

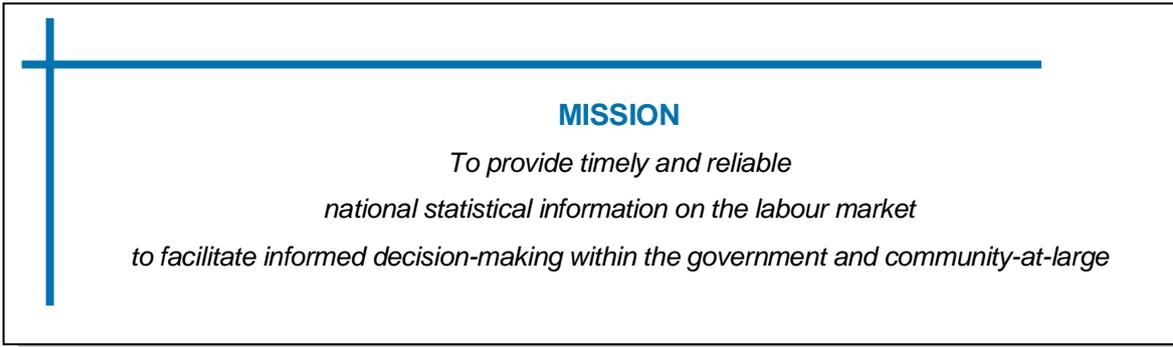
Own Account Workers 2017



**MINISTRY OF
MANPOWER**

Manpower Research and Statistics Department
Singapore

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MISSION

*To provide timely and reliable
national statistical information on the labour market
to facilitate informed decision-making within the government and community-at-large*

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OWN ACCOUNT WORKERS 2017

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Contents

Page

Highlights	iv
1 Introduction	1
2 Profile	1
Primary and Secondary Own Account Workers in the Year	1
Primary Own Account Workers.....	3
Primary Own Account Work as a Non-Preferred Choice of Employment	4
Common Occupations	5
Income	6
3 Concerns Among Own Account Workers	7
4 Conclusion	7
Annex A: Statistical Tables.....	A1
Annex B: Survey Coverage and Methodology	B1

HIGHLIGHTS

The number of residents engaged in own account work as a regular form of employment rose from 200,100 in 2016 to 223,500 in 2017. Residents who were engaged in own account work as their primary job accounted for this increase, making up approximately 8.4%¹ of all employed residents, within the 8% to 10% observed in the last decade.

The majority of own account workers were engaged in own account work as a preferred choice. However, there was an increase in both the proportion and number who engaged in own account work as a non-preferred choice in 2017. Specifically among primary own account workers, the proportion rose from 19% in 2016 to 23% in 2017. A higher share among them were aged 60 and above (31%), or with secondary qualifications and below (67%), compared to a year ago.

Majority of primary own account workers were older (54% were aged 50 and above) or less educated (60% were with non-tertiary qualifications). They were commonly working in traditional occupations such as taxi drivers, working proprietors, insurance sales agents/brokers, real estate agents, as well as in newer occupations such as private hire car drivers. The top occupations in 2017 remained similar to 2016.

63% of all own account workers indicated that they faced challenges, with uncertainty of finding work (44%) remaining the top concern. Other concerns were related to healthcare (27%) and retirement adequacy (24%).

¹ The estimate is derived based on the number of regular primary own account workers as a proportion of local employment (average over 12 months for the year ending June 2017). As a broad comparison, this estimate is compared with the proportion of own account workers among employed residents as at June of each year in the last decade.

Own Account Workers 2017

1 Introduction

1.1. Own account workers are self-employed persons who are engaged in a trade or business without employing any paid workers. This report profiles residents involved in regular own account work over the year. It also looks at whether they took on such work as a preferred choice of employment, the type of jobs they were in and concerns they faced regarding work certainty, retirement and healthcare adequacy, and payment for work done.

1.2. The data are obtained from the second edition of a Labour Force Supplementary Survey on Own Account Workers conducted by the Manpower Research and Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower. They pertain to the resident population. Details on the concepts and definitions, survey coverage and methodology are provided in [Annex B](#).

2 Profile

Primary and Secondary Own Account Workers in the Year

Number of own account workers rose

2.1. 223,500 residents were involved in own account work as a regular form of employment for the one year period ending June 2017, up from 200,100 in 2016.² Residents who were engaged in own account work as their primary job (primary own account workers) accounted for all of the increase. In 2017, 190,900 or 85% were primary own account workers, making up 8.4% of all employed residents, within the 8% to 10% observed in the last decade. Another 32,600 or 15% did own account work on the side (secondary own account workers).

