

08 June 2018

**Economically Active Population Survey (EAPS)  
Module on self-employment. Year 2017**

**23.16% of self-employed workers started working on their own to  
continue the family business**

**One out of five want to work as a paid employee**

**10.59% of self-employed workers had to adjust their working hours  
due to the influence of their clients**

This module of the Economically Active Population Survey (EAPS) includes various aspects related to self-employed workers. First, for how many clients they worked in the year prior to the survey, their importance and the influence of workers on their own working hours.

Next, we analyse the main reason why they started self-employment, the main difficulty or inconvenience of working on their own, whether they worked with a co-owner or partner or were associated with other self-employed workers with whom they shared work or whether they intended to hire a worker or subcontract some work or service.

Finally, some characteristics are analysed, relating not only to self-employed workers but also to paid employees, such as the influence on the content or order of the tasks of their main job or the desire to change their professional status in order to compare the responses of both groups.

**In 2017 there were 15,682,300 paid employees and 3,042,200 self-employed workers,** according to the estimates of the EAPS annual sub-sample<sup>1</sup>.

**Self-employment according to the number and importance of clients and  
freedom in setting working hours**

73.87% of self-employed workers had more than nine clients in the 12 months prior to the interview, 13.66% between two and nine clients and 7.52% one or none.

Among employers with employees, 84.04% had more than nine clients, while for own-account workers and cooperative members, the percentage was 68.65%.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the calculation of the elevation factors in the EAPS sub-sample file, the estimates of the number of employed persons by professional category differ from the corresponding annual averages for the four quarters.

**Self-employed workers <sup>(1)</sup>, by number and importance of clients in the last year <sup>(2)</sup>, by professional status**

Número e importancia de los clientes	Total		Empresario con asalariados		Trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa	
	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.
<b>Total</b>	<b>3042,2</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>1030,6</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>2011,6</b>	<b>100,00</b>
Ningún cliente o a lo sumo uno en los últimos 12 meses	228,9	7,52	43,4	4,21	185,5	9,22
Entre 2 y 9 clientes en los últimos 12 meses	415,7	13,66	82,0	7,96	333,7	16,59
Más de 9 clientes en los últimos 12 meses	2247,2	73,87	866,1	84,04	1381,1	68,65
No sabe/No contesta	150,4	4,95	39,1	3,79	111,4	5,54

<sup>(1)</sup> Personas de 16 y más años, ocupadas y cuya situación profesional es la de empresario con asalariados o la de trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa.

<sup>(2)</sup> El último año se refiere a los doce meses anteriores al domingo de la semana de referencia

On the other hand, 10.59% of the self-employed had to adjust their working hours due to the influence of their clients.

By professional status, 11.26% of own-account workers and cooperative members had to adjust their working day for this reason, compared to 9.29% of employers with employees.

**Self-employed workers with at least one client in the last year <sup>(1)</sup>, according to their influence on the decision of their working hours, by professional status**

Influencia en la decisión de su horario	Total		Empresario con asalariados		Trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa	
	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.
<b>Total</b>	<b>3000,6</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>1025,9</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>1974,7</b>	<b>100,00</b>
Lo decide el encuestado	2346,1	78,19	809,1	78,87	1537,1	77,84
Lo decide el cliente o los clientes	317,7	10,59	95,4	9,29	222,4	11,26
Lo decide otra parte	299,9	10,00	110,7	10,79	189,3	9,58
No sabe/No contesta	36,8	1,23	10,8	1,05	26,0	1,32

<sup>(1)</sup> Personas de 16 y más años, ocupadas, cuya situación profesional es la de empresario con asalariados o la de trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa y que tuvieron al menos un cliente en los doce meses anteriores al domingo de la semana de referencia

## Causes and disadvantages of self-employment

For 23.16% of self-employed workers, the main reason they started working on their own was *to continue the family business*. This percentage increased to 26.70% in employers with employees and stood at 21.35% in own-account workers and cooperative members.

The second most important reason was that *there was a good opportunity* (for 22.54% of the self-employed) and the third one was that it is *the usual practice in the activity they carry out* (13.58%).

