



Extent of dependent self-employment in the European Union

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1.0 Executive summary

This report estimates the prevalence and characteristics of dependent self-employment across EU Member States and Norway. To do so, data from 2021 EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), the largest European household sample survey of 2 580 815, of which 160 245 were self-employed, is used.

The estimates of the extent of dependent self-employment need to be treated with caution and not as indisputable facts. Caution is required because currently, there is no consensus in theory or in national legislation on how the dependent self-employment, a 'grey zone' between genuine self-employment and waged employment, should be defined and measured. Despite the consensus that the dependent self-employed face two types of dependency, namely **economic dependency** and **personal or organisational dependency**, there is no universally accepted view on how each type of dependency should be measured, or whether both types of dependency should simultaneously be present to classify a worker as dependent self-employed. Therefore, estimates of the prevalence of dependent self-employment vary across different datasets and studies, depending on the indicators used to measure economic and organisational dependency, and whether both or just one form of dependency is assessed. In addition, legislative frameworks differ in terms of the criteria they use to decide whether a self-employed worker is genuine or dependent self-employed. This means that the estimates in this report do not align with the definitions in national legislation. For these reasons, the estimates provided should be read as the self-employed possessing characteristics of dependent self-employment and thus susceptible to, or at risk of, being dependent self-employed. There are also data limitations in this study. A limited number of questions are available to measure economic and organisational dependency in the EU-LFS. In addition, in some countries, a high number of self-employed refused to respond to these questions on their economic and organisational dependency, weakening the reliability of data and the robustness of cross-national comparisons.

Methodology

In 2017, an ad-hoc module on self-employment introduced a series of questions related to dependent self-employment. However, only starting in 2021 did the EU-LFS introduce in the core questionnaire two questions enabling estimates to be produced of dependent self-employment. This report is therefore the first attempt to provide estimates of dependent self-employment across EU Member States and Norway based on the full EU-LFS household survey. To estimate the share of the self-employed at risk of dependent self-employment, two types of dependency are measured:

- ▶ *economic dependency* (whether the self-employed worked for only one client or for a dominant client from whom at least 75 % of their income was generated).
- ▶ *organisational dependency* (whether the client(s) or any other party decides the working hours of those reporting themselves as self-employed).

The self-employed who meet simultaneously the economic dependency and the organisational dependency criteria are classified as **possessing characteristics of dependent self-employment and thus susceptible to, or at risk of, being dependent self-employed**.

Dependent self-employment

Although usually analysed from the perspective of the self-employed without employees, dependent self-employment is far from exclusive to the self-employed without employees. Indeed, economic dependency and organisational dependency can also occur amongst the self-employed with employees.

Over the past decade, the share of self-employment as a proportion of total employment in the EU slightly decreased from about 15 % to less than 14 %. There are also marked variations between countries in the share of self-employed workers in total employment, ranging from 4.5 % in Norway to 28.8 % in Greece.

Turning to dependent self-employment and using aggregate data, the finding is that 1 in 31 (3.2 %) of all reporting themselves as self-employed without employees display the characteristics of being dependent self-employed. The estimates of the number of dependent self-employed without employees is numerically six times higher than the dependent self-employed with employees, revealing that the risk of dependency is much more prevalent amongst the self-employed without employees.

Self-employed at risk of dependent self-employment (i.e., self-employed who are both economically and organisational dependent): prevalence and characteristics

- ▶ The share of all self-employed who meet both criteria of dependent self-employment (i.e., economic and personal or organisational dependency) is highest in Slovakia (21.2 % of those reporting themselves as self-employed), Sweden (15.3 %) and Bulgaria (8.8 %) and lowest in Greece (0.8 %), Czechia (1.1 %) and Spain (1.7 %). However, the proportion of dependent self-employment in total employment differs because in Slovakia the share of self-employment in total employment is 14.9 %, in Sweden 10 %, in Bulgaria 10.4 % while in Greece it is much higher, the self-employment representing 28.8 % of total employment. Similarly, there is a larger share of self-employment in total employment in Czechia and Spain (15.5 % and 15.4 % respectively of total employment).
- ▶ There are few differences in the gender, educational level, and urban/rural distribution of those who display the characteristics of dependent self-employed as a proportion of all the self-employed.
- ▶ The characteristics of dependent self-employment are more prevalent amongst younger respondents reporting themselves as self-employed, with 6 % of those reporting themselves as self-employed aged 15-34 years old being at risk of dependent self-employment, as well as amongst the older respondents, with 4.6 % of those reporting themselves as self-employed aged 65-years-old and over being at risk of dependent self-employment. Indeed, this is perhaps because after gaining entitlement to pension rights¹, there are situations when former employees continue to work for their previous employer but as a dependent self-employed person in a minor job or as a consultant. This group, however, perhaps do not face the same vulnerabilities as others in dependent self-employment. The characteristics of dependent self-employment are most prevalent amongst plant and machine operators and assemblers, and elementary occupations (9.8 % of all the self-employed in these occupations are estimated to be dependent self-employed) and amongst the self-employed with medium or low skill levels (4 % of these self-employed).
- ▶ The dependent self-employment characteristics of economic and organisational dependency are also more prevalent among the self-employed working in education, human health, and social work activities (5.8 % of the self-employed in this sector are estimated to be dependent self-employed) and amongst those in information and communication, financial and insurance activities, real estate activities and other services (4.1 % of the self-employed in this sector). However, little variation exists between the estimates of the prevalence of dependent self-employment across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.
- ▶ Those estimated to be dependent self-employed do not work more in the evening or at the weekend compared with the self-employed. Indeed, they are less likely to work on Saturdays. Those susceptible to being dependent self-employed are also less likely to work from home than the self-employed.

¹ Retirement age differs across the EU and has been rising.

- ▶ The risk of dependent self-employment is higher amongst the self-employed working on a part-time basis in their main job (e.g., the main job is self-defined as self-employment) compared with the self-employed working on a full-time basis.
- ▶ Job satisfaction among the self-employed estimated to be dependent self-employed is not lower than for the self-employed using the proxy of whether they are looking for another job.

Economically dependent self-employment: prevalence and characteristics

- ▶ In the EU, 1 in 7 (13.9 %) of the self-employed are *economically dependent* on one client or a main client (for at least 75 % of their income). The share of the self-employed who are economically dependent is highest in Sweden (35.3 % of all the self-employed), Slovakia (31.3 %) and Hungary (30.6 %).
- ▶ Little variation in economic dependency exists across different socio-demographic groups of the self-employed. Economic dependency is slightly more common amongst men who are self-employed, the younger self-employed, the older self-employed aged 65-years-old and over, the self-employed with a low educational level (lower secondary) and the self-employed living in rural areas.
- ▶ Economic dependency is also more common amongst skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (25 % of the self-employed in these occupations) and plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations (21.1 % of the self-employed in these occupations) and amongst the self-employed with medium or low skill levels (14.6 % of the self-employed with this skill level being economically dependent self-employed).
- ▶ The self-employed working in agriculture, forestry and fishing sector are more likely to be economically dependent self-employed (25.8 % of all self-employed working in this sector), resulting in economic dependency being more prevalent in the primary sector.
- ▶ Very little difference exists between the share of the economically dependent self-employed who work in the evening compared with all self-employed but larger differences are found for weekend work. A larger share of the self-employed not working on Saturdays are economically dependent self-employed. Conversely, the dependent self-employed are more likely to work on Sundays.
- ▶ Economic dependency is more prevalent amongst the self-employed working from home.
- ▶ Economically dependency is also more prevalent amongst the self-employed working on a part-time basis for their main job.
- ▶ The job satisfaction of those who are economically dependent self-employed is not lower compared with all self-employed.

Organisationally dependent self-employment: prevalence and characteristics

- ▶ In the EU, nearly 1 in 5 (19 %) of the self-employed lack the autonomy to decide their working time (i.e., the start and the end of their working time). The share of the self-employed who are organisationally dependent is highest in Bulgaria (46.2 % of all self-employed), Croatia (46.1 %), Slovakia (44.4 %) and Sweden (40.7 %).
- ▶ Organisational dependency is rather evenly spread across the different socio-demographic groups of the self-employed. It is only slightly higher amongst women in self-employment, the younger self-employed, and the self-employed with low or medium educational levels which accounts for all those up to upper secondary education.
- ▶ Organisational dependency is more prevalent amongst plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations (33.5 % of the self-employed in these occupations), amongst clerical support

workers, service and sales workers (22.8 % of the self-employed in these occupations) and amongst the self-employed with medium or low skill levels (20.7 % of the self-employed with this skill level being in organisationally dependent self-employment).

- ▶ Organisational dependency is more frequent among the self-employed working education, human health and social work activities (24.2 % of the self-employed in the sector) and in the wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food services (22.4 % of the self-employed in the sector).
- ▶ Organisational dependency is more prevalent in the tertiary sector (wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities; professional, scientific, technical, administration and support service activities; education, human health and social work activities; information and communication; financial and insurance activities; real estate activities; other services) with 20 % of the self-employed in the tertiary sector being organisationally dependent.
- ▶ Organisational dependency is slightly more common amongst self-employed who work on Saturdays but slightly less common amongst the self-employed not working on evenings or on Sundays.
- ▶ Organisational dependency is less prevalent amongst those working from home.
- ▶ The self-employed who are organisationally dependent have lower job satisfaction, measured by the proxy that they are more likely to be looking for another job than all the self-employed (29 % of the self-employed are looking for another job but 33 % of the organisationally dependent self-employed).

This report provides a baseline assessment of the prevalence and distribution of the self-employed possessing characteristics of dependent self-employment and thus at risk of, or susceptible to, dependent self-employment. Future waves of the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) could be used to chart the changing prevalence and distribution of dependent self-employment, and the progress being made in tackling this phenomenon.

2.0 Introduction

The self-employed or those who undertake a gainful activity on their own account (European Commission, 2017a) represent an important share of total employment in Europe. Whilst self-employment is usually seen as allowing individuals to gain freedom in their work, to develop their entrepreneurial skills and to be independent (Allen and Curington, 2014; Burke et al., 2020; Murgia and Pulignano, 2021), there is a growing concern that the status of self-employed is sometimes being used to misclassify dependent employees in order to circumvent collective agreements, labour regulations, employment taxes and other rights that employment contracts offer to workers (Conaty et al., 2016; Eichhorst et al., 2013; Eurofound, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Gialis et al., 2017; Giraud and Lechevalier, 2018; ILO, 2013; MacDonald and Giazitzoglu, 2019; OECD, 2000; Williams and Horodnic, 2019; Williams et al., 2020). The result of such misclassification of workers as self-employed is asserted to be precarious work with little stability and uncertain income for the workers (Conen and Schippers, 2019; Hernanz and Carrasco, 2021; Moore and Newsome, 2018).

The outcome is that under the umbrella of self-employment, a continuum of heterogeneous working relationships have been conceptualised, ranging from genuine or traditional own account workers and independent professionals to working relationships that despite being formally registered as self-employment, display a high level of dependency, or combine self-employment with dependent employment (Bozzon and Murgia, 2022; Cieřlik & Dvoulety, 2019; Williams et al., 2020). To denote these latter employment relationships, seen as a grey zone between genuine self-employment and the dependent employment, various terms have been used including: 'quasi', 'dependent', 'economically dependent', 'bogus', 'fake', 'false', 'sham', 'masked', 'involuntary', or 'misclassified' self-employment, or 'disguised employment' (Bozzon and Murgia, 2022; Kösters and Smits, 2022; Majetic et al., 2022; Millán et al., 2020; Skrzek-Lubasińska and Szaban, 2019; Williams and Horodnic, 2019; Williams et al., 2020). Here, and reflecting the dominant trend in the literature, the term 'dependent self-employment' is used to name this employment relationship, although it needs to be recognised that many enforcement bodies still use the term 'bogus self-employment' when referring to this type of employment.

Although no universal consensus exists on how to define these employment relationships existing in this 'grey zone' between genuine self-employment and dependent employment (Mühlberger and Bertolini, 2008), and legal definitions can vary across countries, the meaning of the various terms and legal definitions do not significantly vary (ILO, 2015). There is a consensus amongst theoreticians and practitioners that this type of working arrangement hides a *de facto* dependent employment relationship (Williams et al., 2020) and that the self-employed in this 'grey zone' face two types of dependency, namely **economic dependency** and **personal or organisational dependency** (Böheim and Mühlberger, 2006; Eichhorst et al., 2013; Kösters and Smits, 2022; ILO, 2015, 2016; Mühlberger, 2007; Skrzek-Lubasińska and Szaban, 2019). **Economic dependency** is present where a self-employed person has only one client or a main client for generating their income, while **personal or organisational dependence** refers to the lack of authority of the worker to decide the content of their work, the methods of work or the time and place for undertaking the work, or their lack of authority to hire staff (Böheim and Mühlberger, 2006; Eichhorst et al., 2013; Kösters and Smits, 2022; Skrzek-Lubasińska and Szaban, 2019).

In this report, these 'grey zone' working relationships are referred to as 'dependent self-employment'. This working arrangement refers to cases where a worker is formally registered as self-employed despite conducting the same tasks under the same working conditions as those of direct employees and/or they have only one or a dominant client for their income (Eichhorst et al., 2013; Majetic et al., 2022; Millán et al., 2020; Williams and Horodnic, 2019; Williams et al., 2020). This definition accounts for both economic and personal or organisational dependence.

However, there is no universally accepted view on how each type of dependency should be measured, or whether both types of dependency should simultaneously be present for a worker to be classified as dependent self-employed (Williams et al., 2020). As such, estimates of the prevalence of dependent self-employment vary across

different datasets and studies, depending on the indicators used to measure economic and organisational dependency, and whether both or just one form of dependency is assessed (Majetic et al., 2022).

Economic and organisational dependency are measured differently in the two main datasets used for obtaining estimates of dependent self-employment in the EU. In the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), three questions are used for classifying a self-employed person as dependent self-employed. A self-employed is considered dependent self-employed if none or one of the following three characteristics are met: i) the self-employed person has generally more than one client or customer (economic dependency); ii) the self-employed person has the authority to hire/fire and iii) the self-employed person makes the most important decisions on how the business is run (organisational dependency). Based on these characteristics, a self-employed person can be classified as dependent self-employed only based on the two criteria referring to organisational dependency in cases where the self-employed has more than one client but fails to meet the other two criteria referring to organisational dependency. Meanwhile, in the European Labour Force Survey, the data set used in this study, two conditions need to be met simultaneously for classifying a self-employed person as being dependent self-employed: i) the self-employed person worked for only one client or for a dominant client generating at least 75 % of the income (economic dependency), ii) the client(s) or any other party decides about the self-employed person's working hours (organisational dependency). Indeed, due to these differences between the definitions/characteristics and data available, some previous studies differentiate between 'pure' dependent self-employment, which covers dependent self-employment where both economic and personal/organisational dependency is present, and 'grey' dependent self-employment where only one of the forms of dependency is present (Bozzon and Murgia, 2021; Williams and Lapeyre, 2017; Williams and Horodnic, 2019).

The different definitions in legal frameworks of countries add to the difficulty of a precise indisputable measurement of the dependent self-employment. The criteria included in the legal framework of different countries reflect national circumstances and very often include more criteria for assessing personal and the organisational dependency than the criteria available in the databases used. For example, in Romania, law no. 227/2015 defines a 'dependent activity' as 'any activity undertaken by a natural person in an employment relationship which generates income'. 'Independent activity' meanwhile, is defined as 'any activity conducted by a natural person in order to obtain income, which meets at least four out of the following seven criteria: (1) the individual has the freedom of choice of where and how to work, as well as the freedom to choose the work program; (2) the individual has the freedom to have more customers (more than one customer); (3) inherent risks of the business are assumed by the individual; (4) work is performed by using individual's assets; (5) work is performed by the individual through the use of intellectual and/ or physical skills, depending on the particularities of each activity; (6) the individual is member of a professional body, with the role of representation, regulation and supervision of the carried out profession, according to special normative acts regulating the organization and the way it is conducted the profession in question, and (7) the individual has the freedom to conduct directly the activity, with employees or in collaboration with third parties according to the law.

In the Netherlands, meanwhile, if a self-employed responds positively to the following two questions, they are not considered genuine self-employed: (1) Is there an obligation to 'personal work'? (e.g., the self-employed has to perform the work themselves and replacement can be made only after consulting the client) and, (2) Is there a relationship of authority between the client and worker? (e.g., the client determines how the self-employed person performs the work) (Hayes and Hastings, 2017).

According to Latvian law, furthermore, a self-employed person is not genuine self-employed if one of the following six criteria is met: (1) the worker is economically dependent on the client to whom they provide services, (2) the worker has not taken a financial risk and is not personally responsible for any profit or loss, (3) the worker is integrated into the enterprise to which they provide services, (4) the holidays and leave of the worker and the procedures for approving them are subject to the internal procedures of the enterprise they work for or the work schedule of other natural persons employed by the enterprise, (5) the work has been done under the management

or control of another person, and the individual does not have the possibility to use his or her own subcontractors in fulfilling his or her duties, or (6) the individual does not own fixed assets, materials or other assets, which are used in performing work (Hayes and Hastings, 2017).

In sum, the criteria used for assessing dependent self-employment are rather different across the various datasets and legislative frameworks. Therefore, the characteristics used in the datasets (e.g., EU-LFS) may be less or more inclusive of who is a dependent self-employed than when using the criteria in a legal framework.

To assess the prevalence and distribution of dependent self-employment in this report, and to allow cross-country comparison, the results are reported when both economic and personal/organisational dependency are present (here referred to as possessing the characteristics of dependent self-employment and thus at risk of, or susceptible to, 'dependent self-employment') as well as for only economically dependent self-employment, and only organisationally dependent self-employment. The precise criteria used and the questions for assessing these characteristics are explained in detail below.

3.0 Data and Methodology

To investigate the prevalence and distribution of dependent self-employment in the EU (plus Norway and Iceland), the European Labour Force Survey from 2021 is here used. This section provides an overview of the data used and the operational definition employed for measuring dependent self-employment.

Key findings

- ▶ The EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) is the largest European household sample survey and provides information about labour force participation of those aged 15 and over.
- ▶ This report uses the data for 2021 which comprises a sample of 2 580 815, of which 160 245 reported being self-employed in the EU and Norway.
- ▶ The 2021 survey allows for the first time two types of dependency of the self-employed to be measured, namely:
 - ▷ *economic dependency* by measuring whether the self-employed worked for only one client or for a dominant client.
 - ▷ *organisational dependency* by measuring whether the client(s) or any other party decides the working hours of those reporting that they are self-employed.
- ▶ The aggregated data (provided by the Eurostat team) differentiates the number of self-employed with and without employees and therefore the share of dependent self-employed among those reporting that they are self-employed without employees can be measured.²

² Status in employment (e.g., self-employed with employees, self-employed without employees) in the EU-LFS database and in this report is based on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93) (this classification is currently being revised at ILO level). Forms of employment relevant in the European context and for dependent self-employment (EU-LFS Explanatory Notes): a) **Self-employed persons with employees** - defined as 'persons who work in their own business, professional practice or farm for the purpose of earning a profit derived from the goods or services produced, and who employ at least one other person. Only dependent working arrangements should be considered here, excluding other kinds of contracts such as sub-contractors or freelancers'; b) **Self-employed persons without employees** - defined as 'persons who work in their own business, professional practice or farm for the purpose of earning a profit derived from the goods or services produced, and who do not employ any other person.'

- ▶ The microdata allows a merging of responses for those reporting economic and organisational dependency as well as an analysis of the distribution of the self-employed possessing the characteristics of being in dependent self-employed, but it does not allow a distinction to be made between the self-employed with and without employees. Therefore, any measurements can only be for all self-employed (with and without employees).
- ▶ When comparing the results, the difference between the estimates of the share of dependent self-employment at EU level using aggregate versus microdata (i.e., the estimates of the prevalence of dependent self-employment among those reporting that they are self-employed without employees, and the self-employed with and without employees), is small.

3.1 Labour Force Survey 2021

The EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) is conducted in all EU Member States of the European Union, the United Kingdom, four EU candidate countries (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey) and three European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland). Microdata is made available for scientific purposes on all Member States as well as for Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The EU-LFS is the largest European household sample survey and provides quarterly information about labour participation of those aged 15 and over as well as on people outside the labour force (e.g., students, retired persons and housepersons) living in private households (e.g., those doing military or community service are not included). EU-LFS data covers all industries and occupations. Sample selection, questionnaire preparation and data collection are undertaken by the national statistical institutes which forward the results to Eurostat. In 2021, in EU and Norway the survey comprises a sample of 2 580 815 out of which 160 245 self-employed³.