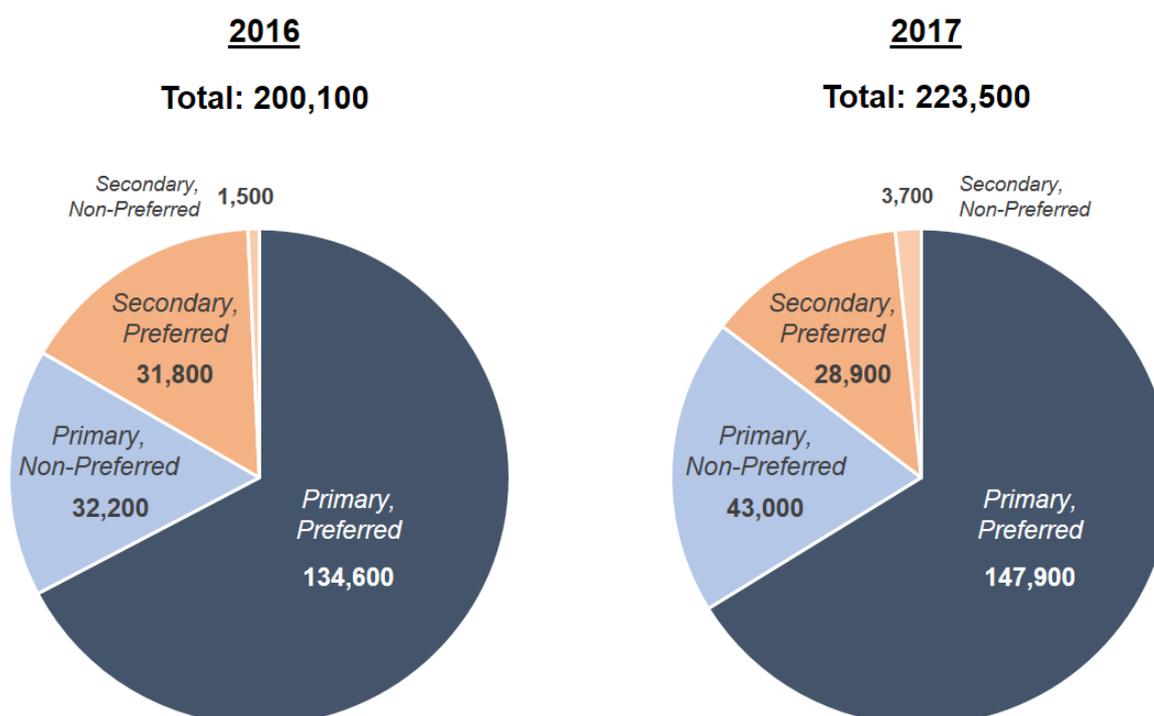
² Henceforth referred to as “2016” and “2017”.

Majority were engaged in own account work as a preferred choice

2.2. The majority of own account workers preferred own account work over salaried employment.³ However, there was an increase in both the proportion and number who were engaged in own account work as a non-preferred choice in 2017 (Chart 1).

2.3. The increase was observed among primary and secondary own account workers. Specifically among primary own account workers, the proportion rose from 19% or 32,200 in 2016 to 23% or 43,000 in 2017.

Chart 1: Regular Own Account Workers, 2016 and 2017



Source: Supplementary Survey on Own Account Workers, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Note:

(1) Figures refer to residents who were own account workers in their primary or secondary job as a regular form of employment during the reference years.

³ Persons for whom own account work is not their preferred choice of work refer to those who engage in own account work because they are unable to find work as an employee. Among multiple job holders, it includes those who are unable to find full-time work. Those for whom own account work is a preferred choice of work refer to the remaining who do not fall into the above estimate. They engage in own account work as they prefer the flexible nature of such work, or to have freedom in the choice of work and control over their career, or to pursue their passion or interest, among other reasons. Among multiple job holders, it also includes those who engage in own account work alongside other jobs to make use of their spare time to earn income, or to get experience and build up expertise.

