



12.6% OF SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS IN ECONOMICAL DEPENDENCE AND 12.3% IN ORGANIZATIONAL DEPENDENCE

Of the total of 698,9 thousand self-employed workers in 2023, 12.6% (87.9 thousand; 2.1 percentage points (pp) less than in 2022 and 2.7 pp less than in 2021) had a client which represented 75% or more of their income (after taxes), an indicator of economic dependence. Of that same total, 12.3% (85.9 thousand; up 0.3 pp from 2022 and up 0.7 pp from 2021) stated that their working hours are determined by their clients, an indicator of organisational dependence.

Combining these two types of dependence, 1.9% (13.5 thousand) of self-employed workers were identified as being, simultaneously, economically and organisationally dependent. This indicator has decreased from that observed in 2022 (down 0.5 pp) and in 2021 (down 0.7 pp).

1. Introduction

In 2021, a new series of the Labour Force Survey began, introducing some changes to this statistical operation, of which stand out, for the purposes of this Press Release, the modularization of the questionnaire (which now includes questions of different periodicities), the introduction, redefinition and elimination of variables, and the implementation of a subsampling strategy in the estimation of non-quarterly variables.¹

Among the annual or biennial periodicity, collected through a subsampling strategy² in 2023, this Press Release analyses two on self-employment (number and importance of clients and who defines the daily working hours) to assess the degree of dependence of this type of work. Other non-quarterly variables are available on request and subject to an analysis of the reliability of the estimates obtained.

2. Economically dependent self-employed workers

To measure the impact of clients on the activity of self-employed workers, namely the existence of clients who alone account for a high share of the worker's income and who have the possibility of stipulating the worker's

¹ For a more detailed analysis of the changes introduced by the new series of the Labour Force Survey, see the note attached to the [Press Release "Employment Statistics - 1st quarter 2021"](#).

² The subsampling strategy is explained in more detail in the Methodological Note at the end of this Press Release.



working hours, Statistics Portugal collects this information annually, according to the sub-sampling strategy mentioned above. In this Press Release, the results from 2021 to 2023 are analysed.³

From the total of 698.9 thousand self-employed workers in 2023, 72.3% (505.0 thousand) had 10 or more clients and none of them was considered dominant, that is, none of them represented individually 75% or more of the worker's income (after paying taxes). That share is 4,0 percentage points (pp) higher than in 2022 (68.3%) and 7.6 pp higher than in 2021 (64.7%).

Additionally, 6.9% (48.2 thousand) of self-employed workers stated that, in the last twelve months, they only had one client (which represents a decrease of 1.5 pp from the previous year and of 3.3 pp from two years earlier), 4.1% (28.5 thousand; 0.5 pp less than in 2022 and 0.3 pp more than in 2021) had between 2 and 9 clients, one of which dominant, and 1.6% (11.2 thousand; 0.1 pp less and 0.3 pp more, respectively) had 10 or more clients, also one of which was dominant. In other words, 12.6% (87.9 thousand) of self-employed workers had a dominant client in 2023, which represents a decrease of 2.1 pp from 2022 and of 2.7 pp from 2021.

When self-employed have only one client or, if they have two or more clients, one of them is dominant, this is considered as "economic dependence". This is more frequent among men (14.0%) than among women (10.4%), young people between 16 and 34 years old (20.6%), individuals with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (14.2%), those working in the agriculture, farming of animals, hunting and forestry sector (44.3%) and in *Oeste e Vale to Tejo* region⁴ (20.3%).

Another measure that allows for the analysis of the impact of clients on the self-employed's activity is related to the determination of daily working hours.