3.2 Methodology used to measure the extent of dependent self-employment

Commencing in 2021, the European Labour Force Survey (LFS) has included questions which allow the measurement of those possessing the characteristics of dependent self-employment. More specifically, it assesses:

- ▶ *economic dependency* by measuring whether the self-employed persons worked for only one client or for a dominant client.
- ▶ *organisational dependency* by measuring whether the client(s) or any other party decides about the working hours of the self-employed.

To measure *economic dependency*, a new variable has been created using the following two questions in the questionnaire:

1. Q1_Number of clients

In the 12 months ending with the reference week, how many clients did you work for?

- ▶ One
- ▶ Two to nine
- ▶ Ten or more
- ▶ None
- ▶ Cannot say

³ Microdata for Iceland was not available when this report was being written.

2. Q2_Clients

In the 12 months ending with the reference week did at least 75 % of your self-employment income come from one client?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No
- ▶ Cannot say

Combining the responses to the two above questions, the LFS microdata contains a new variable, namely:

Number and importance of clients in the 12 months ending with the reference week:

- a. Only one client in the 12 months ending with the reference week,
- b. 2-9 clients in the 12 months ending with the reference week, but one was dominant,
- c. 2-9 clients in the 12 months ending with the reference week, and none was dominant,
- d. 10 clients or more in the 12 months ending with the reference week, but one was dominant,
- e. 10 clients or more in the 12 months ending with the reference week, and none was dominant,
- f. No client in the 12 months ending with the reference week.

In this report, a further new variable has been created by merging all situations revealing the existence of a dominant client in a single category and all the remaining situations in a different category. As such, the economic dependency variable takes value 1='yes' for all the cases when a dominant client has been mentioned (options a, b and d from the above question) and value 0='no' for all the remaining cases (options c, e and f from the above question).

To measure *organisational dependency*, the 2021 survey included a new question to understand whether the self-employed decide their working time or not. As such, unlike the questions addressed to other categories of worker (e.g., employees), the question for the self-employed does not offer any middle category, such as the working schedule was 'jointly decided'.

Again, a new variable has been created from the following two questions in the 2021 questionnaire:

1. Qa: Can you decide on the start and end of your working time? (for other category of workers)

- ▶ Yes, can decide them yourself
- ▶ Yes, can decide them under flexible working arrangements (e.g. flexible working hours)
- ▶ No, the employer or organisation decides
- ▶ Don't know / cannot say

2. Qb: Can you decide on the start and end of your working time? (for self-employed)

- ▶ Yes, can decide them yourself
- ▶ No, the client(s) or a third party decide(s)
- ▶ No, any other party decides
- ▶ Don't know / cannot say

Combining the responses to the above two questions, the LFS microdata contains a new variable, namely:

Decision on the start and end of working time:

- a. Worker can fully decide him/herself,
- b. Worker can decide under flexible working time arrangements,
- c. Employer, organisation, or client(s) decides,
- d. Any other party decides.

In this report, a further new variable on organisational dependency has been created by merging all situations revealing the lack of autonomy of the self-employed in setting their working time, and all remaining situations in a different category. As such, the organisational dependency variable takes value 1='yes' for all the cases when the self-employed lack the autonomy to decide their working time (options c and d from the above question) and value 0='no' for all the remaining cases (options a and b from the above question).

Finally, a new variable has been created for measuring where both types of dependency are present (i.e., economic and organisational dependency), taking value 1='yes' for cases where both economic dependency and organisational dependency are manifested (variable economic dependency and variable organisational dependency take value 1 simultaneously).

It is important to recognise that the aggregated data (provided by the Eurostat team) make a distinction between the self-employed with and without employees and the share of self-employed without employees who are at risk of being dependent self-employed can be therefore measured. Indeed, most of the previous literature examines only the self-employed without employees when discussing dependent self-employment. However, little additional information can be obtained beyond the share of the dependent self-employment in the EU Member States because the results are displayed for all possible answers (i.e., the cases where there is a dominant client are not merged under one single category), resulting to a limited number of responses per category, which does not meet the threshold for being published according to the dataset restrictions. Meanwhile, the microdata merges the answers for defining the economic and the organisational dependency (as explained above) as well as merges the categories for different socio-demographic characteristics when necessary but, on the other hand, does not allow one to distinguish between the self-employed with and without employees. However, when comparing the results, the difference between the share of dependent self-employed at EU level using aggregate data versus microdata is rather small. Using the aggregate data, and therefore analysing only the self-employed without employees, the self-employed with characteristics of dependent self-employed account for 3.2 % of total self-employment. Using the microdata, and analysing the occurrence of the two types of dependency simultaneously for all self-employed (with and without employees), the finding is that the self-employed with characteristics of dependent self-employment account for 3.7 % of total self-employment. However, the actual difference between the two figures is even smaller in practice due to the very low reliability of the data for *self-employed without employees having 10 clients or more in the last 12 months (but one was dominant) and for whom any other party (except client(s) or a third party) decides on the start and end of working time*, who were not included for obtaining the 3.2 % figure. Therefore, **the share of dependent self-employed using aggregated data should be considered as a lower bound estimate**. However, the difference between the two figures captures the self-employed who are dependent self-employed, despite having employees. This category is even more vulnerable and important to analyse, considering that it is these self-employed as well as their employees who are dependent on a main client and lack authority for arranging their working time. Indeed, these are covered by the type of worker that the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) resolution define as 'dependent contractors': 'Dependent contractors are workers who have contractual arrangements of a commercial nature (but not a contract of employment) to provide goods or services for or through another economic unit. They are not employees of that economic unit, but are dependent on that unit for organization and execution of the work, income, or for access to the market. They are workers employed for profit, who are dependent on another entity that exercises control over their productive activities and directly benefits from the work performed by them.'⁴ Indeed, the uptrend in outsourcing and subcontracting by the large corporations as well as the rise of non-standard forms of work associated with the digital economy result in lower standard and decent employment opportunities (Murgia et al, 2020, Williams and Horodnic, 2019). As such, careful consideration is needed in order to assess the working conditions of those with their main job in dependent self-employment but also in other forms of working

⁴ ILO 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians Geneva, 10-19 October 2018 – Resolution concerning statistics on work relationships (para 35).

relationships, in order to ensure that tackling dependent self-employment (e.g., by reclassifying the worker or by defining a new employment category) would not lead to greater subcontracting and outsourcing to genuine self-employment which will then become the new realm for decent work deficits (Williams and Horodnic, 2019).

In sum, in this report, which uses mostly the microdata to analyse the prevalence and distribution of the self-employed possessing characteristics of dependent self-employment, the category of dependent self-employment is obtained by considering the economic and the organisational dependency for **all self-employed workers** and not only for those without employees. When the data for the EU is displayed, the averages are weighted using the LFS weighting scheme. Throughout this report, two types of symbols are used, **in accordance with the Eurostat microdata restrictions**:

- ▶ **(:)** – for very low reliability and therefore not displayed;
- ▶ **(u)** – for a warning about the low reliability of the results (details in Annex 1).

With this caveat in mind, attention can now turn to the results.

4.0 Estimates of dependent self-employment

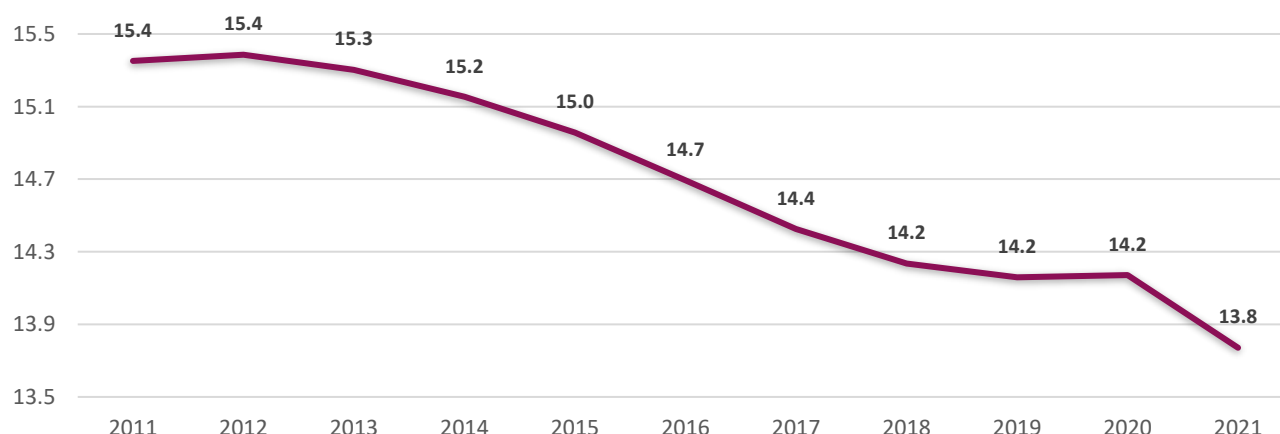
This section displays the estimates of the prevalence of dependent self-employment in the EU and Norway.

Key findings

- ▶ Over the past decade, the share of self-employment as a proportion of total employment in the EU slightly decreased from about 15 % to less than 14 %. There are marked variations between countries in the share of self-employed workers in total employment, ranging from 4.5 % in Norway to 28.8 % in Greece.
- ▶ In 2021, of total self-employment, the share without employees, and thus, susceptible to being in dependent self-employment, is more than double than the share of self-employed with employees in the EU (68.4 % compared with 31.6 %).
- ▶ Analysing only the self-employed without employees (using the aggregate data), the self-employed possessing the characteristics of dependent self-employment account for 3.2 %. Meanwhile, analysing all self-employed with and without employees (using the microdata), those possessing the characteristics of being dependent self-employed account for 3.7 %.
- ▶ The difference between the estimates (using aggregate data versus using microdata) is rather small and explained by the fact that:
 - ▷ microdata includes the dependent self-employed with employees.
 - ▷ for the aggregate data estimate, part of the dependent self-employed could not be displayed and accounted for due to the very low reliability of the data.
- ▶ Although this reveals that dependent self-employment is far from exclusive to the self-employed without employees, the estimate of the number of dependent self-employed without employees is six times higher than the estimate of the number of dependent self-employed with employees.

The share of self-employment in total employment in the EU slightly decreased over the past decade from about 15 % to less than 14 %, as Figure 1 displays.

Figure 1. Share of self-employed in total employed persons in EU – trends (% , 2011-2021)



Source: based on Eurostat data (LFS).

However, as Table 1 shows, there are marked variations between countries in the share of self-employment in total employment, ranging from 4.5 % in Norway to 28.8 % in Greece. Indeed, in four countries, self-employment is lower than 10 % of total employment (Norway, Germany, Denmark and Luxembourg) and in two countries self-employment is higher than 20 % of total employment (Greece and Italy).

Table 1. Employment in the EU, Iceland and Norway (2021)

Country	Employment Rate ¹⁾	Professional status (employed people) ²⁾ :			Self-employment as % of total employment ³⁾
		Employee	Family worker (unpaid)	Self-employed	
	(%)	(Thousand persons)	(Thousand persons)	(Thousand persons)	(%)
EU-27	68.4	169,357.6	1,475.3	27,290.5	13.8
Belgium	65.3	4,167.4	31.0	655.3	13.5
Bulgaria	68.1	2,738.1	17.5	320.8	10.4
Czechia	74.4	4,382.5	21.3	809.5	15.5
Denmark	75.5	2,643.7	10.4	246.0	8.5
Germany	75.8	37,868.6	146.5	3,484.8	8.4
Estonia	74.0	582.6	1.3 ^(u)	70.3	10.7
Ireland	69.8	2,053.2	23.2	312.8	13.1
Greece	57.2	2,677.9	119.2	1,130.9	28.8
Spain	62.7	16,625.6	80.3	3,052.7	15.4
France	67.2	24,199.1	96.3	3,399.2	12.3
Croatia	63.4	1,458.2	26.4	193.6	11.5
Italy	58.2	17,630.0	224.9	4,699.0	20.8
Cyprus	70.8	380.5	3.7	47.4	11.0
Latvia	69.9	756.3	5.7	107.3	12.3
Lithuania	72.4	1,209.4	8.2	150.9	11.0
Luxembourg	69.4	273.2	4.3	27.1	8.8
Hungary	73.1	4,061.2	13.3	567.3	12.2
Malta	75.5	227.7	(⁽ⁱ⁾)	41.5	15.4
Netherlands	80.1	7,818.2	34.4	1,429.6	15.4
Austria	72.4	3,793.0	61.2	451.7	10.5
Poland	70.3	13,370.5	203.4	3,082.2	18.5
Portugal	70.1	4,067.1	41.0	704.1	14.6
Romania	61.9	6,584.4	233.9	937.2	12.1
Slovenia	71.4	835.5	17.4	118.7	12.2
Slovakia	69.4	2,177.4	(⁽ⁱ⁾)	380.7	14.9
Finland	72.7	2,198.3	19.4	355.6	13.8
Sweden	75.4	4,577.8	28.3	514.5	10.0
Iceland	79.8	171.6	(⁽ⁱ⁾)	25.1	12.8
Norway	76.3	2,664.4	6.2 ^(u)	125.7	4.5

Notes:

¹⁾ Eurostat, Employment rates by sex, age and citizenship (%), in % of the total population aged 15-64 [last 27-09-2022]. Available from: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_organ&lang=en; ²⁾ Eurostat aggregated data - extracted; ³⁾ based on Eurostat, Employment by sex, age, professional status and full-time/part-time (15 years or over) [last 27-09-2022]. Available from: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_eftpt&lang=en.

^{u)} low reliability; ⁱ⁾ not available (due to very low reliability)

Source: based on Eurostat data (LFS).

Analysing the changing composition of self-employment, Figure 2 shows that overall self-employment decreased over the past decade from 28.7 million in 2011 to 27.3 million in 2021. However, the number of the self-employed

with employees decreased from 8.7 million in 2011 to 8.6 million in 2021 and the number of self-employed without employees decreased from 20 million in 2011 to 18.7 million in 2021.

Figure 2. Share of self-employed in total self-employment, EU – trends (millions, 2011-2021)



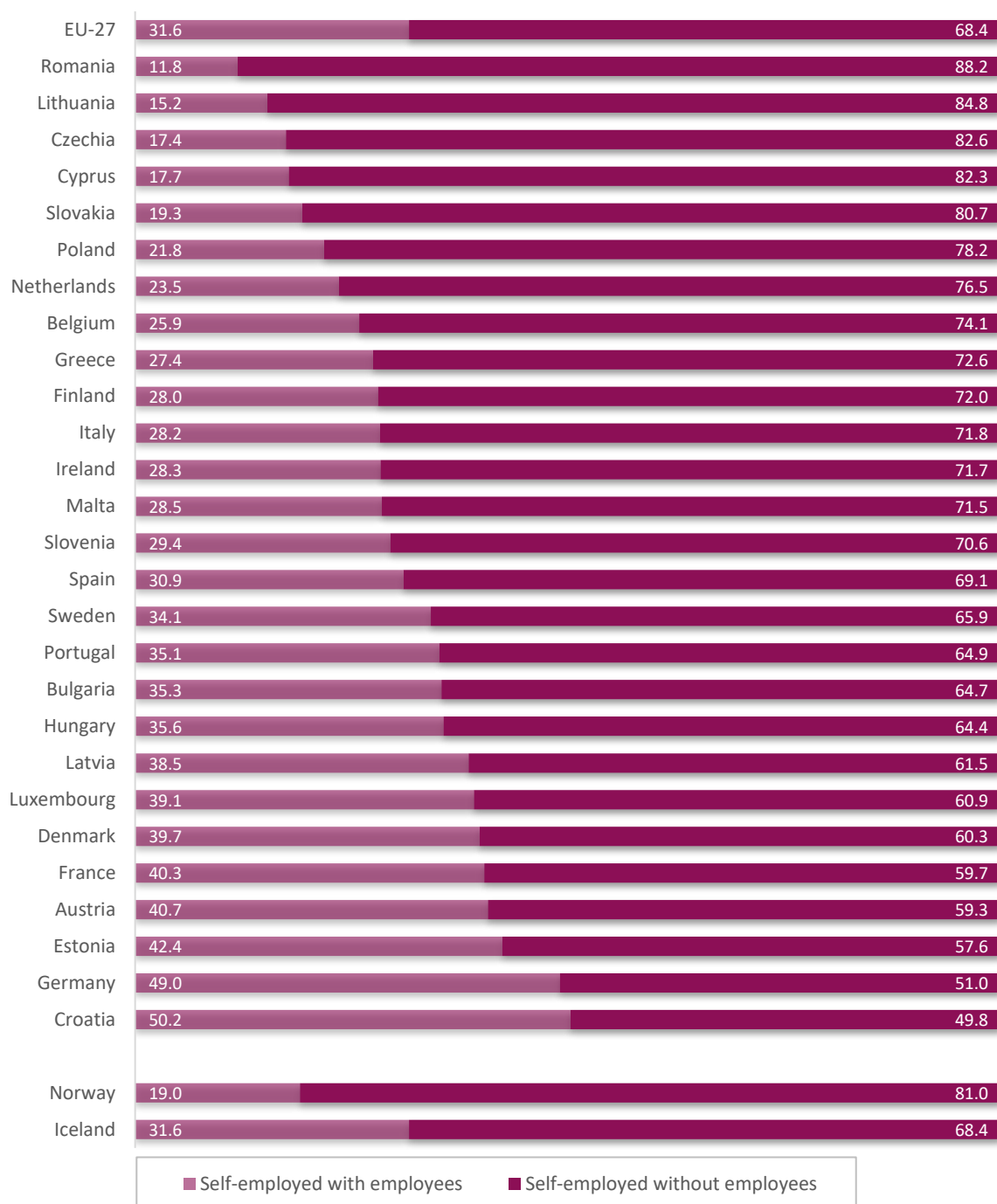
A) Self-employed with employees

B) Self-employed without employees

Source: based on Eurostat data (LFS).

In 2021, the share of the self-employed without employees, and thus, more susceptible to dependent self-employment, is more than double the share of the self-employed with employees in the EU (68.4 % self-employed without employees compared with 31.6 % self-employed with employees in total self-employment) as Figure 3 displays. Apart from Croatia, in all other EU countries and in Norway and Iceland, the share of the self-employed without employees is higher than the share of self-employed with employees. The highest share of the self-employed without employees in total self-employment is in Romania (88.2 %), Lithuania (84.8 %), Czechia (82.6 %), Cyprus (82.3 %), Norway (81.0 %) and Slovakia (80.7 %), while the lowest share of self-employed without employees in total self-employment is in Croatia (49.8 %), Germany (51 %), Estonia (57.6 %), Austria (59.3 %) and France (59.7 %).

Figure 3. Self-employed: with and without employees (% of total self-employment, 2021)

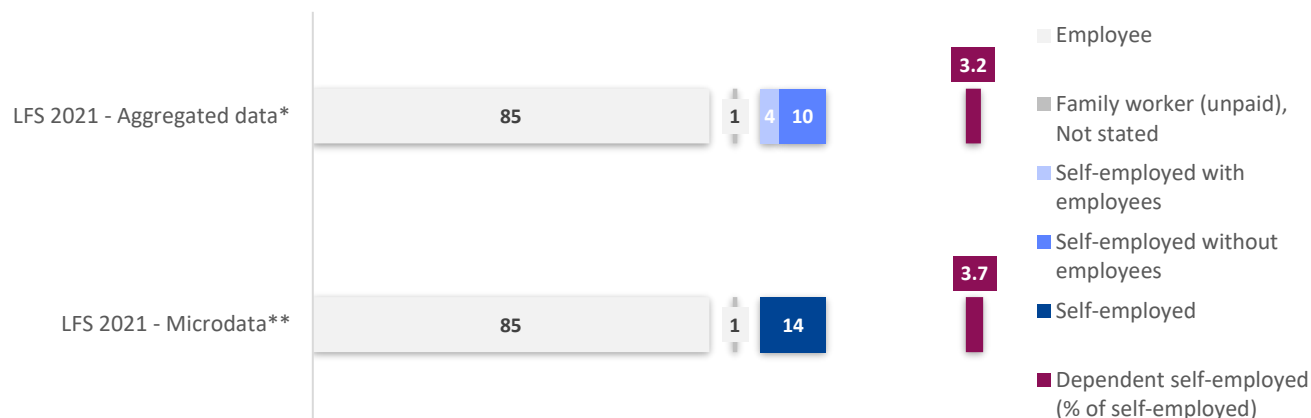


Source: based on Eurostat data (LFS).

