

Three fast facts: Self-employment trends among older Americans

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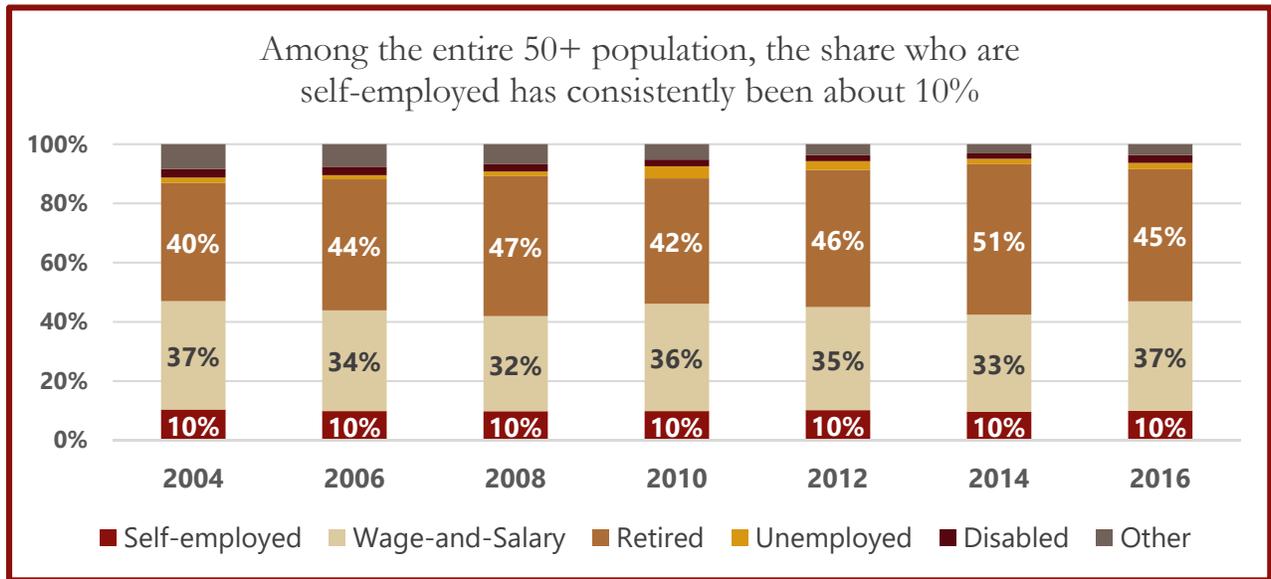
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3 Fast Facts: Self-Employment Trends Among Older Americans

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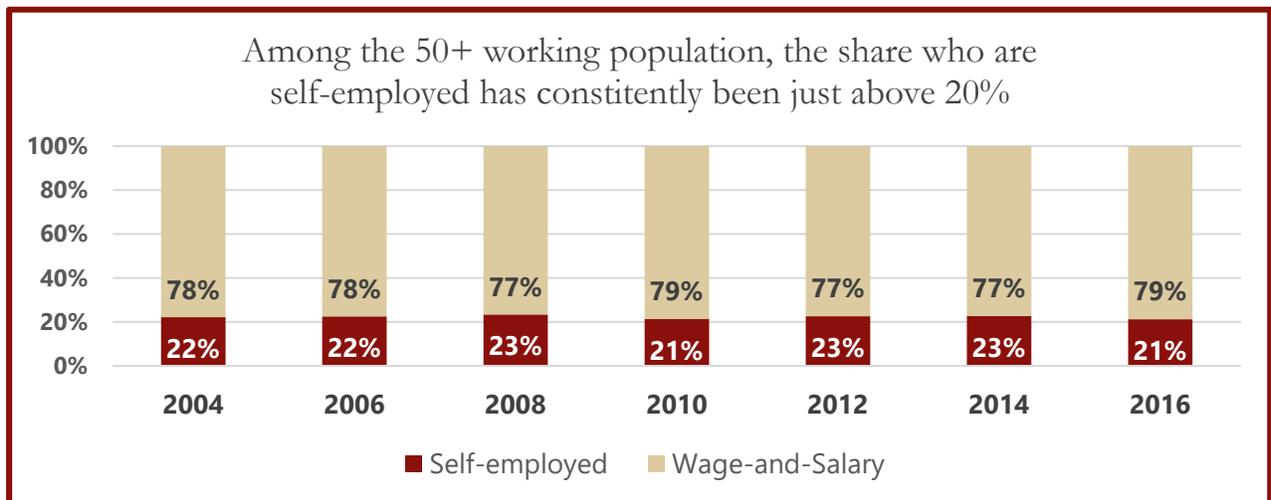
How important is self-employment as a form of work among older Americans? There are several ways you can answer this question, and this research brief will cover three general trends in self-employment rates.

