

THE *REAL* INVISIBLE HANDS OF THE MARKET

Uncovering the Scale of Platform Work in Switzerland's Care Sector

1) Background

Care crisis: Missing infrastructure for care [1]
→ Privately purchased care services
→ Gigification as seemingly convenient solution
→ **BUT** risks exploitation of young women and migrant women without anyone taking note [2]

Invisible hands of the market?

Double invisibility:

Home work and gig work both remain invisible in labor market statistics [3]

2) RQ

What's the size & structure of the care sector of the Swiss gig economy?

3) Methods

- **Idea:** Use platform data
- **Problem:** (1) Unclear what platforms are relevant; (2) Data not directly accessible through API
- **Workaround:** (1) Pre-selection of platforms based on keyword search in search engines; (2) Web scraping with Selenium (Python) to automate the data collection from platforms
- **Data collection period:** April – July 2025

4) Challenges

1. Scraping limitations

- Doesn't scale: CAPTCHAs, sleep timers, layout changes → requires human oversight

2. Incomplete / inconsistent data

- Variables differ between platforms
- Usually full list of users not directly accessible → workaround through postal code search
- Some gig platforms operated by agencies (typically in cleaning sector) → scraping not possible

3. Measurement issues

- Mediated gigs hard to assess
- Activity levels not comparable across platforms

References

- [1] Dowling, Emma (2021): The Care Crisis: What caused it and how can we end it? London: Verso.
[2] Rodríguez-Modroño, Paula / Agenjo-Calderón, Astrid / López-Igual, Purificación (2023): A Feminist Political Economic Analysis of Platform Capitalism in the Care Sector. Review of Radical Political Economics 55(4): 629-638.
[3] Kluzik, Vicky (2022): Governing invisibility in the platform economy: excavating the logics of platform care. Internet Policy Review 11(1): 1-21.