Figure 4 evaluates the share of total self-employment that possesses the characteristics of dependent self-employment in the EU. Analysing only the self-employed without employees (using the aggregate data), the dependent self-employed are estimated to be **3.2 % of all self-employed without employees**. Meanwhile, analysing all self-employed with and without employees (using microdata), the dependent self-employed are estimated to be **3.7 % of all the self-employed**. The difference between these estimates is explained by the fact that microdata includes in addition the dependent self-employed with employees and for the aggregate data estimate, part of the dependent self-employed could not be displayed and accounted for (i.e., due to very low reliability, data for self-employed without employees having 10 clients or more in the last 12 months (but one was

dominant) and for whom any other party (except the employer, organisation, or client(s)) decides on the start and end of working time) was not included. Although this reveals that the risk of dependent self-employment is far from exclusive to the self-employed without employees, and that the self-employed with employees can also suffer along with their employees both types of dependency, the estimates of the number of dependent self-employed without employees is six times higher than the estimates of the number of dependent self-employed with employees.

Figure 4. Employment in the EU (% , 2021)



Notes:

* Characteristics of dependent self-employment when using aggregated data: self-employed WITHOUT employees meeting both the economic and organisational dependency criteria. Due to very low reliability, data for *self-employed without employees having 10 clients or more in the last 12 months (but one was dominant) and for whom any other party (except the employer, organisation, or client(s)) decides on the start and end of working time* was not included. The share of dependent self-employed using aggregated data should be therefore considered as a lower bond estimate.

** Characteristics of dependent self-employment when using microdata: self-employed WITH and WITHOUT employees meeting both the economic and organisational dependency criteria.

Source: based on LFS 2021 data: aggregated and microdata.

5.0 Cross-national variations in the estimates of dependent self-employment

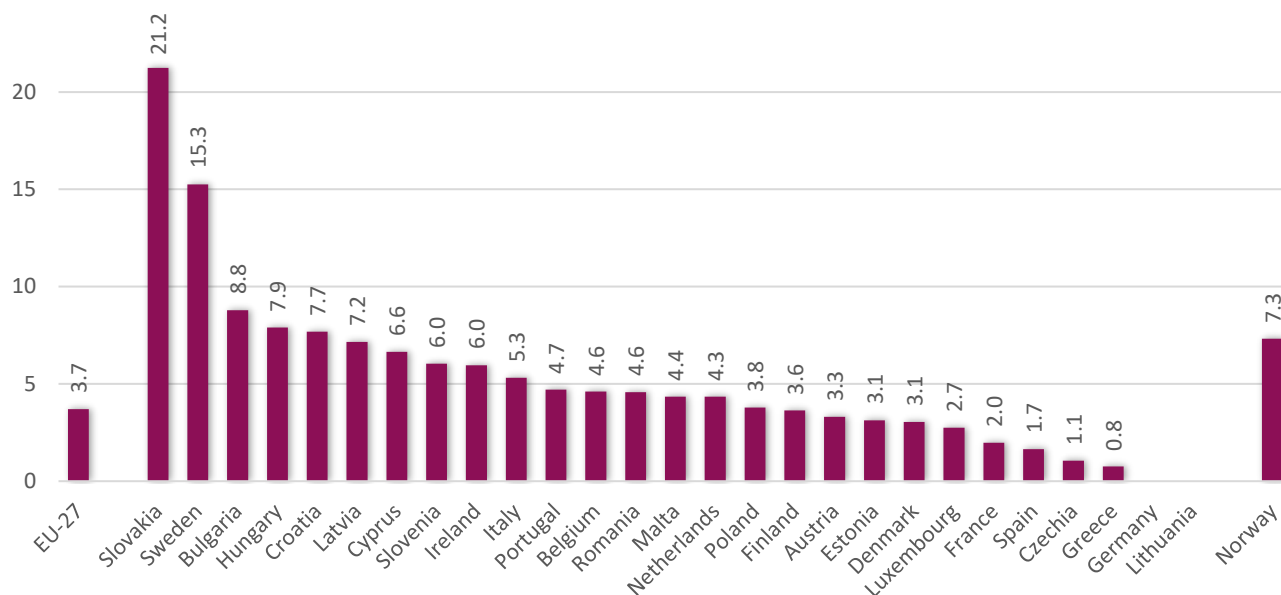
This section provides an overview of the distribution of the self-employed displaying the characteristics of dependent self-employment across the EU Member States and Norway by reporting the share of the self-employed facing both economic and organisational dependency simultaneously as well as the share facing each type of dependence individually.

Key findings

- ▶ The share of the self-employed displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment in total self-employment is highest in Slovakia (21.2 % of the self-employed), Sweden (15.3 %) and Bulgaria (8.8 %) and lowest in Greece (0.8 %), Czechia (1.1 %) and Spain (1.7 %).
- ▶ The data for Lithuania and Germany could not be displayed due to very low reliability of the data (i.e., the figures did not meet the Eurostat threshold for being displayed). In these two countries, a very high percentage of the self-employed could not be classified as dependent or independent self-employed due to not responding to the two questions on their economic and organisational dependency. Indeed, 70.7 % of the self-employed in Germany and 78.7 % of those in Lithuania could not be classified.
- ▶ In the EU, 13.9 % of the self-employed are *economically dependent* on one or a main client (for at least 75 % of their self-employment income). The share of economically dependent self-employment in total self-employment is highest in Sweden (35.3 % of the self-employed), Slovakia (31.3 %) and Hungary (30.6 %) and lowest in Germany (3.6 %), Czechia (6.0 %) and Greece (9.5 %).
- ▶ In the EU, 19 % of the self-employed lack the autonomy to decide the start and end of their working time. The share of the self-employed facing such organisational dependency is highest in Bulgaria (46.2 % of the self-employed), Croatia (46.1 %), Slovakia (44.4 %) and Sweden (40.7 %) and lower in Spain (9.8 %), Germany (7.1 %) and Lithuania (1.2 %).

Figure 5 displays the cross-country variations in the prevalence of the self-employed possessing the characteristics of being dependent self-employed. The share of the self-employed who display both the economic and organisational dependency characteristics of dependent self-employed is highest in Slovakia (21.2 % of the self-employed), Sweden (15.3 %) and Bulgaria (8.8 %) and lowest in Greece (0.8 %), Czechia (1.1 %) and Spain (1.7 %). The data for Lithuania and Germany could not be displayed due to very low reliability of the data (i.e., the figures did not meet the threshold for being displayed).

Figure 5. Self-employed displaying both the economic and organisational dependency characteristics of dependent self-employment in the EU and Norway (% of self-employed, 2021)

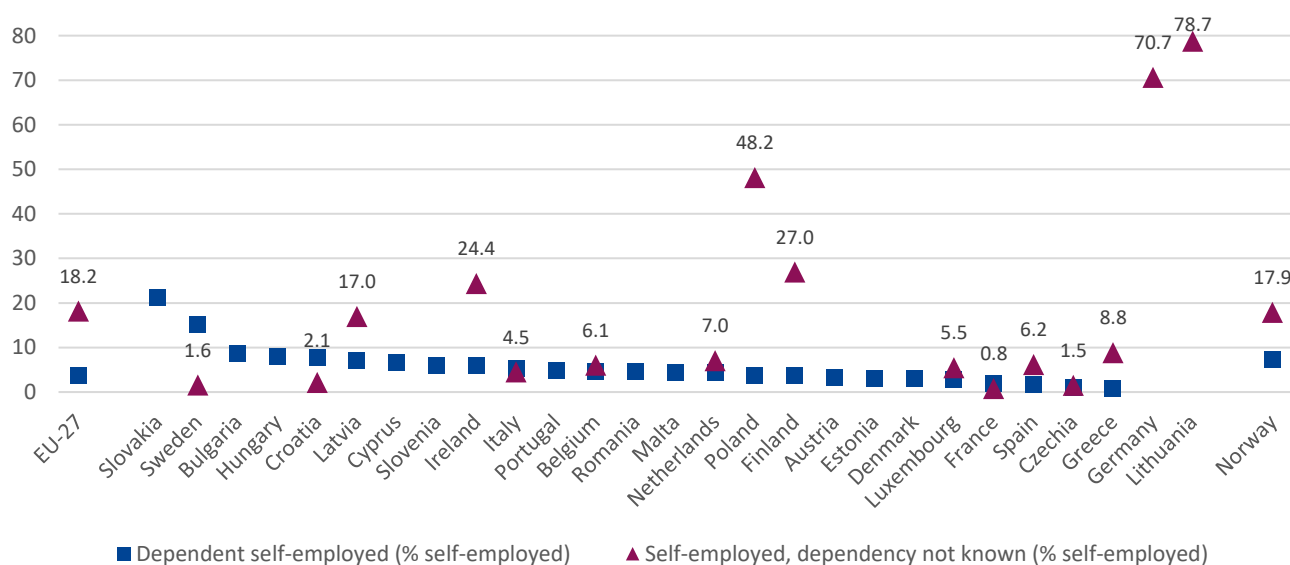


Notes: EU weighted average; (:) very low reliability (not displayed) – Germany and Lithuania; (u) low reliability – Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta and Norway.

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

In some countries, a very high percentage of the self-employed could not be classified as dependent or independent self-employed due to the lack of responses of the self-employed to the two questions on their economic and organisational dependency. Indeed, 70.7 % of the self-employed in Germany and 78.7 % of those in Lithuania could not be classified (see Figure 6). As such, there was a very low reliability of the data (i.e., the figures did not meet the threshold for being displayed).

Figure 6. Dependency not known in the EU and Norway (% of self-employed, 2021)

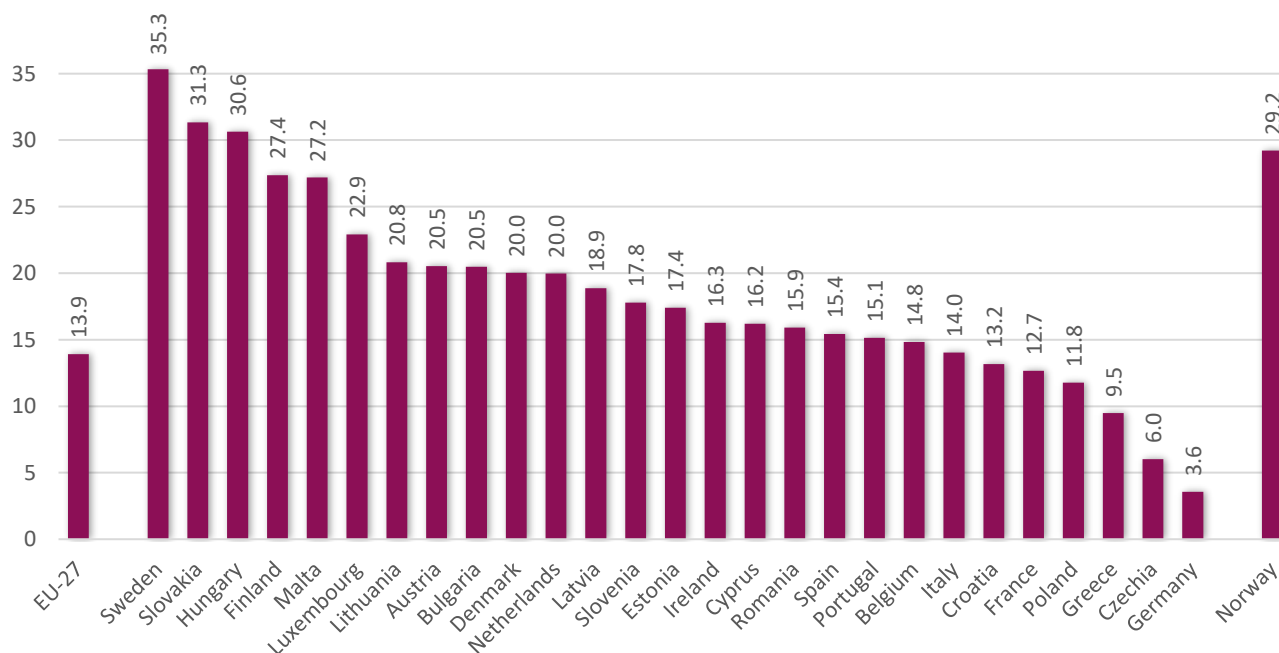


Notes: EU weighted average; Dependency not known: (:) very low reliability (not displayed) – Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Austria and Slovakia; (u) low reliability – France, Croatia, Denmark, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia.

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Analysing the two types of dependency separately, and starting with the economic dependency of the self-employed, Figure 7 shows that in the EU, 13.9 % of the self-employed are economically dependent on one or a main client (for at least 75 % of their self-employment income). The share of the economically dependent self-employment is highest in Sweden (35.3 % of the self-employed), Slovakia (31.3 %) and Hungary (30.6 %) and lowest in Germany (3.6 %), Czechia (6.0 %) and Greece (9.5 %). Important to mention, however, is that, as Figure 8 will reveal, in Poland and Germany the number of self-employed that did not respond to the question related to the economic dependency is high, and this might hide a higher percentage of dependency than the one displayed in Figure 7,

Figure 7. Economic dependency in the EU and Norway (% of self-employed, 2021)

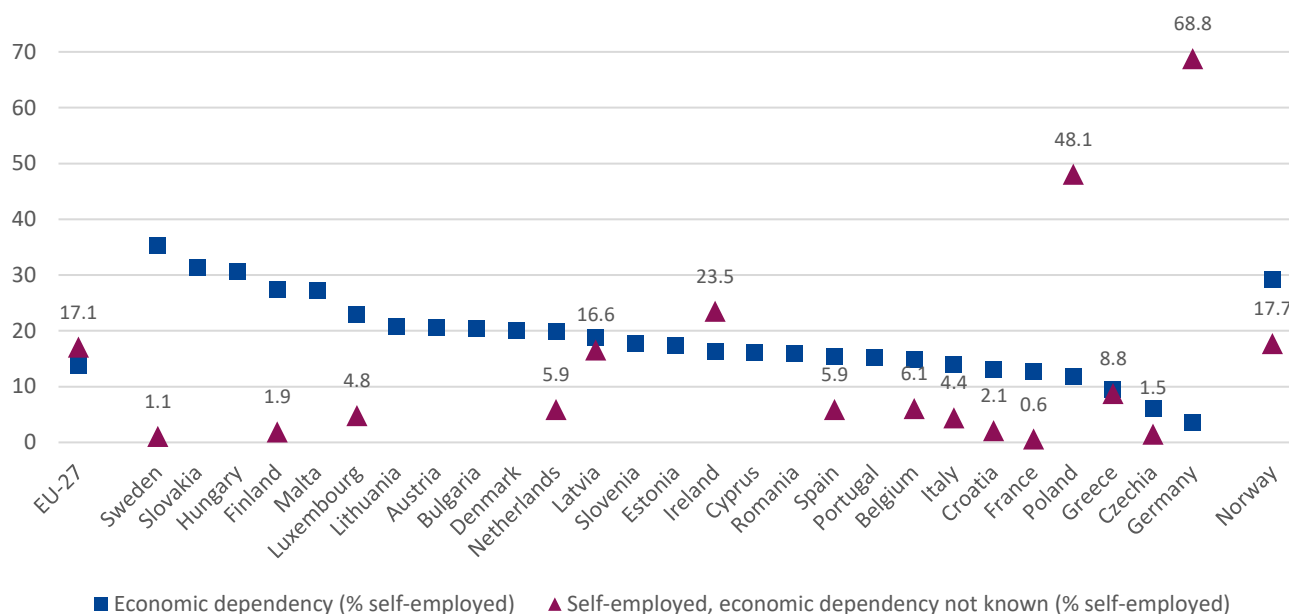


Notes: EU weighted average.

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

However, a very high percentage of the self-employed could not be classified as economically dependent or independent self-employed because they did not respond to the questions related to economic dependency. Indeed, 68.8 % of the self-employed in Germany and 48.1% in Poland did not answer the questions related to economic dependency (Figure 8). As such, the actual share of economically dependent self-employment in Germany and Poland might be higher (or lower).

Figure 8. Economic dependency not known in the EU and Norway (% of self-employed, 2021)

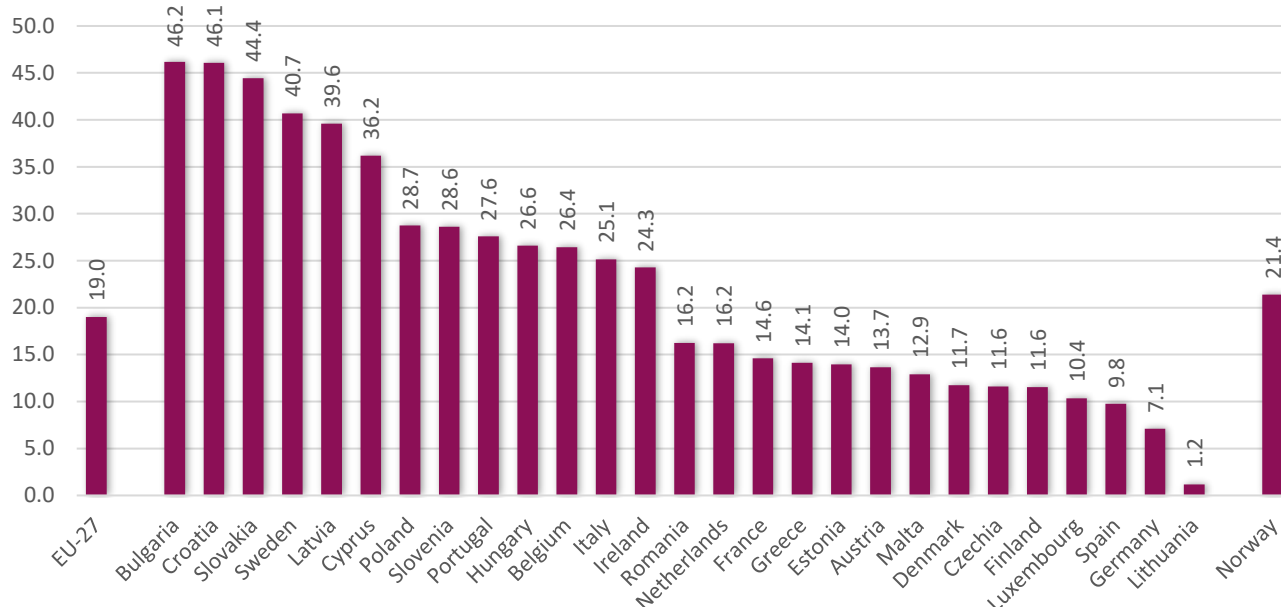


Notes: EU weighted average; Economic dependency not known: (:) very low reliability (not displayed) – Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia; (u) low reliability – France, Croatia and Sweden.

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Turning to the organisational dependency of the self-employed, Figure 9 displays that 19 % of the self-employed in the EU lack the autonomy to decide their working time (i.e. the start and the end of their working time). The share of the self-employed who are organisationally dependent is highest in Bulgaria (46.2 % of the self-employed), Croatia (46.1 %), Slovakia (44.4 %) and Sweden (40.7 %) and lowest in Spain (9.8 %), Germany (7.1 %) and Lithuania (1.2 %). Important to mention, however, is that, as Figure 10 reveals, in Lithuania, Germany and Finland the number of self-employed that did not respond to the question related to the organisational dependency is high, and this might result in a higher (or lower) percentage of organisational dependency than the one displayed in Figure 9,

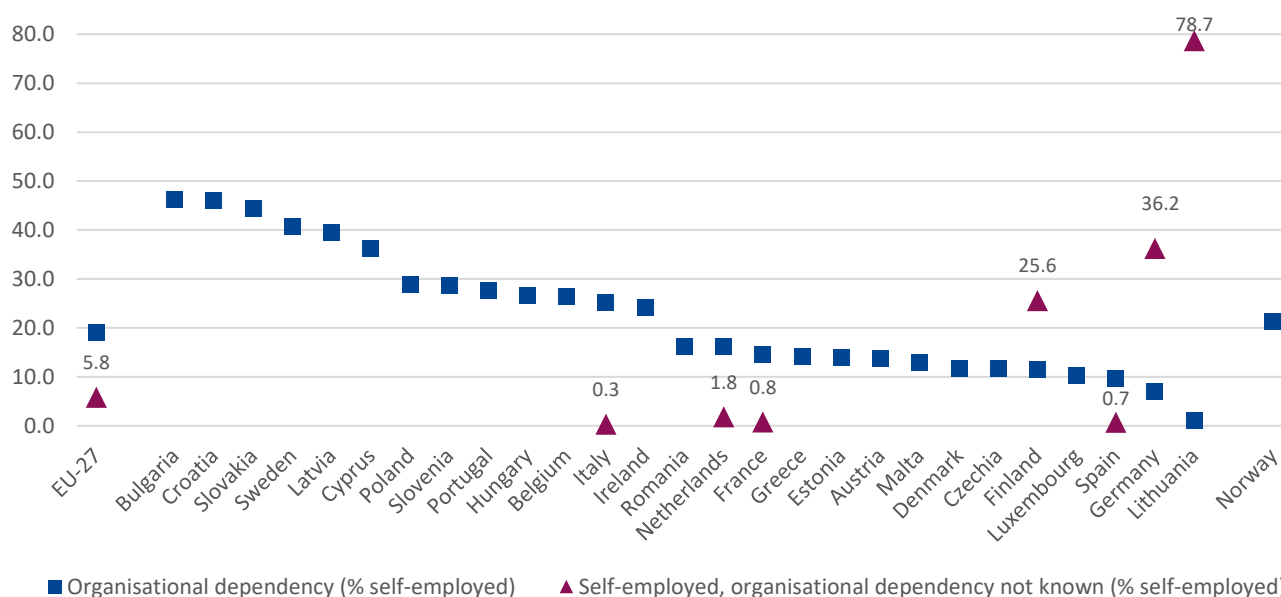
Figure 9. Organisational dependency in the EU and Norway (% of self-employed, 2021)



Notes: EU weighted average; (u) low reliability – Lithuania; Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Similarly to the questions on economic dependency, therefore, a very high percentage of the self-employed could not be classified as organisationally dependent or independent because they did not answer the questions related to organisational dependency. Indeed, 78.7 % of the self-employed in Lithuania, 36.2 % of those in Germany and 25.6 % in Finland did not do so (Figure 10). As such, the actual share of organisationally dependent self-employment in Lithuania, Germany and Finland might be higher.