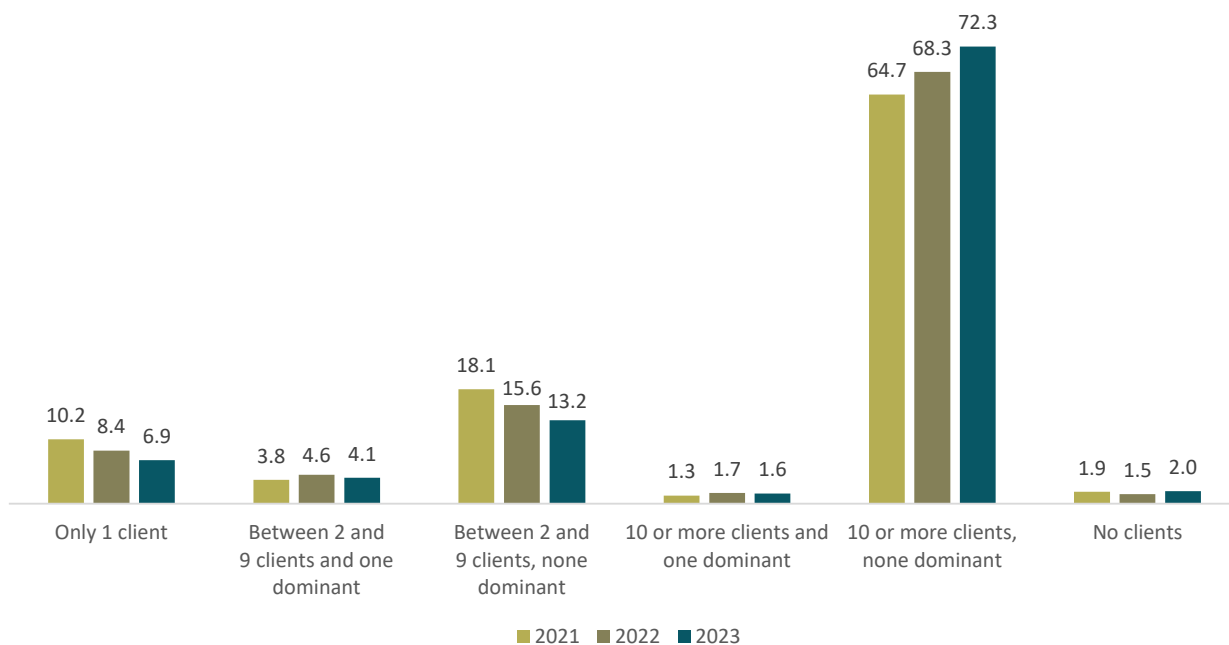
Of the total of 698.9 thousand self-employed workers, 73.1% (510.7 thousand) considered that they determine their daily working hours without restrictions, a higher share than in 2022 (up 1.5 pp) and than in 2021 (up 0.7 pp), while 14.6% (102.3 thousand; down 1.8 pp from the previous year and down 1.4 pp from two years earlier) reported that their working hours are determined by circumstances other than their clients (for example, legal provisions) and 12.3% (85.9 thousand; up 0.3 pp and 0.7 pp, respectively) stated that it is their clients who establish their working hours.

³ The Labour Force Survey estimates from 2020 to 2022 were revised following the results of the analysis on the impact of the suspension of face-to-face data collection mode (CAPI) due to the public health safeguard measures adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic period, which is why the revised estimates for the years 2021 and 2022 of the variables under analysis are published in the Excel files attached to this Press Release. For more details, please consult the explanatory note in the [Press Release "Employment Statistics - 3rd quarter 2023"](#), published on the Statistics Portugal's website.

⁴ With the adoption of [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2023/674](#) of 26 December 2022, Portugal now has nine level two territorial units (NUTS 2) used for statistical purposes of harmonised comparison with other European Union countries: *Norte, Centro, Oeste e Vale do Tejo, Grande Lisboa, Península de Setúbal, Alentejo, Algarve, Região Autónoma dos Açores, and Região Autónoma da Madeira*.

