

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 2010, the share of self-employed workers in the total (men and women together) ranged from under 8% in the United States, and Norway 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 25.5%, is an exception. Ireland and Spain also combine high per capita incomes and high self-employment rates.

Over the period 1990-2010, self-employment rates have been falling in most countries. However the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom saw moderate increases and the Slovak Republic sharp increases, albeit from low levels in the latter country. Conversely, there have been sharp declines in self-employment rates in Turkey, Greece, Korea, Poland, New Zealand, Spain, Portugal, and Mexico, starting from a higher level.

Levels and changes in total self-employment rates conceal significant differences between men and women. While most men would tend to be employers or own account workers, a larger share of self-employed women play a supporting role in unpaid family jobs. In 2010, considering those countries with data, only two countries, Mexico and Turkey recorded female self-employment rates larger than the male rate. In the case of Turkey, almost half of all woman 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 civilian employment i.e. total employment less military employees.

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 (2011), *OECD Employment Outlook*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2010), *OECD Studies on SMEs and Entrepreneurship*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2005), *OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook – 2005 Edition*, 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.



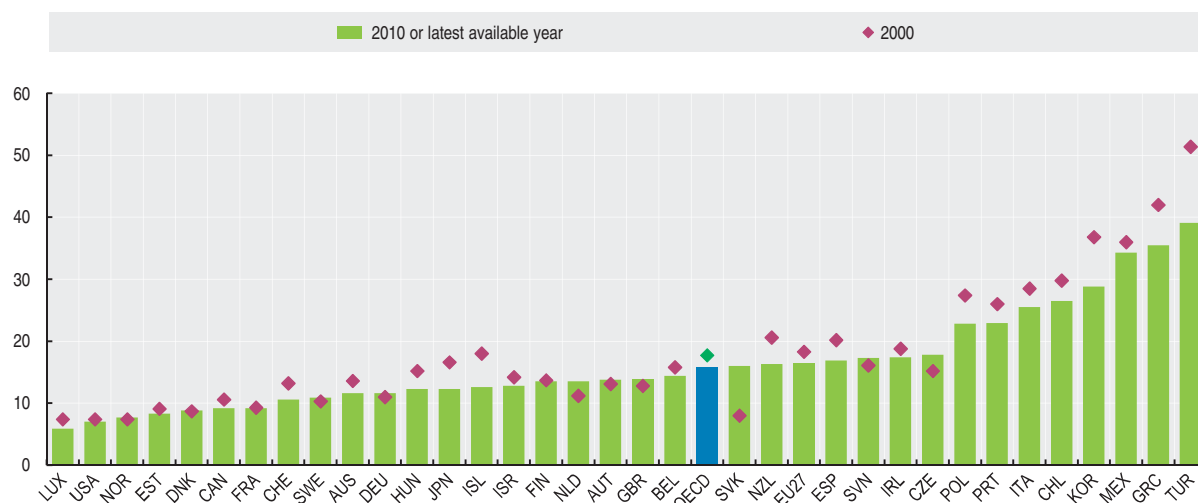
Self-employment rates
As a percentage of total employment by gender