Figure 10. Organisational dependency not known in the EU and Norway (% of self-employed, 2021)



Notes: EU weighted average; Organisational dependency not known: (:) very low reliability (not displayed) – Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Greece; Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden and Norway; (u) low reliability – France.

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

6.0 Who engages in dependent self-employment?

This section examines the socio-demographic distribution of the self-employed possessing characteristics of dependent self-employment.

Key findings

Self-employed possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment

- ▶ Little difference exists by gender. In the EU, 3.6 % of self-employed men display both characteristics of dependent self-employment and 3.8 % of self-employed women.
- ▶ Dependent self-employment is estimated as more prevalent amongst younger respondents with 6 % of the self-employed aged 15-34-years-old displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment, as well as amongst those aged 65-years-old and over, with 4.6 % of them possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment.
- ▶ Variations by educational level are not marked. Some 3.4 % of the self-employed with a high education level (third level) possess both characteristics of dependent self-employment, 3.8 % of the self-employed with a low educational level (lower secondary) and 3.9 % of the self-employed with medium education level (upper secondary).
- ▶ Small differences exist across different community types. Those possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment is more common in cities (4 % of the self-employed living in cities) than in towns, suburbs and rural areas (3.6 % and 3.5 % respectively of the self-employed living in towns and suburbs, or rural areas).

Economically dependent self-employed

- ▶ In the EU, 13.9 % of the self-employed are *economically dependent* on one or a main client (for at least 75 % of their self-employment income).
- ▶ Men in self-employment are slightly more likely to be economically dependent self-employed than women (14.2 % of self-employed men are economically dependent and 13.4 % of self-employed women).
- ▶ The younger self-employed are more likely to be economically dependent (16.5 % of the self-employed aged 15-34-years-old), as are the self-employed aged 65-years-old and over (16.1 %).
- ▶ Economic dependency is more prevalent amongst the self-employed with a low educational level (lower secondary) at 15.5 % of all such self-employed.
- ▶ Economic dependency is also more common among the self-employed living in the rural areas (15.4 % of them are economically dependent).

Organisational dependent self-employed

- ▶ In the EU, 19 % of the self-employed lack the autonomy to decide the start and end of their working time.
- ▶ 19.8 % of women in self-employment are organisationally dependent and 18.6 % of the men in self-employment.

- ▶ The share of the self-employed who are organisationally dependent decreases with age. While 23.9 % of the self-employed aged 15-34-years-old are organisationally dependent, but only 17.3 % of those aged 65-years-old or over.
- ▶ Organisational dependency is more common amongst the self-employed with low or medium educational level (i.e., all those up to upper secondary education). More than a fifth of these self-employed lacks the authority of deciding on their working time.
- ▶ Organisational dependency is more common for the self-employed living in urban areas (19.6 % of those living in towns and suburbs and 19.4 % of the self-employed living in cities).

There are no large variations in the proportions of the men and women in self-employment who display both characteristics of dependent self-employment. In the EU, 3.6 % of the men in self-employment and 3.8 % of women in self-employment display both characteristics of dependent self-employment (Figure 11A). Indeed, 32 % of all the self-employed in the EU are women and they represent 33 % of all at risk of dependent self-employment (Figure 11B).

Figure 11. Estimates of dependent self-employment: by gender (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

However, the estimates of dependent self-employment do vary by the age of the self-employed. As Figure 12 displays, the younger self-employed are more likely to display both characteristics of dependent self-employment (i.e., 6 % of the self-employed aged 15-34-years-old), as do the older self-employed, with 4.6 % of the self-employed aged 65-years-old and over displaying both characteristics (Figure 12A). Indeed, the self-employed aged 15-34-years-old are just 14 % of all self-employed in the EU but 22 % of all those estimated as dependent self-employed. Similarly, those aged 65-years-old or over are 18 % of all self-employed in the EU but 22 % of all those estimated as dependent self-employed (Figure 12B). Dependent self-employment is therefore more concentrated amongst these two age groups.

Figure 12. Estimate of dependent self-employment: by age (years old) (% , 2021)



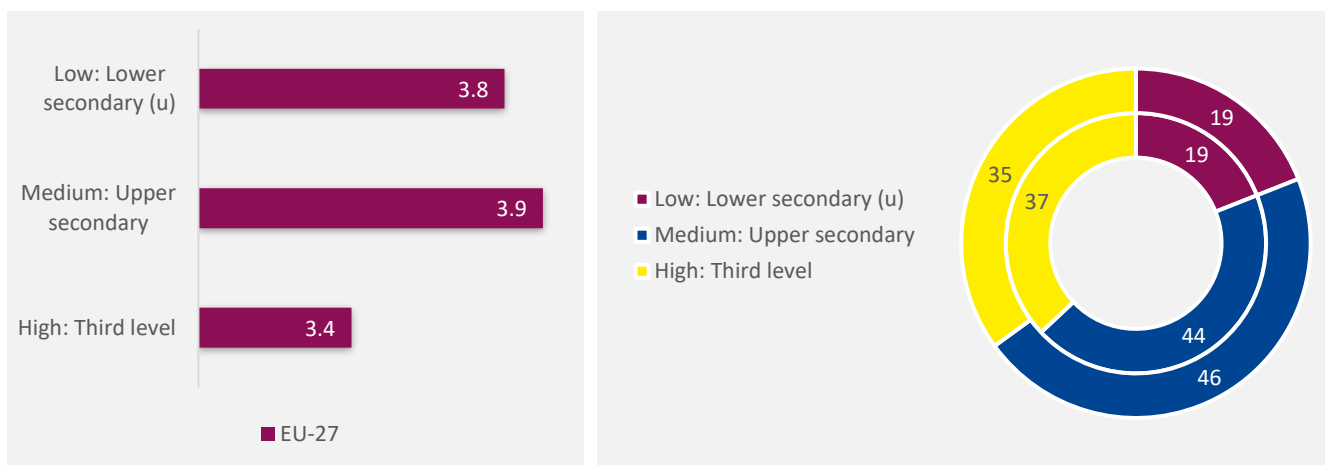
A) Estimate of dependent self-employment (% of self-employed)
EU + NO average only displayed when different than EU average

B) Inner pie: % of all self-employed in the EU
Outer pie: % of all displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment in the EU ((u) low reliability – 15-34, 50-64, 65+)

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Smaller variations exist in the prevalence of dependent self-employment by educational level. Although the self-employed with a high educational level (third level) are less likely to display both characteristics of being dependent self-employed, the differences are small. Some 3.4 % of the self-employed with a high education level (upper secondary) and 3.9 % of the self-employed with a low educational level (lower secondary) are estimated to be dependent self-employed, 3.8 % of the self-employed with a low educational level (lower secondary) and 3.9 % of the self-employed with a medium education level (upper secondary) (Figure 13A). Indeed, the self-employed with a medium education level represent 44 % of all self-employed in the EU but 46 % of all those estimated as dependent self-employed (Figure 13B)

Figure 13. Estimate of dependent self-employment: by education level (% , 2021)



A) Estimate of dependent self-employment (% of self-employed)
EU + NO average only displayed when different than EU average

B) Inner pie: % of all self-employed in the EU
Outer pie: % of all displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment in the EU ((u) low reliability – Low: Lower secondary)
(Not stated excluded)

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Finally, and examining the variations by the type of community, Figure 14 displays that those displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment are slightly more common among the self-employed living in cities (4 % of the self-employed living in cities) than in towns and suburbs, and rural areas (3.6 % and 3.5 % respectively of the self-employed) (Figure 14A). Indeed, the self-employed living in cities are 36 % of all self-employed but 39 % of all those estimated as being in dependent self-employment in the EU (Figure 14B).

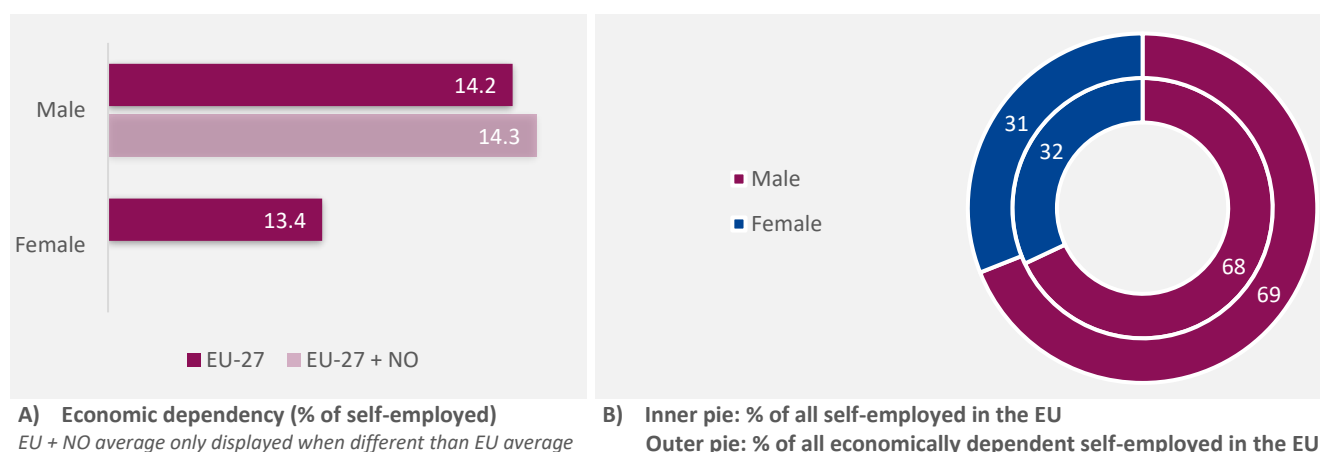
Figure 14. Estimate of dependent self-employment: by urbanisation degree (residence) (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Turning to the socio-demographic distribution in economically dependent self-employment, and starting with the gender variations, Figure 15 displays that 14.2 % of men in self-employment are economically dependent compared with 13.4 % of women in self-employment (Figure 15A). Some 68 % of all self-employed are men in the EU and 69 % of all economically dependent self-employed (Figure 15B).

Figure 15. Economic dependency: by gender (% , 2021)

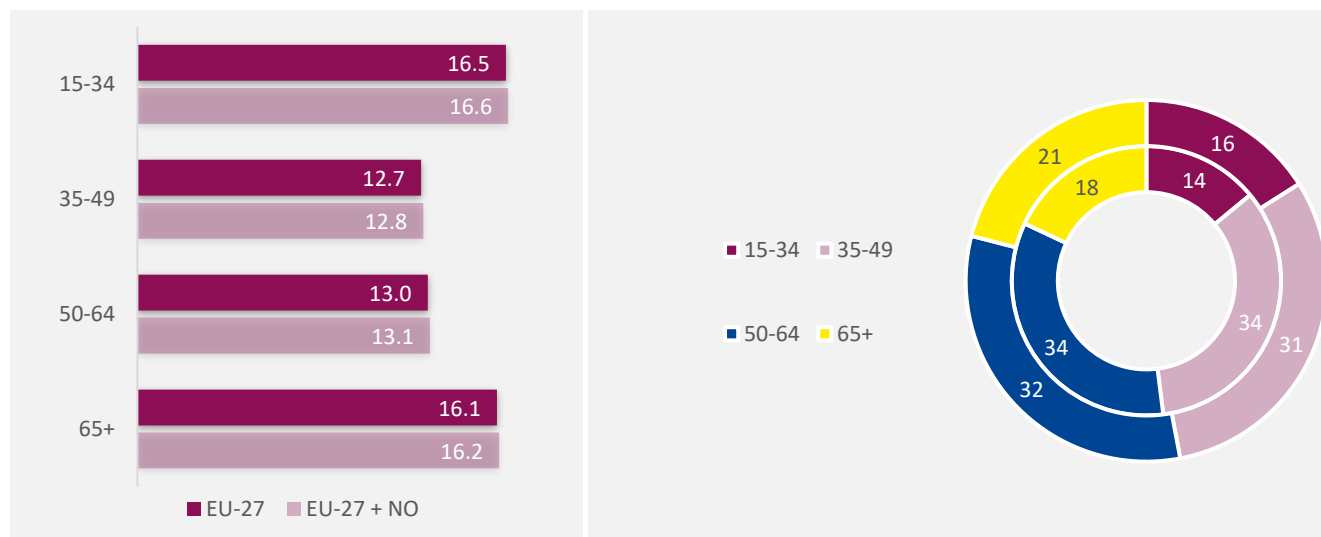


Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Turning to age differences, Figure 16 reveals that economic dependency is more prevalent amongst the younger self-employed (16.5 % of the self-employed aged 15-34-years-old are economically dependent), as well as amongst those aged 65-years-old and over (16.1 % of them are economically dependent) (Figure 16A). Indeed,

the self-employed aged 15-34-years-old are 14 % of all self-employed in the EU but 16 % of all economically dependent self-employed. Similarly, those aged 65-years-old or over are 18 % of all self-employed in the EU but 21 % of all economically dependent self-employed (Figure 16B). Economic dependency is therefore more concentrated amongst these two age groups of the self-employed.

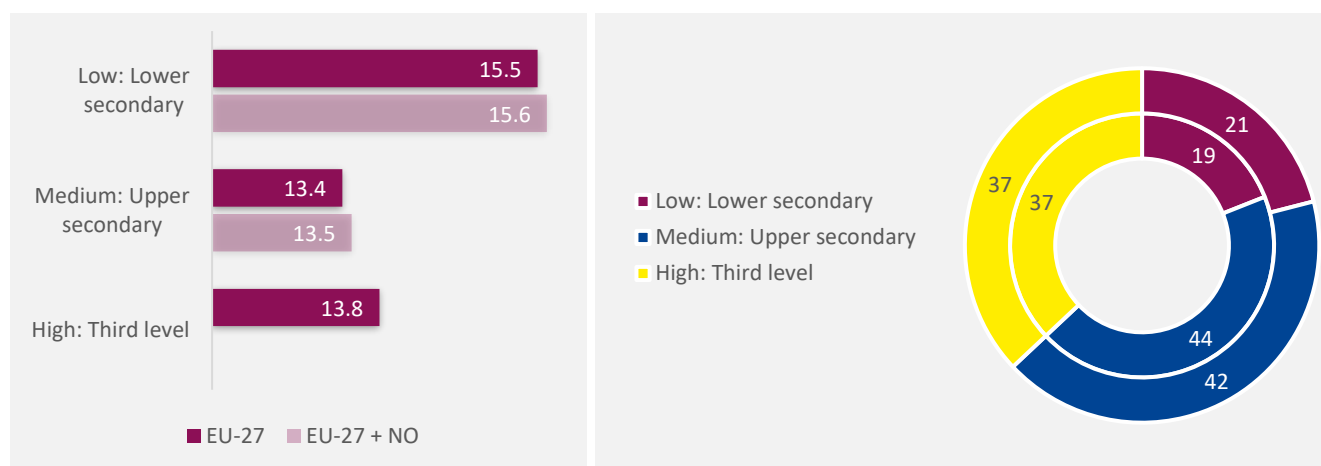
Figure 16. Economic dependency: by age (years old) (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

In terms of educational level, economic dependency is more prevalent amongst the self-employed with a low educational level (lower secondary). The share of the self-employed who are economically dependent is 15.5 % amongst the self-employed with a low educational level, 13.8 % amongst those with a high educational level (third level) and 13.4 % amongst the self-employed with a medium educational level (upper secondary) (Figure 17A). Indeed, the self-employed with low educational level (secondary level) are 19 % of all self-employed but 21 % of all economically dependent self-employed (Figure 17B).

Figure 17. Economic dependency: by education level (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Finally, Figure 18 reveals the distribution of the economically dependent self-employed across different community types. The finding is that economic dependency is more common for the self-employed living in rural areas (15.4 % of the self-employed living in rural areas are economically dependent) (Figure 18A). Indeed, they are 31 % of all the self-employed but 34 % of all economically dependent self-employed in the EU (Figure 18B).

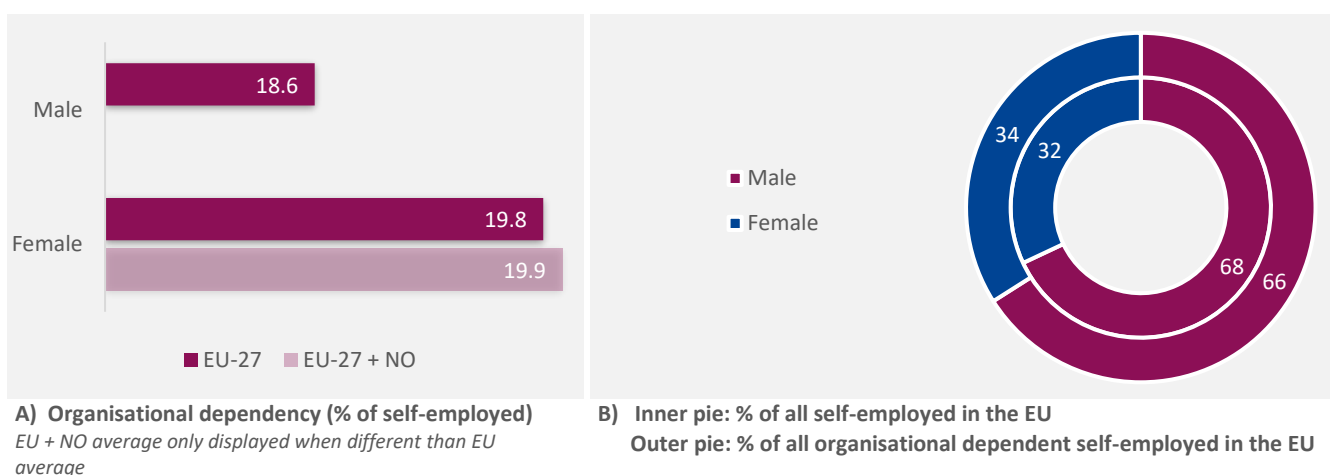
Figure 18. Economic dependency: by urbanisation degree (residence) (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Turning to the prevalence of organisational dependency among the self-employed, and starting with gender differences, Figure 19 displays that women in self-employment are more likely to be organisationally dependent. Some 19.8 % of women in self-employment are organisationally dependent compared with 18.6 % of men in self-employment (Figure 19A). Women are 32 % of all the self-employed but 34 % of all organisationally dependent self-employed (Figure 19B).

