

# *Number of Self-Employed Cubans Up 3.4 Percent in Five Months*

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Havana, August 26 (RHC) -- Cuba has witnessed a thriving private sector as the number of the self-employed increased by 3.4 percent in five months, according to local newspaper Trabajadores.

At the end of July, the number of people employed in the private sector reached 471,085, representing an increase in just five months of more than 15,500 people, the newspaper reported on Sunday.

That figure "and the fact that 69 percent of those registered (private sector workers) declared they had no previous labor ties (to the state), mean that the so-called 'self-employment' is growing stronger as a valid employment option in the national economy," the report said.

Economic modernization in Cuba is promoting the private sector in a country where the government continues to be the largest employer.

Since Cuban leader Raul Castro promoted "self-employment" in October 2010, the number of people joining the private sector has continued to grow steadily, according to Idalmys Alvarez Mendive, deputy labor and social security minister.

She noted industries in the private sector that have the largest number of employees include food processing, cargo or passenger transportation, and home rentals.

Cuban authorities hope the private sector helps absorb laid-off state employees as the government tries to trim the bloated public sector, revive the economy and eventually generate enough tax revenue to fund half the national budget. / Source: Xinhua

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