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# Differentiation of the Tax Burden Based on the Size of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses

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## ABSTRACT

The article is dedicated to the tax burden on small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). The authors compare the level of tax burden depending on the scale of entrepreneurial activity. The aim of this article is to assess the perception of SMEs regarding the level of tax burden in order to ensure adequate fulfillment of their tax obligations. The research aims to compare the level of tax burden on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) depending on their size, and to identify behavioral patterns that may affect business fragmentation. The research methodology is based on the use of comparative analysis methods, tabular data visualization, and graphical representation. Based on the comparative analysis, we have found that SMEs have a much lower tax burden compared to other enterprises. However, the subjective perception of the tax burden level, especially among microenterprises, significantly differs from the actual situation. This indicates their opportunistic approach to taxation. The novelty of this study lies in the fact that there has not yet been a comparison of the tax burdens of micro, small, and medium-sized businesses that use the general tax system to assess the accuracy of their tax liability. An element of scientific novelty and the significance of the obtained results lies in the mutual connection between the problem of assessing the tax burden in relation to the size of SMEs, and the issues of their tax behavior. The practical value of this study lies in its ability to objectively assess the level of tax burden on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and to determine the degree of impact that taxation has on entrepreneurial decisions.

**Keywords:** taxes; insurance premiums; tax burden; tax behavior; microenterprise; small enterprise; medium enterprise; small and medium-sized businesses; business fragmentation

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## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, small and medium-sized enterprises (hereinafter referred to as SMEs) receive much more tax support from the state than large companies. This approach is aimed at creating favorable conditions for the acceleration of SMEs in a competitive environment. These purposes are primarily served by special preferential tax regimes. However, government financial support has objective budgetary constraints. In order to offset the negative effects of falling tax revenues due to the provision of tax benefits, a reduction in the tax burden on some taxpayers is ensured by increasing it for others, thereby violating tax fairness. Moreover, the increase in preferences leads to the opportunistic behavior of taxpayers and their financial dependence. In this regard, an objective assessment of the level of tax burden by SMEs is of great importance for building civilized relations in the state and increasing tax discipline.

The subjective perception of the tax burden by SMEs is certainly different from reality; therefore, in order to increase the reliability of the assessment, it is important to make a comparison with other business entities. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that comparing the share of mandatory payments (taxes and insurance premiums) paid in the costs of taxpayers is not able to give an objective picture, since it will not allow taking into account the nature and scale of activities, business specifics and other factors.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, experts rightly recommend including mandatory insurance premiums in the amount of tax liabilities, since their size varies for different organizational forms of small business [1].

The most adequate indicators for analyzing the perception of the level of tax burden

by SMEs in comparison with other business entities are: the share of taxes and insurance contributions paid by them in GDP, the share of revenues from SMEs in the total amount of revenues to the budgets of the budgetary system in the context of certain types of taxes.

In connection with the above, the purpose of this article is to assess the perception of SMEs of the level of tax burden for them to adequately fulfill their tax obligations. Based on a comparison of the level of tax burden of small and medium-sized businesses that vary in size, it is possible to identify certain behavioral patterns depending on the scale of their activities. Identifying the relationship between the level of tax burden and the scale of the business will help identify the sources of government tax risks associated with business fragmentation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Many works have been devoted to assessing the impact of institutional and economic factors on the behavior of SMEs. Scientists analyze the external and internal factors that influence the strategic decisions of entrepreneurs. In particular, it is noted that such an external factor as establishing mutually beneficial contacts between small enterprises and banks is important for activating investment processes in small businesses [2]. A number of scientists take into account the scale of the business and justify that the size of the company has a positive effect on the disclosure of information related to intellectual capital. At the same time, medium and small firms disclose less information than large corporations [3]. Some authors note that “recently, small businesses have begun to occupy a weaker position compared to medium-sized and large businesses, <...> which leads to the problem of realizing the potential of small enterprises in Russia” [4]. Despite these difficulties, the policy of state support is an essential factor in solving regional problems, especially effective employment [5].