Figure 19. Organisational dependency: by gender (% , 2021)

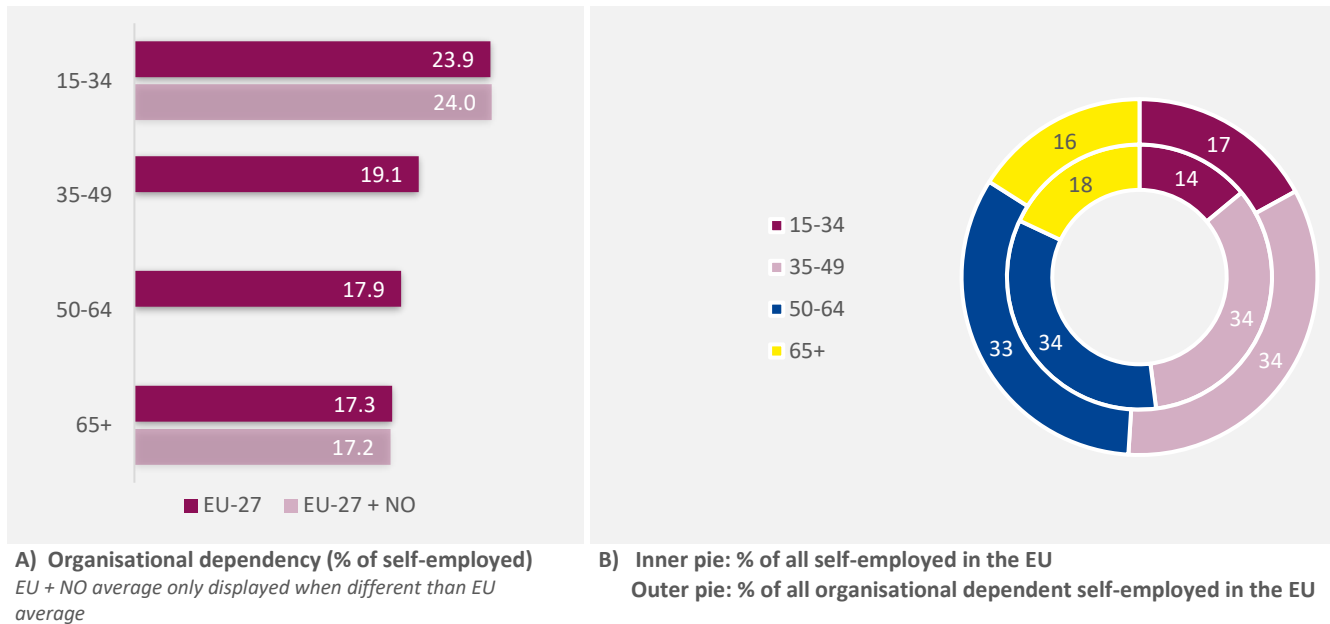


Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Turning the variations in organisationally dependent self-employment by age, the share of the self-employed who are organisationally dependent decreases with age. While 23.9 % of the self-employed aged 15-34-years-old are organisationally dependent, this is only 17.3 % among the self-employed aged 65-years-old or over (Figure 20A).

Indeed, those aged 15-34-years-old are 14 % of all self-employed but 17 % of all organisationally dependent self-employed.

Figure 20. Organisational dependency: by age (years old) (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

As Figure 21 displays, organisational dependency is also more common amongst the self-employed with low or medium educational levels (i.e., all those up to upper secondary education). More than one-fifth of these self-employed lack the authority to decide on their working time (20.2 % of those with a low education level and 20.1 % of those with a medium education level) (Figure 21A). Indeed, those with a low educational level (lower secondary) are 19 % of all self-employed but 20 % off all organisationally dependent self-employed. Similarly, those with a medium educational level (upper secondary) are 44 % of all self-employed but 46 % off all organisationally dependent self-employed.

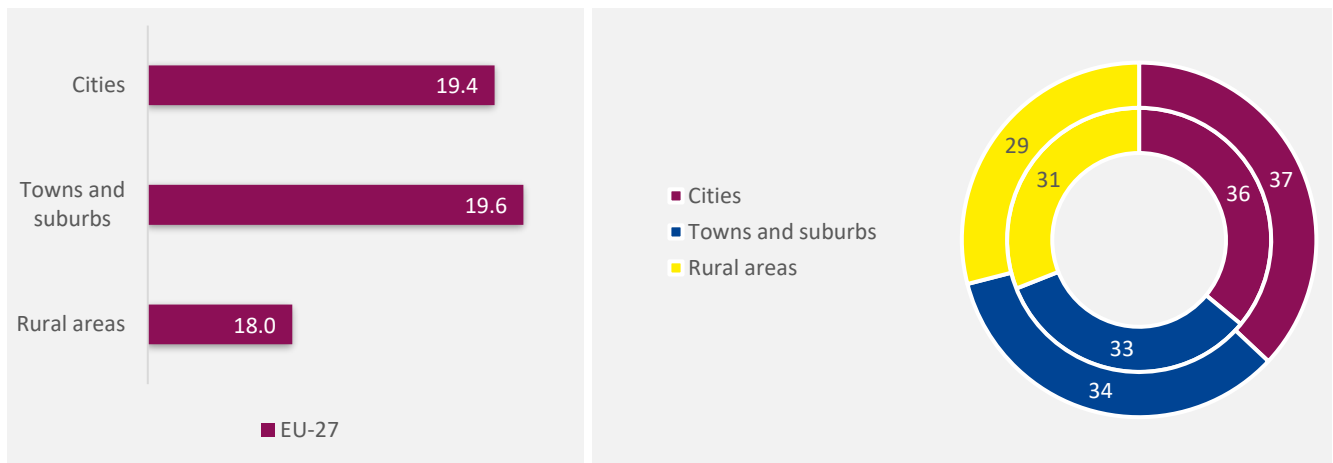
Figure 21. Organisational dependency: by education level (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Finally, Figure 22 displays the distribution of the organisational dependent self-employed across community types. The finding is that organisational dependency is more common among the self-employed living in urban areas (19.6 % of those living in towns and suburbs and 19.4 % of the self-employed living in cities) (Figure 22A). Those living in cities are 36 % of all the self-employed but 37 % of all the organisationally dependent self-employed, those living in towns or suburbs are 33 % of all the self-employed but 34 % of all the organisationally dependent self-employed, whilst those living in rural areas are 31 % of all the self-employed but 29 % of all the organisationally dependent self-employed (Figure 22B).

Figure 22. Organisational dependency: by urbanisation degree (residence) (% , 2021)



A) Organisational dependency (% of self-employed)
EU + NO average only displayed when different than EU average

**B) Inner pie: % of all self-employed in the EU
Outer pie: % of all organisational dependent self-employed in the EU**

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

7.0 In which occupations is dependent self-employment more common?

This section displays the distribution of self-employed displaying the characteristics of dependent self-employment by occupation and skill level.

Key findings

Self-employed possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment

- ▶ The self-employed displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment is higher amongst plant, machine, operators and assemblers, and elementary occupations (9.8 % of the self-employed within this occupational group).
- ▶ Those displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment is higher amongst the self-employed in occupations requiring medium or low skill levels (clerical support workers, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations) with 4 % of the self-employed in medium or low-skilled occupations being dependent self-employed.

Economically dependent self-employed

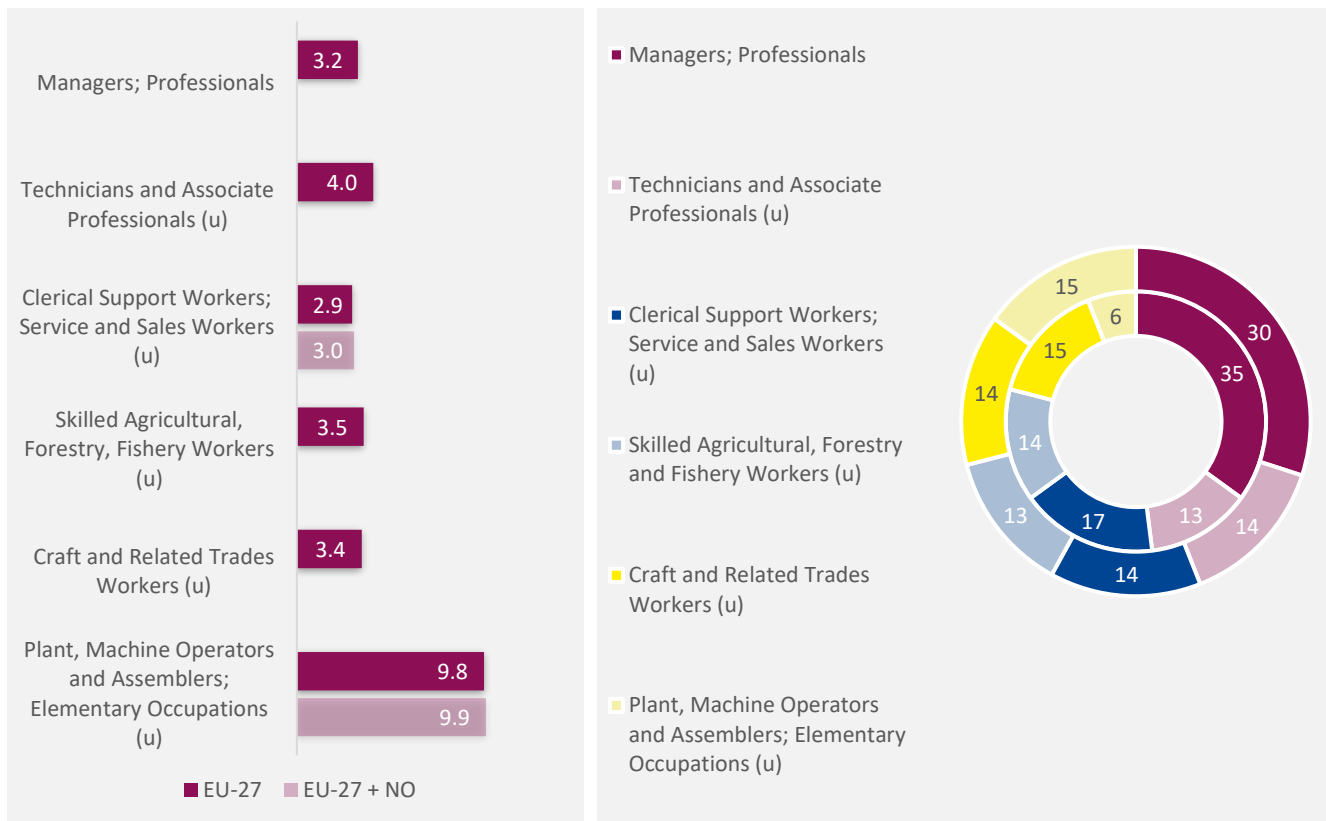
- ▶ Economic dependency is more common amongst self-employed skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (25 % of the self-employed in these occupations) and the self-employed in plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations (21.1 % of the self-employed in these occupations).
- ▶ Economically dependent self-employment is more prevalent amongst the self-employed in occupations requiring medium or low skill levels (clerical support workers, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations) with 14.6 % of the self-employed in medium or low-skilled occupations being economically dependent self-employed.

Organisationally dependent self-employed

- ▶ Organisational dependency is more prevalent amongst plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations (33.5 % of the self-employed in these occupations) and amongst clerical support workers, service and sales workers (22.8 % of the self-employed in these occupations).
- ▶ Organisational dependency is more prevalent amongst the self-employed in occupations requiring medium or low skill levels (clerical support workers, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations) with 20.7 % of the self-employed in medium or low-skilled occupations being organisationally dependent self-employed.

As Figure 23 displays, the proportion of the self-employed displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment is higher amongst plant, machine, operators and assemblers, elementary occupations (9.8 % of the self-employed with this occupation) (Figure 23A). Indeed, they are 6 % of all the self-employed but 15 % of all possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment in the EU (Figure 23B).

Figure 23. Estimates of dependent self-employment: by occupation (% , 2021)



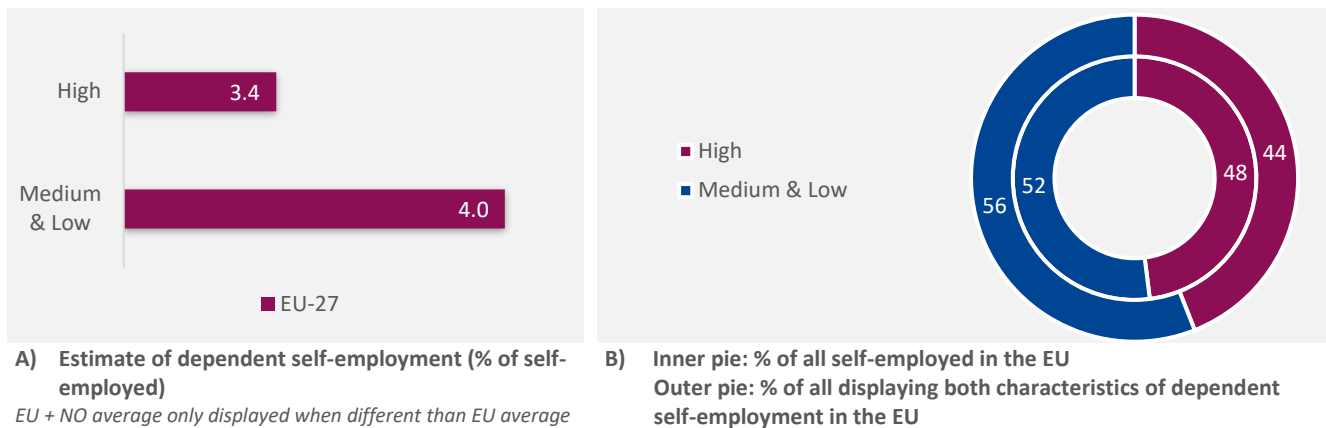
A) Estimate of dependent self-employment (% of self-employed)
EU + NO average only displayed when different than EU average

**B) Inner pie: % of all self-employed in the EU
Outer pie: % of all displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment in the EU ((u) low reliability –**
Technicians and Associate Professionals; Clerical Support Workers, Service and Sales Workers; Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers; Craft and Related Trades Workers; Plant, Machine Operators and Assemblers, Elementary Occupations)
(Armed Forces Occupations excluded; not stated excluded)

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Turning to the variations in the estimates of dependent self-employment by the skill level required by a specific occupation, Figure 24 displays that dependent self-employment is more common amongst the self-employed in occupations requiring medium or low skill levels (clerical support workers, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations) with 4 % of the self-employed in medium or low-skilled occupations being estimated as dependent self-employed (Figure 24A). Indeed, they are 52 % of all the self-employed but 56 % of all those possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment (Figure 24B).

Figure 24. Estimates of dependent self-employment: by occupation – skill level (% , 2021)

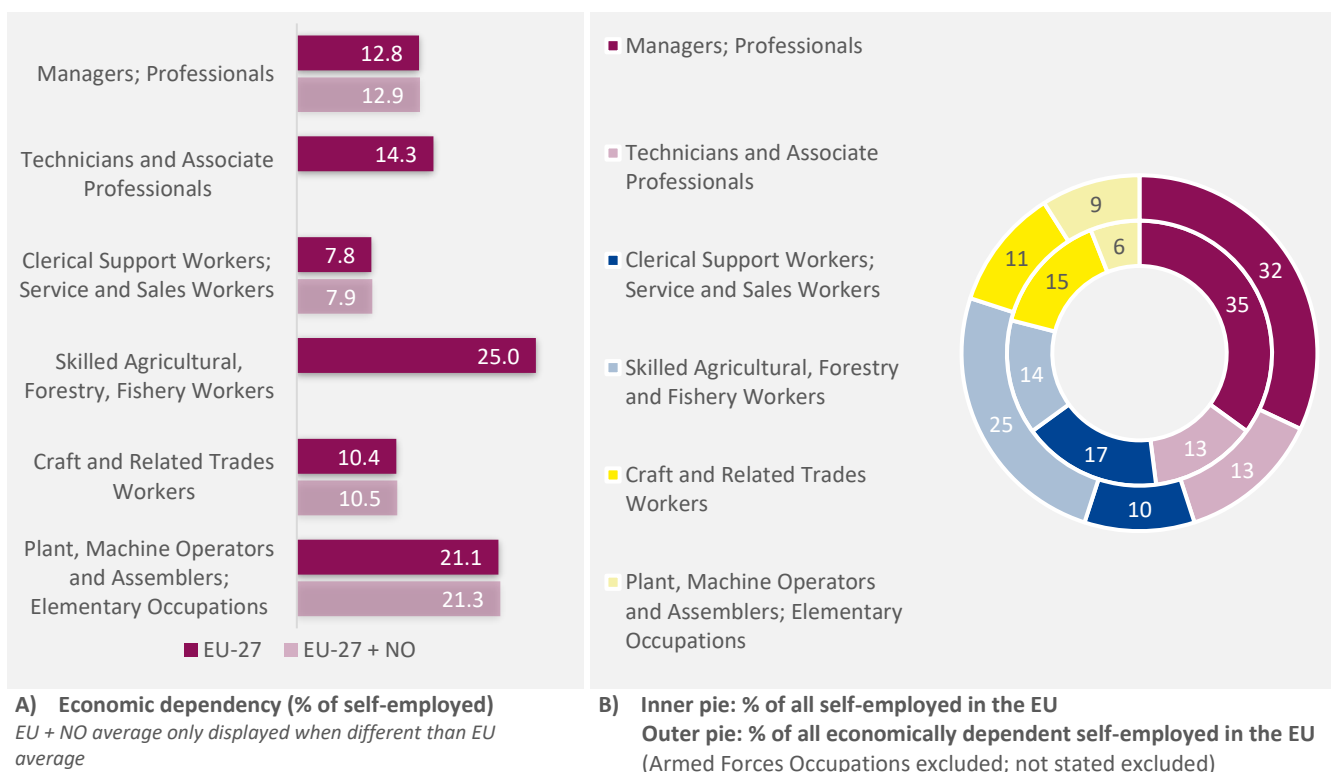


- High Skill Level (3&4): Managers, Professionals and Technicians and Associate Professionals
- Medium and Low Skill Level (1&2): Clerical Support Workers, Service and Sales Workers, Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers, Craft and Related Trades Workers, Plant, Machine Operators and Assemblers and Elementary Occupations (Armed Forces Occupations excluded; not stated excluded)

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Analysing economic dependency alone, the finding is that economic dependency is more common amongst skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (25 % of the self-employed in these occupations) and plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations (21.1 % of the self-employed in these occupations) (Figure 25A). Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers are 14 % of all the self-employed in the EU but 25 % of all the economically dependent self-employed, and those in plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations are 6 % of all the self-employed but 9 % of all the economically dependent self-employed (Figure 25B).

Figure 25. Economic dependency: by occupation (% , 2021)



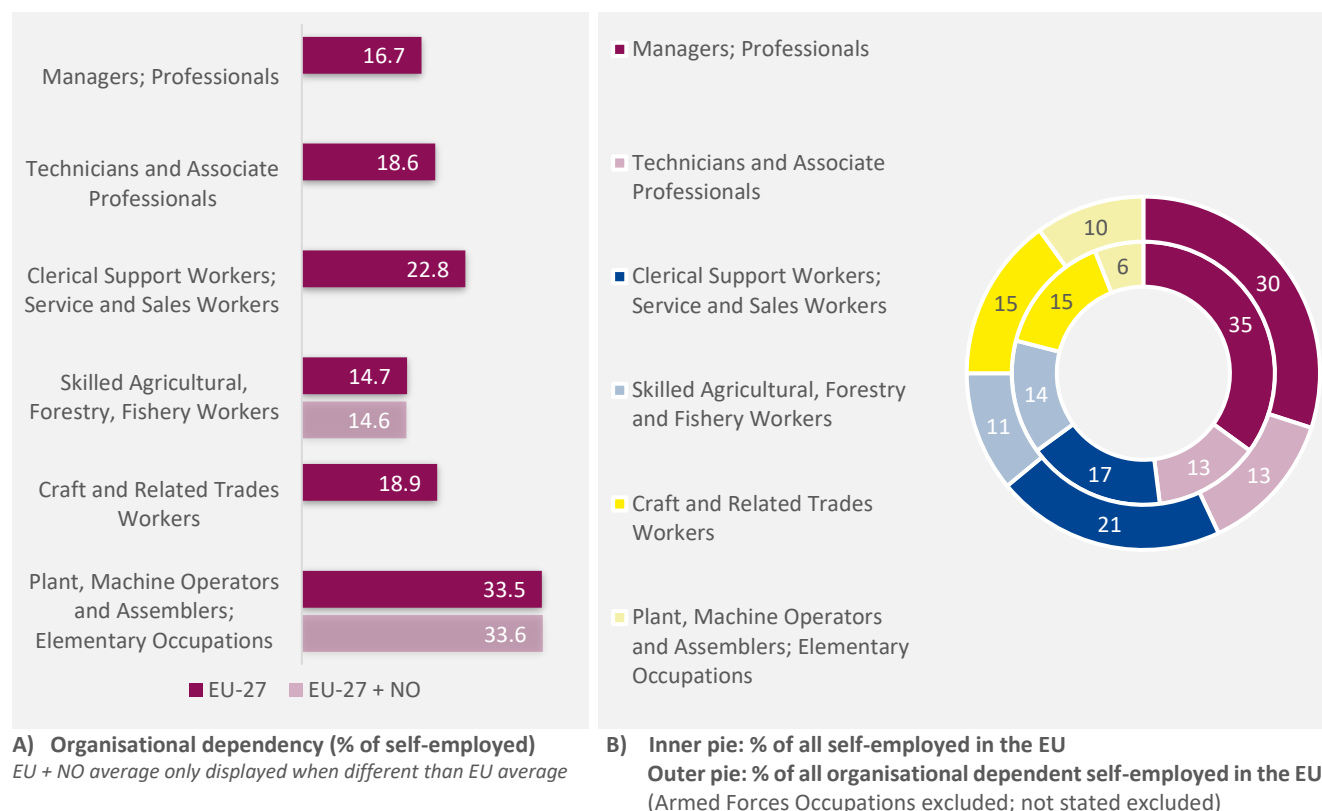
Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Figure 26. Economic dependency: by occupation – skill level (% , 2021)



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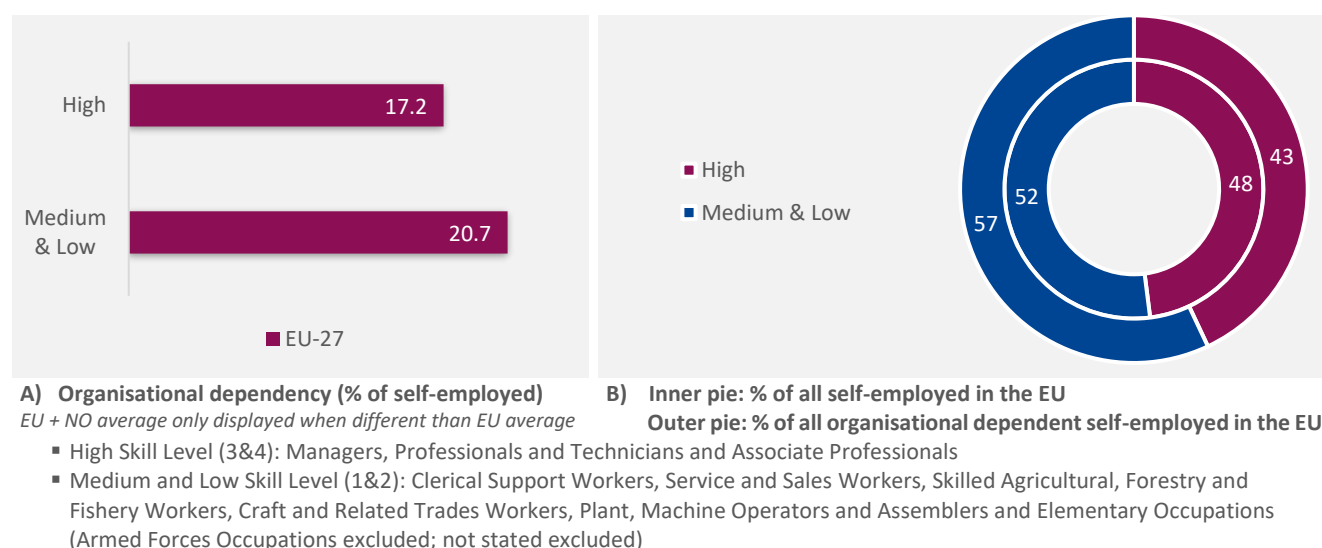
Figure 27. Organisational dependency: by occupation (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Similarly to overall estimate of dependent self-employment and economically dependent self-employment, organisational dependency is also more prevalent amongst the self-employed in occupations requiring medium or low skill levels (clerical support workers, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant, machine operators and assemblers and elementary occupations) with 20.7 % of the self-employed in medium or low-skilled occupations being organisationally dependent self-employed (Figure 28A). Indeed, they are 52 % of all the self-employed in the EU but 57 % of all organisationally dependent self-employed (Figure 28B).

