

Enterprises by size

Key findings

- In all countries, the vast majority of enterprises (between 70% and 95%) are micro-businesses, i.e. enterprises with fewer than ten persons employed, and in most countries over half of all enterprises are non-employer enterprises, i.e. enterprises with no employees such as the self-employed who work on their own account and do not employ other persons.
- Partly reflecting the higher entry costs and capital intensity in manufacturing, SMEs in OECD countries are disproportionately located in the services sector, with high numbers of non-employer enterprises in wholesale and retail trade and construction activities.
- In around half of OECD economies, especially those hit hard by the crisis, the number of enterprises in 2014 remained below levels in 2008. The construction sector was especially affected, and to a lesser extent manufacturing, but services fared much better in most OECD economies. In all sectors growth in the number of SMEs typically outperformed growth in larger enterprises in most OECD economies.

Relevance

Small businesses can be important drivers of growth and innovation. Without a conducive business environment, however, they may face barriers to growth, in particular in capital-intensive sectors where access to finance and integration into global value chains are important determinants of success.

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 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) refers to the size class 1-249.

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

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 Korea and Mexico, which use establishments. Since 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, while comparisons relating to the proportion of larger firms will be downward biased.

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 “11-50” for Mexico; the size class “20-49” refers to “20-199” for Australia; the size class “50-249” refers to “50-299” for Japan and Korea, and “51-250” for Mexico; finally, the size class “250+” refers to “200+” for Australia, “300+” for Japan and Korea, and “251+” for Mexico.

For Canada, the United States and the Russian Federation, data do not include non-employer enterprise counts. For the business economy, estimates of non-employer enterprises amount to approximately 1.7 million in Canada, 15.3 million in the United States, and to 2.5 million in the Russian Federation. Data for Switzerland exclude businesses with less than 3 persons employed.

Data for Finland and Portugal exhibit a break in the series in 2013 and for Canada and France in 2014. Data for the United Kingdom exclude an estimate of 2.6 million small unregistered businesses; these are businesses below the thresholds of the value-added tax regime and/or the “pay as you earn (PAYE)” (for employing firms) regime.

In Figure 2.4, the Business Demography dataset is used as data source; this dataset covers non-employer enterprises for all countries including Switzerland.

