

### Enterprises by size

#### Key facts

- In all countries between 70% and 95% of all firms are micro-enterprises, i.e. firms with less than ten persons employed. Moreover, among micro-enterprises a very large share consists of non-employer firms, i.e. enterprises with no employees.
- The highest proportion of micro-enterprises is typically found in the services sector.
- Generally, the larger the economy the greater the number of enterprises and the higher the proportion of larger enterprises. In Europe, Italy and Spain have disproportionately more businesses per unit of GDP than other large European economies such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom, or resource rich countries such as Canada and the Russian Federation.
- The population of manufacturing firms across all size classes declined between 2008 and 2012 in most OECD countries, and in those OECD countries where the population of SMEs increased, this was accompanied by falls in the population of large enterprises, suggesting that some of the increase in SMEs may have occurred as a result of lay-offs in (previously) large firms.

#### Relevance

Small businesses can be important drivers of growth and innovation. At the same time, larger businesses typically have competitive advantages through, for example, economies of scale, cheaper credit and direct access to global value chains, compared to smaller enterprises. Size matters therefore when formulating policy.

#### Definitions

An enterprise is defined as the smallest combination of legal units that is an organisational unit producing goods or services, which benefits from a certain degree of autonomy in decision-making, especially for the allocation of its current resources. An enterprise carries out one or more activities at one or more locations.

The basis for size classification is the *total number of persons employed*, which includes the self-employed.

In this publication, micro-enterprises are defined as firms with 1-9 persons employed; small enterprises: 10-49; medium enterprises: 50-249; and large enterprises: 250 and more. The group of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) refers to the size class 1-249.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

#### Comparability

All countries present information using the enterprise as the statistical unit except Japan, Korea and Mexico which use establishments. As most enterprises in these countries, as elsewhere, consist of only one establishment, comparability issues are not expected to be significant in relation to the total population of businesses but comparisons relating to the proportion of smaller firms will be upward biased, compared to other countries, whilst comparisons relating to the proportion of larger firms will be downward biased.

The number of persons employed corresponds to the total number of persons who work for the observation unit (inclusive of working proprietors, partners working regularly in the unit and unpaid family workers).

The size-class breakdown 1-9, 10-19, 20-49, 50-249, 250+ provides for the best comparability given the varying data collection practices across countries. Some countries use different conventions: the size class “1-9” refers to “1-10” for Mexico and “1-19” for Australia and Turkey; the size class “10-19” refers to “11-20” for Mexico; the size class “20-49” refers to “20-199” for Australia, “21-50” for Mexico and “20-99” for the United States (for 2011 data and earlier); the size class “50-249” refers to “50+” for Japan, “50-299” for Korea, “51-250” for Mexico and “100-499” for the United States (for 2011 data and earlier); finally, the size class “250+” refers to “200+” for Australia, “300+” for Korea, “251+” for Mexico and “500+” for the United States (for 2011 data and earlier).

For Canada and the United States and the Russian Federation data do not include non-employer enterprise counts. For the United Kingdom, in Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2 the total population of enterprises excludes 750 000 non-employer enterprises, for which the sector of activity is unknown.

In Figure 2.3 two data sources are used, Structural Business Statistics and Business Demography datasets.

#### Sources

OECD Structural and Demographic Business Statistics (SDBS) (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/sdbs-data-en>.

#### Further reading

OECD (2010), *Structural and Demographic Business Statistics*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264072886-en>.

