	4.4%
Data entry/annotation, training/testing for AI	27.0%
Created online content such as videos, blogs or podcasts	9.7%
Property rental	0.0%
Sold or advertised goods online (including used or handmade goods)	8.5%
Other, specify	21.0%

Work done in data entry and AI training was the most selected category (27.0%), followed by delivery (15.3%), and Other responses (21.0%). The most common “other” response was survey-taking. Thus, adding another category such as “Participated in market research, research studies, or surveys,” was recommended to capture these responses.

DP17 (Cognitive Interviews)

Excluding tips, do you get paid through [app/website] or were you paid directly by the customer?

Read if necessary: If you use more than one app or website, think about the one you use to get most of your work.

1. The app or website
2. Directly by customer

The next question asked respondents how they get paid for their work (through the app or directly via the customer). During the cognitive interviews, some confusion was observed with this question. Most participants felt the answer was the app or website, but some were uncertain because the customer pays through the app, which then pays them: “Both - the customer pays, then through the app.” Other participants answered that they are paid by the customer, because the customer provides payment through the app: “Does the customer pay for it or Uber eats, not including tips - I would say customers pay for the service.” To clarify what it means to be paid through the app versus outside of the app, we recommended changing the question stem and response categories to contrast these two payment methods: “Excluding tips, do you get paid through [app name] or were you paid directly by the customer OUTSIDE of [app name]?” This wording was tested in the web-probing study.

DP17 (Web-Probing)

Excluding tips, do you get paid through [app/website] or were you paid directly by the customer OUTSIDE of the app or website?

1. The app or website
2. Directly by customer
3. Both

In the web-probing study, we tested the revised wording above, designed to clarify that being paid directly by the customer means being paid outside of the app or website used to obtain work. Of the 225 participants who received this question, most (75.6%) answered that they are paid through the app or website; 16.4% answered directly by the customer; and 8.0% answered “both.” A minority of participants who reported using the same app to obtain work reported different answers to this question. The reason for the inconsistency was likely because many participants appeared to not read the instructions to exclude tips from their response. Another source of confusion, similar to the cognitive interviews, was because customers pay the app, and then the app pays the worker. A handful of participants mentioned connecting with the customer via the app but getting paid outside of the app, especially for repeat customers.

Participants who were administered DP17 were also asked an open-ended probe about what it means to be paid directly by the customer outside of the app or website. Although many participants mentioned that this arrangement wouldn’t apply to them, they still understood what this meant:

- “That would be for a gig like babysitting, where a parent pays you outside of whatever platform they found you on; it doesn’t apply to me.”
- “Paid by the client rather than through the platform.”

However, a few participants still mentioned how this works with the app they use, noting that customers provide payment to the app, and the app pays the workers:

- “Customer pays company and company pays me.”
- “I don’t really understand this question. I do deliveries and get a base pay from the company I’m delivering for and customers pay them.”

It was recommended to keep the wording of DP17 tested in the web-probing study, which seemed to improve comprehension of the question compared to the cognitive interview study. Due to some confusion observed on what it means to be paid through the app versus directly by the customer, we recommended adding additional “Read-if-necessary” language for interviewers to clarify what counts as being paid through the app/website versus the customer:

- **Read if necessary: Being paid through the app or website INCLUDES when customers pay through the app, and then the app pays you.**

- Read if necessary: Customers paying directly can include them paying you using a different app than the one you used to get the work.

DP20 (Cognitive Interviews)

How do you usually get work using this app or website? Does it assign work; do you select tasks, jobs, or projects; do customers choose you; or something else?

Read if Necessary: Customers choosing you includes them selecting you after you have applied for or bid on a project.

- (1) The app assigns it
- (2) You select tasks, jobs, or projects
- (3) Customers choose you
- (4) Something else

During the cognitive interviews, participants understood this question well. However, most expressed that they wanted an answer option that the app assigns them work, but they can then accept or decline it; other times this caused confusion on whether to select category one or two, or because the categories were not mutually exclusive and multiple categories could apply:

- “The app does assign it but I have the ability to decline it.”
- “This was a little difficult because the app assigns it, but I also select it. It's not a true assignment. They offer it to me and I have the right to say if I'm going to accept it.”

Some participants elaborated that the confusion stemmed from the interpretation that category #1 implied that once the app assigns it, you are required to do the task:

- “I thought this meant once the app assigns you, you HAVE to do it.”
- “This implies that the app assigns you a task and you cannot accept or decline, you HAVE to do it, or you get penalized. If you get under a certain rating, then that can be bad and you lose your job.”

To address this confusion, we revised the question for the web-probing study to emphasize the word “USUALLY” to convey that while multiple answers may apply, we were interested in collecting their *usual* method of getting work. We also added language to the first response category to convey that they could accept or decline work the app assigned to them.

DP20 (Web-Probing)

How do you USUALLY get work using this app or website? Does it assign work that you can accept or decline; do you select tasks, jobs, or projects; do customers choose you; or something else?

1. The app assigns it, but I can accept or decline
2. I select tasks, jobs, or projects
3. Customers choose me (this includes customers selecting you after you have applied for or bid on a project)
4. Something else (specify)

In the web-probing study, a total of 227 participants received this question. As seen in Table 4 below, responses were mixed, with the most frequently chosen option being “I select tasks, jobs, or projects,” followed by the app assigning work, and then customers choosing them. Participants selecting “something else” often did so to indicate they used multiple methods to get work:

- “I have to apply for jobs and then be accepted after usually passing screening tests.”
- “Both I can advertise my specific services and the customers post jobs they need help with.”

Participants who selected something else largely wanted to select-all-that-applied. Based on these findings, no additional question wording changes were recommended.