<sup>1</sup> To achieve the objectives of this article, when assessing the tax burden, the authors take into account mandatory insurance premiums. In Russia, financial and tax authorities use the term “fiscal burden” rather than “tax burden” when analyzing insurance premiums.

It is noteworthy that the issues of the impact of sanctions measures on small and medium-sized businesses have not received adequate coverage in the research literature. We should agree with experts who note that “there are not many scientific papers analyzing the new sanctions period, mostly works of a journalistic nature” [6, p. 80].

Researchers study the burden on SMEs in the context of the special tax regimes they apply to describe a specific type or select the most appropriate one [7–11]. They also analyze the load by economic sectors [12] in the context of forecasting and optimizing its magnitude [13]. Research is being conducted to assess the effectiveness of special tax regimes [14].

The results of the selective monitoring of the business activity of small enterprises in the fields of extraction, processing, production of electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning, conducted by Rosstat on a quarterly basis since 1999, are of interest.

“In 2019–2021, about 4,000 small enterprises (excluding microenterprises) participated in the surveys. The main purpose of the survey is to obtain data characterizing the general economic situation in small enterprises, as well as forward-looking estimates of their development. The survey results are summarized in the form of simple and composite indicators of business activity of enterprises. The most common composite indicator in international practice is the business confidence index, which characterizes the generalized state of the business climate in a particular sector of the economy”.<sup>2</sup>

The survey was conducted by Rosstat among the heads of small enterprises. Consistently, more than half of the respondents: (1) in the mining sector and (2) in the manufacturing sector, more than a third of respondents (3) in the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning

sectors recognized the tax burden as a limiting factor. Moreover, he is in the first place in the first two sectors. In the third sector mentioned by us, the factor of high tax burden is in third place after such factors as “lack of financial resources” and “uncertainty of the economic situation”. An analysis of the business activity of small construction enterprises was also carried out, where a similar situation developed with an assessment of the impact of the tax burden factor as limiting production activities. It should be noted that this survey was conducted against the background of the moratorium on on-site tax audits of small businesses introduced in 2020.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis of the dependence of the tax burden on the scale of entrepreneurial activity was carried out for the branches of the timber industry. The authors proved that the larger the enterprise, the more taxes they pay, while the tax burden was calculated as the ratio of the amount of taxes paid to the company’s revenue [15]. The analysis carried out at the level of a certain industry is based on indicators of financial and economic activity of taxpayers, but it does not give an overall picture of the economy as a whole.

Of course, the low level of tax burden gives SMEs advantages over other competitors. However, according to scientists, SMEs use various strategies to lead the market, including increasing turnover and market share, innovation [16], and diversification. At the same time, the degree of freedom in making strategic decisions depends on the relationship with counterparties: the closer they are, the more difficult it is to replace them [17]. Diversification expands the scope of the company’s activities and requires

<sup>2</sup> The official website of the Federal State Statistics Service. Statistical collection “Small and medium-sized enterprises in Russia”. 2019–2021 p. 21. URL: <https://rosstat.gov.ru> (accessed on 12.05.2024).

<sup>3</sup> Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 02.04.2020 No. 409 “On measures to ensure sustainable economic development” (together with the “Rules for granting deferral (installment) payments for taxes, advance payments on taxes and insurance premiums”, “List of types of economic activity for the purposes of applying subparagraph “d” of paragraph 1 of the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated April 2 2020, No. 409”). Access from the ConsultantPlus legal reference system.

the use of a new set of skills necessary for the competitive environment in which the company enters. According to Jansen, the diversification strategy is not suitable for all companies. “Small businesses seeking growth should focus on a limited number of products or services, so a specialization strategy can provide a better chance of survival and achieving small business growth goals” [18]. Diversification is the preferred means of development for medium-sized enterprises, where, however, it must be related to the existing activities of the enterprise [18], or when the size of their business portfolio is insufficient to achieve the goal. Reducing the tax burden may also be a reason that leads SMEs to diversify by splitting up their businesses.