Primary Own Account Workers

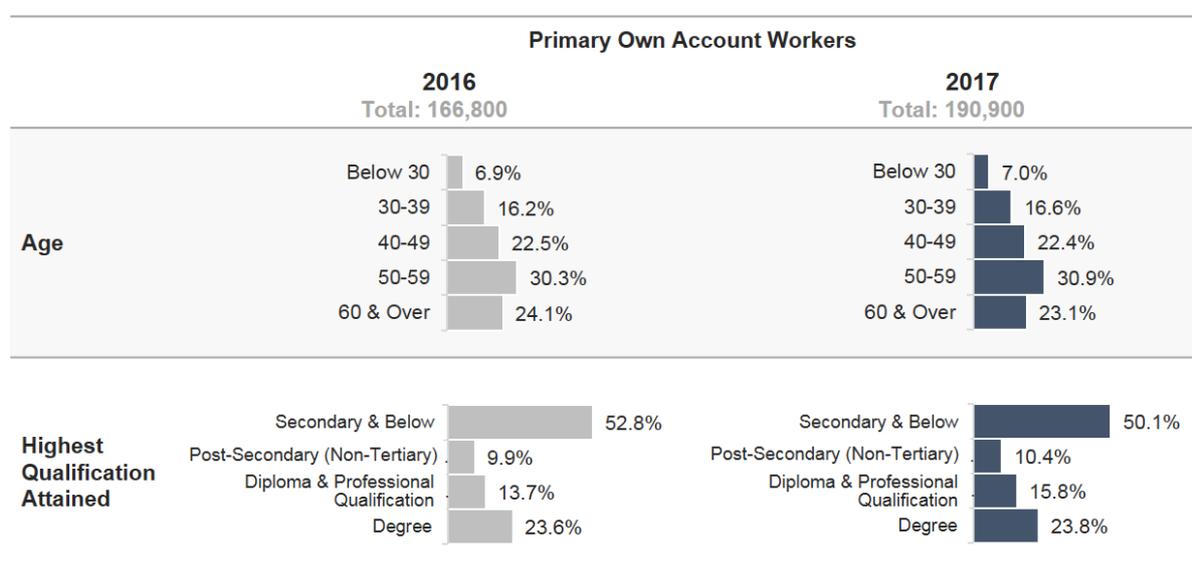
Majority of primary own account workers were older or less educated

2.4. More than half (54%) were aged 50 and over in 2017. Their age distribution remained largely similar to 2016.

2.5. By education, the majority of primary own account workers (60%) had non-tertiary qualifications. However, reflecting the improving educational profile of the overall workforce, the tertiary educated rose in share, from 37% in 2016 to 40% in 2017 (Chart 2).

2.6. The profile of the secondary own account workers was broadly similar to the primary own account workers⁴ (Annex A – Table 1).

Chart 2: Age and Education Profile of Primary Own Account Workers, 2016 and 2017



Source: Supplementary Survey on Own Account Workers, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Note:

(1) Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

⁴ Secondary own account workers are multiple job holders involved in part-time own account work alongside other jobs. They also include full-time students, homemakers and retirees (aged 60 years and over) who do part-time own account work on the side. This has captured a profile of secondary own account workers that is older or less educated relative to 2016.