Table 4. Responses to DP20 (n=227)

Response Category	Percent selected
The app assigns it, but I can accept or decline	26.9%
I select tasks, jobs, or projects	44.9%
Customers choose me (this includes customers selecting you after you have applied for or bid on a project)	19.4%
Something else (specify)	8.8%

CONCLUSION

Pretesting the 2026 CWS platform work questions showed that participants understood the questions as intended. Participants had little to no problems with the reference period change from one week to four weeks. Participants could easily recall the work they did during this period, often because they tended to do it every week. Although recall was not an issue, some participants mentioned if their schedule varied this information might be more difficult to recall, but it would likely not affect their responses. Participants were generally able to answer for themselves and other household members. While platform work does use an app or website, it is a very specific type of apps/websites that intermediate employment. The full set of questions,

which were tested and well-understood in both the 2025 and 2026 supplements, will be used to screen out general use of apps/websites for work-related activities.

APPENDIX



Appendix A
Cognitive interview



Appendix B Web
Probing Protocol.pdf

Appendix A: Remote Cognitive Interview Protocol

- Hi! Thank you for participating in our research today.
- My name is ____ [This is my colleague ____ who will be taking notes for us today]
- Explanation of the session's purpose:
 - We are going to be working with some questions from the Current Population Survey, a survey that collects information about the American workforce.
 - The purpose of today's session is to help us find out more about how people react to these questions. Basically, we're trying to find out what you think a question is asking and how hard it is to answer. We are not here to evaluate you, we are looking to improve the questions, so there are no wrong answers.
 - All the information you give us will be kept completely confidential, and will be used to improve the survey questions.
- Outline of the interview session:
 - The first half will be the scripted survey.
 - The second half will be when we switch gears and start digging into what it was like to answer the questions, getting your feedback on the questions.
- Show consent information on the screen:
 - We estimate the session will last up to [30-60] minutes. If you have any comments regarding this estimate or any other aspect of this study, send them to BLS_PRA_Public@bls.gov.
 - Your participation in this research project is voluntary, and you have the right to stop at any time.
 - The Bureau of Labor Statistics is conducting this voluntary study under OMB No. 1220-0141, which expires on July 31, 2027. Without this currently approved number, we could not conduct this research. Your responses are also protected by law:

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, its employees, agents, and partner statistical agencies, will use the information you provide for statistical purposes only and will hold the information in confidence to the full extent permitted by law. During this research you may be video recorded or you may be observed. If you do not wish to be recorded, you still may participate in this research. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (44 U.S.C. 3572) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent. Per the Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, Federal information systems are protected from malicious activities through cybersecurity screening of transmitted data.

In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 as amended (5 U.S.C. 552a), this study is being conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), under the authority of 29 U.S.C. 2. Your voluntary participation is important to the success of this study and will enable the BLS to better understand the behavioral and psychological processes of individuals, as they reflect on the accuracy of BLS information collections. The information will only be used by and disclosed to BLS personnel and contractors who need the information for activities related to improving BLS information collection. Information on routine uses can be found in the system of records notice, DOL/BLS – 14, BLS Behavioral Science Research Laboratory Project Files (81 FR 47418).

- Do you have any questions before we proceed?
- Do you agree to participate?

Basic CPS Questions

	Basic CPS questions	Ask in blocks of up to 2 other household members, identified during roster	
Variable	Question	Categories	Universe
Roster1	Please tell me the names and ages of everyone in your household who is 15 years of age or older		Everyone
LABOR	Next, I am going to ask a few questions about work related activities LAST WEEK. By last week, I mean the week beginning on Sunday, ____ and ending on Saturday, ____		Everyone
WK	LAST WEEK, did you do ANY work for pay?	(1) Yes, go to MJ (2) No, go to ABS (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	Everyone
ABS	LAST WEEK, did you have a job either full or part time? Include any job from which you were temporarily absent.	(1) Yes (2) No (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	WK=2, D, R
MJ	LAST WEEK, did you have more than one job (or business), including part-time, evening or weekend work?	(1) Yes (2) No (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	WK=1 or ABS=1
HRUSL1	How many hours per week do you USUALLY work at your (main) job? (If MJ is "yes") By main job we mean the one at which you USUALLY work the most hours.	_____ hours per week If MJ=1 ask HRUSL else go to IO1INT	All employed, fill based on more than one job, MJ=1
HRUSL2	How many hours per week do you USUALLY work at your other job(s)?	_____ hours per week	MJ=1

IO1INT	<p>Now I have a few questions about the (main) job -</p> <p>(a) (at which you worked LAST WEEK.)</p> <p>(b) (from which you were absent LAST WEEK.)</p> <p>(Was.../Were you) employed by government, by a private company, a non-profit organization, or (was.../were you) self-employed (or working in a family business)?</p>	<p>(1) Government (2) Private company (3) Non-profit organization incl. tax exempt and charitable organizations (4) Self-employed (5) Working in family business (D) Don't Know (R) Refused</p>	<p>All employed, (main) fill based on more than one job, MJ=1; a fill if WK=1; b fill if ABS=1</p>
IO1NMP	<p>What is the name of the (company) (non-profit organization) (business) for which ... (works) (at your/his/her Main job)?</p>	<p>Open-ended</p>	<p>All employed, fill based on more than one job, MJ=1</p>
IO1IND	<p>What kind of business or industry is this?</p> <p>READ IF NECESSARY What do they make or do where you work?</p>	<p>Open-ended</p>	<p>All employed</p>
IO1OCC	<p>What kind of work (do/did) (you/name) do, that is, what (is/was) (your/name's) occupation?</p> <p>(For example: plumber, typist, farmer)</p>	<p>Open-ended</p>	<p>All employed</p>
IO1DT	<p>What (are/were) (your/name's) usual activities or duties at this job?</p> <p>(For example: typing, keeping account books, filing, selling cars, operating printing press, finishing concrete)</p>	<p>Open-ended</p>	<p>All employed</p>
IOPRO1	<p>Now I have a few questions about your second job.</p> <p>READ IF NECESSARY: By second job I mean the one that you work the second most hours.</p>		<p>MJ=1</p>