1. Among all Americans aged 50 and older—including those working and not working—self-employed people make up about 10% of the population. This rate has been stable for more than a decade.



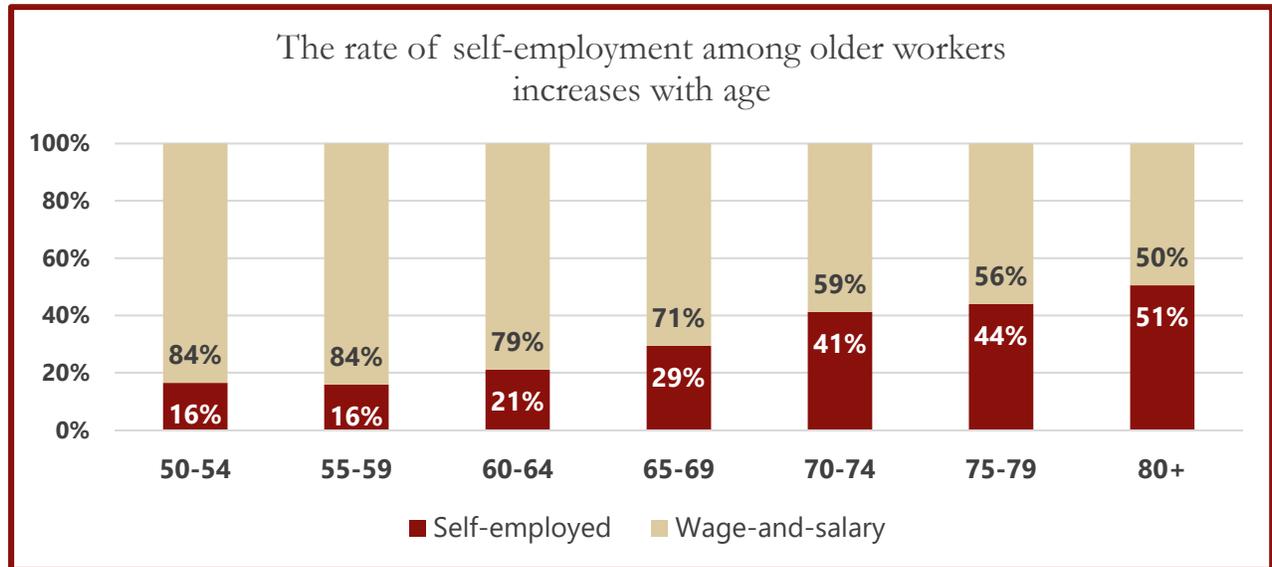
Authors' calculations using weighted data from the Health and Retirement Study/RAND HRS Longitudinal File 2016 (V2).

2. Looking at the same time span, the share of working Americans aged 50 and older who are self-employed has also consistently held steady at just more than 20% of the population.



Authors' calculations using weighted data from the Health and Retirement Study/RAND HRS Longitudinal File 2016 (V2).

3. Yet how do self-employment rates differ *among* working and older Americans? It turns out that the importance of self-employment as a form of work increases dramatically with age. While about 1 in 6 workers in their 50s are self-employed, nearly 1 in 3 are self-employed in their late 60s and more than 1 in 2 workers over the age of 80 are self-employed.



Authors' calculations using weighted data from the Health and Retirement Study/RAND HRS Longitudinal File 2016 (V2).

In summary, while the self-employed make up about 1 in 10 of all Americans over the age of 50, they make up about 2 in 10 of all workers over the age of 50 and this rate increases dramatically with age.

Methodology

Authors' calculations using weighted data to be representative of the U.S. older population from the Health and Retirement Study/RAND HRS Longitudinal File 2016 (V2). Unweighted data calculations produced similar results. The University of Michigan Health and Retirement Study is a longitudinal panel study that surveys a representative sample of approximately 20,000 people in America every two years.



The Center on Aging & Work at Boston College aims to promote opportunity, choice, and quality of paid and unpaid work across the lifespan, with a focus on older adults. Through research studies, engagement with a multi-disciplinary network of scholars and practitioners, and efforts to translate research into practice, we bridge the worlds of research and practice.