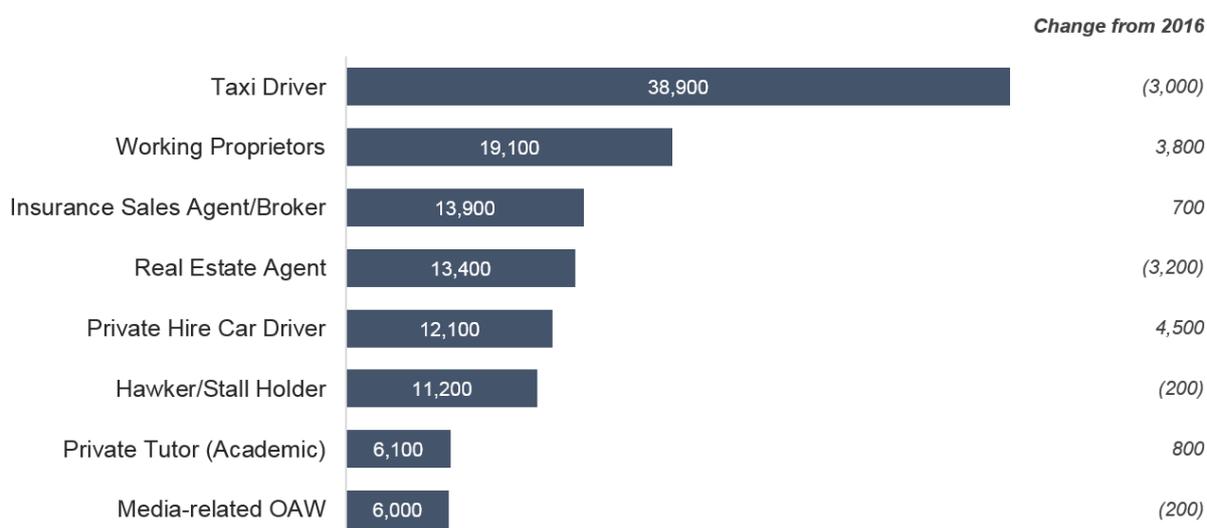
Common Occupations

Most occupations among primary own account workers were traditional occupations

2.9. The top occupations among primary own account workers in 2017 were similar to 2016. They were largely traditional occupations⁵ such as *taxi drivers, working proprietors⁶, insurance sales agents/brokers, real estate agents*, along with newer ones such as *private hire car drivers* (Chart 4).

2.10. Primary own account workers in traditional occupations such as taxi drivers, working proprietors or hawkers/stall holders were likely to be older, with more than half aged 50 and over. On the other hand, insurance sales agents/brokers and those in media-related occupations tended to be younger; more than half were aged below 40.

Chart 4: Top Occupations Among Primary Own Account Workers, 2017



Source: Supplementary Survey on Own Account Workers, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Notes:

(1) Figures refer to residents in primary own account work as a regular form of employment during the reference year.

(2) Figures in parentheses refer to negative change from 2016.

(3) Private hire car drivers in this chart refer to those on online matching platforms (such as Uber and Grab). Including those not on online platforms, the total number of private hire car drivers in primary own account work was 10,300 in 2016 and 12,800 in 2017.

⁵ These traditional jobs were consistently the top common occupations among own account workers in the past decade as well, based on the Comprehensive Labour Force Survey.

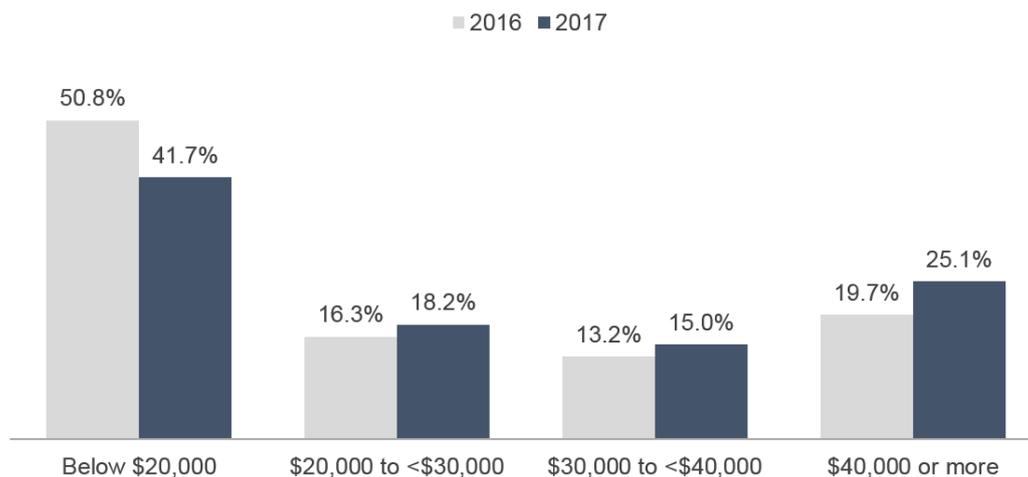
⁶ Working proprietors in this paper refer to self-employed persons who operate and manage their own businesses without any paid employees. Examples include businesses in wholesale and retail trade (e.g. provision shops, blog shops) or service providers (e.g. renovating, printing services). Self-employed professionals, insurance sales agents, real estate agents, hawkers, electricians etc. who perform the principal tasks of their respective occupations are classified in these occupations and not as working proprietors.

Income

More primary own account workers earned incomes of \$20,000 and above

2.11. Among primary own account workers, the share who earned annual incomes of \$20,000 or more from their own account work (58%) rose from the previous year (49%) (Chart 5). This increase was mainly pulled up by proportionately more earning \$40,000 and above annually in 2017 as compared to 2016.