IO2INT	Last week at (your/name's) second job, (was/were) you employed by government, by a private company, a non-profit organization, or (was name/were you) self-employed (or working in a family business)?	(1) Government (2) Private company (3) Non-profit organization incl. tax exempt and charitable organizations (4) Self-employed (5) Working in family business (D) Don't know (R) Refused	MJ=1
IO2NMP	What is the name of the (company) (non-profit organization) (business) for which ... (works) (at your/his/her SECOND job)?	Open-ended	MJ=1
IO2OCC	What kind of work (do/did) (you/name) do at your SECOND job, that is, what (is/was) (your/name's) occupation? (For example: plumber, typist, farmer)	Open-ended	MJ=1

Contingent Worker Supplement, ask as a block for up to 2 HH employed members, identified during roster		
Intro employed	<p>Next, I am going to ask about paid work people get through an app or website. Please include any work obtained through an app or website even if it wasn't your main job.</p> <p>PROBE: I'd like to pause here. In your own words, what does this statement mean? What types of apps or websites come to mind? What types of work comes to mind?</p> <p>Now, I'm going to repeat the intro with some additional language:</p> <p>Next, I am going to ask about paid work people get through an app or website.</p>	Employed in basic CPS (WK=1 or ABS=1)

	<p>{This work can include tasks, jobs, or projects like providing customers with transportation, food delivery, home health care, tutoring, or writing computer code.}</p> <p>PROBE: I'd like to pause again now that you have heard the examples. What do you think of them? Do they match what you expected to hear, or not? Can you think of other types of work not included in the examples?</p> <p>Please include any work obtained through an app or website even if it wasn't your main job.</p> <p><Repeat full question uninterrupted and record response></p>	
E1	<p>If worked last week (WK=1): Did you use an app or website to get any of the paid work you did LAST WEEK?</p> <p>PROBE: If temp absent (ABS=1): If you HAD worked last week, would you have used an app or website to get any of that work?</p> <p>Yes (If MJ=yes go to E2, otherwise go to E3)</p> <p>No (go to E3)</p> <p>DK (go to E3)</p> <p>R (go to E3)</p>	Employed in basic CPS
E2	<p>Was any of this work that you get through an app or website for (<i>main job employer name from basic/your main job</i>)?</p> <p>(1) Yes</p> <p>(2) No</p> <p>(3) DK</p> <p>(4) R</p>	Employed in basic CPS and has multiple jobs, MJ=1
E3	<p>Now we are switching the time frame from LAST WEEK to LAST MONTH, that is the last 4 weeks.</p> <p>(fill if E1=no: Even though you didn't use an app or website to get the paid work you did last week)(fill if E1=yes: In addition to last week), Did you use an app or website to get ANY paid work in (any other of) the LAST 4 WEEKS?</p> <p>(1) Yes</p>	Employed in basic CPS

	<p>(2) No (3) DK (4) R</p> <p>If E1= yes (used app last week) and E3= {No,D,R} (didn't use it any other week), then plug DP1b1 =1 and go to DP1b2 If E1= yes (used app last week) and E3=yes (used it any other week) then go to DP1b1 If E1=D, R (unclear if used last week) and E3=yes (used it any other week) then go to DP1b1 If E1= {No, D, R} (didn't use last week) and E3={No,D,R} (didn't use last month) then end this section</p>	
Intro Not in Labor Force and Unemployed	Even though you didn't do any work for pay in the last week, people sometimes may have worked for pay in the last month, that is the last 4 weeks.	Not employed or not in labor force
NE0	<p>In the LAST 4 WEEKS, did you do any work for pay (or profit)?</p> <p>(1) Yes (go to NE1) (2) No/DK/R (end supplement)</p>	Not employed or not in labor force
NE1	<p>Now we are interested in a specific type of work, that is, paid work people get through an app or website.</p> <p>PROBE: I'd like to pause here. In your own words, what does this statement mean? What types of apps or websites come to mind? What types of work comes to mind?</p> <p>Now, I'm going to repeat the intro with some additional language:</p> <p>Now we are interested in a specific type of work, that is, paid work people get through an app or website.</p> <p>{READ for first household member: This work can include tasks, jobs, or projects like providing customers with transportation, food delivery, home health care, tutoring, or writing computer code.}</p>	Not employed or not in labor force

	<p>PROBE: I'd like to pause again now that you have heard the examples. What do you think of them? Do they match what you expected to hear, or not? Can you think of other types of work not included in the examples?</p> <p>Please include any work obtained through an app or website even if it wasn't your main job.</p> <p><Repeat full question uninterrupted and record response></p> <p>Did you use an app or website to get ANY of the paid work that you did in the LAST 4 WEEKS?</p> <p>(1) Yes (go to DP1b1) (2) No/DK/R (end supplement)</p>		
DP1b1	<p>In how many of the last 4 WEEKS did you do paid work that you got through an app or website? Please include weeks when you did this kind of work for only a few days or hours.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 (Every week) Didn't do it in the last month (skip out of this section)</p>	<p>People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks</p>
DP1b2	<p>In those weeks that you did work that you got through an app or website, how many DAYS per week did you typically do this work?</p>	<p>___ days (1-7) (V) It varies If it varies, ask: DP1b2v. Is it typically 4 or more days per week? (Y/N)</p>	<p>People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks</p>
DP1b3	<p>On the days that you did work that you got through an app or website, how many HOURS per day did you typically do this work?</p>	<p>___ hours (V) It varies If it varies, ask: DP1b3v. Is it typically 4 or more hours per day? (Y/N)</p>	<p>People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks</p>