Sources

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

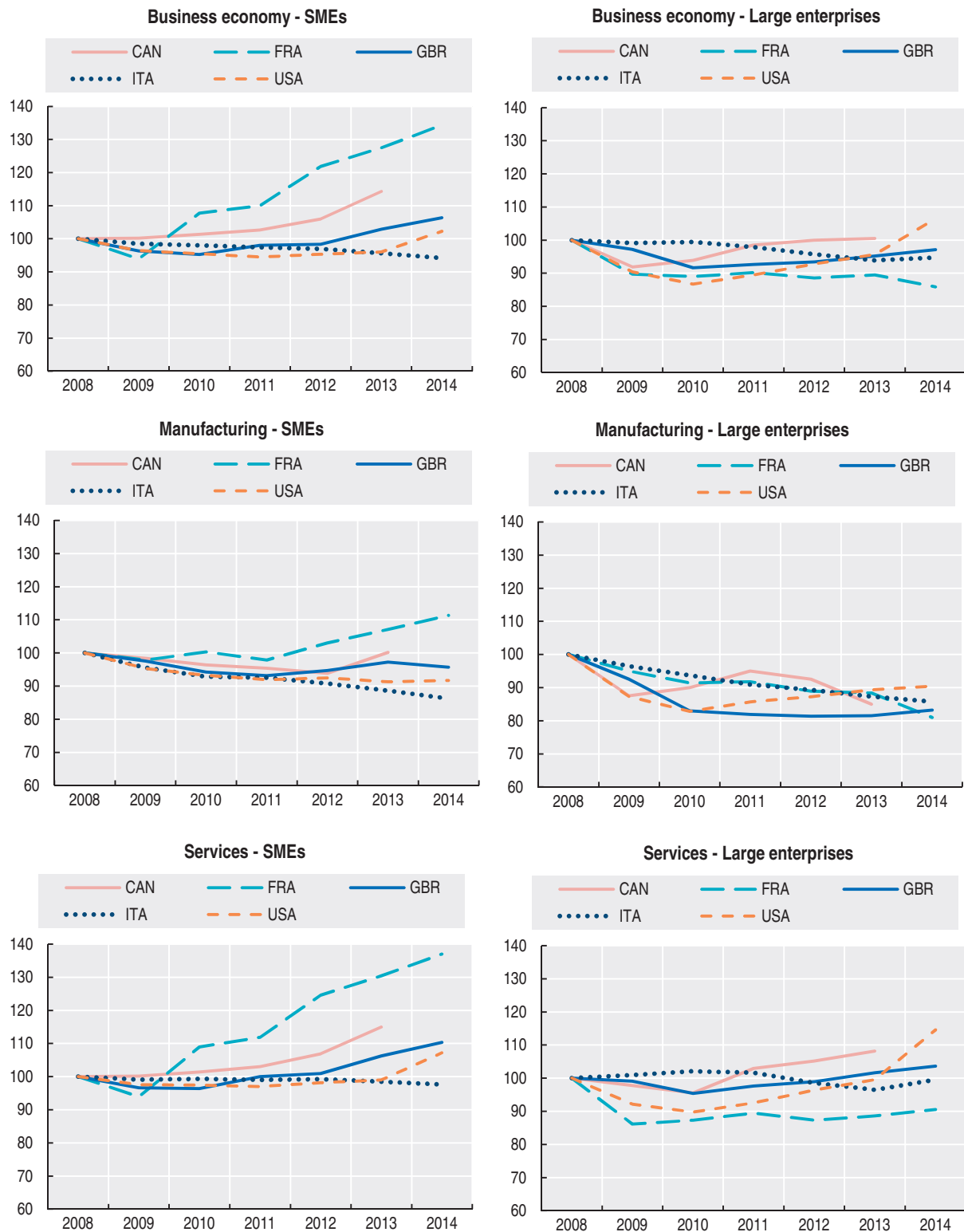
Further reading

OECD (2017), *Small, Medium, Strong. Trends in SME Performance and Business Conditions*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264275683-en>.

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/dataoecd/59/34/38516035.pdf.

Figure 2.1. Number of enterprises, by size and main sector, selected countries
2008=100

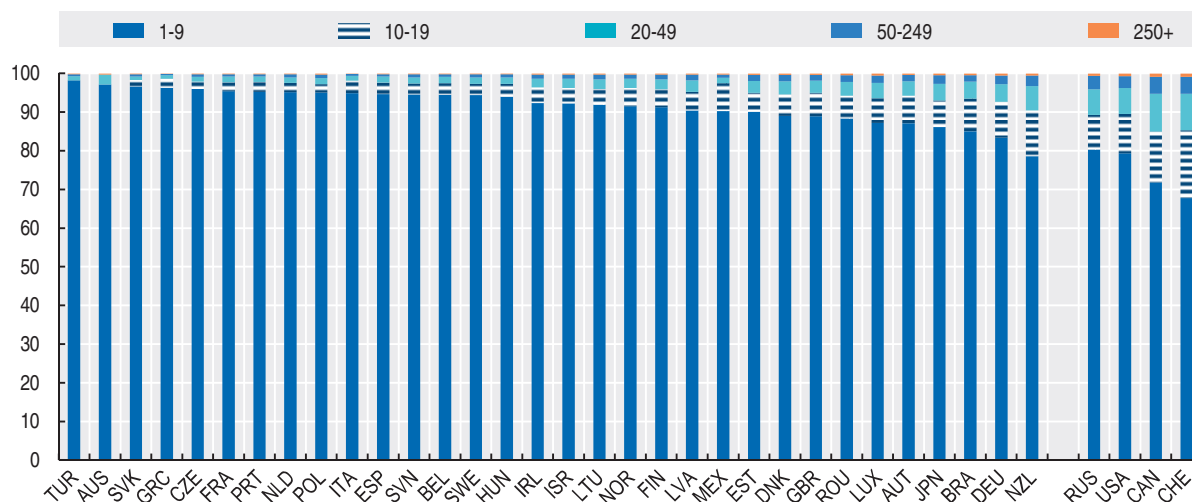


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2. STRUCTURE AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ENTERPRISE POPULATION

