

# Self-Employed Percentage Drops

Recent figures compiled by the Work Foundation suggest more people are choosing the security and regular hours of the 9 to 5 in preference to the ups and downs of self-employment. Although there are around 4 million self-employed people in the UK, the percentage of self-employed as a whole has dropped from 13.4% to 12.9%.



The recent report by The Work Foundation charity, entitled *Labour under Labour*, indicates a growing trend towards steady salaried work in favour of the often long hours and financial struggles many entrepreneurs face from day to day. The figures contradict other recent predictions that Britain is turning into a nation of entrepreneurs thanks to business-related popular TV shows like *Dragon's Den* and *The Apprentice*.

A researcher for the Work Foundation commented "In the mid Nineties, it did look like there were more of us choosing self-employment, but such predictions have not been borne out in practice". Indeed, there was a steady increase in self-employment from 1986 through to 1996 (from 11.4% to 13.4%). Although self-employment may seem glamorous to some, it often leads to financial insecurity and stress – which makes the steady pay and predictable hours of the 9 to 5 more appealing.

Of course, this view is open to interpretation and often the perceived 'security' of the steady job is little better than the self-employed may face. Cary Cooper, a professor at the University of Lancaster School of Management, commented: "People like the feeling of security, but it is illusory because companies are getting rid of people all the time... and 9 to 5 now is more likely to be 7.30am to 7pm".

Whether an individual finds self-employed life more stressful than life as an employee may also depend on their own attitudes. A director of the Leicestershire-based Work Life Balance Centre said "If you're the type of person who works long hours, you'll still work them whatever your employment status."

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