DP2	<p>In the weeks you got work through an app or website, was this your only paid work or did you also have other paid employment?</p> <p>Read if necessary: In other words, did you combine the work you got through an app or website with another job or other paid work?</p>	<p>(1) Only paid employment (go to DP3a) (2) Had other paid work (go to follow up DP2a)</p>	<p>People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks</p>
DP2a	<p>In the weeks you did both work you got through an app or website AND had other paid employment, on which type of work did you spend the most time?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work through the app 2. Other employment 3. It varies 	<p>DP2 = 2</p>
DP3	<p>How many apps or websites have you used to get paid work in the last 4 weeks?</p>	<p>___ [open entry]</p>	<p>DP2 = 2</p>
DP3a	<p>What is the name of the (fill if DP3a > 1: ONE) app or website you used to get (most of your) work in the last 4 weeks?</p> <p>Interviewer instruction: Record</p>	<p>___ [open entry]</p>	<p>People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks</p>

	only the ONE app or website used to get MOST work		
DPX	Using (fill name/this app or website), what kind of work did you do? DO NOT READ LIST. Select ONE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Provided personal transportation, ride services (2) Delivered food or other goods (3) Cared for people (childcare, eldercare, home health care) or pets (4) Home maintenance (furniture assembly, cleaning, repair work, painting) (5) Computer programming or coding (6) Translation, proofreading, editing (7) Tutoring or training (8) Data entry/annotation, training/testing for AI (9) Created online content such as videos, blogs or podcasts (10) Property rental (End DPE Questions) (11) Sold or advertised goods online (including used or handmade goods) (End Questions) 	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks

		(12) Other (specify)	
DP3x	For the work you got through (DP3 App or website/this app or website), how long does a typical task, job, or project last?	(1) An hour or less (2) Up to a day (but more than an hour) (3) 2 to 7 days (more than a day, up to a week) (4) Less than a month (but more than a week) (5) 1 to 2 months (6) 3 to 5 months (7) 6 months to a year (8) More than a year	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP4	For this work, are you ONLY paid by the task, job, or project?	(1) Yes (2) No (3) Paid hourly, goto DP4a (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP4A	Even though you are paid hourly, is the total amount you receive paid by the task, job, or project?	(1) Yes (2) No (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	DP4=3
DP5	Excluding tips, do you get paid through (dp3 app or website name/the app or website you use to get most of your work) or were you paid directly by the customer? Read if necessary: If you use more than one app or website, think about the one you use to get most of your work	(1) The app or website (2) Directly by customer (3) Both (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks

DP5A	Does (dp3 app or website name /the app or website) control the price you can charge or what you get paid for a task, job, or project?	(1) Yes (2) No (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP5B	Can you decide not to work by turning off or not checking the app or website?	(1) Yes (2) No (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP5C	How do you usually get work using this app or website? Does it assign work; do you select tasks, jobs, or projects; do customers choose you; or something else? Read if Necessary: Customers choosing you includes them selecting you after you have applied for or bid on a project.	(1) The app assigns it (2) You select tasks, jobs, or projects (3) Customers choose you (4) Something else (specify) 1. DK 2. REF	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP9	Did the app or website require you to create a profile before you could get work through it?	(1) Yes (2) No (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP10	Can customers rate your work through (Does (dp3 app or website name /the SAME app or website) where you get tasks, jobs, or projects?	(1) Yes (2) No (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks

DP12A	Would you prefer an arrangement where you did not do paid work that you got through an app or website?	(1) Yes (2) No (D) Don't Know (R) Refused	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP12B	<p>There are a variety of reasons people work in arrangements where they use an app or website to get work. For example, some people do this because it is the only work they can find. Others do it for the flexibility or for other reasons. What is the MAIN reason that you work in an arrangement where you use an app or website to get paid work?</p> <p>[Do not read options. Type verbatim response, if needed.]</p>	(1) Only work could find (2) Flexibility of schedule (3) Independence/enjoy being own boss (4) Make more money/need money quickly (5) In school/training (6) Something else	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks

Digital Platform Questions Debriefing

General Questions

Now, we'd like to switch gears and get your feedback on what it was like to answer those questions. *(Ask all questions for self and all other household members, if applicable. If participants are from the same household, probe on any differences in responses that were given about one another. Ask all questions that apply to the participant; if the question did not apply, ask for general reactions/comprehension as needed, even if they were not administered that question)*

- What stood out to you most about these questions?
 - Was anything unclear or confusing? (If so, what?)
 - Was anything sensitive or personal? (If so, what?)
 - What about answering for [insert proxy name]?
 - If same household: We noticed you and [NAME other HH member] answered some questions differently [describe any differences]. Can you tell us more about that?
 - If struggled to answer for another HH member: Can you tell us what was difficult about responding for [NAME]? What's the best way to ask about this? Would you check with [NAME] for the answers, if asked?
 - If did not struggle to answer: How did you know this information about [NAME]? How confident are you in this answer?
- Can you tell us more about your job(s) and the kind(s) of work you do for pay? (Ask about main job and digital platform work, if applicable)

For digital platform work:

- (If yes to digital platform work) Can you describe how you used an app or website to get this paid work?
- (if no to digital platform work) Was there any paid work you did but weren't sure whether it should be included in your answer? (If yes), please describe.
- What kind of task/job/project is typical for you?
- Earlier you said you used more than one app. If so, are they all part of the same "job" or is finding work on different platforms each a different job? For what reasons do you use multiple apps?

Now I'd like to walk through the survey with you and get your feedback on the questions themselves. *If on video call, share screen with questionnaire showing so that participant can see the questions.*

Intro for people who were employed

Earlier, we read this introduction statement to you to help frame the questions about your work:

Next, I am going to ask about paid work people get through an app or website.

READ for first household member {This work can include tasks, jobs, or projects like providing customers with transportation, food delivery, home health care, tutoring, or writing computer code.}

Please include any work obtained through an app or website even if it wasn't your main job.