Chart 5: Income Distribution of Primary Own Account Workers, 2016 and 2017



Source: Supplementary Survey on Own Account Workers, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Note:

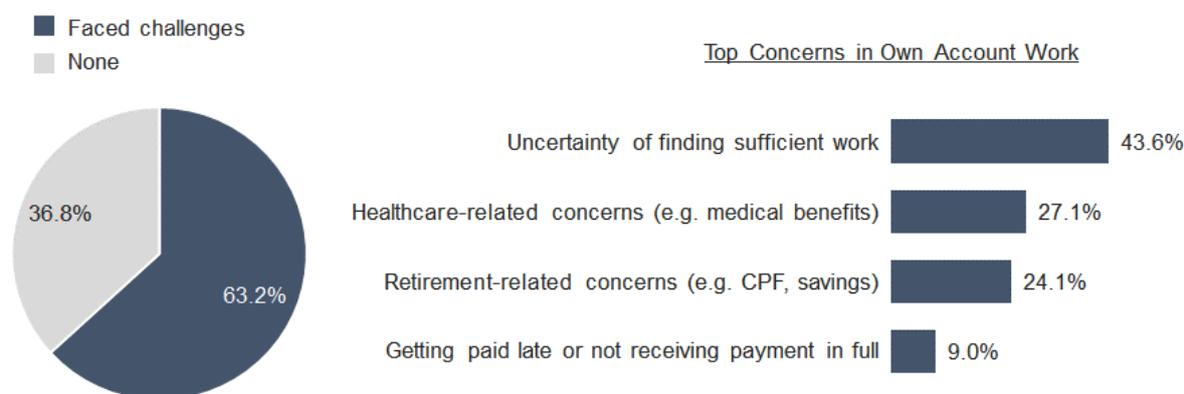
Figures refer to annual income earned from own account work only. Annual income refers to the annual profits from an own account worker's business, trade or profession (i.e. total receipts less business expenses incurred) before deduction of income tax.

3 Concerns Among Own Account Workers

Common concerns included uncertainty in finding work, healthcare and retirement adequacy

3.1. A majority (63%) of own account workers indicated they faced difficulties in the course of their work (Chart 6). They were most commonly concerned with the uncertainty of finding work (44%). Other concerns faced included healthcare-related concerns (27%) such as the lack of employee benefits, medical benefits and paid sick leave as well as concerns over having adequate retirement funds (24%).

Chart 6: Challenges Faced By Own Account Workers, 2017



Source: Supplementary Survey on Own Account Workers, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Notes:

- (1) Figures refer to the percentage of primary and secondary own account workers who faced each of the concerns specified.
- (2) Figures for top concerns on own account work do not add up to 100%, as own account workers may indicate multiple concerns.

4 Conclusion

4.1. More residents were engaged in own account work as a regular form of employment in 2017 compared to 2016. Primary own account workers accounted for this increase, though their share among employed residents has remained within the range observed in the last decade. Own account work remained a preferred choice of employment for the majority of primary own account workers. However, the proportion who were engaged in own account work as a non-preferred choice rose, the majority of whom were older or less educated.

4.2. The top occupations remained largely similar to 2016, where primary own account workers were commonly working in traditional jobs such as taxi drivers, working proprietors, insurance sales agents/brokers, real estate agents and in newer ones such as private hire car drivers. Uncertainty of finding work remained a top concern among own account workers, followed by healthcare or retirement adequacy, and payment issues.

STATISTICAL TABLES

TABLE 1
RESIDENTS IN REGULAR OWN ACCOUNT WORK BY SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS,
JULY 2016 TO JUNE 2017