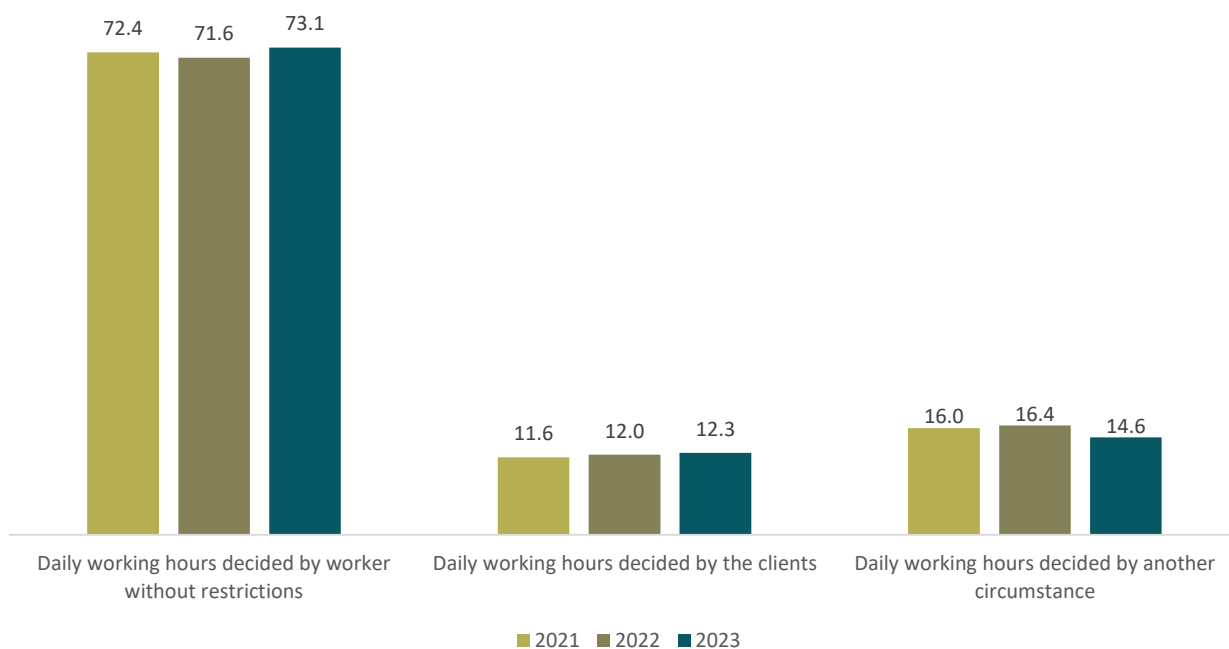


Figure 1. Self-employed workers by number and importance of clients in the last 12 months (%)



Source: Statistics Portugal, Labour Force Survey – 2023.

Figure 2. Self-employed workers according to who decides the daily working hours (%)



Source: Statistics Portugal, Labour Force Survey – 2023.



When clients determine the working hours, this is considered to be "organisational dependence". Similarly to economic dependence, organisational dependence is more common among young people between 16 and 34 years old (15.5%) and among those with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (14.8%). However, it is higher among women (13.6%) than men (11.4%), in the services sector (13.4%) and in *Península de Setúbal* region (23.5%).

The two measures analysed, economic dependence (a single client or the existence of a dominant client) and organisational dependence (clients who determine the daily working hours), are part of the indicator on "economically dependent self-employed workers", which considers the number of self-employed workers economically dependent on a single client or on a dominant client, with that client determining the daily working hours.⁵

In 2023, this indicator covered 13.5 thousand people, corresponding to 0.3% of the total employed population and 1.9% of the self-employed workers. Compared to the previous two years, this indicator decreased by 5.0 thousand people (27.0%) from 2021 and by 3.6 thousand (21.1%) from 2022, covering a lower share of self-employed workers (2.7% in 2021 and 2.4% in 2022). Their weight in the employed population has also decreased (it was 0.4% in 2021 and 2022).

Table 1. Self-employed workers by economic and organisational dependence

	2023					
	Total	Organisational dependence	Organisational independence	Total	Organisational dependence	Organisational independence
	Thousands			%		
Total	698.9	85.9	613.0	100.0	12.3	87.7
Economic dependence	87.9	13.5	74.4	12.6	1.9	10.6
Economic independence	610.9	72.3	538.6	87.4	10.4	77.1

Source: Statistics Portugal, Labour Force Survey – 2023.

⁵ Eurostat restricts this indicator to the self-employed persons without employees. Considering this population group, in 2023, the indicator "economically dependent self-employed persons" covered to 11.3 thousand people, representing 0.2% of the total employed population, 1.6% of self-employed workers and 2.5% of self-employed workers without employees.