Enterprises by size

Figure 2.2. **Enterprises by size, business economy**
Percentage of all enterprises, 2014, or latest available year



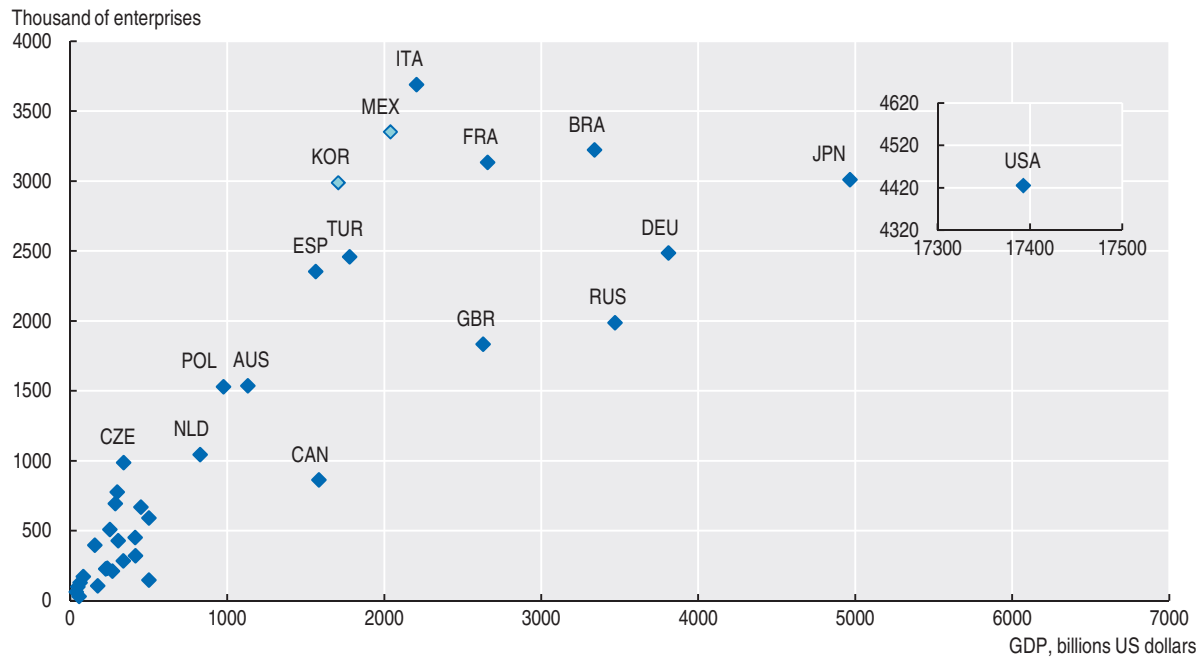
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Table 2.1. **Number of enterprises by size and main sector**
2014, or latest available year