Figure 28. Organisational dependency: by occupation – skill level (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

8.0 In which sectors is dependent self-employment more common?

This section analyses the distribution of the self-employment at risk of dependent self-employment by sector.

Key findings

Self-employed possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment

- ▶ The share of self-employed displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment is higher amongst the self-employed working in education, human health and social work activities (5.8 % of the self-employed in this sector) and amongst those in information and communication, financial and insurance activities, real estate activities and other services (4.1 % of the self-employed in this sector).
- ▶ Little variation exists across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in the prevalence of the self-employed estimated to be dependent self-employed.

Economically dependent self-employed

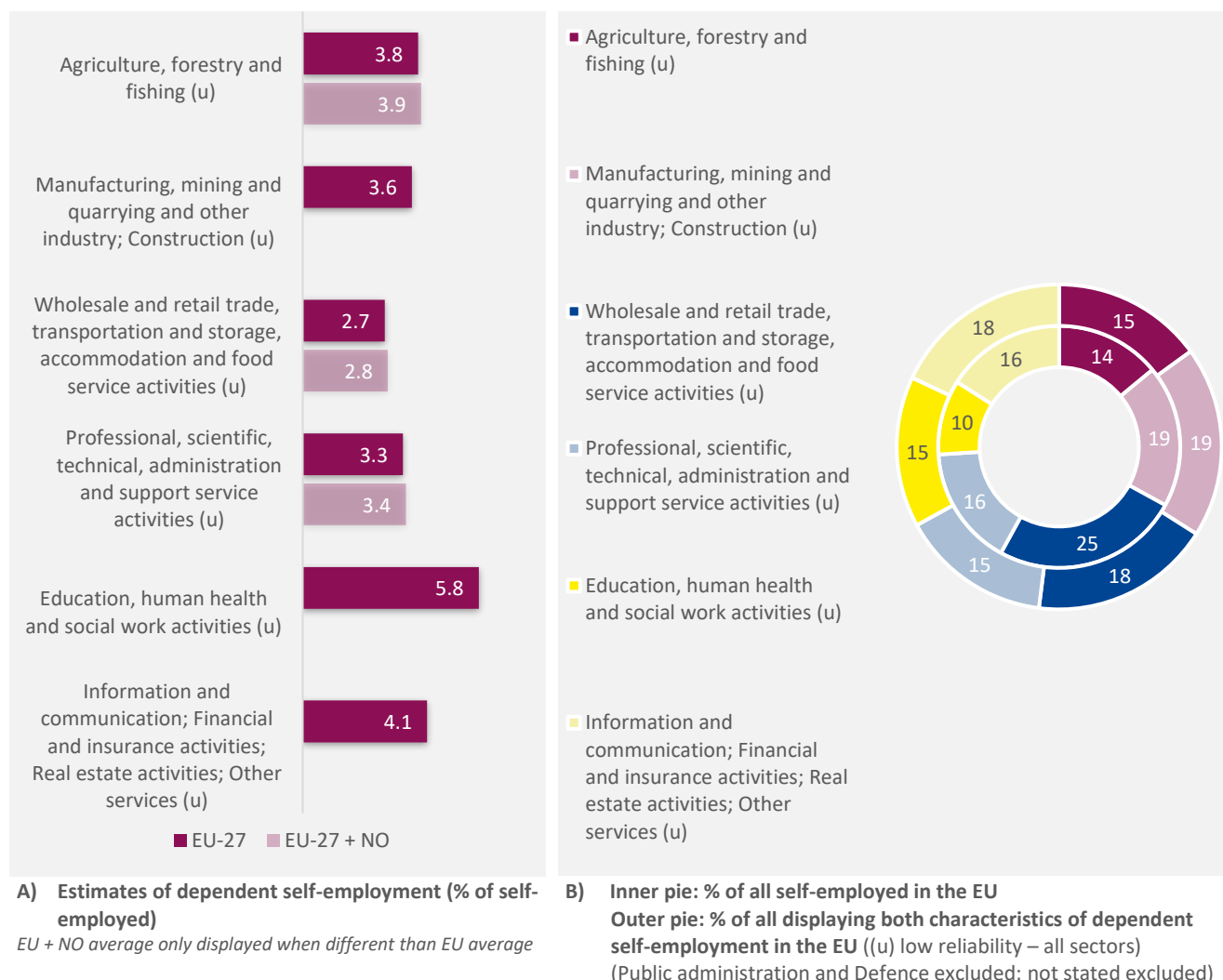
- ▶ The self-employed working in the primary sector which includes agriculture, forestry and fishing sector are more likely to be economically dependent self-employed (25.8 % of all self-employed working in this sector).

Organisationally dependent self-employed

- ▶ Organisationally dependency is more frequent among the self-employed in education, human health and social work activities (24.2 % of the self-employed in the sector) and in wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food services (22.4 % of the self-employed in the sector).
- ▶ Organisational dependency is more prevalent in the tertiary sector (i.e., services sector)) with 20 % of the self-employed in the tertiary sector being organisationally dependent self-employed.

As Figure 29 displays, the share of self-employed displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment is higher amongst the self-employed working in education, human health and social work activities (5.8 % of the self-employed in this sector) and amongst those in information and communication, financial and insurance activities, real estate activities and other services (4.1 % of the self-employed in this sector) (Figure 29A). Indeed, the self-employed working in education, human health and social work activities are 10 % of all the self-employed but 15 % of all displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment, whilst the self-employed working in information and communication, financial and insurance activities, real estate activities and other services are 16 % of all the self-employed and 18 % of all displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment (Figure 29B).

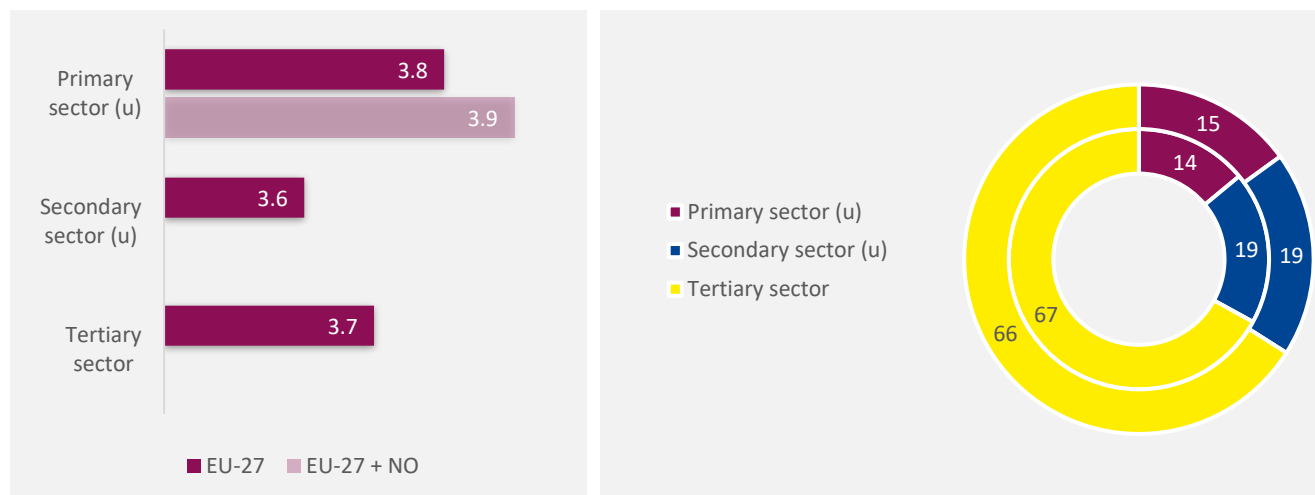
Figure 29. Estimates of dependent self-employment: by sector – NACE rev. 2 (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Comparing the primary sector (agriculture, forestry and fishing), secondary sector (manufacturing, mining and quarrying and other industry and construction) and tertiary sector (wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities; professional, scientific, technical, administration and support service activities; education, human health and social work activities; information and communication; financial and insurance activities; real estate activities; other services), little variation exists in the estimates of dependent self-employment. Those working in the primary sector have slightly higher risk to be dependent self-employed (3.8 % of the self-employed in this sector compared with 3.7 % in the tertiary sector and 3.6 % in the secondary sector) (Figure 30A). Indeed, the self-employed in the primary sector are 14 % of all the self-employed and 15 % of all displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment (Figure 30B).

Figure 30. Estimate of dependent self-employment: by economic sector (primary, secondary, tertiary) (% , 2021)



A) Estimate of dependent self-employment (% of self-employed)

EU + NO average only displayed when different than EU average

B) Inner pie: % of all self-employed in the EU

Outer pie: % of all displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment in the EU ((u) low reliability – Primary sector and Secondary sector)

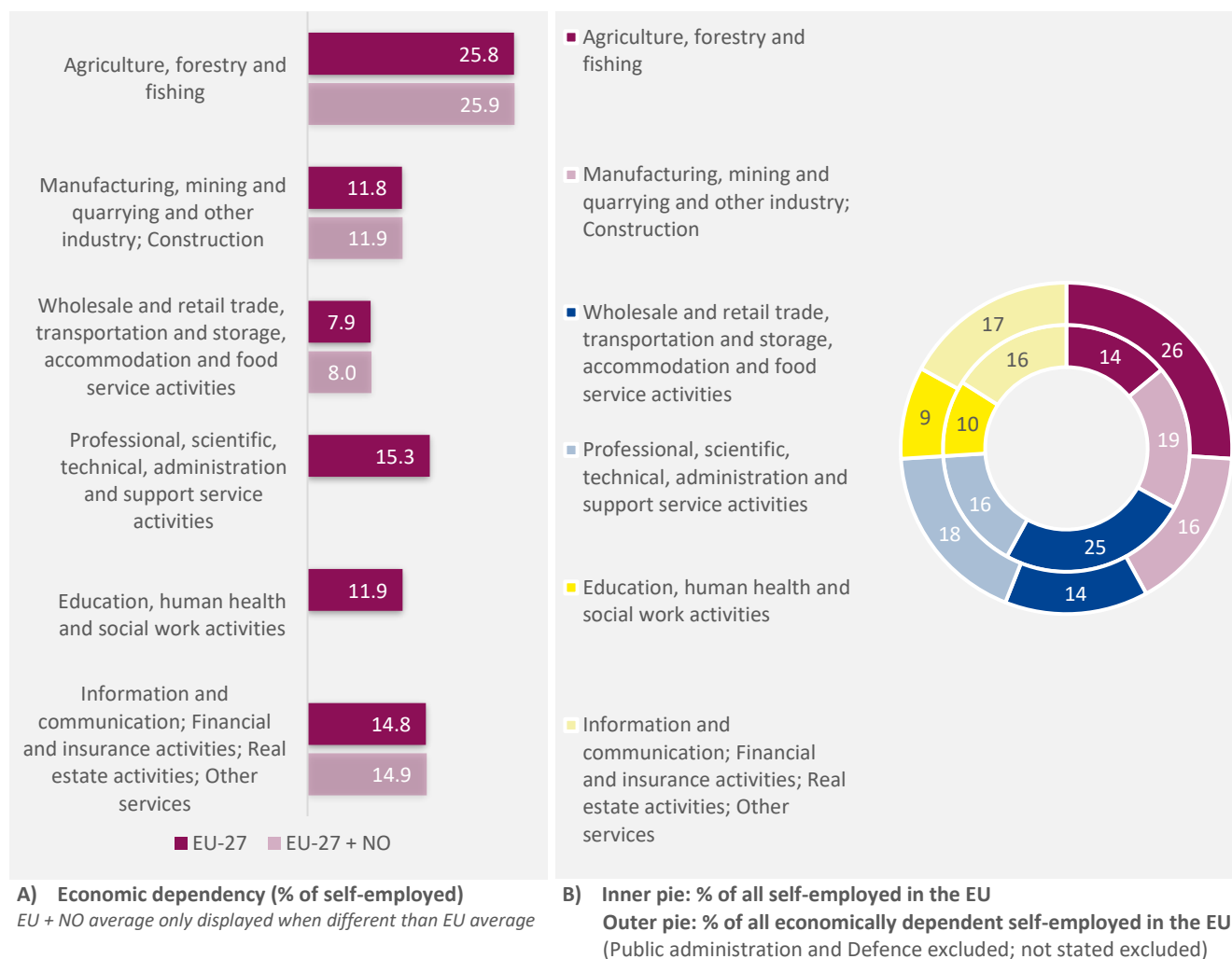
(Public administration and Defence excluded; not stated excluded)

- Primary sector: Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Secondary sector: Manufacturing, mining and quarrying and other industry; Construction
- Tertiary sector: Wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities; Professional, scientific, technical, administration and support service activities; Education, human health and social work activities; Information and communication; Financial and insurance activities; Real estate activities; Other services

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Turning to economic dependency, Figure 31 displays that the self-employed working in agriculture, forestry and fishing sector are more likely to be economically dependent self-employed (25.8 % of all the self-employed working in this sector) (Figure 31A). Indeed, the self-employed working in agriculture, forestry and fishing sector are 14 % of all the self-employed in the EU but 26 % of all the economically dependent self-employed (Figure 31B).

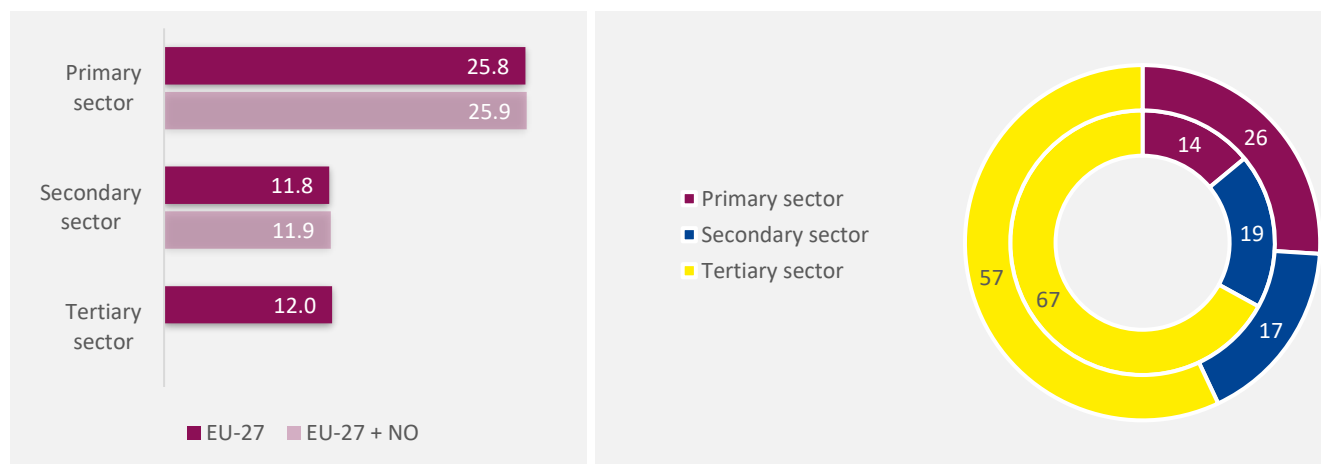
Figure 31. Economic dependency: by sector – NACE rev. 2 (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

As Figure 32 displays, this is also the case when comparing the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Economic dependency is more prevalent in the primary sector which includes the agriculture, forestry and fishing (25.8 % of the self-employed in this sector) (Figure 32A). Indeed, the self-employed working in the primary sector are 14 % of all the self-employed in the EU and 26 % of all the economically dependent self-employed (Figure 32B).