Did you use an app or website to get any of the paid work you did LAST WEEK?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with that answer? Was this easy or difficult to come up with?
- Looking back at this introduction and statement, what first came to mind when we read the phrase “paid for work they got through an app or website?”
 - What does the phrase “paid work people get through an app or website” mean to you?
 - What does “get” mean to you in this context? How do people “get” this work?
 - What do “tasks, jobs, or projects” mean to you? Is this how you would describe this type of work, or would you use different terms?
- Looking back at the examples given, what are your reactions to those?
 - Now that you see it again, do you think the examples are necessary to understand the question? Do you think most people would understand the question without the examples?
 - Did they match or not match what you would expect to see? For what reasons?
 - What apps or websites come to mind with these examples?
 - Can you think of any other examples of work that can be gotten through an app or website that seem to fit what is being asked about?
 - Do you think the examples imply that the following questions are only interested in collecting information about these types of apps, or ALL work that people get through an app or website?
 - Do the examples clarify what we mean by “paid work people get through an app or website?”, or not? Why is that?
 - [If struggled for proxy response when this wasn't read again]: What type of work did you think of when answering for [name]? Do you think it was necessary to repeat the examples again, or not?
 - Looking back at the introduction What did you think when you heard the phrase “Please include any work obtained through an app or website even if it wasn't your main job?”
 - (IF temp absent) You did tell me you worked last week, but I'd like you to imagine that you didn't work last week (like if you were sick or on vacation). If you didn't work last week, how would you answer this question: **If you HAD worked last week, would you have used an app or website to get any of that work?**

The next question switched gears a little, we'd like to get your feedback on it:

Now we are switching the time frame from LAST WEEK to the LAST MONTH, that is the last 4 weeks.

(Even though you didn't use an app or website to get the paid work you did last week)(In addition to last week), did you use an app or website to get ANY paid work in (any other of) the LAST 4 WEEKS?

- Earlier you answered [fill]. How did you come up with that answer? Was this easy or difficult to come up with?
 - Was there any work like this that you might have done in the last 4 weeks, but weren't sure whether to include it? (if yes) Why is that?
- How did you remember this information? (if needed: Memory/just knew, Estimated, Looked at phone, Looked at calendar, Looked at app/website, Thought about major activities, Guessed, something else?)
- (If no) What if we had asked about the last 3 months? Would your answer be different? What about the last 6 months?
- Did you notice the switch from ONE week to FOUR weeks? Did this make it easy or difficult to answer?
 - What specific dates were you thinking about when you heard "the last 4 weeks?"
 - How did it feel to be asked about work you did in the last four weeks, given the questions you answered earlier about your work situation during the last week? For what reasons?
 - (Did/Would) specifying the exact dates of [FILL] be helpful, or confusing? How so?
- How could we improve this introduction and transition to asking about the last 4 weeks? Did it set up the next set of questions about well, or not? For what reasons?

Intro for Not In Labor Force and Unemployed

Even though you didn't do any work for pay in the last week, people sometimes may have worked for pay in the last month, that is the last 4 weeks (for half of sample: [DATE] to [DATE]).

In the LAST 4 WEEKS, did you do any work for pay (or profit)?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with that answer? Was this easy or difficult to come up with?

- How did you remember this information? (if needed: Memory/just knew, Estimated, Looked at phone, Looked at calendar, Looked at app/website, Thought about major activities, Guessed, something else?)
- (If no) What if we had asked about the last 3 months? Would your answer be different? What about the last 6 months?
- In looking back at the introduction to this set of questions, we acknowledged that you said you hadn't done work for pay in the last week, while trying to explain that we are interested in any work you did in the LAST FOUR WEEKS.
 - Was this introduction statement clear or confusing? For what reasons?
 - Did you notice the switch from ONE week to FOUR weeks? Was this easy or difficult to answer?
 - What specific dates were you thinking about when you heard "the last 4 weeks?"
 - (Did/Would) specifying the exact dates of [FILL] be helpful, or confusing? How so?
- How could we improve this introduction and transition to asking about the last 4 weeks? Did it set up the next set of questions well, or not? For what reasons?

The next question asked:

Now we are interested in a specific type of work, that is, paid work people get through an app or website.

This work can include tasks, jobs, or projects like providing customers with transportation, food delivery, home health care, tutoring, or writing computer code.

Did you use an app or website to get ANY of the paid work that you did in the LAST 4 WEEKS?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with that answer? Was this easy or difficult to come up with?
- How did you remember this information? (if needed: Memory/just knew, Estimated, Looked at phone, Looked at calendar, Looked at app/website, Thought about major activities, Guessed, something else?)
- (If no) What if we had asked about the last 3 months? Would your answer be different? What about the last 6 months?
- Looking back at this introduction and statement, what first came to mind when we read the phrase "paid for work they get through an app or website?"

- What does the phrase “paid work people get through an app or website” mean to you?
- What does “get” mean to you in this context? How do people “get” this work?
- Now that you see it again, do you think the examples are necessary to understand the question? Do you think most people would understand the question without the examples?
 - What do “tasks, jobs, or projects” mean to you? Is this how you would describe this type of work, or would you use different terms?
 - Looking back at the examples given, what are your reactions to those?
 - Now that you see it again, do you think the examples are necessary to understand the question? Do you think most people would understand the question without the examples?
 - Did they match or not match what you would expect to see? For what reasons?
 - What apps or websites come to mind with these examples?
 - Do you think the examples imply that the following questions are only interested in collecting information about these types of apps, or ALL work that people get through an app or website?
 - Do the examples clarify what we mean by “paid work people get through an app or website?”, or not? Why is that?
 - [If struggled for proxy response when this wasn’t read again]: What type of work did you think of when answering for [name]? Do you think it was necessary to repeat the examples again, or not?

Questions *(Ask questions for self and proxies, if applicable)*

In how many of the last 4 WEEKS did you do paid work that you got through an app or website? Please include weeks when you did this kind of work for only a few days or hours.

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with your answer to this question?
- In your own words, what is this question asking?
- How easy or difficult was it to recall this information) Given this question, was there a certain amount of work you had to do for you to count it as a week you did paid work?