### Self-employed workers <sup>(1)</sup>, according to the main reason for starting to work on their own account, by professional status

Razón principal	Total		Empresario con asalariados		Trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa	
	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.
<b>Total</b>	<b>3042,2</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>1030,6</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>2011,6</b>	<b>100,00</b>
No consiguió encontrar un trabajo por cuenta ajena Su anterior empleador le pidió que trabajara por cuenta propia	377,9	12,42	75,8	7,35	302,1	15,02
Es la práctica habitual en la actividad que realiza	43,4	1,43	10,6	1,02	32,8	1,63
Se presentó una buena oportunidad	413,0	13,58	109,5	10,63	303,5	15,09
Continuó con el negocio familiar	685,7	22,54	297,7	28,88	388,0	19,29
No tenía intención ni planes de trabajar por cuenta propia, pero empezó a hacerlo por una razón distinta de las anteriormente mencionadas	704,6	23,16	275,2	26,70	429,4	21,35
Quería trabajar por cuenta propia por la flexibilidad del horario de trabajo	180,8	5,94	52,4	5,08	128,5	6,39
Quería trabajar por cuenta propia por otro motivo	163,2	5,36	42,0	4,07	121,2	6,02
No sabe/No contesta	389,9	12,82	143,3	13,90	246,6	12,26
	83,7	2,75	24,3	2,36	59,4	2,95

<sup>(1)</sup> Personas de 16 y más años, ocupadas y cuya situación profesional es la de empresario con asalariados o la de trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa.

As for the disadvantages, the greatest difficulties for self-employed workers were *the periods without clients, without having any orders or projects to work on* (13.49% indicated this reason) and *the delay or non-payment of clients* (11.68%).

For employers with employees the greatest difficulty was the *delay or non-payment of clients* (15.00% noted this cause), while for own-account workers or cooperative members it was *the periods without clients, with no order or project to work on* (15.95%).

**Self-employed workers <sup>(1)</sup>, according to the greater difficulty or inconvenience of working on their own account, by professional status**

Mayor dificultad o inconveniente	Total		Empresario con asalariados		Trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa	
	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.
<b>Total</b>	<b>3042,2</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>1030,6</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>2011,6</b>	<b>100,00</b>
No tener control en la fijación del precio de su propio trabajo	119,4	3,92	32,6	3,17	86,7	4,31
Falta de financiación para su negocio	190,8	6,27	66,3	6,44	124,5	6,19
Retraso o falta de pago de los clientes	355,4	11,68	154,6	15,00	200,8	9,98
Un nivel inadecuado de carga administrativa	98,6	3,24	45,9	4,45	52,7	2,62
Falta de ingresos en caso de enfermedad	219,5	7,22	59,4	5,76	160,2	7,96
Períodos de precariedad financiera	231,7	7,62	69,2	6,71	162,5	8,08
Períodos sin clientes, sin tener ningún pedido o proyecto en el que trabajar	410,2	13,49	89,3	8,67	320,9	15,95
Otras dificultades no mencionadas anteriormente	438,5	14,41	160,9	15,61	277,6	13,80
No ha sufrido ninguna dificultad	840,6	27,63	306,7	29,76	533,9	26,54
No sabe/No contesta	137,4	4,52	45,6	4,43	91,8	4,56

<sup>(1)</sup> Personas de 16 y más años, ocupadas y cuya situación profesional es la de empresario con asalariados o la de trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa.

76.11% of self-employed workers stated that they had no intention of hiring workers or subcontracting work or services. This percentage reached 62.52% for employers with employees and 83.07% for own-account workers and cooperative members.

On the other hand, 6.42% stated that they intended to employ only temporary workers, 1.99% were going to hire both permanent and temporary workers and 1.96% only permanent workers.

## Self-employed workers <sup>(1)</sup>, according to whether or not they intend to hire a worker or subcontract some work or service in the following 12 months <sup>(2)</sup>, by professional status

Intención de contratar	Total		Empresario con asalariados		Trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa	
	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.
<b>Total</b>	<b>3042,2</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>1030,6</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>2011,6</b>	<b>100,00</b>
Tiene intención de contratar exclusivamente trabajadores fijos	59,7	1,96	38,6	3,74	21,1	1,05
Tiene intención de contratar exclusivamente trabajadores temporales	195,4	6,42	123,8	12,02	71,5	3,56
Tiene intención de contratar trabajadores tanto fijos como temporales	60,5	1,99	38,3	3,71	22,2	1,11
Tiene intención exclusivamente de subcontractar trabajos o servicios	179,9	5,91	58,6	5,69	121,3	6,03
Tiene intención tanto de contratar trabajadores como de subcontractar trabajos o servicios	123,9	4,07	84,7	8,22	39,2	1,95
No tiene intención ni de contratar trabajadores ni de subcontractar trabajos o servicios	2315,4	76,11	644,3	62,52	1671,1	83,07
No sabe/No contesta	107,4	3,53	42,3	4,11	65,1	3,23

<sup>(1)</sup> Personas de 16 y más años, ocupadas y cuya situación profesional es la de empresario con asalariados o la de trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa.