Figure 32. Economic dependency: by economic sector (primary, secondary, tertiary) (% , 2021)

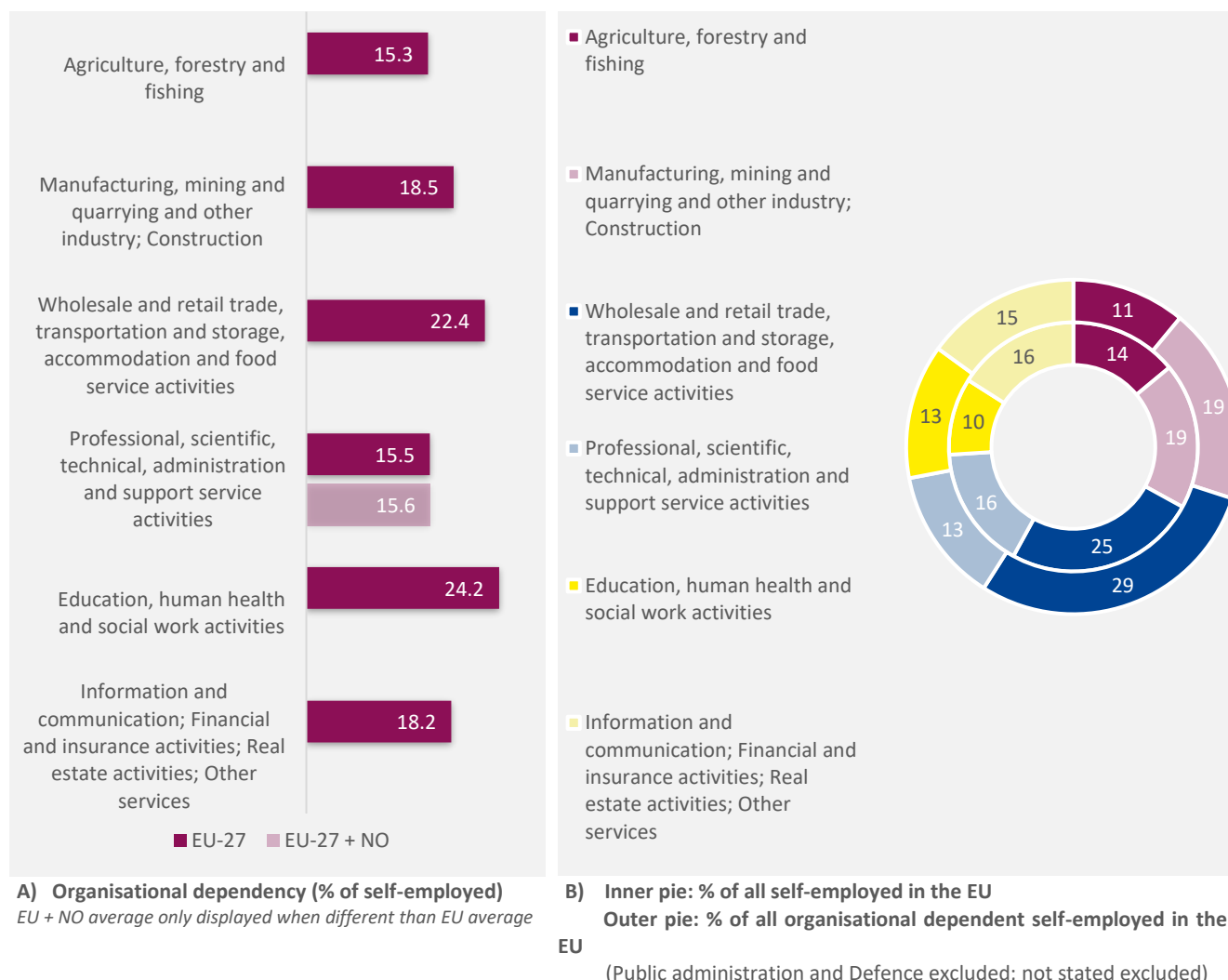


- Primary sector: Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Secondary sector: Manufacturing, mining and quarrying and other industry; Construction
- Tertiary sector: Wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities; Professional, scientific, technical, administration and support service activities; Education, human health and social work activities; Information and communication; Financial and insurance activities; Real estate activities; Other services

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Finally, Figure 33 reveals the variations in the organisational dependency of the self-employed by sector. The finding is that organisational dependency is more frequent among the self-employed working in education, human health and social work activities (24.2 % of the self-employed in the sector) and in wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food services (22.4 % of the self-employed in the sector) (Figure 33A). Indeed, the self-employed working in education, human health and social work activities are 10 % of all the self-employed in the EU and 13 % of all the organisationally dependent self-employed, and the self-employed working in wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food services are 25 % of all the self-employed in the EU and 29 % of all the organisationally dependent self-employed (Figure 33B).

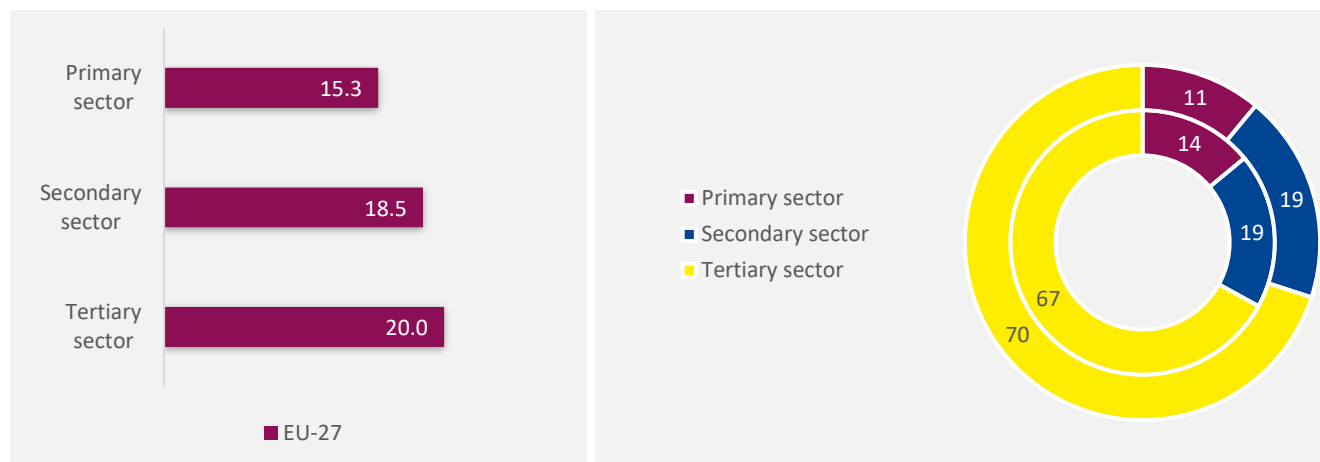
Figure 33. Organisational dependency: by sector – NACE rev. 2 (% , 2021)



Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

As Figure 34 displays, comparing the primary, secondary and tertiary, the finding is the opposite to the findings for the risk of dependent self-employment and economically dependent self-employment. Organisational dependency is more prevalent in the tertiary sector (20 % of the self-employed), followed by the secondary and primary sectors (18.5 % and 15.3 % of the self-employed respectively) (Figure 34A). Indeed, the self-employed working in the tertiary sector are 67 % of all the self-employed in the EU and 70 % of all the organisationally dependent self-employed (Figure 34B).

Figure 34. Organisational dependency: by economic sector (primary, secondary, tertiary) (% , 2021)



- Primary sector: Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Secondary sector: Manufacturing, mining and quarrying and other industry; Construction
- Tertiary sector: Wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities; Professional, scientific, technical, administration and support service activities; Education, human health and social work activities; Information and communication; Financial and insurance activities; Real estate activities; Other services

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Comparing the results on occupations for the two types of dependency, namely economic and organisational dependency, some contrasting findings are revealed. For example, the self-employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector face the highest economic dependency but the lowest organisational dependency. This high economic dependency might be explained by the limited number of clients one individual provider usually has in the industry (e.g., they have a main client for their products or services as they can be organised in small producers' organisations selling to large chains). The low organisational dependency can be also explained by the specifics of this sector closely linked to the weather and the prohibited periods and less linked to an organisation's premises or working schedule. The opposite is revealed for the self-employed in education, human health and social work activities where they face the highest organisational dependency and the lowest economic dependency. This is again explained by the specifics of the sector. While the workers in education or medical staff and social workers are highly dependent on the personal requirements or the clients' schedule (e.g., schools, medical clinics), they usually have more clients and are less dependent on the income from one single client.

9.0 Working arrangements of the dependent self-employed

This section investigates the working arrangements, including the job satisfaction, of those displaying the characteristics of dependent self-employment, to better understand their working conditions and whether they are more vulnerable than the self-employed.

Key findings

Self-employed possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment

- ▶ Those self-employed displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment do not work more in the evening or at the weekend compared with the self-employed. Indeed, those possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment work less on Saturdays. Those with both characteristics of dependent self-employment are also less likely to work from home than the self-employed.
- ▶ Those with both characteristics of dependent self-employment are higher amongst the self-employed working on a part-time basis for their main job (self-defined as self-employment).
- ▶ The job satisfaction of those possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment is not lower than for the self-employed if the proxy of whether they are looking for another job is used.

Economically dependent self-employed

- ▶ Very little difference exists between the share of the economically dependent self-employed who work in the evening compared with those who do not, but larger differences are found for weekend work. A larger share of those reporting themselves as self-employed and not working on Saturdays are economically dependent self-employed. In contrast, the dependent self-employed are more likely to work on Sundays.
- ▶ Economic dependency is more prevalent amongst the self-employed working from home.
- ▶ Economically dependent self-employment is more prevalent amongst the self-employed working on a part-time basis for their main job.
- ▶ The job satisfaction of those who are economically dependent self-employed is not lower than for the self-employed.

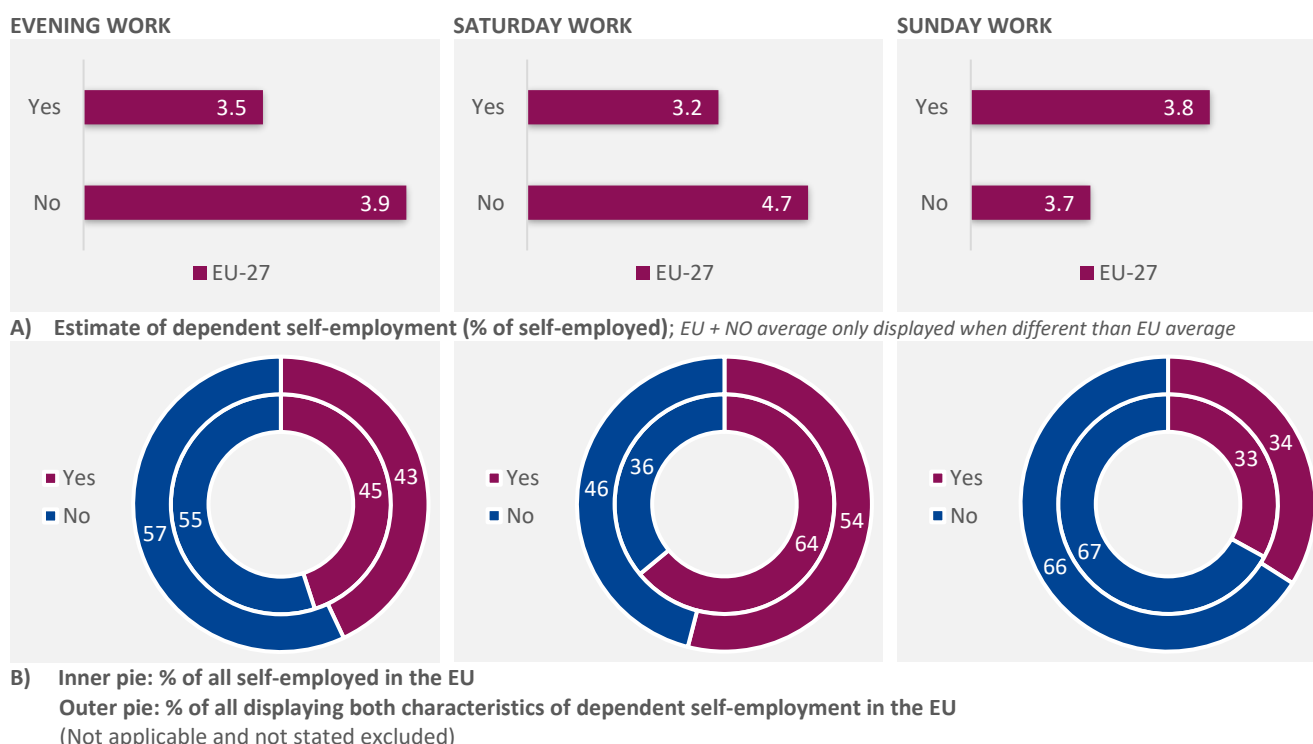
Organisational dependent self-employed

- ▶ Very little differences between the organisationally dependent self-employed and the self-employed exists on working time arrangements.
- ▶ Organisational dependency is less prevalent amongst those working from home.
- ▶ The organisationally dependent self-employed have lower job satisfaction as a greater share of them are looking for a job than the share of the dependent self-employed not looking for another job. Indeed, from all the self-employed looking for another job a share of 22.1 % are organisational dependent compared with 18 % of those not looking for another job which are organisational dependent.

Analysing working times, those possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment are not working more in the evening or at the weekend compared with the self-employed. Those with both characteristics of dependent self-employment are working less on Saturdays. Some 3.2 % of those working on Saturdays are estimated as dependent self-employed and 4.7 % of those not working on Saturdays are estimated as dependent

self-employed (Figure 35A). Indeed, 36 % of all self-employed in the EU are not working on Saturdays while 46 % of all those at risk of being dependent self-employed are not working on Saturdays. (Figure 35B).

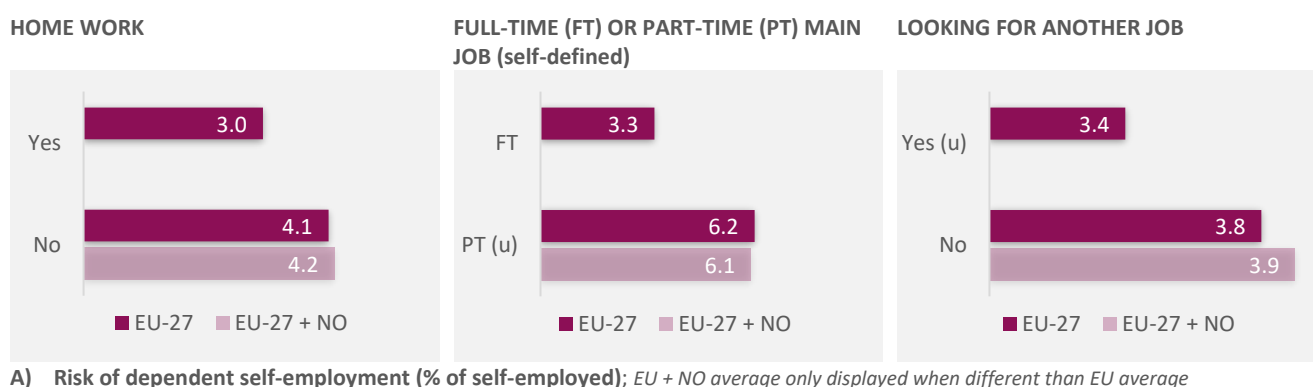
Figure 35. Estimates of dependent self-employment: by working time arrangements (% , 2021)

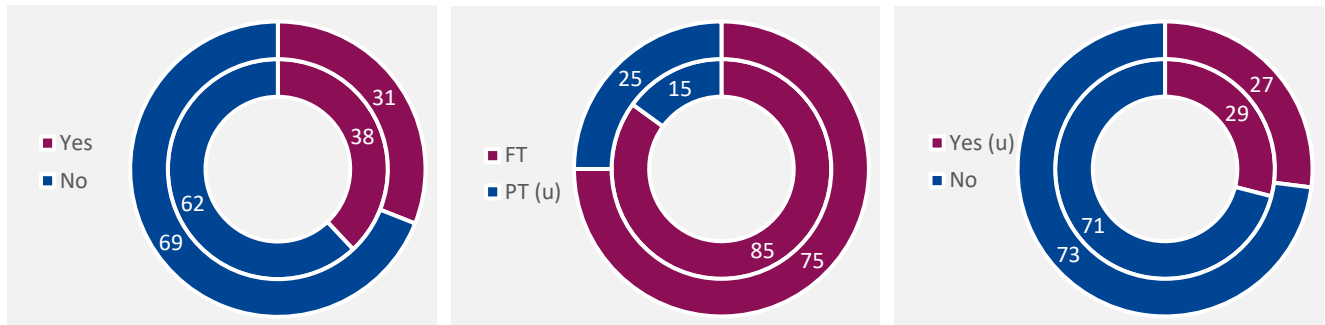


Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

As Figure 36 reveals, 38 % of all the self-employed work from home but only 31 % of those with both characteristics of dependent self-employment (Figure 36B). However, dependent self-employment is higher amongst the self-employed working on a part-time basis for their main job (self-defined as self-employment). The share of self-employed working on a part-time basis is 15 % of all the self-employed but 25 % of all displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment (Figure 36B). Finally, the job satisfaction of those possessing both characteristics of dependent self-employment does not seem to be lower than for the self-employed, when the proxy of whether they are looking for another job is used. Indeed, 3.8 % of the self-employed not looking for another job have both characteristics of dependent self-employment compared with 3.4 % of the self-employed looking for another job (Figure 36A). Although the self-employed who do not look for another job represent 71 % of all the self-employed, they are 73 % of all estimated as dependent self-employed (figure 36B).

Figure 36. Estimate of dependent self-employment: by working arrangements and job satisfaction (% , 2021)





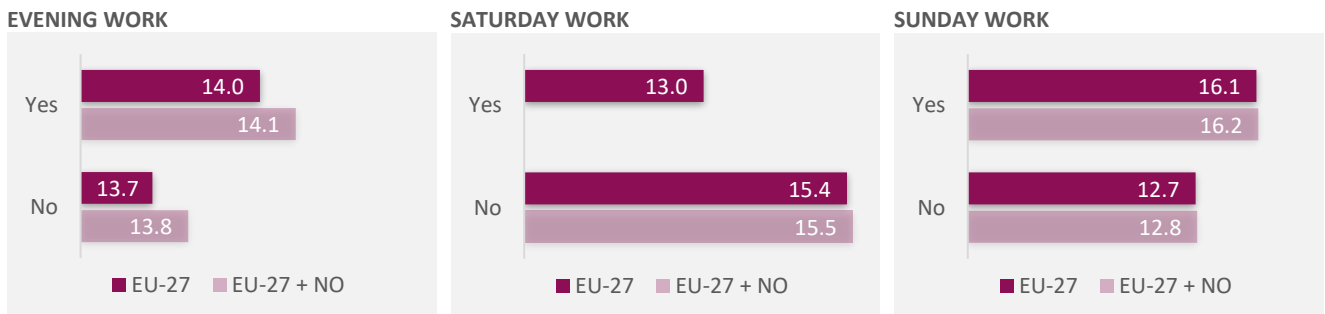
B) Inner pie: % of all self-employed in the EU

Outer pie: % of all displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment in the EU ((u) low reliability – Part-time (PT) main job and looking for another job – Yes)

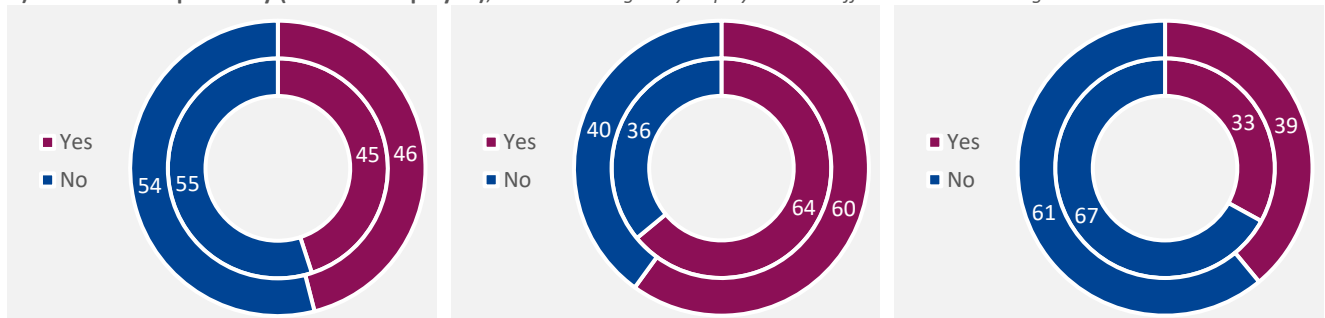
Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Figure 37 displays the working arrangements for the economically dependent self-employed. While very little difference exists between the share of the economically dependent self-employed who work in the evening compared with those who do not, larger differences are found for weekend work. A larger share of the self-employed not working on Saturdays are economically dependent self-employed (15.4 % of all self-employed working on Saturdays) compared with those who work on Saturdays (13 % of all self-employed working on Saturdays) (Figure 37A). Indeed, although the self-employed not working on Saturdays are 36 % of all the self-employed, they are 40 % of the economically dependent self-employed. In contrast, the dependent self-employed are more likely to work on Sundays. Although the self-employed working on Sundays represents 33 % of all self-employed, they are 39 % of the economically dependent self-employed (Figure 37B).