In those weeks that you did work that you got through an app or website, how many DAYS per week did you typically do this work?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with your answer to this question?
- In your own words, what is this question asking?
- How did you recall this information?
 - (if needed: Memory/just knew, Estimated, Looked at phone, Looked at calendar, Looked at app/website, Thought about major activities, Guessed, something else?)
- Given this question, was there a certain amount of work you had to do for you to count it as a day you did paid work? (If it varies), tell us more about how this varies.

On the days that you did work that you got through an app or website, how many HOURS per day did you typically spend doing this work?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with your answer to this question?
- How did you recall this information?
- (if needed: Memory/just knew, Estimated, Looked at phone, Looked at calendar, Looked at app/website, Thought about major activities, Guessed, something else?)
- (If it varies), tell us more about how this varies.

In the weeks you got work through an app or website, was this your only paid work or did you also have other paid employment?

Read if necessary: In other words, did you combine the work you got through an app or website with another job or other paid work?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with your answer to this question?
- In your own words, what is this question asking?
 - What does “other paid employment” mean to you??
- (If other paid employment), What other paid employment did you do?
- Please take a look at the Read if Necessary language compared to the original question.
 - Does the Read if necessary language clarify what is being asked?
 - What does a “job” in this read if necessary mean to you? (e.g, Do you think it is only asking about a steady job)?
 - Which is clearer and easier to understand? For what reasons?

In the weeks you did both work you got through an app or website AND had other paid employment, on which type of work did you spend the most time?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with your answer to this question?
- How much time would you say you spent on your work through the app or website?
How about the other paid work you did?
- How did you recall this information? (if needed: Memory/just knew, Estimated, Looked at phone, Looked at calendar, Looked at app/website, Thought about major activities, Guessed, something else?)
- (If it varies), tell us more about how this varies.

What is the name of the (ONE) app or website you used to get (most of your) work in the last 4 weeks?

- How did you arrive at your answer to this question?
- Was it easy or difficult to come up with an answer? (If use multiple apps/websites)
- For those who said used more than one app, how did you determine which one you used the most? (If necessary, was it the one you spent the most time on, the one that paid you the most?)

Using (fill name/this app or website), what kind of work did you do?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with your answer to this question?

<Show categories on screen>

- Looking at these categories, which one best describes the kind of work you do using (fill name/this app or website)?
 - For what reasons did you select this one?
- Was it easy or difficult to select ONE of the categories? For what reasons?
- Would you use the label [fill choice] to describe your work, or describe it some other way?
- What categories, if any, are missing?
- Would you change the wording of any of these categories? If so, which ones? Are any confusing or difficult to understand? How so?

Excluding tips, do you get paid through (dp3 app or website name/the app or website you use to get most of your work) or were you paid directly by the customer?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with your answer to this question?
- How would you describe how you are paid for the work you do using (app or website)?

- If your own words, what is this question asking?
 - Did you interpret it as asking about how you get paid by customers or about how customers pay for the service?
- What were you thinking when you heard “getting paid **through** an app or website”?
- Would you answer this question differently if we asked you how customers pay for your work?
 - If needed: Is there a difference between getting paid **through** the app or website versus getting paid **by** an app or website?

How do you usually get work using this app or website? Does it assign work; do you select tasks, jobs, or projects; do customers choose you; or something else?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with your answer to this question?
- Can you tell me more about how you get work from [fill app name?]
- Looking at the response categories...
 - What does “the app assigns it” mean to you?
 - What does “you select tasks, jobs, or projects” mean to you?
 - What does “customers choose you (this includes selecting you, after you have applied for or bid on a project)” mean to you?
- Was it easy or difficult to select ONE category? For what reasons?
- Are there any categories missing from this list?
- Would you change the wording of any of these categories?

Would you prefer an arrangement where you did not do paid work that you got through an app or website?

- Earlier, you answered [fill]. How did you come up with your answer to this question?
- Did you interpret this question as asking whether you prefer to NOT work at all? For what reasons?
- For those who said they combined platform work with other employment: Did you interpret this question as asking if you would prefer not to not do work through an app or website in addition to your other employment?

Thank you for participating!

Appendix B: Online Survey Protocol

Welcome! Thank you for your interest in our research to improve the Current Population Survey, a survey about people in the US who are working and the types of work they do.

The study should take about 15 minutes. Please only start the study when you will be able to complete the whole study without interruption. Please do your best to respond to the questions accurately.

Please do not use your browser's back button.

This voluntary study is being collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics under OMB No. 1220-0141 (Expiration Date: July 31, 2027). Without this currently approved number, we could not conduct this survey. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. If you have any comments regarding this estimate or any other aspect of this study, send them to BLS_PRA_Public@bls.gov. The BLS cannot guarantee the protection of survey responses and advises against the inclusion of sensitive personal information in any response. This survey is being administered by Qualtrics and resides on a server outside of the BLS Domain. Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to stop at any time.

--page break--

What is your CloudResearch Connect ID?

[open entry]

For accuracy, please re-enter your CloudResearch Connect ID:

[open entry]

---page break---

What is your age?

[open numeric entry]

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than a high school diploma
- High school graduate, no college
- Some college or associate degree
- Bachelor's degree or higher

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

---page break---

Variable	Basic CPS questions	Categories	Universe
LABOR	Next, I am going to ask a few questions about work related activities LAST WEEK. By last week, I mean the week beginning on Sunday, ____ and ending on Saturday, ____		Everyone
WK	LAST WEEK, did you do ANY work for pay?	(1) Yes, go to MJ (2) No, go to ABS	Everyone
ABS	LAST WEEK, did you have a job either full or part time? Include any job from which you were temporarily absent.	(1) Yes (2) No, go to NE0	WK=2, D, R
MJ	LAST WEEK, did you have more than one job (or business), including part-time, evening or weekend work?	(1) Yes (2) No	WK=1 or ABS=1
HRUSL1	How many hours per week do you USUALLY work at your (main) job? (If MJ is "yes") By main job we mean the one at which you USUALLY work the most hours.	_____ hours per week If MJ=1 ask HRUSL2 else go to IO1INT	All employed, fill based on more than one job, MJ=1
HRUSL2	How many hours per week do you USUALLY work at your other job(s)?	_____ hours per week	MJ=1