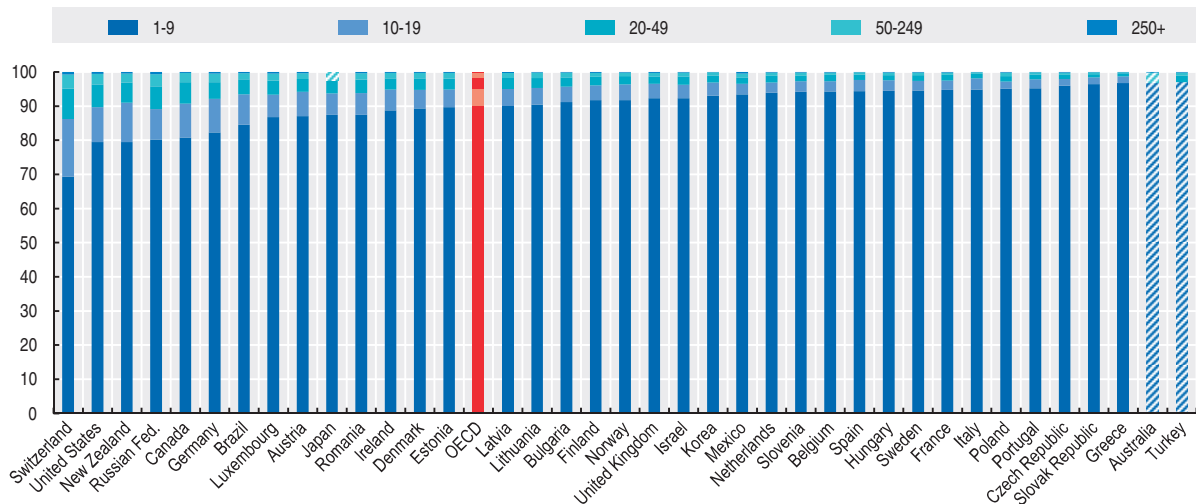
Ahmad N. (2007), *The OECD's Business Statistics Database and Publication*, Paper presented at the Structural Business Statistics Expert Meeting, Paris, 10-11 May 2007, [www.oecd.org/industry/business-stats/38516035.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/industry/business-stats/38516035.pdf).