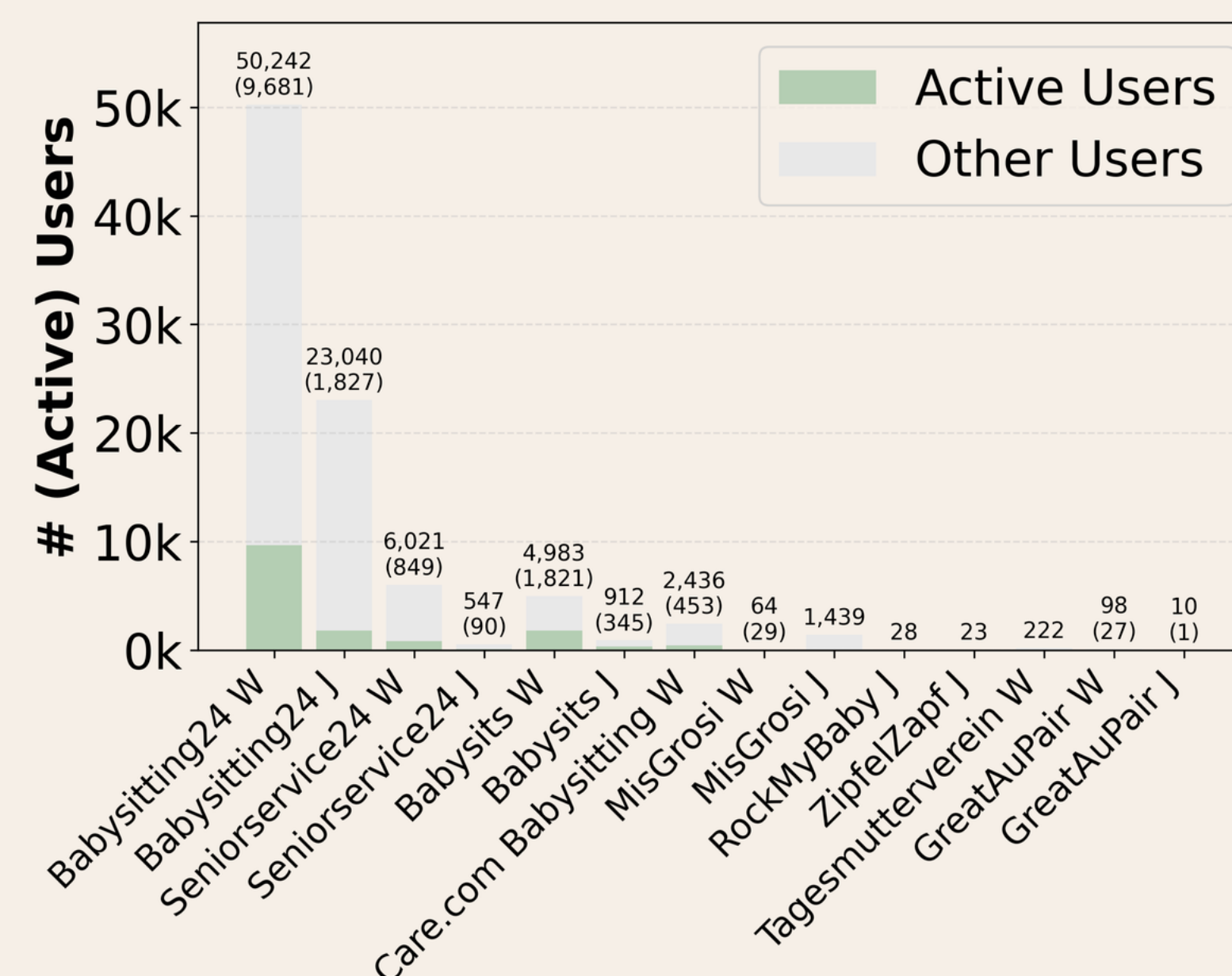
5) Results

User type: W = workers; J = jobs

Active: online within the last 31 days and (if data is available) member for more than 31 days