Taking into account the purpose of the article, we have studied scientific publications on the problem of business fragmentation. Basically, scientists and experts consider fragmentation through the prism of proving the fact of receiving unjustified tax benefits. At the same time, they emphasize that “with conscientious entrepreneurial activity, the tax savings obtained by “splitting up” a business can only be as a bonus” [19]. It is proved that “the greatest stimulating and budgetary effect is provided by measures of state support for small businesses aimed at reducing the tax burden. The loss of a special tax regime can lead to a significant increase in a taxpayer’s tax liability, and, consequently, to the risk of business fragmentation”. [20, p. 158]. It should be agreed that “it is appropriate to stimulate and encourage any form of self-organization of the taxpayer, involving encouragement to voluntarily fulfill tax obligations, independent control of the calculation and payment of taxes, the collection of which uses the tax benefit” [21, p. 211].

The Financial Department also proceeds from the fact that the division of business in itself is recognized as the optimization of entrepreneurial activity, and the conclusion about fragmentation can be made if there is

evidence of unjustified tax benefits.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, tax legislation considers the receipt of unjustified tax benefits using special tax regimes as fragmentation (Article 6 of the Law of the Russian Federation dated 12.07.2024 No. 176–FZ).<sup>5</sup> The remaining actions of taxpayers in order to obtain tax benefits that are not related to the transition to special tax regimes do not fall within the scope of the functional analysis of tax authorities to prove the fact of fragmentation. Experts, in particular, cite the following example, which cannot be qualified as fragmentation: the division of business between an organization based on the general taxation system and an individual entrepreneur based on the general taxation system to apply the personal income tax rate below the corporate income tax rate [22].

A review of the available research has shown that the analysis of the problem of assessing the tax burden, taking into account the size of SMEs in the context of identifying patterns of their tax behavior has not been conducted.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To verify the results of the Rosstat survey on business activity of small enterprises, we calculated the tax burden by type of economic activity (see *Table 1*).

As can be seen from *Table 1*, the size of the tax burden significantly exceeds the average level by type of economic activity only in the mining sector. This is justified because the state withdraws natural rent through taxes. However, for other types of activities, the tax burden is significantly lower than the average level, and there are no grounds for asserting an excessively high tax burden as the main factor limiting production growth. Most likely, the problem lies

<sup>4</sup> Letter of the Ministry of Finance of Russia dated 15.02.2019 No 03–02–07/1/9647. Access from the ConsultantPlus legal reference system.

<sup>5</sup> Federal Law No. 176-FZ of 12.07.2024 “On Amendments to Parts One and Two of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation, Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation and Invalidation of Certain Provisions of Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation” (as amended and Supplemented, intro. effective from 01.01.2025) (as amended on 12.12.2024). Access from the ConsultantPlus legal reference system.

The Tax Burden by Type of Economic Activity, Including SMEs, %

Type of economic activity (according to OKVED-2)	2019	2020	2021	2022
TOTAL	11.18	9.98	10.38	10.68
Mining – total	41.37	35.23	40.43	42.18
Agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing, fish farming – total	4.46	3.77	4.67	4.08
Manufacturing industries – total	7.61	8.14	7.42	6.78
Provision of electric energy, gas and steam; air conditioning – total	7.12	7.26	6.92	6.72
Construction	11.94	10.66	10.13	11.15

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the Federal Tax Service. URL: <https://analytic.nalog.gov.ru>, <https://pb.nalog.ru/calculator.html> (accessed on 04.05.2024).