	Resident Own Account Workers					
	Primary		Secondary		Total	
	Number	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)
Total	190,900	85.4	32,600	14.6	223,500	100.0
Sex						
Males	142,600	74.7	16,100	49.5	158,700	71.0
Females	48,300	25.3	16,500	50.5	64,800	29.0
Age (Years)						
15-29	13,400	7.0	3,000	9.1	16,300	7.3
30-39	31,700	16.6	4,900	15.0	36,600	16.4
40-49	42,800	22.4	8,700	26.6	51,500	23.1
50-59	58,900	30.9	5,700	17.6	64,700	28.9
60 & Over	44,000	23.1	10,300	31.7	54,300	24.3
Highest Qualification Attained						
Secondary & Below	95,600	50.1	13,600	41.7	109,200	48.9
Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary)	19,800	10.4	3,700	11.4	23,500	10.5
Diploma & Professional Qualification	30,200	15.8	7,000	21.3	37,100	16.6
Degree	45,300	23.8	8,300	25.6	53,700	24.0
Occupation (SSOC 2015)						
Taxi Drivers	38,900	20.4	2,500	7.6	41,400	18.5
Working Proprietors	19,100	10.0	2,300	7.0	21,300	9.5
Real Estate Agents	13,400	7.0	2,700	8.4	16,200	7.2
Insurance Sales Agents/Brokers	13,900	7.3	s	4.1	15,300	6.8
Private Hire Car Drivers	12,100	6.4	2,500	7.6	14,600	6.5
Hawkers/Stall Holders	11,200	5.8	s	1.6	11,700	5.2
Private Tutor (Academic)	6,100	3.2	2,600	8.1	8,800	3.9
Media-Related Workers	6,000	3.1	s	3.9	7,200	3.2
Others	74,100	38.8	17,000	52.0	91,100	40.7

Notes:

- (1) Figures refer to residents in own account work as a regular form of employment during the reference year.
(2) Private hire car drivers in Table 1 refer to those on online matching platforms (such as Uber and Grab). Including those not on online platforms, there were 12,800 private hire car drivers among primary own account workers, and 2,500 among secondary own account workers, adding to a total of 15,300 private hire car drivers in 2017.
(3) Figures by occupations do not add to the totals as an individual may hold two or more jobs in own account work.
(4) 's': Data suppressed due to small number covered.

**TABLE 2
RESIDENTS IN REGULAR OWN ACCOUNT WORK BY PREFERENCE AND SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS,
JULY 2016 TO JUNE 2017**

	Resident Own Account Workers											
	Primary Own Account Workers						Secondary Own Account Workers					
	Preferred Choice		Non-Preferred Choice		Total		Preferred Choice		Non-Preferred Choice		Total	
	Number	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)
Total	147,900	77.5	43,000	22.5	190,900	100.0	28,900	88.6	3,700	11.4	32,600	100.0
Sex												
Males	104,800	70.8	37,800	88.0	142,600	74.7	14,000	48.6	2,100	56.9	16,100	49.5
Females	43,100	29.2	5,200	12.0	48,300	25.3	14,900	51.4	s	43.1	16,500	50.5
Age (Years)												
15-29	11,800	8.0	s	3.6	13,400	7.0	2,900	9.9	s	2.7	3,000	9.1
30-39	27,800	18.8	4,000	9.2	31,700	16.6	4,400	15.3	s	13.2	4,900	15.0
40-49	33,900	22.9	8,900	20.7	42,800	22.4	8,100	27.9	s	16.6	8,700	26.6
50-59	43,600	29.5	15,400	35.8	58,900	30.9	5,100	17.8	s	16.1	5,700	17.6
60 & Over	30,900	20.9	13,100	30.6	44,000	23.1	8,400	29.1	1,900	51.4	10,300	31.7
Highest Qualification Attained												
Secondary & Below	66,600	45.1	28,900	67.4	95,600	50.1	11,200	38.7	2,400	64.7	13,600	41.7
Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary)	15,700	10.6	4,100	9.5	19,800	10.4	3,300	11.4	s	11.5	3,700	11.4
Diploma & Professional Qualification	26,300	17.8	3,900	9.0	30,200	15.8	6,700	23.1	s	7.5	7,000	21.3
Degree	39,300	26.6	6,100	14.1	45,300	23.8	7,700	26.7	s	16.3	8,300	25.6

Notes:

(1) Figures refer to residents in own account work as a regular form of employment during the reference year.

(2) 's' : Data suppressed due to small number covered.

SURVEY COVERAGE AND METHODOLOGY

LABOUR FORCE SUPPLEMENTARY SURVEY ON OWN ACCOUNT WORKERS

The Labour Force Supplementary Survey on Own Account Workers, 2017 was conducted by the Manpower Research and Statistics Department under the Statistics Act (Chapter 317). It was conducted from 3 October to 3 November 2017.

OBJECTIVE

The supplementary survey was conducted to obtain in-depth information on persons who operated as own account workers in their primary or secondary jobs as a regular form of employment over a year. The reference period for the supplementary survey was from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017. The survey also sought to understand the reasons for engaging in own account work and the concerns faced.