Country	Manufacturing (10-33, ISIC4)					Services (45-82 excluding 64-66, ISIC4)					Construction (41-43, ISIC4)				
	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	116,480		6,403		491	1,023,185		29,162		1,899	337,841		4,179		166
Austria	18,576	2,842	2,182	1,456	468	228,685	15,980	7,586	3,070	483	27,984	3,593	1,985	597	68
Belgium	29,944	2,331	1,992	1,169	311	425,095	12,262	6,321	2,256	470	101,414	2,695	1,362	476	51
Brazil	218,056	52,029	36,051	17,029	3,830	2,436,010	201,195	89,385	29,583	6,317	79,672	18,141	12,975	6,786	1,444
Canada	27,887	8,202	7,842	5,545	1,426	442,857	84,182	58,994	26,516	4,232	114,195	14,314	8,578	3,605	554
Czech Republic	157,909	4,427	3,866	3,045	794	608,722	11,693	6,370	2,704	537	166,011	2,674	1,521	546	54
Denmark	10,686	1,800	1,374	955	192	145,333	7,817	4,621	2,169	394	27,876	1,929	1,096	338	42
Estonia	4,984	589	548	429	63	43,761	1,916	1,065	506	85	8,189	507	252	71	10
Finland	17,035	1,707	1,279	822	199	149,499	6,656	3,488	1,531	327	38,495	2,035	988	273	36
France	205,876	12,761	9,554	5,545	1,357	2,194,656	46,097	28,660	11,901	2,455	553,442	13,717	6,858	1,487	229
Germany	138,436	37,010	16,420	16,484	4,252	1,650,651	149,686	83,924	34,690	6,205	282,570	41,135	11,180	3,417	233
Greece	55,447	1,132	936	581	115	529,809	13,366	4,677	1,542	211	82,243	1,549	688	177	15
Hungary	40,097	3,131	2,360	1,623	403	382,982	11,125	4,869	2,045	352	53,212	2,275	979	279	20
Ireland	12,503	823	664	494	144	153,628	7,838	4,142	1,876	273	46,180	731	333	89	16
Israel	19,287	1,850	1,420	1,061	191	322,699	12,455	7,629	3,437	639	53,390	2,702	1,152	275	21
Italy	328,486	39,402	18,988	8,349	1,197	2,649,255	61,824	21,397	8,512	1,639	509,648	14,000	4,335	1,041	79
Japan	315,669	42,791	34,305	21,591	3,576	1,845,690	124,559	77,552	39,878	6,836	397,861	36,298	16,781	4,827	545
Korea	328,505	33,847	23,963	10,155	701	2,321,477	74,551	37,252	15,522	1,486	106,539	13,080	6,017	2,353	226
Latvia	7,859	756	655	476	59	73,262	3,186	1,727	749	117	8,030	687	488	203	16
Lithuania	15,006	1,182	956	699	132	115,962	4,767	2,518	1,077	152	25,550	1,007	646	304	36
Luxembourg	503	101	105	78	25	24,083	1,421	771	380	97	2,592	443	352	137	18
Mexico	430,971	39,242	8,338	7,431	3,548	2,509,306	186,689	32,713	16,808	2,087	4,904	6,429	3,370	2,069	291
Netherlands	53,105	3,382	2,657	1,924	326	790,223	18,447	10,867	5,427	1,042	149,560	2,791	1,601	683	113
New Zealand	7,956	1,851	1,287	594	132	57,351	8,754	4,440	1,983	309	17,205	1,821	846	273	21
Norway	13,898	1,308	1,040	646	124	193,988	8,975	4,265	1,832	402	50,538	2,767	1,402	399	44
Poland	157,056	8,580	7,327	6,131	1,545	1,066,190	20,258	12,038	6,286	1,226	221,638	4,438	2,927	1,340	154
Portugal	54,420	5,527	3,943	2,061	250	610,235	11,571	5,287	2,137	413	73,245	2,845	1,271	433	50
Romania	34,577	5,174	4,438	3,118	784	320,262	17,272	8,964	3,506	609	40,669	3,805	2,296	956	87
Russian Federation	146,355	24,594	23,509	16,061	4,428	1,238,672	123,612	82,829	38,918	4,264	196,983	26,146	21,049	10,156	1,105
Slovak Republic	60,348	2,201	1,187	964	275	239,723	3,590	2,079	1,015	203	82,645	733	377	158	14
Slovenia	16,452	947	578	477	107	86,592	2,023	1,040	450	80	17,098	679	262	84	10
Spain	140,164	12,397	9,176	4,124	728	1,733,714	49,478	23,401	8,929	1,794	335,541	6,947	3,319	893	121
Sweden	47,482	2,752	2,072	1,284	306	473,822	12,574	7,144	3,206	567	91,020	3,370	1,755	501	48
Switzerland	11,476	4,432	3,072	1,933	389	73,093	16,782	8,015	3,573	664	14,118	4,257	2,425	798	63
Turkey	607,180	-	18,076	9,384	1,784	3,815,186	-	25,727	9,960	2,064	312,450	-	10,048	4,553	442
United Kingdom	95,804	13,081	9,485	6,220	1,377	1,274,346	86,371	42,248	18,640	4,299	252,747	11,003	4,873	1,832	315
United States	228,477	46,273	37,114	22,893	5,543	2,742,717	344,321	223,482	100,313	19,732	511,722	53,162	31,594	12,375	1,353