## 2. STRUCTURE AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ENTERPRISE POPULATION

### Enterprises by size

Figure 2.1. Number of enterprises by size, total business economy

Percentage, 2012, or latest available year



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933230419>

Table 2.1. Number of enterprises by size, by main sector

2012, or latest available year

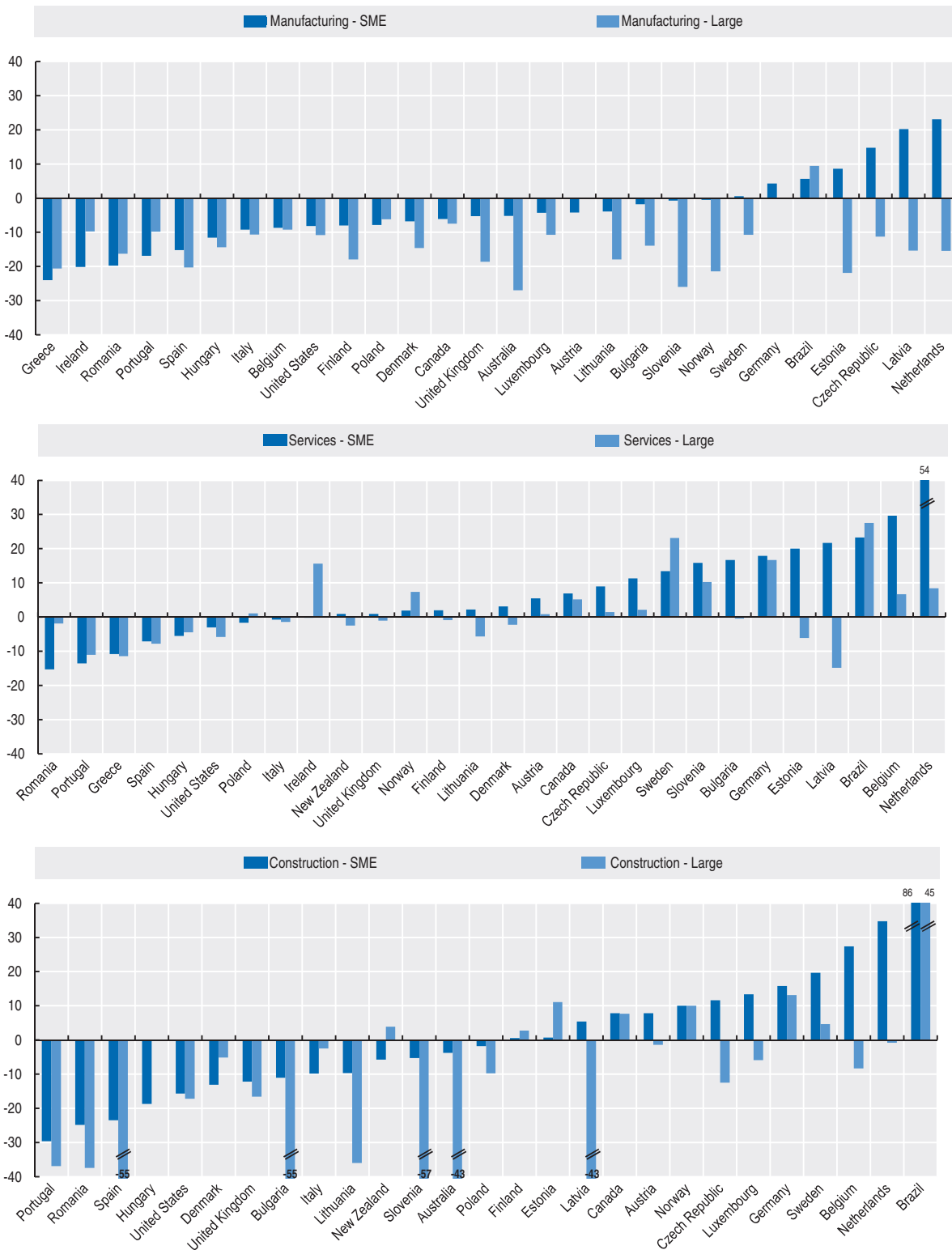
Country	Manufacturing					Services					Construction				
	1-9	10-19	20-49	50-249	250+	1-9	10-19	20-49	50-249	250+	1-9	10-19	20-49	50-249	250+
Australia	113 436			6 694	590	955 015			28 412	1 821	309 292			4 544	208
Austria	17 946	2 962	2 161	1 469	465	219 294	15 196	7 356	2 971	482	26 068	3 493	1 933	609	71
Belgium	27 809	2 502	2 110	1 237	314	410 032	11 755	6 605	2 298	448	90 683	2 835	1 487	489	55
Brazil	201 505	52 199	35 146	17 890	3 905	2 222 818	192 737	79 923	27 227	5 959	65 794	16 205	12 033	7 376	1 499
Bulgaria	22 171	2 936	2 558	1 753	297	241 417	9 251	4 795	1 782	241	16 076	1 493	952	503	44
Canada	30 530	7 440	6 320	3 440	370	445 090	54 960	34 110	14 180	1 420	116 770	10 840	5 860	2 040	140
Czech Rep.	161 421	4 674	3 963	3 052	779	615 421	11 786	6 460	2 761	502	170 519	2 873	1 730	614	63
Denmark	11 077	1 917	1 403	928	199	145 634	7 531	4 544	2 096	383	28 009	1 834	1 107	313	37
Estonia	4 338	578	539	415	57	39 802	1 825	1 026	461	76	7 542	507	238	79	10
Finland	17 813	1 696	1 290	843	206	145 884	5 992	3 274	1 421	343	39 712	1 873	915	244	37
France	186 839	13 302	10 300	5 934	1 489	1 986 456	46 818	29 809	11 905	2 367	487 684	15 645	7 272	1 956	308
Germany	126 525	40 686	15 854	16 436	4 162	1 436 032	139 640	77 270	34 340	5 898	225 978	33 700	10 839	3 252	233
Greece	61 022	1 677	1 184	587	112	549 683	10 903	4 576	1 711	264	84 552	1 542	592	175	13
Hungary	42 326	3 209	2 237	1 645	381	391 363	10 558	4 579	1 963	343	57 060	2 042	885	271	26
Ireland	2 163	656	578	471	130	99 071	7 447	3 662	1 914	288	26 966	556	428	122	8
Israel	19 516	1 912	1 424	1 038	191	293 722	10 990	6 781	3 065	572	48 444	2 453	1 116	289	20
Italy	345 292	41 803	20 329	8 635	1 247	2 692 270	64 697	22 269	8 528	1 622	548 709	17 085	5 302	1 237	79
Japan	329 498	43 907	35 125	25 600		1 935 993	112 742	69 496	40 995		411 778	35 694	15 756	4 971	
Korea	296 483	32 012	21 778	9 434	687	2 215 464	61 099	29 375	13 309	1 345	96 725	12 373	5 533	2 280	242
Latvia	7 103	751	629	443	55	67 618	3 105	1 674	710	103	6 767	606	402	212	12
Lithuania	12 313	1 086	927	693	114	94 696	4 613	2 486	1 030	133	18 378	911	611	310	32
Luxembourg	507	107	101	82	25	22 264	1 347	739	364	96	2 422	444	340	143	16
Mexico	472 340	13 852	8 160	6 075	2 718	437 147	16 312	9 559	4 623	1 428	3 224	827	532	292	99
Netherlands	44 682	3 563	2 779	1 967	328	628 172	18 901	11 185	5 505	1 000	128 273	3 409	1 958	827	122
New Zealand	8 028	1 793	1 195	578	111	56 587	8 277	4 062	1 805	328	15 968	1 537	738	237	23
Norway	14 330	1 357	1 069	631	117	189 207	8 585	4 207	1 729	381	48 568	2 528	1 251	372	44
Poland	151 845	7 836	7 313	6 201	1 505	1 041 374	18 416	12 065	6 384	1 169	223 733	5 003	3 211	1 609	175
Portugal	57 217	5 678	3 902	2 009	247	607 139	11 674	5 496	2 149	410	83 216	3 507	1 511	510	53
Romania	32 102	5 242	4 753	3 151	756	296 702	17 184	8 834	3 485	567	36 864	4 030	2 489	1 102	122
Russian Fed.	143 210	24 290	23 225	16 071	4 713	1 214 885	122 056	82 501	39 619	4 435	190 118	25 199	20 275	10 192	1 257
Slovak Rep.	62 724	1 492	1 244	947	276	232 303	5 232	1 971	846	192	84 995	755	466	178	18
Slovenia	15 080	931	563	497	111	77 555	2 023	1 040	459	86	17 359	679	247	97	10
Spain	146 712	14 395	9 810	4 248	754	1 757 265	51 333	23 987	9 103	1 742	306 194	9 435	3 995	1 101	147
Sweden	47 895	2 920	2 118	1 340	342	481 672	12 323	7 034	3 131	585	88 207	3 214	1 686	446	45
Switzerland	11 373	3 808	2 691	1 824	401	67 991	14 560	6 685	2 819	530	13 059	3 956	2 238	762	63
Turkey	309 818		17 427	8 067	1 581	1 915 996		22 558	8 471	1 698	131 714		7 315	3 631	387
United Kingdom	94 218	13 191	9 591	6 252	1 347	1 166 887	77 954	38 074	17 674	4 104	239 174	10 882	4 947	1 872	317
United States	231 416	46 509	36 715	22 855	5 342	2 508 118	321 676	203 947	89 385	16 601	506 290	50 013	28 894	11 090	1 206