The supplementary survey's scope differs from the annual Comprehensive Labour Force Survey which is designed to collect information on the *main job* of employed persons during a *reference week*. Data on own account workers traditionally captured by the Comprehensive Labour Force Survey therefore relate to persons who were own account workers in their *main job or primary own account workers*.

COVERAGE

The supplementary survey covered residents aged 15 years and over who were own account workers and/or have taken up work on online matching platforms for some time over the past year. 5,276 residents (excluding full-time National Servicemen) were surveyed, of whom 4,562 or 86.5% responded. The results of the supplementary survey were grossed up to the resident population using multiple estimation factors.

METHODOLOGY

The supplementary survey was conducted using internet submissions, telephone interviews and personal visits.

DATA COLLECTED

All respondents were asked to provide information on their working arrangements as follows:

- Own account work in the year
- Concurrent job arrangements held
- Reasons for operating as an own account worker
- Occupation
- Income
- Concerns

CLASSIFICATION

The occupations were classified according to the Singapore Standard Occupational Classification (SSOC) 2015.

CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Own Account Worker

This refers to self-employed persons who operate their own business or trade without employing any paid worker in the conduct of their business or trade.

Primary and Secondary Own Account Workers

Primary own account workers refer to persons who are own account workers in their main job. This includes (i) those who are own account workers in their single job (full-time or part-time) or (ii) those who work longer hours in own account work alongside other jobs. *Secondary own account workers* are multiple job holders who spend fewer hours in own account work relative to other types of employment. They also include students, homemakers and retirees who do such work on the side.

Nature of Employment

Employed persons can be categorised into those working on a full-time or part-time basis.

Full-time

This refers to employment where the normal hours of work are at least 35 hours a week.

Part-time

This refers to employment where the normal hours of work are less than 35 hours a week.

Preferred and Non-Preferred Choice of Work

Own account workers are asked about the reasons they engage in this form of work. Those for whom own account work is *not their preferred choice of work* refer to persons who engage in own account work because they are unable to find work as an employee. Among multiple job holders, it includes those unable to find full-time work.

Those for whom own account work is a *preferred choice of work* are those who do not fall into the above estimate of persons for whom own account work is a non-preferred choice of work. They engage in own account work as they prefer the flexible nature of such work, or to have freedom in the choice of work and control over their career, or to pursue their passion or interest, among other reasons. Among multiple job holders, it also includes those who engage in own account work alongside other jobs to make use of their spare time to earn income, or to get experience and build up expertise.

RELIABILITY OF DATA

In a sample survey, inferences about the target population are drawn from the data collected from the sample. Errors due to extension of the conclusions based on one sample to the entire population are known as sampling errors. The sampling error of an estimate is the extent of variation between the estimated value obtained from a sample and the true value from the population. Factors influencing the sampling error include the sample size, the sample design, method of estimation, the variability of the population and the characteristics studied.

A common measure of the sampling error of an estimate is its standard error, which is a measure of the variation among the estimates derived from all possible samples. An alternative measure is the relative standard error of an estimate which indicates the standard error relative to the magnitude of the estimate. A sample estimate and an estimate of its standard error can be used to construct an interval that will, at specified levels of confidence, include the true value. By statistical convention, the confidence level has been set at 95 per cent.

Estimates of the sampling variability of selected indicators are as follows:

	Estimate (%)	Standard Error (%-points)	Relative Standard Error (%)	95% Confidence Interval (%)	
				Lower	Upper
Proportion of Resident Own Account Workers					
Primary own account workers	85.4	0.6	0.7	84.2	86.6
Own account work as a preferred choice of work	77.5	0.8	1.0	76.0	79.0
Own account work as non-preferred choice of work	22.5	0.8	3.4	21.0	24.0
Secondary own account workers	14.6	0.6	4.1	13.4	15.8

Note: Data pertain to residents who were own account workers in their main or secondary job as a regular form of employment during the reference year.

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1. How would you rate this report in terms of:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
a) Relevance to your work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Providing useful insights on prevailing labour market trends/development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Ease of understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Which area(s) of the report do you find most useful? Please provide reasons.

3. How do you find the length of the report?

Too detailed Just right Too brief

4. Overall, how would you rate this report?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. What additional information (if any) would you like us to include in our future issues?

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