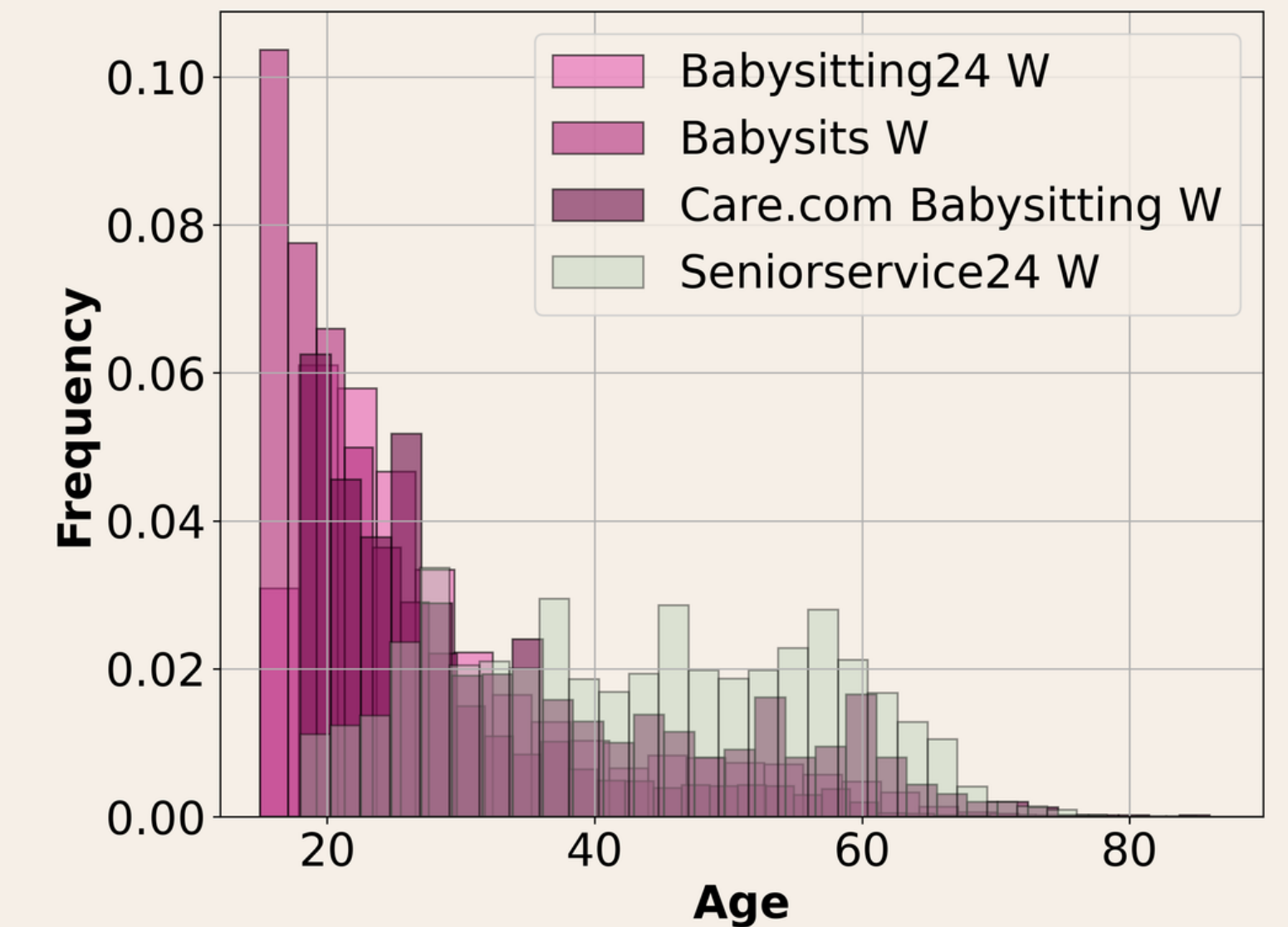


Number of (Active) Users



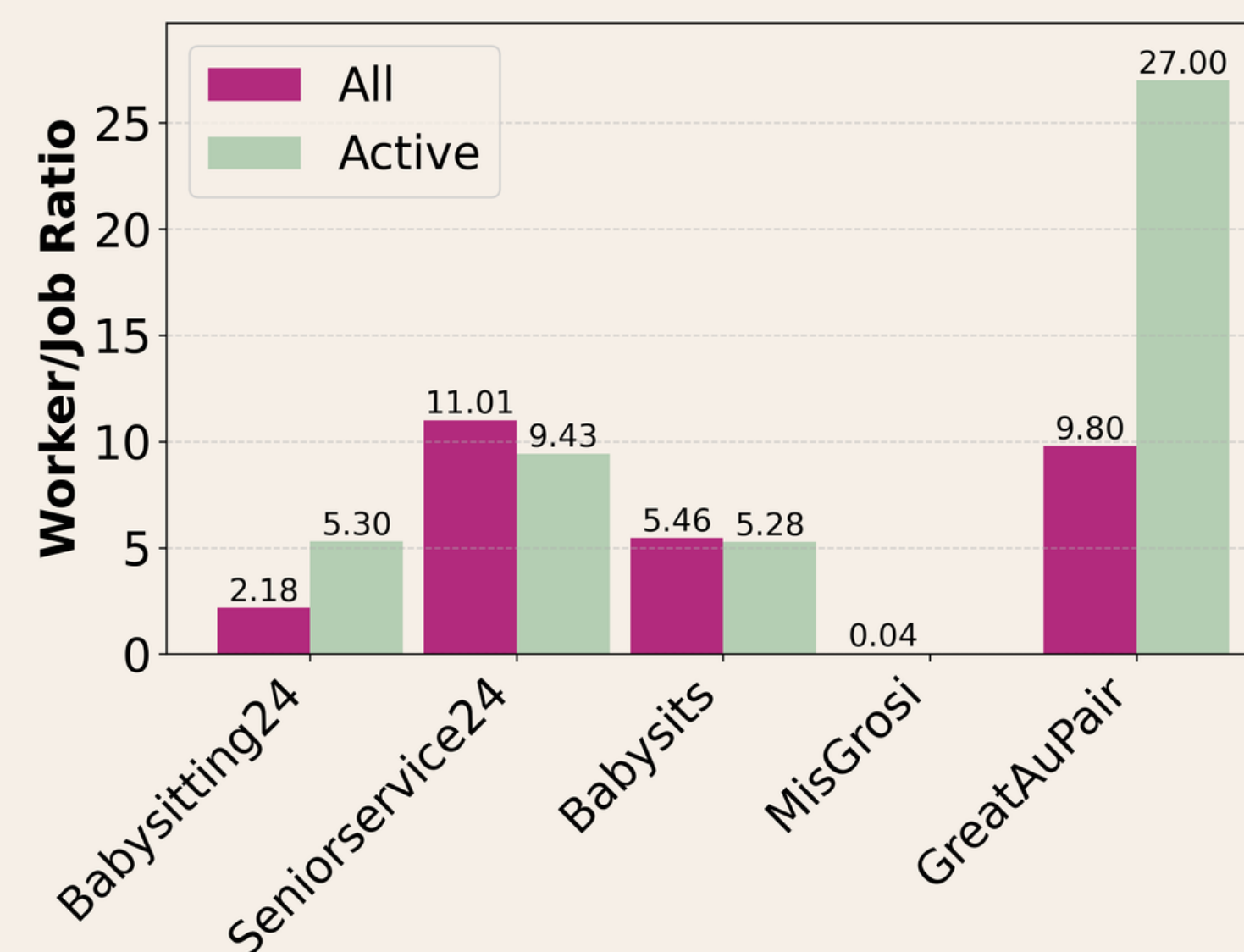
- Oligopoly: Market dominated by few platforms
- About 8-51% active workers (with varying definitions of “active”)