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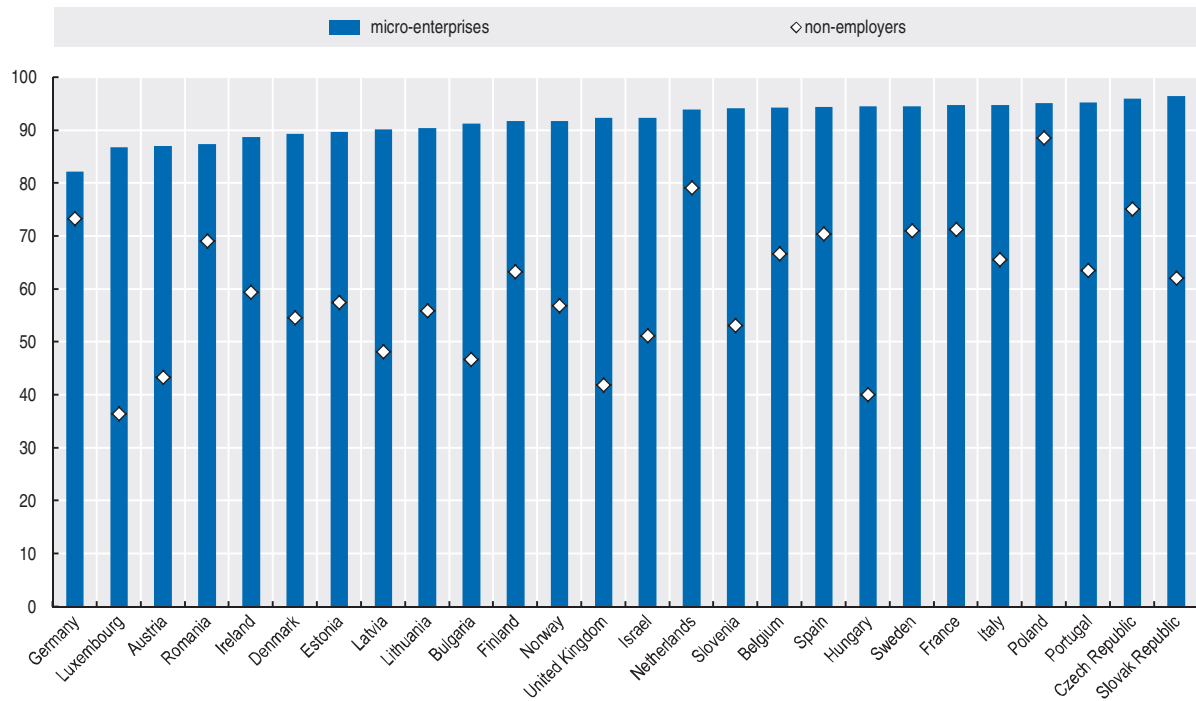
### Enterprises by size