	Total				Men				Women			
	1990	2000	2005	2010	1990	2000	2005	2010	1990	2000	2005	2010
Australia	14.4	13.6	12.7	11.6	16.4	16.1	15.2	13.9	11.6	10.4	9.7	8.9
Austria	14.2	13.1	13.3	13.8	..	13.9	15.3	16.0	..	12.2	10.9	11.3
Belgium	18.1	15.8	15.2	14.4	18.5	17.5	17.5	17.3	17.5	13.5	12.3	10.8
Canada	9.5	10.6	9.5	9.2	10.8	11.8	10.6	10.2	7.8	9.2	8.2	8.1
Chile	..	29.8	30.4	26.5	..	32.4	32.8	27.5	..	24.5	25.8	24.9
Czech Republic	..	15.2	16.1	17.8	..	19.1	20.4	22.0	..	10.2	10.4	12.2
Denmark	11.7	8.7	8.7	8.8	..	11.7	11.6	11.7	..	5.5	5.3	5.5
Estonia	..	9.1	8.1	8.3	..	11.6	11.3	11.5	..	6.4	5.1	5.3
Finland	15.6	13.7	12.7	13.5	19.5	17.8	16.7	17.7	11.3	9.2	8.5	9.0
France	13.2	9.3	9.1	..	15.0	11.0	10.9	..	10.9	7.3	6.9	..
Germany	..	11.0	12.4	11.6	..	13.4	14.9	14.4	..	7.9	9.4	8.4
Greece	47.7	42.0	36.4	35.5	47.5	43.7	39.1	38.6	48.0	38.9	32.0	31.0
Hungary	..	15.2	13.8	12.3	..	19.1	17.3	15.4	..	10.5	9.9	8.8
Iceland	..	18.0	14.2	12.6	..	24.0	20.1	16.4	..	11.0	7.4	8.4
Ireland	24.9	18.8	17.7	17.4	32.3	25.8	25.1	25.8	10.9	8.7	7.6	7.8
Israel	..	14.2	13.1	12.8	..	18.3	17.3	17.0	..	9.3	8.2	8.0
Italy	28.7	28.5	27.0	25.5	31.1	32.3	31.2	30.3	24.1	22.0	20.6	18.5
Japan	22.3	16.6	14.7	12.3	18.9	15.5	14.5	12.9	27.4	18.3	14.9	11.4
Korea	39.5	36.8	33.6	28.8	36.9	35.7	34.0	30.0	43.2	38.4	32.9	27.1
Luxembourg	9.1	7.4	6.5	..	9.1	7.7	7.4	..	9.1	6.9	5.3	..
Mexico	31.9	36.0	35.5	34.3	35.5	36.4	35.7	33.8	20.4	35.2	35.3	35.1
Netherlands	12.4	11.2	12.4	..	11.8	12.6	14.6	..	13.4	9.4	9.7	..
New Zealand	19.8	20.6	18.3	..	24.7	25.6	22.7	..	13.4	14.5	13.3	..
Norway	11.3	7.4	7.4	7.7	14.6	9.8	10.2	10.8	7.4	4.8	4.4	4.4
Poland	27.2	27.4	25.8	22.8	..	29.5	27.9	25.1	..	24.8	23.1	19.9
Portugal	29.4	26.0	25.1	22.9	..	27.4	26.7	25.3	..	24.4	23.3	20.1
Slovak Republic	..	8.0	12.6	16.0	..	10.8	17.2	21.3	..	4.6	6.9	9.4
Slovenia	..	16.1	15.1	17.3	..	18.6	17.2	20.0	..	13.0	12.7	14.0
Spain	25.8	20.2	18.2	16.9	25.8	22.2	20.8	20.5	25.9	16.6	14.5	12.4
Sweden	9.2	10.3	9.8	10.9	12.9	14.5	14.0	15.0	5.2	5.7	5.3	6.4
Switzerland	..	13.2	11.2	..	..	13.9	11.7	..	..	12.3	10.6	..
Turkey	61.0	51.4	43.0	39.1	53.5	46.5	40.0	35.1	78.4	64.7	51.7	49.3
United Kingdom	15.1	12.8	12.9	13.9	19.9	16.7	17.4	18.2	8.9	8.3	7.7	8.9
United States	8.8	7.4	7.5	7.0	10.5	8.6	8.8	8.3	6.7	6.1	5.9	5.6
EU27 total	..	18.3	17.3	..	..	20.9	20.5	..	..	14.8	13.2	..
OECD total	..	17.7	16.8	19.1	18.4	14.8	13.5	..
Russian Federation	..	10.1	7.8	6.9	..	10.5	8.3	7.7	..	9.7	7.3	6.0

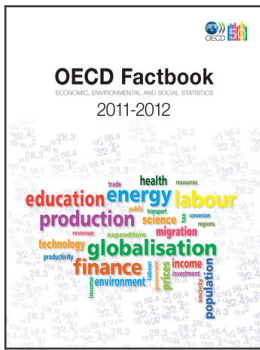
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Self-employment rates: total

As a percentage of total employment



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