

SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Self-employment may be seen either as a survival strategy for those who cannot find any other means of earning an income or as evidence of entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to be one's own boss. The self-employment rates shown here reflect these various motives.

Definition

Employment is generally measured through national labour force surveys. According to the ILO Guidelines, employed persons are defined as those aged 15 or over who report that they have worked in gainful employment for at least one hour in the previous week or who had a job but were absent from work in the reference week.

Self-employed persons include employers, own-account workers, members of producers' co-operatives, and unpaid family workers. People in the last of these groups do not have a formal contract to receive a fixed amount of income at regular intervals, but they share in the income generated by the enterprise; unpaid family workers are particularly important in farming and retail trade. Note that all persons who work in corporate enterprises, including company directors, are considered to be employees.

Overview

In 2011, the share of self-employed workers in total employment ranged from under 8% in Luxembourg, Norway and the United States to well over 30% in Greece, Mexico and Turkey. In general, self-employment rates are highest in countries with low per capita income although Italy, with a self-employment rate of around 25%, is an exception. Ireland and Spain also combine high per capita incomes and high self-employment rates.

Over the period 2000-11, self-employment rates have fallen in most countries and by 1.6 percentage points in the OECD area. These falls have mostly occurred prior to the onset of the global financial crisis in late 2007. However the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom saw moderate increases and the Slovak Republic sharp increases, albeit from low levels. Conversely, and starting from a higher level, there have been sharp declines in self-employment rates in Chile, Greece, Italy, Korea, Poland, New Zealand, Mexico, Portugal and Spain.

Levels and changes in total self-employment rates conceal significant differences between men and women. In 2011, only Mexico, Switzerland and Turkey recorded self-employment rates for women higher than those rates for men. In the case of Turkey, almost half of all women with a paid job are self-employed, down from 78.4% recorded in 1990.

The rates shown here are the percentages of the self-employed in total employment.

Comparability

All OECD countries use ILO Guidelines for measuring employment. Operational definitions used in national labour force surveys may, however, vary slightly across countries. Only unincorporated self-employed are included in self-employed in Australia, Canada and the United States. Employment levels are also likely to be affected by changes in the survey design, questions sequencing and/or the ways in which surveys are conducted. Despite this, self-employment rates are likely to be fairly consistent over time.

Sources

- OECD (2011), *Labour Force Statistics*, OECD Publishing.
- For non-member countries: National sources.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2012), *Entrepreneurship at a Glance*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2012), *OECD Employment Outlook*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2012), *Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2012, An OECD Scoreboard*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2010), *OECD Studies on SMEs and Entrepreneurship*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2005), *OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook 2005*, OECD Publishing.

Online databases

- *OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics*.

Websites

- OECD Employment Policies, www.oecd.org/els/employment.
- OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development, www.oecd.org/cfe.


Self-employment rates

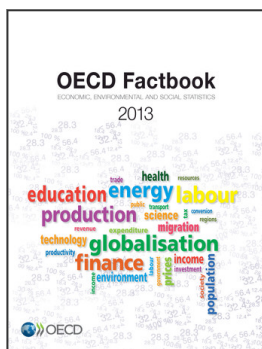
As a percentage of total employment by gender