Table 2a. Self-employed workers by economic and organizational dependence and several characterization variables

Characterization variables	2023				
	Total	Economic dependence	Economic independence	Organisational dependence	Organisational independence
	Thousands				
Total	698.9	87.9	610.9	85.9	613.0
NUTS II residence region					
Norte	262.9	29.7	233.1	32.6	230.3
Centro	101.3	x	89.2	8.8 §	92.5
Oeste e Vale do Tejo	54.3	11.0 §	43.2	5.3 §	48.9
Grande Lisboa	138.5	18.0	120.6	18.0	120.5
Península de Setúbal	44.6	x	40.4	10.5 §	34.1
Alentejo	32.1	4.9 §	27.3	x	29.6
Algarve	39.3	3.1 §	36.2	5.2	34.0
Região Autónoma dos Açores	13.2	3.2	10.0	x	12.0
Região Autónoma da Madeira	12.8	1.8 §	11.0	1.9 §	10.9
Sex					
Males	430.5	60.1	370.4	49.3	381.3
Females	268.3	27.8	240.5	36.6	231.7
Age groups					
16-34	92.4	19.0	73.4	14.4	78.0
35-64	515.5	55.9	459.6	63.7	451.8
65-89	91.0	13.0	78.0	7.9	83.2
Highest completed level of education					
First and second stages of basic education (at most)	316.3	39.7	276.6	35.7	280.6
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education	179.7	25.5	154.2	26.6	153.1
Tertiary education	202.9	22.7	180.1	23.5	179.3
Main activity (NACE Rev.2)					
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	53.6	23.7	29.9	x	51.7
Manufacturing, electricity, gas and water supply and construction	160.5	22.0	138.5	18.9	141.6
Services	484.8	42.2	442.6	65.1	419.7

Source: Statistics Portugal, Labour Force Survey – 2023.

Note:

- The estimates in the total column correspond to the sum of estimates related to economic dependence (yes/no) or to organizational dependence (yes/no).
- Economic dependence corresponds to a single client or to the existence of a dominant client, while organisational dependence occurs when the clients determine the daily working hours of the self-employed worker.

Conventional signs:

§ Value with low reliability.

x Not available.



Table 2b. Self-employed workers by economic and organizational dependence and several characterization variables (%)

Characterization variables	2023				
	Total	Economic dependence	Economic independence	Organisational dependence	Organisational independence
	%				
Total	100.0	12.6	87.4	12.3	87.7
NUTS II residence region					
Norte	100.0	11.3	88.7	12.4	87.6
Centro	100.0	x	88.0	8.6 §	91.4
Oeste e Vale do Tejo	100.0	20.3 §	79.7	9.8 §	90.2
Grande Lisboa	100.0	13.0	87.0	13.0	87.0
Península de Setúbal	100.0	x	90.7	23.5 §	76.5
Alentejo	100.0	15.1 §	84.9	x	92.2
Algarve	100.0	7.9 §	92.1	13.3	86.7
Região Autónoma dos Açores	100.0	24.1	75.9	x	91.2
Região Autónoma da Madeira	100.0	14.3 §	85.7	14.8 §	85.2
Sex					
Males	100.0	14.0	86.0	11.4	88.6
Females	100.0	10.4	89.6	13.6	86.4
Age groups					
16-34 anos	100.0	20.6	79.4	15.5	84.5
35-64 anos	100.0	10.8	89.2	12.4	87.6
65-89 anos	100.0	14.3	85.7	8.6	91.4
Highest completed level of education					
First and second stages of basic education (at most)	100.0	12.5	87.5	11.3	88.7
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education	100.0	14.2	85.8	14.8	85.2
Tertiary education	100.0	11.2	88.8	11.6	88.4
Main activity (NACE Rev.2)					
Agriculture, farming of animals, hunting and forestry	100.0	44.3	55.7	x	96.5
Manufacturing, electricity, gas and water supply and construction	100.0	13.7	86.3	11.8	88.2
Services	100.0	8.7	91.3	13.4	86.6

Source: Statistics Portugal, Labour Force Survey – 2023.

