

## 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. Self-employment rates 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

### Overview

In 2014, the share of self-employed workers in total employment ranged from under 7% in Luxembourg and the United States to well over 30% in Brazil, 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 2000-14, self-employment rates have fallen in more than two thirds of countries and by 2.4 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, Slovenia and the United Kingdom saw moderate to strong increases and the Slovak Republic even had an increase exceeding 7 percentage points, albeit from low levels. Conversely, and starting from a higher level, there have been sharp declines in self-employment rates of 3 percentage points or more in Turkey, Korea, Greece, Portugal, Poland, Mexico and Italy but also in Australia, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, and Switzerland.

Levels and changes in total self-employment rates conceal significant differences between men and women. In 2014, only Mexico and Turkey recorded self-employment rates for women higher than those for men with many of them working as unpaid family workers. In the case of Turkey, almost 40% of all working women are self-employed, albeit down from 64.7% in 2000.

who work in corporate enterprises, including company directors, are considered to be employees.

Rates 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 (2014), *OECD Labour Force Statistics*, OECD Publishing.
- For non-member countries: National sources.

### Further information

#### Analytical publications

- OECD (2015), *Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2015), *OECD Employment Outlook*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2014), *OECD Studies on SMEs and Entrepreneurship*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2005), *OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook 2005*, OECD Publishing.

#### Statistical publications

- OECD (2014), *Entrepreneurship at a Glance*, OECD Publishing.

#### Online databases

- *OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics*.

#### Websites

- Employment policies and data, [www.oecd.org/employment/emp](http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp).
- Labour statistics, [www.oecd.org/employment/labour-stats](http://www.oecd.org/employment/labour-stats).
- SMEs and entrepreneurship, [www.oecd.org/industry/smes](http://www.oecd.org/industry/smes).

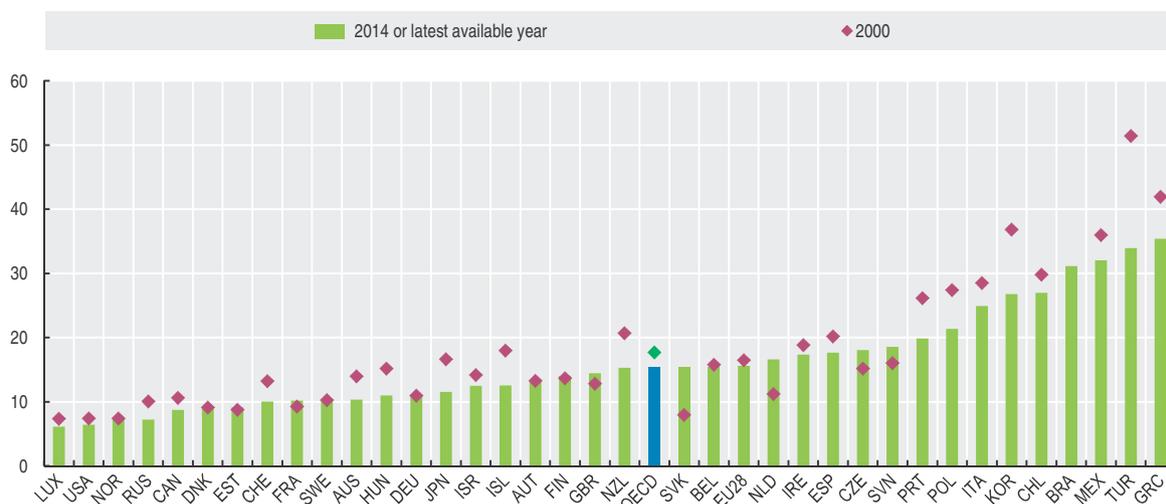

**Self-employment rates**

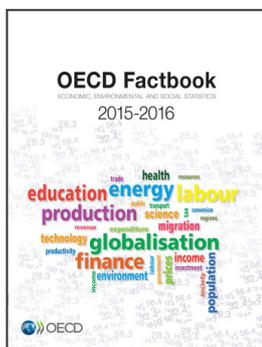
As a percentage of total employment by gender