Figure 2.2. **Change in number of enterprises, by main sector**  
Percentage change between 2008 and 2012



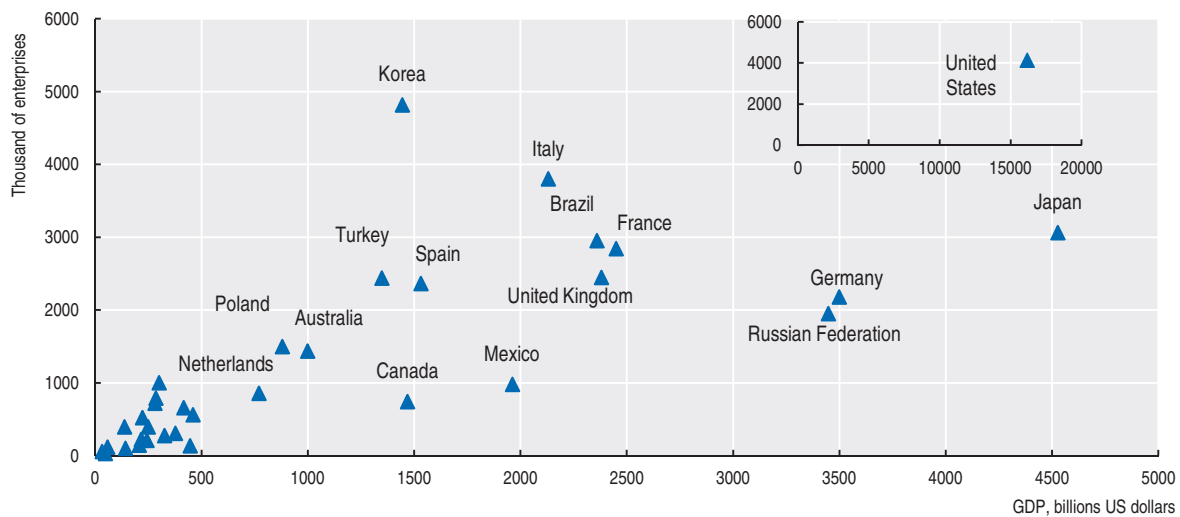
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**Figure 2.3. Non-employers and micro-enterprises**  
Percentage of total business population, 2012, or latest available year

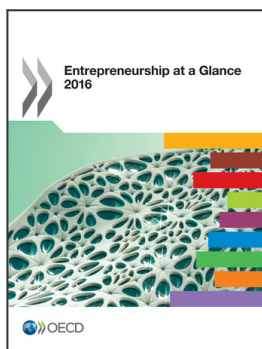


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**Figure 2.4. Number of enterprises and GDP**  
2012, or latest available year



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