Figure 37. Economic dependency: by working time arrangements (% , 2021)



A) Economic dependency (% of self-employed); EU + NO average only displayed when different than EU average



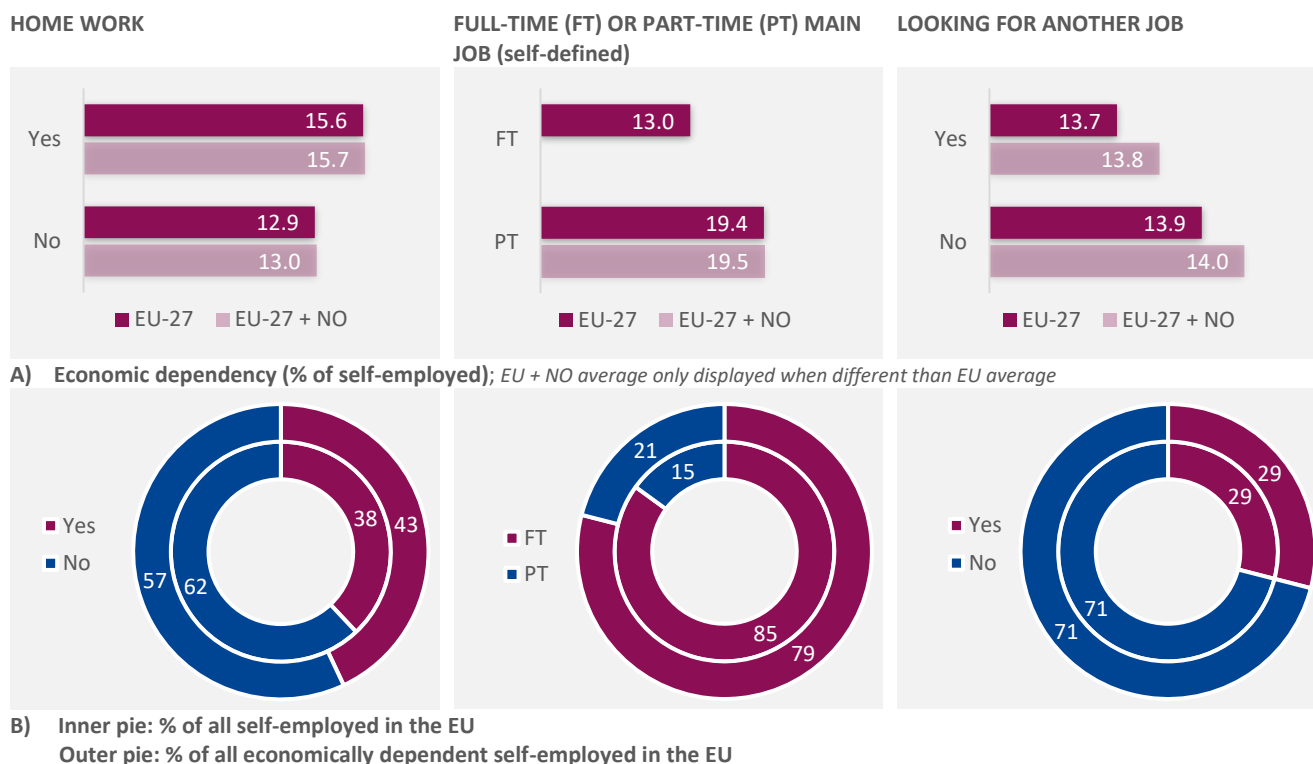
B) Inner pie: % of all self-employed in the EU

Outer pie: % of all economically dependent self-employed in the EU
(Not applicable and not stated excluded)

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

As Figure 38 displays, larger differences are found between the share of the self-employed who work from home and the economically dependent self-employed who do so, as well as between the proportions working on part-time basis. The self-employed are less likely to work from home (38 % of the self-employed do so) than the economically dependent self-employed (43 % do so) (Figure 38B). Similarly, the self-employed are less likely to work part-time for their main job (15 %) than the economically dependent self-employed (21 %) (Figure 36B). And similar to the findings on the risk of dependent self-employment, the job satisfaction of those who are economically dependent self-employed is similar to the self-employed. Indeed, 29 % of the self-employed are looking for another job, as are 29 % of the economically dependent self-employed (Figure 38A).

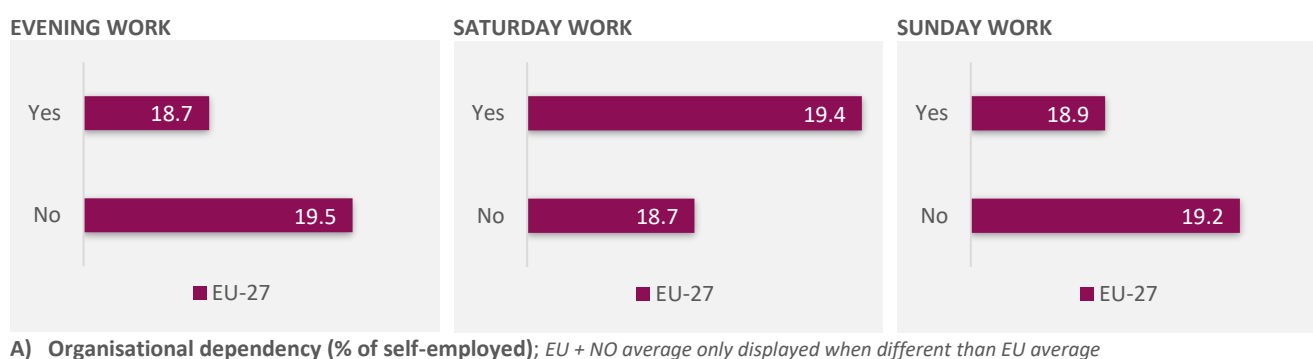
Figure 38. Economic dependency: by working arrangements and job satisfaction (% , 2021)

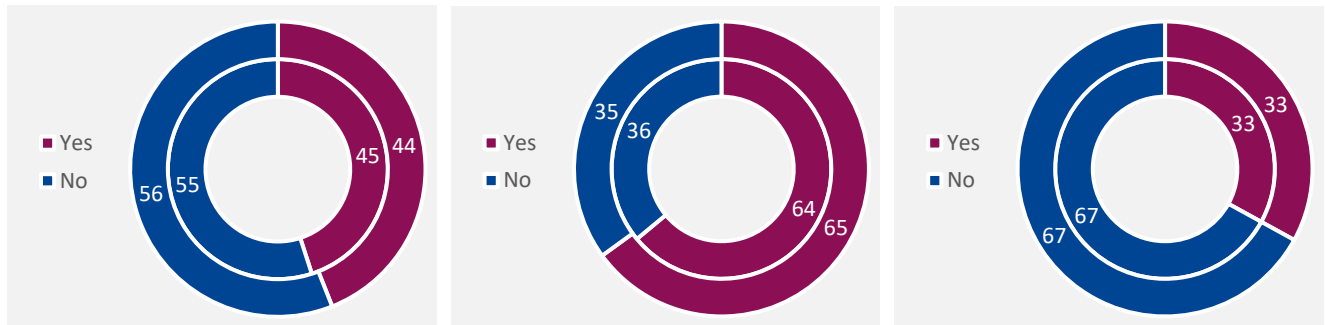


Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

Figure 39 displays the working arrangements for the organisationally dependent self-employed. Few differences exist in the proportion of the self-employed and organisationally dependent self-employed working in the evenings, or on Saturdays or Sundays.

Figure 39. Organisational dependency: by working time arrangements (% , 2021)



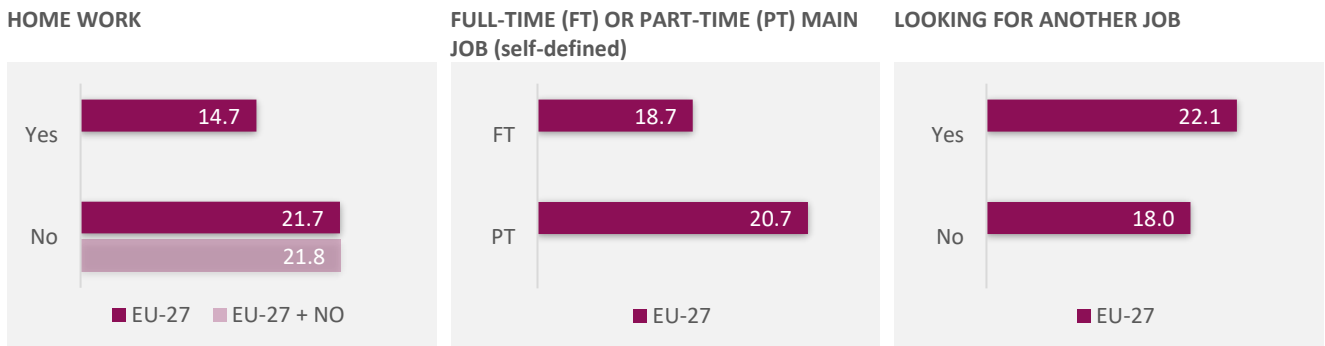


B) Inner pie: % of all self-employed in the EU
Outer pie: % of all organisationally dependent self-employed in the EU
(Not applicable and not stated excluded)

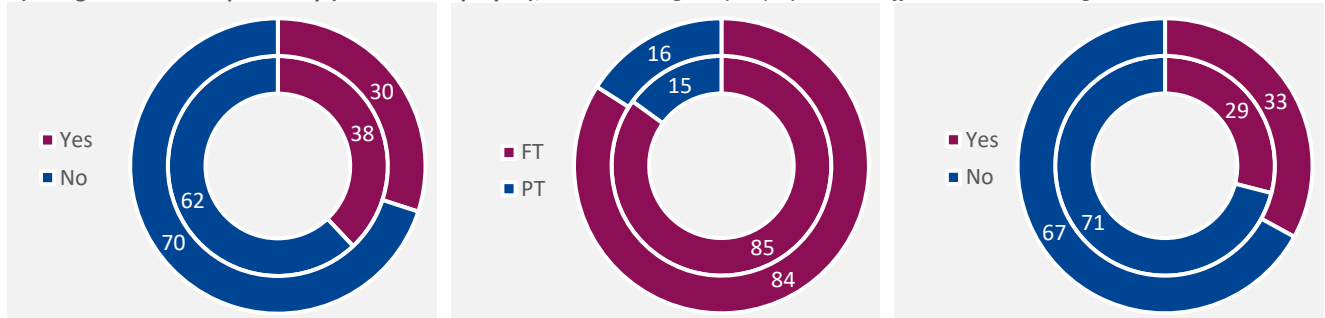
Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

However, Figure 40 displays that there are larger differences in the proportion of the self-employed and proportion of the organisationally dependent self-employed who work from home, full- and part-time, and their levels of job satisfaction. The organisationally dependent self-employed are less likely to work from home (only 30 % do so) than the self-employed (38 % do so) and they are slightly more likely than the self-employed to work part-time in their main job (16 % compared with 15 %). Importantly, the organisationally dependent self-employed have lower job satisfaction if the proxy of looking for another job is used. Just 29 % of the self-employed are looking for another job but 33 % of the organisationally dependent self-employed are looking for another job.

Figure 40. Organisational dependency: by working arrangements and job satisfaction (% , 2021)



A) Organisational dependency (% of self-employed); EU + NO average only displayed when different than EU average



B) Inner pie: % of all self-employed in the EU
Outer pie: % of all organisationally dependent self-employed in the EU

Source: based on LFS 2021 microdata.

10.0 Conclusions

This report has evaluated the prevalence and distribution of the self-employed displaying characteristics of dependent self-employment using data from EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), the largest European household sample survey. In 2021, in EU and Norway the survey comprised a sample of 2 580 815, of which 160 245 reported themselves as self-employed. To provide a comprehensive overview of dependent self-employment, the results have been reported for those meeting both the economic and personal/organisational dependence criteria simultaneously, as well as for those meeting each one of these types of dependency.

Analysing only the self-employed without employees (using the aggregate data), those with both characteristics of dependent self-employment account for 3.2 % of all self-employed without employees, while analysing all the self-employed both with and without employees (using microdata), those with both characteristics of dependent self-employment account for 3.7 % of total self-employment. Marked variations exist across countries. The proportion of the self-employed who display both characteristics of dependent self-employment is highest in Slovakia (21.2 %), Sweden (15.3 %) and Bulgaria (8.8 %) and lowest in Greece (0.8 %), Czechia (1.1 %) and Spain (1.7 %).

Analysing the economic and organisational pillars of dependency separately, higher shares of dependent self-employment are revealed. A very high proportion of the self-employed in the EU are economically dependent and therefore, vulnerable to changes occurring in the client/company they depend on for their income. Indeed, 1 in 7 (13.9 %) of the self-employed in EU are economically dependent on one or a main client (for at least 75 % of self-employment income). This share of the self-employed who are economically dependent is highest in Sweden (35.3 % of the self-employed), Slovakia (31.3 %) and Hungary (30.6 %) and lowest in Germany (3.6 %), Czechia (6.0 %) and Greece (9.5 %). Turning to organisational dependency, and their lack of autonomy to decide their working time, nearly 1 in 5 (19 %) of the self-employed in the EU lack the autonomy to decide their working time (i.e., the start and the end of the working time). The share of the self-employed witnessing such organisational dependency is highest in Bulgaria (46.2 % of the self-employed), Croatia (46.1 %), Slovakia (44.4 %) and Sweden (40.7 %) and lowest in Spain (9.8 %), Germany (7.1 %) and Lithuania (1.2 %).

Analysing the distribution of the self-employed displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment across socio-demographic groups, occupations and sectors, some rather small differences have been identified, which should not be perhaps over-exaggerated. Rather, the finding is that dependent self-employment is a ubiquitous practice that prevails in across all socio-demographic groups, occupations and sectors and, importantly, even if much more prevalent, it is not exclusive to the self-employed without employees.

Moreover, those displaying both characteristics of dependent self-employment are not less satisfied with their job compared with the self-employed, and only those who are organisationally dependent are looking for another job to a greater extent than the self-employed.

In sum, this report provides a baseline assessment of the prevalence and characteristics of the self-employed displaying characteristics of dependent self-employment. Future waves of the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) could be used to chart the changing prevalence and characteristics of dependent self-employment, and the progress being made in tackling this phenomenon.

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Annex 1: LFS 2021 – Reliability thresholds (yearly data) by main variable and country (protocol order of EU Member States)

	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	NO
Limit "a" (thousands): suppressed due to low reliability ^(c)	121.2	3	5.4	1	2	25	2	6.8	3.7	2	20	1	1.5	0.5	5.2	1.1	0.5	2.6	0.8	1.5	3	10	3.3	6.5	1	6.5	2	3.2	5
Limit "b" (thousands): warning; limited reliability ^(u)	265.0	8	12.2	6	4	50	4.6	11.4	8.5	8	40	10	2.5	1.5	7.8	4	1	4.8	2.2	6.5	6	20	8.6	11.5	5	10.5	4	6.4	10
Dependent self-employment (DSE)																													
DSE share	√	√	√	√	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(u)	√	Θ ^(u)	√	√	√	√	√	Θ ^(u)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(u)	√	Θ ^(u)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	Θ ^(u)
DSE (dependency not known)	√	√	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	√	√	√	Θ ^(u)	Θ ^(u)	√	Θ ^(c)	√	√	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	√	√	√
<i>By:</i>																													
Gender																													
Male	√																												
Female	√																												
Age																													
15-34	Θ ^(u)																												
35-49	√																												
50-64	Θ ^(u)																												
65+	Θ ^(u)																												
Education level																													
Low: Lower secondary	Θ ^(u)																												
Medium: Upper secondary	√																												
High: Third level	√																												
Residence: Urbanisation																													
Cities	√																												
Towns and suburbs	√																												
Rural areas	√																												
Occupation (ISCO-08)																													
Managers; Professionals	√																												
Technicians and Associate Professionals	Θ ^(u)																												
Clerical Support Workers; Service and Sales Workers	Θ ^(u)																												
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers	Θ ^(u)																												
Craft and Related Trades Workers	Θ ^(u)																												
Plant, Machine Operators; Elementary Occupations	Θ ^(u)																												
Occupation – skill level																													
High	√																												
Medium and Low	√																												
Economic Sector – NACE Rev. 2																													
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Θ ^(u)																												



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	NO
Limit "a" (thousands): suppressed due to low reliability ^(c)	121.2	3	5.4	1	2	25	2	6.8	3.7	2	20	1	1.5	0.5	5.2	1.1	0.5	2.6	0.8	1.5	3	10	3.3	6.5	1	6.5	2	3.2	5
Limit "b" (thousands): warning; limited reliability ^(u)	265.0	8	12.2	6	4	50	4.6	11.4	8.5	8	40	10	2.5	1.5	7.8	4	1	4.8	2.2	6.5	6	20	8.6	11.5	5	10.5	4	6.4	10
Manufacturing, mining and quarrying and other industry; Construction	Θ ^(u)																												
Wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities	Θ ^(u)																												
Professional, scientific, technical, administration and support service activities	Θ ^(u)																												
Education, human health and social work activities	Θ ^(u)																												
Information and communication; Financial and insurance activities; Real estate activities; Other services	Θ ^(u)																												
Economic Sector – major economic sectors																													
Primary sector	Θ ^(u)																												
Secondary sector	Θ ^(u)																												
Tertiary sector	√																												
Working time arrangements																													
Evening work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Saturday work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Sunday work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Working arrangements																													
Home work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT) main job (self-defined)																													
FT	√																												
PT	Θ ^(u)																												
Looking for another job																													
Yes	Θ ^(u)																												
No	√																												
Economic dependency (ED)																													
ED share	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
ED (dependency not known)	√	√	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	√	√	√	Θ ^(u)	Θ ^(u)	√	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(u)	√
By:																													
Gender																													
Male	√																												
Female	√																												



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	NO
Limit "a" (thousands): suppressed due to low reliability ⁽ⁱ⁾	121.2	3	5.4	1	2	25	2	6.8	3.7	2	20	1	1.5	0.5	5.2	1.1	0.5	2.6	0.8	1.5	3	10	3.3	6.5	1	6.5	2	3.2	5
Limit "b" (thousands): warning; limited reliability ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾	265.0	8	12.2	6	4	50	4.6	11.4	8.5	8	40	10	2.5	1.5	7.8	4	1	4.8	2.2	6.5	6	20	8.6	11.5	5	10.5	4	6.4	10
Age																													
15-34	√																												
35-49	√																												
50-64	√																												
65+	√																												
Education level																													
Low: Lower secondary	√																												
Medium: Upper secondary	√																												
High: Third level	√																												
Residence: Urbanisation																													
Cities	√																												
Towns and suburbs	√																												
Rural areas	√																												
Occupation (ISCO-08)																													
Managers; Professionals	√																												
Technicians and Associate Professionals	√																												
Clerical Support Workers; Service and Sales Workers	√																												
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers	√																												
Craft and Related Trades Workers	√																												
Plant, Machine Operators; Elementary Occupations	√																												
Occupation – skill level																													
High	√																												
Medium and Low	√																												
Economic Sector – NACE Rev. 2																													
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	√																												
Manufacturing, mining and quarrying and other industry; Construction	√																												
Wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities	√																												
Professional, scientific, technical, administration and support service activities	√																												
Education, human health and social work activities	√																												
Information and communication; Financial and insurance activities; Real estate activities; Other services	√																												
Economic Sector – major economic sectors																													
Primary sector	√																												
Secondary sector	√																												
Tertiary sector	√																												
Working time arrangements																													
Evening work																													
Yes	√																												



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	NO
Limit “a” (thousands): suppressed due to low reliability ^(c)	121.2	3	5.4	1	2	25	2	6.8	3.7	2	20	1	1.5	0.5	5.2	1.1	0.5	2.6	0.8	1.5	3	10	3.3	6.5	1	6.5	2	3.2	5
Limit “b” (thousands): warning; limited reliability ^(u)	265.0	8	12.2	6	4	50	4.6	11.4	8.5	8	40	10	2.5	1.5	7.8	4	1	4.8	2.2	6.5	6	20	8.6	11.5	5	10.5	4	6.4	10
No	√																												
Saturday work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Sunday work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Working arrangements																													
Home work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT) main job (self-defined)																													
FT	√																												
PT	√																												
Looking for another job																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Organisational dependency (OD)																													
OD share	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	Θ ^(u)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
OD (dependency not known)	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(u)	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)	√	Θ ^(c)	Θ ^(c)
By:																													
Gender																													
Male	√																												
Female	√																												
Age																													
15-34	√																												
35-49	√																												
50-64	√																												
65+	√																												
Education level																													
Low: Lower secondary	√																												
Medium: Upper secondary	√																												
High: Third level	√																												
Residence: Urbanisation																													
Cities	√																												
Towns and suburbs	√																												
Rural areas	√																												
Occupation (ISCO-08)																													



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	NO
Limit "a" (thousands): suppressed due to low reliability ⁽ⁱ⁾	121.2	3	5.4	1	2	25	2	6.8	3.7	2	20	1	1.5	0.5	5.2	1.1	0.5	2.6	0.8	1.5	3	10	3.3	6.5	1	6.5	2	3.2	5
Limit "b" (thousands): warning; limited reliability ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾	265.0	8	12.2	6	4	50	4.6	11.4	8.5	8	40	10	2.5	1.5	7.8	4	1	4.8	2.2	6.5	6	20	8.6	11.5	5	10.5	4	6.4	10
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers	√																												
Craft and Related Trades Workers	√																												
Plant, Machine Operators; Elementary Occupations	√																												
Occupation – skill level																													
High	√																												
Medium and Low	√																												
Economic Sector – NACE Rev. 2																													
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	√																												
Manufacturing, mining and quarrying and other industry; Construction	√																												
Wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities	√																												
Professional, scientific, technical, administration and support service activities	√																												
Education, human health and social work activities	√																												
Information and communication; Financial and insurance activities; Real estate activities; Other services	√																												
Economic Sector – major economic sectors																													
Primary sector	√																												
Secondary sector	√																												
Tertiary sector	√																												
Working time arrangements																													
Evening work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Saturday work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Sunday work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Working arrangements																													
Home work																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												
Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT) main job (self-defined)																													
FT	√																												
PT	√																												
Looking for another job																													
Yes	√																												
No	√																												



European Platform
tackling undeclared work