	Women				Men				Total			
	2000	2012	2013	2014	2000	2012	2013	2014	2000	2012	2013	2014
Australia	10.3	8.4	8.1	..	16.0	12.4	12.2	..	13.5	10.6	10.3	..
Austria	12.3	10.5	10.6	10.5	14.0	15.4	15.6	15.8	13.3	13.1	13.2	13.3
Belgium	13.5	10.5	10.7	12.3	17.5	17.6	18.8	18.3	15.8	14.3	15.1	15.5
Canada	9.2	8.0	8.1	8.0	11.8	9.7	9.5	9.4	10.6	8.9	8.8	8.8
Chile	24.5	24.8	25.1	25.6	32.4	25.3	25.7	26.0	29.8	25.1	25.4	25.9
Czech Republic	10.2	13.5	13.5	12.9	19.1	22.3	21.3	22.1	15.2	18.5	17.9	18.1
Denmark	5.7	5.6	5.6	..	12.1	12.3	12.1	..	9.1	9.1	9.0	..
Estonia	6.0	5.1	5.9	5.7	11.4	12.6	12.4	12.5	8.8	8.9	9.2	9.1
Finland	9.2	8.9	8.8	9.4	17.8	18.2	18.0	18.5	13.7	13.6	13.5	14.1
France	7.3	7.5	7.6	7.6	10.9	12.3	12.6	12.6	9.3	10.0	10.2	10.2
Germany	7.9	8.4	8.1	8.0	13.4	14.4	14.0	13.6	11.0	11.6	11.2	11.0
Greece	39.0	31.1	31.9	29.8	43.7	40.4	40.4	39.4	42.0	36.6	36.9	35.4
Hungary	10.5	8.7	8.2	7.8	19.1	14.5	14.0	13.7	15.2	11.8	11.3	11.0
Iceland	11.0	8.8	8.4	7.8	24.0	15.9	16.7	16.8	18.0	12.5	12.7	12.5
Ireland	8.6	7.5	8.1	7.9	25.9	24.8	24.9	25.5	18.8	16.7	17.1	17.4
Israel	9.3	8.7	9.0	9.1	18.3	16.2	15.8	15.6	14.2	12.7	12.6	12.5
Italy	22.0	18.3	18.3	18.5	32.3	30.2	30.1	29.7	28.5	25.2	25.1	24.9
Japan	18.3	10.7	10.4	..	15.5	12.6	12.4	..	16.6	11.8	11.5	..
Korea	38.4	26.0	25.3	24.6	35.7	29.8	29.0	28.4	36.8	28.2	27.4	26.8
Luxembourg	6.9	..	..	..	7.7	..	..	..	7.4	6.1	6.2	..
Mexico	35.2	35.1	33.8	32.7	36.4	32.8	32.5	31.7	36.0	33.7	33.0	32.1
Netherlands	9.4	11.5	12.1	..	12.6	18.4	19.2	..	11.2	15.2	15.9	..
New Zealand	14.5	12.4	11.7	11.8	25.7	20.4	18.8	18.3	20.6	16.6	15.4	15.3
Norway	4.8	4.1	4.4	4.3	9.8	9.4	9.3	9.8	7.4	6.9	7.0	7.2
Poland	24.8	19.2	18.4	17.7	29.5	25.0	24.5	24.3	27.4	22.4	21.8	21.4
Portugal	24.5	17.7	17.5	14.9	27.5	26.5	26.4	24.6	26.1	22.2	22.1	19.9
Slovak Republic	4.6	9.9	9.8	9.9	10.8	19.8	20.2	19.7	8.0	15.5	15.6	15.4
Slovenia	13.0	12.8	13.6	16.0	18.6	19.2	19.6	20.7	16.1	16.2	16.9	18.6
Spain	16.6	12.7	13.1	13.0	22.2	21.3	22.1	21.7	20.2	17.4	17.9	17.7
Sweden	5.7	5.9	6.2	6.2	14.5	14.6	14.5	14.1	10.3	10.5	10.6	10.3
Switzerland	12.3	10.3	10.2	10.0	13.9	10.4	10.5	10.0	13.2	10.4	10.4	10.0
Turkey	64.7	45.7	43.4	39.8	46.5	33.5	32.7	31.5	51.4	37.1	35.9	34.0
United Kingdom	8.3	9.6	9.6	..	16.7	19.0	18.7	..	12.8	14.6	14.4	..
United States	6.1	5.6	5.6	5.4	8.6	7.8	7.5	7.4	7.4	6.8	6.6	6.5
EU 28	14.8	12.4	12.3	..	20.9	20.2	20.0	..	18.3	16.6	16.5	..
OECD	15.1	13.2	13.0	12.8	19.6	18.0	17.7	17.5	17.7	15.9	15.6	15.4
Brazil	..	27.1	26.8	..	..	34.3	34.4	..	..	31.2	31.2	..
China	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
India	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Indonesia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Russian Federation	9.7	6.0	6.4	6.3	10.5	7.8	8.1	8.1	10.1	6.9	7.3	7.2
South Africa	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

 1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933336573>
**Self-employment rates: total**

As a percentage of total employment


 1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933335485>



**From:**  
**OECD Factbook 2015-2016**  
Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics

**Access the complete publication at:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/factbook-2015-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2016), "Self-employment", in *OECD Factbook 2015-2016: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/factbook-2015-52-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to [rights@oecd.org](mailto:rights@oecd.org). Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at [info@copyright.com](mailto:info@copyright.com) or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at [contact@cfcopies.com](mailto:contact@cfcopies.com).