IO1INT	<p>Now I have a few questions about the (main) job -</p> <p>(a) (at which you worked LAST WEEK.)</p> <p>(b) (from which you were absent LAST WEEK.)</p> <p>(Was.../Were you) employed by government, by a private company, a non-profit organization, or (was.../were you) self-employed (or working in a family business)?</p>	<p>(1) Government</p> <p>(2) Private company</p> <p>(3) Non-profit organization incl. tax exempt and charitable organizations</p> <p>(4) Self-employed</p> <p>(5) Working in family business</p>	<p>All employed, (main) fill based on more than one job, MJ=1; a fill if WK=1; b fill if ABS=1</p>
IO1NMP	<p>What kind of work (do/did) (you/name) do, that is, what (is/was) (your/name's) occupation?</p> <p>(For example: plumber, typist, farmer)</p>	Open-ended	All employed
IOPRO1	<p>Now I have a few questions about your second job.</p> <p>READ IF NECESSARY: By second job I mean the one that you work the second most hours.</p>		MJ=1
IO2INT	<p>Last week at (your/name's) second job, (was/were) you employed by government, by a private company, a non-profit organization, or (was name/were you) self-employed (or working in a family business)?</p>	<p>(1) Government</p> <p>(2) Private company</p> <p>(3) Non-profit organization incl. tax exempt and charitable organizations</p> <p>(4) Self-employed</p> <p>(5) Working in family business</p>	MJ=1
IO2OCC	<p>What kind of work (do/did) (you/name) do at your SECOND job, that is, what (is/was) (your/name's) occupation?</p> <p>(For example: plumber, typist, farmer)</p>	Open-ended	MJ=1

Contingent Worker Supplement

<p>Intro employed</p>	<p>Next, I am going to ask about paid work people get through an app or website.</p> <p>Examples of this work may include tasks, jobs, or projects like providing customers with transportation, food delivery, home health care, tutoring, or writing computer code.</p> <p>Please include any work obtained through an app or website even if it wasn't your main job.</p> <p>Include any paid work you got through an app or website, even if it was not one of these examples.</p>	<p>Employed (WK=1 or ABS=1)</p>
<p>E1</p>	<p>If worked last week (WK=1): Did you use an app or website to get any of the paid work you did LAST WEEK?</p> <p>If temp absent (ABS=1): If you HAD worked last week, would you have used an app or website to get any of that work?</p> <p><i>Do not include work you did completing online surveys.</i></p> <p>Yes (If MJ=yes go to E2, otherwise go to E3)</p> <p>No (go to E3)</p>	<p>Employed</p>
<p>E2</p>	<p>Was any of this work that you got through an app or website for your main job?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>Employed and has multiple jobs, MJ=1</p>
<p>E3</p>	<p>Now we are switching the time frame from LAST WEEK to LAST MONTH, that is the last 4 weeks.</p> <p>(fill if E1=no: Even though you didn't use an app or website to get the paid work you did last week) (fill if E1=yes: In addition to last week), Did you use an app or website to get ANY paid work in (any other of) the LAST 4 WEEKS?</p>	<p>Employed</p>

	<p><i>Do not include work you did completing online surveys.</i></p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p> <p>If E1= yes (used app last week) and E3={No} (didn't use it any other week), then plug DP1b1 =1 and go to DP1b2 If E1= yes (used app last week) and E3=yes (used it any other week) then go to DP1b1 If E1=D, R (unclear if used last week) and E3=yes (used it any other week) then go to DP1b1 If E1= {No } (didn't use last week) and E3={No } (didn't use last month) then end this section</p>	
Intro Not in Labor Force and Unemployed	Even though you didn't do any work for pay in the last week, people sometimes may have worked for pay in the last month, that is the last 4 weeks.	Not employed or not in labor force (ABS=2, D, R)
NE0	In the LAST 4 WEEKS, did you do any work for pay (or profit)? (1) Yes (go to NE1) (2) No/DK/R (end questions)	Not employed or not in labor force (ABS=2, D, R)
NE1	<p>Now we are interested in a specific type of work, that is, paid work people get through an app or website.</p> <p>Examples of this work may include tasks, jobs, or projects like providing customers with transportation, food delivery, home health care, tutoring, or writing computer code.</p> <p>Include any paid work you got through an app or website, even if it was not one of these examples.</p>	Not employed or not in labor force

	<p>Did you use an app or website to get ANY of the paid work that you did in the LAST 4 WEEKS?</p> <p><i>Do not include work you did completing online surveys.</i></p> <p>(1) Yes (go to DP1b1) (2) No/DK/R (end questions)</p>		
DP1b1	<p>In how many of the last 4 WEEKS did you do paid work that you got through an app or website? Please include weeks when you did this kind of work for only a few days or hours.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 (Every week) Didn't do it in the last month (skip out of this section)</p>	<p>People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks</p>
DP1b2	<p>In those weeks that you did work that you got through an app or website, how many DAYS per week did you typically do this work?</p>	<p>___ days (1-7) (V) It varied If it varied, ask: DP1b2v. Is it typically 4 or more days per week? (Y/N)</p>	<p>People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks</p>
DP1b2_Probe	<p>For the work you get through an app or website, how many hours would you have to work for you to count it as a day you worked?</p>	<p>1.) Any amount of time 2.) 1-3 hours 3.) 4-7 hours 4.) 8 hours or more</p>	<p>People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks</p>