Age Distribution



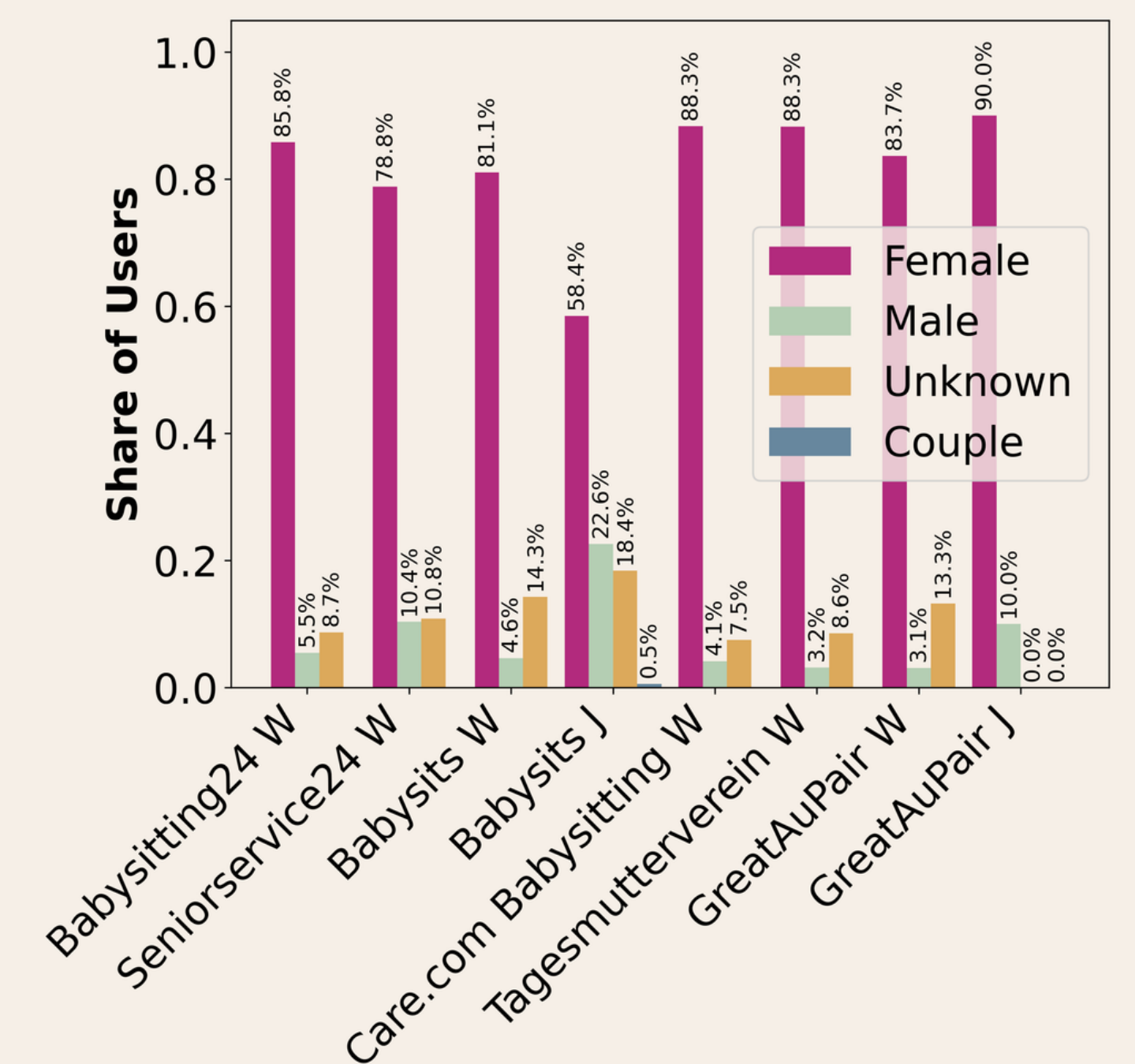
- Babysitting: Mostly younger workers, some younger than reported to bypass platforms' age restrictions
- Elderly care: Broad age range of workers

Worker/Job Ratio



- Demand market: Far more workers than customers
- Exception: MisGrosi, where customers probably hope to get care (nearly) for free

Gender Distribution



- Feminised market: Predominantly women on worker & customer side

Users per capita vs population density

- No correlation between population density and workers/jobs/users per capita ($r \approx 0.00-0.04$, n.s.).
- Some platforms: Statistically significant but negligible correlations ($r \leq 0.08$)
- Conclusion: Gig work per capita is largely independent of population density

6) Take-aways

- ~15,300 active worker profiles on Babysitting24, Babysits.ch, Care.com → significant number (cf. ~100,000 formal day care spots in CH)
- Market size remains unclear as scraping cannot disclose no. of effectively mediated jobs
- Sector still overly feminized and largely invisible
→ Risk of exploitation for marginalized groups remains



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