<sup>(2)</sup> Doce meses a contar desde el domingo de la semana de referencia.

## Self-employed and employed workers

The number of self-employed workers who *were able to influence both the content and order of the tasks of their main job* was 2,708,600, accounting for 89.03% of the total. In the case of paid employees, the figure was 6,780,000, representing 43.23% of the total.

In turn, 5.45% of self-employed workers and 36.70% of the paid employees *were not able to influence the content or order of the tasks of their main job*.

## Self-employed workers <sup>(1)</sup> and paid employees, according to their level of influence on the content and order of the tasks of their main job, by professional status

Nivel de influencia en el contenido y orden de las tareas	Trabajadores por cuenta propia		Asalariados	
	Valor abs.	Porcent.	Valor abs.	Porcent.
<b>Total</b>	<b>3042,2</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>15682,3</b>	<b>100,00</b>
Puede influir tanto en el contenido como en el orden de las tareas	2708,6	89,03	6780,0	43,23
Puede influir en el contenido, pero no en el orden de las tareas	72,4	2,38	824,4	5,26
Puede influir en el orden, pero no en el contenido de las tareas	63,6	2,09	1888,5	12,04
No puede influir ni en el contenido ni en el orden de las tareas	165,9	5,45	5755,5	36,70
No sabe/No contesta	31,7	1,04	434,0	2,77

<sup>(1)</sup> Personas de 16 y más años, ocupadas y cuya situación profesional es la de empresario con asalariados o la de trabajador independiente o miembro de cooperativa.

In terms of preferences to change or maintain their current professional status, self-employed workers were more willing to change it than paid employees.

Thus, 84.79% of paid employees did not want to change their professional status, compared to 69.58% of self-employed workers.

By sex, women paid employees showed a greater desire for stability than men (86.93% compared to 82.84%). On the other hand, self-employed women wanted to change their professional status to a greater extent (23.53% compared to 20.31% of men).

## Percentage of self-employed workers and paid employees according to whether or not they wish to change their professional status, by sex and current professional status

Preferencia en la situación profesional	Ambos sexos		Hombres		Mujeres	
	Trabajadores por cuenta propia	Asalariados	Trabajadores por cuenta propia	Asalariados	Trabajadores por cuenta propia	Asalariados
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>100,00</b>
No desea cambiar de situación profesional	69,58	84,79	70,24	82,84	68,28	86,93
Trabaja por cuenta propia, pero desea trabajar por cuenta ajena	21,38	-	20,31	-	23,53	-
Trabaja por cuenta ajena, pero desea trabajar por cuenta propia	-	9,91	-	11,25	-	8,46
No sabe/No contesta	9,03	5,29	9,46	5,91	8,19	4,61

## Methodological note

The Economically Active Population Survey (EAPS) includes a specific module each year, dedicated to issues of interest related to the labour market. These modules are part of the European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS), which in turn is integrated into the EAPS. They are done in a harmonised way across the EU.

In 2017, the subject under investigation is *self-employment*, in accordance with the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/8 of 5 January 2016 . The 2017 module of the Economically Active Population Survey, compiled in collaboration with Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Union), investigates self-employment (excluding contributing family workers).

The variables in this module have been established according to the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/8 of 05 June 2016 and are intended to provide harmonized information on this issue at the European level. The Commission has partially financed this module.

In this module, the group of self-employed workers is defined by virtue of the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) currently in force, although the so-called contributing family workers (those who work without regulated remuneration in the company of a relative with whom they live) are excluded from the scope of the module.

**Type of operation:** annual continuous statistics (each year a different subject).

**Population scope:** employed persons aged 16 years old and over

**Geographical scope:** the entire national territory.

**Reference period of the results:** year 2017

**Sample size:** 3,822 census tracts, approximately 40,000 dwellings and 37,513 occupied persons aged 16 years old and over.

**Type of sampling:** two-stage sampling with stratification in the first stage units. The first stage units are the census tracts and the second stage units are the inhabited family dwellings.

**Collection method:** computer-assisted personal or telephone interviews.

For more information, you can consult the [methodology](#) and the [standardised methodological report](#) of the EAPS.

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