Note:

- The estimates in the total column correspond to the sum of estimates related to economic dependence (yes/no) or to organizational dependence (yes/no).
- Economic dependence corresponds to a single client or to the existence of a dominant client, while organisational dependence occurs when the clients determine the daily working hours of the self-employed worker.

Conventional signs:

§ Value with low reliability.

x Not available.



TECHNICAL NOTE

The main purpose of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is to classify the population in terms of their participation in the labour market. It is a quarterly sample survey, addressed to all persons living in the national territory.

Most of the characteristics observed in this survey report to the situation in one pre-defined week (from Monday to Sunday), known as reference week. The reference weeks are uniformly distributed throughout the quarters and years. The interviews usually take place in the week following the reference week.

The information is obtained directly, through computer-assisted interview by using a mixed data collection mode: the initial interview is done face-to-face by an interviewer visiting the household and the other five interviews are done by telephone if certain requirements are met. However, it should be noted that, following the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures adopted by the competent authorities, Statistics Portugal has decided, between the first fortnight of March 2020 and the end of the collection of the 2nd quarter of 2022, to suspend the face-to-face collection mode, replacing it exclusively with telephone interviews. After analysing the impact of adopting an exclusively telephone data collection mode, in November 2023 Statistics Portugal revised the estimates for the 2nd quarter of 2020 to the 2nd quarter of 2023 by incorporating the variable "completed level of education" into the process of calibrating the individual weights, in addition to the information usually used (monthly estimates of the resident population by sex, age group and region). The estimation of the results for the 3rd quarter of 2023 was carried out in a similar way.⁶

The LFS sample is divided into six subsamples (rotations/waves), and in each quarter a subsample is replaced by a new one (selected under the same design) after being observed for six consecutive quarters. This rotation design introduces a longitudinal component, thus allowing the follow-up of persons who remain in the sample for a maximum period of one and a half year.

The subsampling strategy (wave approach) consists of taking advantage of the organisation of the LFS sample in waves. This feature enables the construction of an annual microdata base composed of four subsamples, each one corresponding to the wave that enters in the sample for the first time (new rotation) in each quarter. This means that, in each quarter, the annual, biennial and eight-yearly questions will be placed only in 1/6 of the quarterly sample's households (new rotation). In subsequent interviews, only quarterly questions will be applied to these households, regardless of the result of the first interview. Therefore, the microdata base with non-quarterly questions will only be complete after the end of the 4th quarter of each year.

This methodology makes it possible to reduce the statistical burden on families and, consequently, the interview time, as they only respond to the entire questionnaire in only one of the six survey quarters (in the quarter in which they enter the sample for the first time).

The weighting factors of persons in the subsample wave approach are adjusted to ensure their consistency with the weighting factors for the annual averages obtained from the complete sample at labour status level (employed, unemployed and inactive population), sex (male, female) and age groups (16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+), type of the employees'

⁶ For more information on the context, methodology and impacts of this revision, see the "Methodological note on the revision of the Labour Force Survey data: the context of the COVID-19 pandemic", published together with the [Press Release "Employment Statistics – 3rd quarter of 2023"](#).



employment contract (permanent job, temporary job, other contractual arrangements), work duration regime (full-time, part-time) and household dimension (1, 2, 3, 4+ individuals).

Published data were calibrated by using the population estimates calculated from the final results of Census 2011.

Due to rounding, the totals in tables and diagrams do not always match the sum of parts.

For more detailed information consult the Labour Force Survey [methodological document](#) (only in Portuguese) available at the Statistics Portugal website.

SOME CONCEPTS

Employed: person aged 16 to 89 who, during the reference period, was in one of the following situations:

- worked for at least one hour for a wage or salary, in cash or in kind (including unpaid family work);
- had a formal attachment to his/her job but was not at work temporarily;
- was in early retirement but working in the reference week.

Self-employed person: an individual who pursues an independent occupation, alone or with 1, or various, associates, benefiting from a remuneration that is directly linked to profits (gained or potential) from goods or services produced and who, in general, does not hire employees to work with him/her. The associates may or may not be immediate family members.

Next Press Release - 26 March 2025