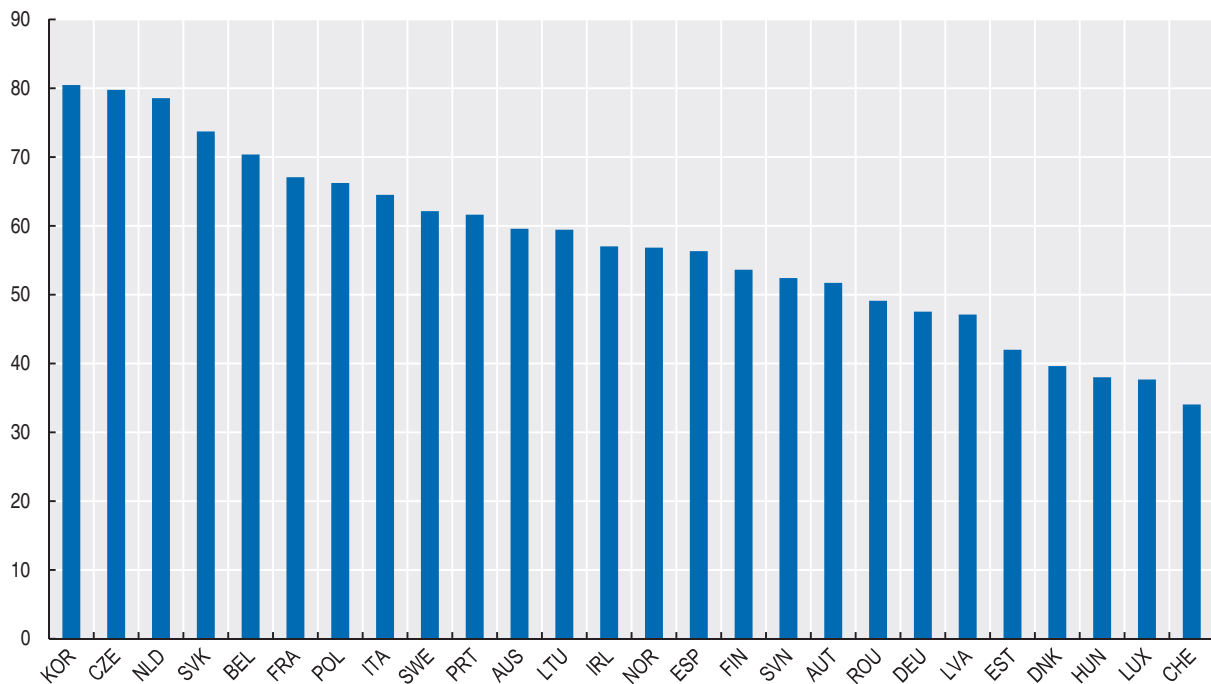
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Figure 2.3. **Number of enterprises and GDP**
2014, or latest available year



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Figure 2.4. **Share of non-employer enterprises, business economy**
Percentage of business population, 2014, or latest available year



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Figure 2.5. **SMEs by economic activity**