DP1b3	On the days that you did work that you got through an app or website, how many HOURS per day did you typically do this work?	___ hours (V) It varied If it varied, ask: DP1b3v. Is it typically 4 or more hours per day? (Y/N)	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP2	In the weeks you got work through an app or website, was this your ONLY type of paid work or did you also have other paid employment that was not through an app or website?	(1) Only work through an app or website (go to DP3a) (2) Had other paid employment NOT through app or website (go to follow up DP2a)	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP2_Probe	What was that other paid employment that was not through an app or website?	___ [open entry]	DP2 = 2
DP2a	In the weeks you did both work you got through an app or website AND had other paid employment, on which type of work did you spend the most time?	1. Work through the app(s) or website(s) 2. Other employment not through apps or websites 3. It varied	DP2 = 2
DP3	How many apps or websites have you used to get	___ [open entry]	DP2 = 2

	paid work in the last 4 weeks?		
DP3a	<p>What is the name of the app or website you used to get most of your work in the last 4 weeks?</p> <p><i>Please only list ONE app or website.</i></p>	___ [open entry]	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DPX_Open	<p>What kind of work do you do using (fill)/this app or website?</p>	___ [open entry]	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DPX	<p>Using (fill name/this app or website), what kind of work did you do?</p>	<p>(1) Provided personal transportation, ride services</p> <p>(2) Delivered food or other goods</p> <p>(3) Cared for people (childcare, eldercare, home health care) or pets</p> <p>(4) Home maintenance (furniture assembly, cleaning, repair work, painting)</p> <p>(5) Computer programming or coding, software engineering, and graphic design</p>	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (6) Translation, proofreading, editing (7) Tutoring or training (8) Data entry/annotation, training/testing for AI (9) Created online content such as videos, blogs or podcasts (10) Property rental (End DPE Questions) (11) Sold or advertised goods online (including used or handmade goods) (End Questions) (12) Other, specify 	
DP3x	For the work you got through (DP3 App or website/this app or website), how long does a typical task, job, or project last?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) An hour or less (2) Up to a day (but more than an hour) (3) 2 to 7 days (more than a day, up to a week) (4) Less than a month (but more than a week) (5) 1 to 2 months (6) 3 to 5 months (7) 6 months to a year (8) More than a year 	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP4	For this work, are you ONLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Yes (2) No (3) Paid hourly, go to 	People who used an app or website to get paid

	paid by the task, job, or project?	DP4a	work in the last 4 weeks
DP4A	Even though you are paid hourly, is the total amount you receive paid by the task, job, or project?	(1) Yes (2) No	DP4=3
DP5	Excluding tips, do you get paid through (dp3 app or website name/the app or website you use to get most of your work) or were you paid directly by the customer OUTSIDE of [dp3 app or website name/the app or website]?	(1) The app or website (2) Directly by customer (3) Both (If both, please explain)	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP5_ProbeOpen	What does it mean to be “paid directly by the customer OUTSIDE of [dp3 app or website name/the app or website]”?	___ [open entry]	People who answered DP5
DP5_Probe1	Here are two versions of the question you were just asked:		People who answered DP5

	<p>A. Excluding tips, do you get paid through (dp3 app or website name/the app or website you use to get most of your work) or were you paid directly by the customer OUTSIDE of [dp3 app or website name/the app or website]?</p> <p>B. Excluding tips, do you get paid through (dp3 app or website name/the app or website you use to get most of</p>		
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	<p>your work) or were you paid directly by the customer not using [dp3 app or website name/the app or website]?</p> <p>Are these two versions asking the same thing? (Yes/No)</p> <p>(If no) What is the difference between them? [open-entry]</p> <p>Which version is easier to understand? (Version A “outside” /Version B “not using”)</p>		
DP5A	<p>Does (dp3 app or website name/the app or website) control the price you can charge or what you get paid for a task, job, or project?</p>	<p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks</p>

DP5B	Can you decide not to work by turning off or not checking the app or website?	(1) Yes (2) No	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP5C	How do you USUALLY get work using this app or website? Does it assign work that you can accept or decline; do you select tasks, jobs, or projects; do customers choose you; or something else?	(1) The app assigns it, but I can accept or decline (2) I select tasks, jobs, or projects (3) Customers choose me (this includes customers selecting you after you have applied for or bid on a project) (4) Something else (specify)	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP9	Did the app or website require you to create a profile before you could get work through it?	(1) Yes (2) No	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP10	Can customers rate your work through (dp3 app or website name/the SAME app or website) where you get tasks, jobs, or projects?	(1) Yes (2) No	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP12A	Would you prefer paid work that you did not get through an app or website?	(1) Yes (2) No	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks

DP12A_Probe	Did you interpret this question as asking whether or not you would prefer NOT to work at all?	(1) Yes (2) No	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
DP12B	There are a variety of reasons people use an app or website to get work. For example, some people do this because it is the only work they can find. Others do it for the flexibility or for other reasons. What is the MAIN reason that you use an app or website to get paid work?	(1) Only work could find (2) Flexibility of schedule (3) Independence/enjoy being own boss (4) Make more money/need money quickly (5) In school/training (6) Something else, specify	People who used an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks

Debriefing section (at the very end)

Time_Probe	Earlier you were asked about paid work people get through an app or website. What length of task, job, or project BEST MATCHES what came to mind when asked about this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An hour or less ○ Up to a day ○ 2 to 7 days ○ More than a week but less than 2 weeks ○ More than 2 weeks but less than a month ○ More than a month 	
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Examples_Probe1 (on same page as Time_Probe)	What are some examples that came to mind of paid tasks, jobs or projects people get through an app or website?	5 open-ended single line text boxes	
Examples_Probe2 <new page>	Now, imagine we had asked you about SHORT tasks or projects that people get through an app or website. What are some examples of SHORT tasks or projects that people get through an app or website?	5 open-ended single line text boxes	
Probe_Ref3Months	Earlier, you said you did NOT use an app or website to get ANY paid work in the last 4 weeks. Did you use an app or website to get ANY paid work in the LAST 3 MONTHS?	Yes No	People who did not report using an app or website to get paid work in the last 4 weeks
Probe_Ref6Months	Did you use an app or website to get ANY paid work in the LAST 6 MONTHS?	Yes No	Probe_Ref3Months = No