	Women				Men				Total			
	2000	2008	2010	2011	2000	2008	2010	2011	2000	2008	2010	2011
Australia	10.4	8.9	8.9	..	16.1	13.9	13.9	..	13.6	11.6	11.6	..
Austria	12.2	11.5	11.3	11.3	13.9	15.7	16.0	15.9	13.1	13.8	13.8	13.8
Belgium	13.5	10.8	10.8	..	17.5	17.0	17.3	..	15.8	14.2	14.4	..
Canada	9.2	7.8	8.1	8.0	11.8	10.2	10.2	9.9	10.6	9.1	9.2	9.0
Chile	24.5	24.4	24.9	26.0	32.4	28.2	27.5	27.0	29.8	26.8	26.5	26.6
Czech Republic	10.2	10.6	12.2	12.9	19.1	20.3	22.0	22.0	15.2	16.2	17.8	18.1
Denmark	5.5	5.1	5.5	5.3	11.7	12.1	11.7	11.9	8.7	8.8	8.8	8.7
Estonia	6.4	4.9	5.3	..	11.6	10.6	11.5	..	9.1	7.7	8.3	..
Finland	9.2	8.6	9.0	8.8	17.8	16.8	17.7	17.7	13.7	12.8	13.5	13.4
France	7.3	6.8	6.8	..	11.0	11.1	11.5	..	9.3	9.0	9.2	..
Germany	7.9	8.9	8.4	..	13.4	14.1	14.4	..	11.0	11.7	11.6	..
Greece	38.9	30.9	31.0	31.7	43.7	37.8	38.6	39.5	42.0	35.1	35.5	36.3
Hungary	10.5	8.6	8.8	8.5	19.1	15.5	15.4	15.2	15.2	12.3	12.3	12.1
Iceland	11.0	7.3	8.4	..	24.0	17.0	16.4	..	18.0	12.6	12.6	..
Ireland	8.7	7.6	7.8	7.5	25.8	24.9	25.8	25.2	18.8	17.3	17.4	16.9
Israel	9.3	8.0	8.0	8.3	18.3	16.7	17.0	16.5	14.2	12.7	12.8	12.6
Italy	22.0	19.3	18.5	18.2	32.3	30.1	30.3	29.6	28.5	25.7	25.5	25.0
Japan	18.3	12.4	11.4	10.9	15.5	13.4	12.9	12.6	16.6	13.0	12.3	11.9
Korea	38.4	30.4	27.1	26.4	35.7	31.9	30.0	29.6	36.8	31.3	28.8	28.2
Luxembourg	6.9	4.7	..	..	7.7	6.7	..	..	7.4	5.8	5.8	5.7
Mexico	35.2	34.7	35.5	34.8	36.4	33.5	34.2	33.1	36.0	33.9	34.7	33.7
Netherlands	9.4	10.1	11.5	..	12.6	15.8	18.0	..	11.2	13.2	15.0	..
New Zealand	14.5	12.5	11.8	12.4	25.6	21.2	19.8	20.1	20.6	17.1	16.1	16.5
Norway	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.1	9.8	10.9	10.8	9.7	7.4	7.8	7.7	7.0
Poland	24.8	20.4	19.9	..	29.5	25.0	25.1	..	27.4	22.9	22.8	..
Portugal	24.4	22.4	20.1	17.0	27.4	25.6	25.3	25.0	26.0	24.1	22.9	21.3
Slovak Republic	4.6	7.8	9.4	9.7	10.8	18.4	21.3	20.8	8.0	13.8	16.0	15.9
Slovenia	13.0	11.3	14.0	13.4	18.6	16.5	20.0	19.7	16.1	14.1	17.3	16.8
Spain	16.6	13.3	12.4	12.3	22.2	20.9	20.5	20.1	20.2	17.7	16.9	16.6
Sweden	5.7	5.9	6.4	6.0	14.5	14.5	15.0	14.5	10.3	10.4	10.9	10.5
Switzerland	12.3	10.4	10.1	10.9	13.9	11.6	11.1	10.5	13.2	11.1	10.6	10.7
Turkey	64.7	46.8	49.3	48.4	46.5	36.1	35.1	34.2	51.4	39.0	39.1	38.3
United Kingdom	8.3	8.2	8.9	..	16.7	17.8	18.2	..	12.8	13.4	13.9	..
United States	6.1	5.6	5.6	..	8.6	8.3	8.3	..	7.4	7.0	7.0	..
EU 27	14.8	12.5	12.6	12.4	20.9	19.8	20.3	20.2	18.3	16.5	16.8	16.6
OECD	14.8	12.7	..	..	19.1	17.6	..	..	17.7	15.9	16.1	..
Brazil	..	31.6	..	..	..	35.3	..	..	..	33.7	..	..
China	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
India	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Indonesia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Russian Federation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
South Africa	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

 StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932708560>
Self-employment rates: total

As a percentage of total employment


 StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932708579>



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