Percentage of total number of SMEs, 2014, or latest available year

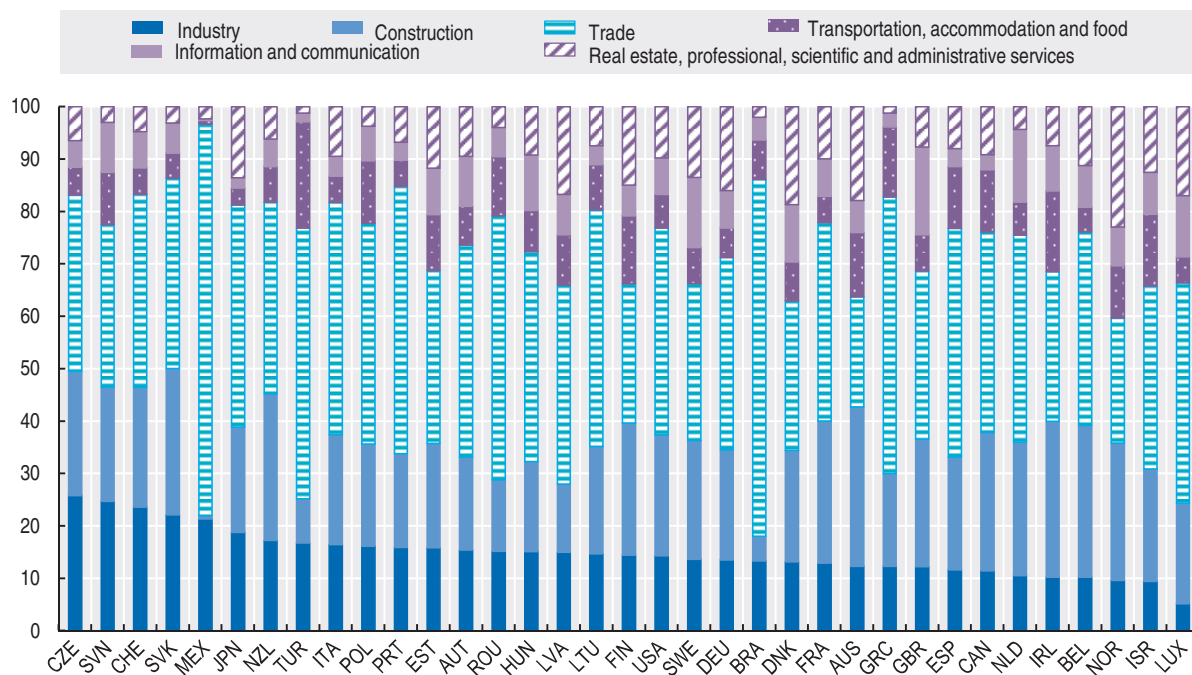


Figure 2.6. **Change in the number of enterprises by size, business economy**

Average annual percentage change between 2008 and 2014

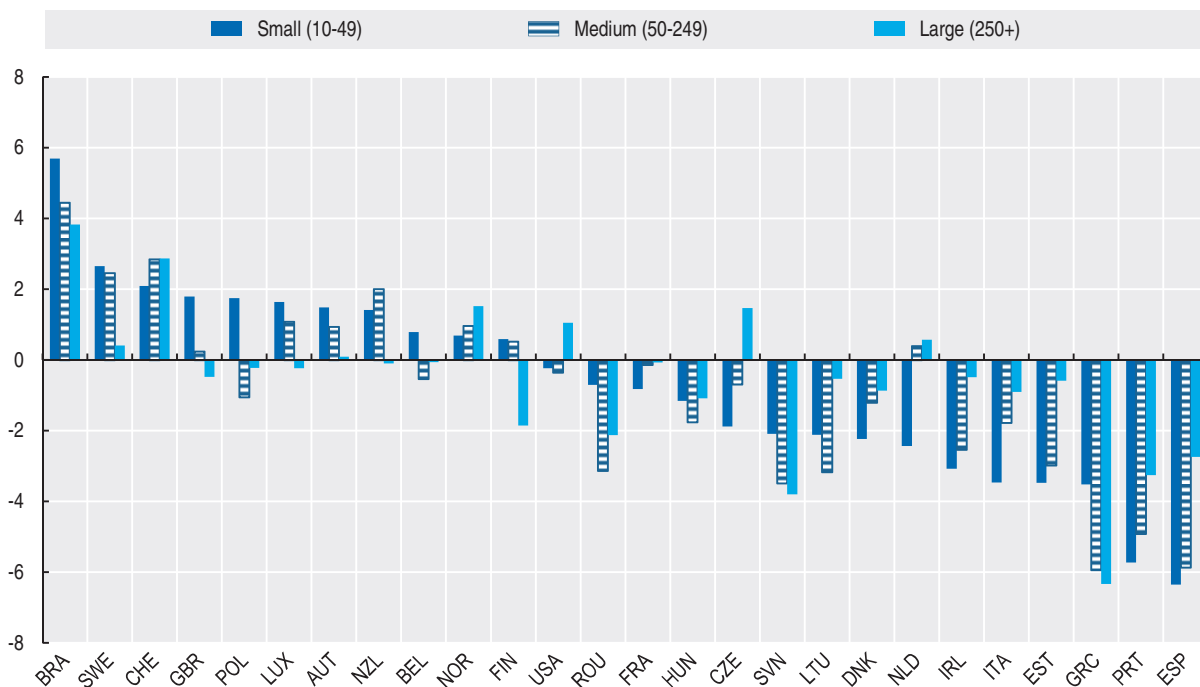
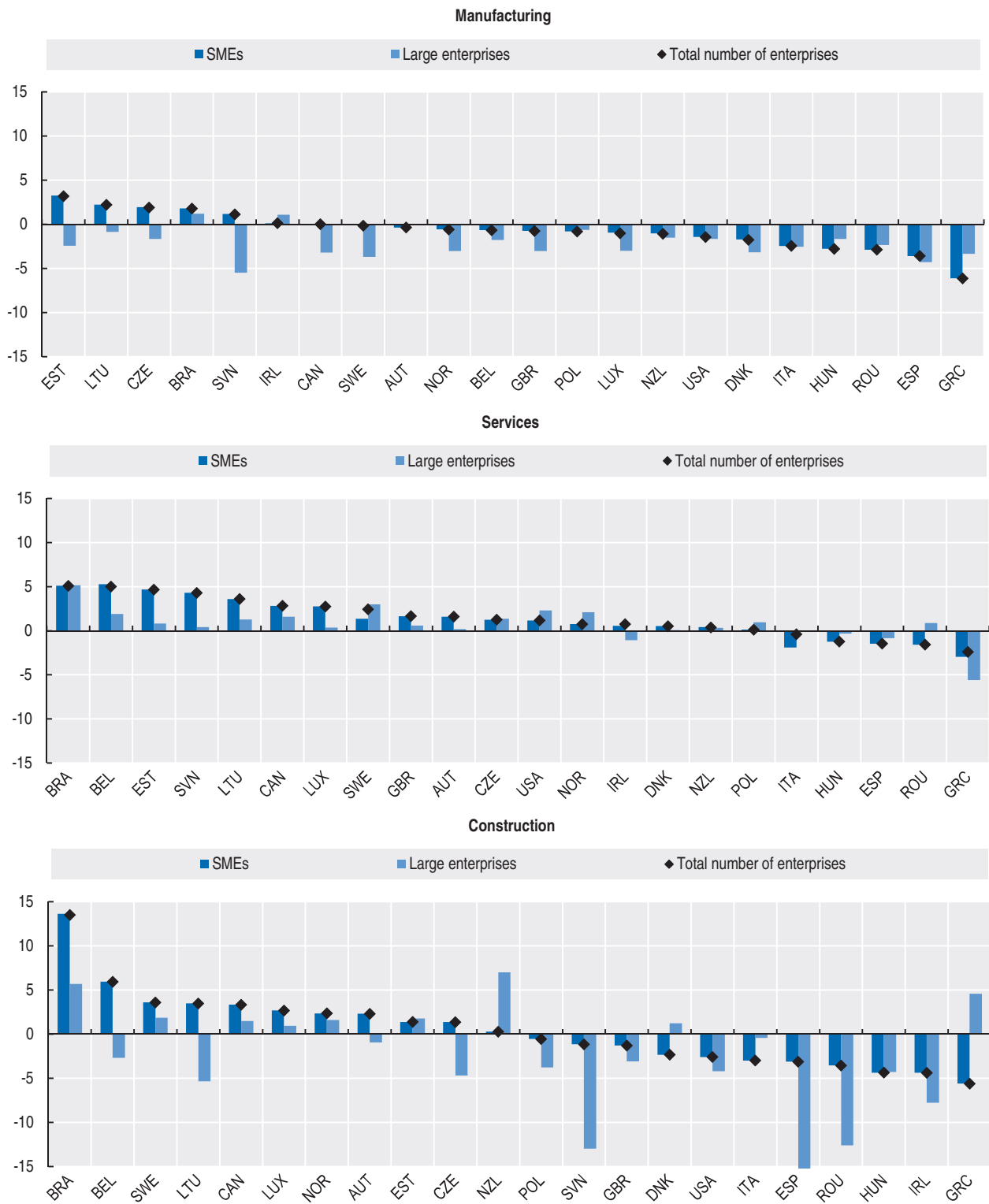
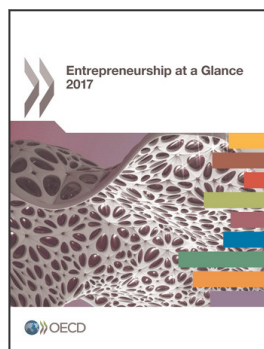


Figure 2.7. **Change in number of enterprises, by size and main sector**
Average annual percentage change between 2008 and 2014



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