in the behavioral characteristics of taxpayers. At the level of large companies, a special structural unit handles tax reporting, tax deductions in the structure of other payments (to creditors, suppliers, etc.) may not have much weight, and the head of the company has a broader view of the structure of payments. Of course, such a broad perception of the situation is not achieved at the SME level, which distorts the perception of tax liability. In support of this idea, an example can be given with an assessment of the “absence or imperfection of the regulatory framework”<sup>6</sup> factor, which is in the last or penultimate place (below is only competing imports) in the ranking, despite the fact that tax legislation is directly related to this factor. If the respondents had seen a link between this factor and the tax burden, then the assessment of this factor would have been much tougher. In this regard, it is of interest to estimate the amount of tax paid per SME.

The study hypothesized that the size of a company is important for assessing the

adequacy of the perception of tax obligations by SMEs: microenterprises (with revenue up to 30 million rubles and from 30 million rubles to 120 million rubles), small (with revenue from 120 million rubles, up to 500 million rubles and from 500 million rubles to 800 million rubles) and medium (with revenue from 800 million rubles to 2 billion rubles). Determining the dependence of the tax burden on the scale of a business can also reveal how much taxes affect the decision to split up a business. It is no secret that the motivation for applying special tax regimes with preferences for SMEs may be to lower the income tax rate, so for the purpose of this article, it is of interest to analyze the behavioral patterns associated with fragmentation. Due to the fact that the assessment of the tax burden is carried out in the economy as a whole, its results make it possible to identify common patterns of tax behavior that cause business fragmentation and develop universal tax rules to counter fragmentation.

## RESULTS

The novelty of the results obtained lies in the fact that a comparison of the tax burden of

<sup>6</sup> The official website of the Federal State Statistics Service. Statistical collection “Small and medium-sized entrepreneurship in Russia”. pp. 73–74. 2019–2021. URL: <https://rosstat.gov.ru> (accessed on 12.05.2024).



**Fig. 1. The Ratio of the Total Volume of Tax Revenues from SMEs to Other Taxpayers in Terms of Individual Taxes in 2022, in Billion Rubles**

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the Federal Tax Service. URL: <https://analytic.nalog.gov.ru>, <https://pb.nalog.ru/calculator.html> (accessed on 04.05.2024).

micro, small and medium-sized enterprises using the general taxation system has not yet been conducted to assess the adequacy of the perception of tax liability. Every eighth taxpayer in Russia belongs to the category of SMEs, and their number is constantly growing: from 76.93% of the total number of taxpayers in 2019 to 80.70% in 2022. About 5% of SMEs are small enterprises, less than 5% are medium-sized enterprises. However, the share of their contribution to the formation of tax and non-tax revenues of budgets is four times less than that of other taxpayers (18.25% in 2022). When calculating this amount, all taxes and payments administered by the Russian tax authorities were taken into account: corporate income tax, personal income tax, VAT, mineral extraction tax, corporate property tax, transport tax corporate tax, land tax on organizations, non-tax income administered by tax authorities, income from special tax regimes, insurance premiums.

An analysis of the SME (small and medium-sized enterprises) sector, based on the size

of businesses, revealed that the majority of taxpayers, accounting for 72.15% of the total number, are organizations and sole proprietors with annual incomes up to 30 million rubles. These taxpayers account for 2.63% of the tax revenues of the consolidated budget of the Russian Federation (as of 2022).

This means that government support is aimed at microenterprises, which is fully consistent with the goals of stimulating the acceleration of the number of SMEs. The largest amount of tax revenues (5.20%) is accumulated by SMEs with incomes ranging from 120 million to 500 million rubles per year, while their share in the total number of taxpayers accounts for 2.18% (according to data from 2022).

Figure 1 shows data on the ratio of tax revenues from SMEs and other taxpayers on individual taxes.

SMEs generate the following amounts of tax revenue for the consolidated budget of the Russian Federation: 25.4% of total personal income tax, 37.3% of total VAT, 52% of total transport tax from organizations, and 28% of

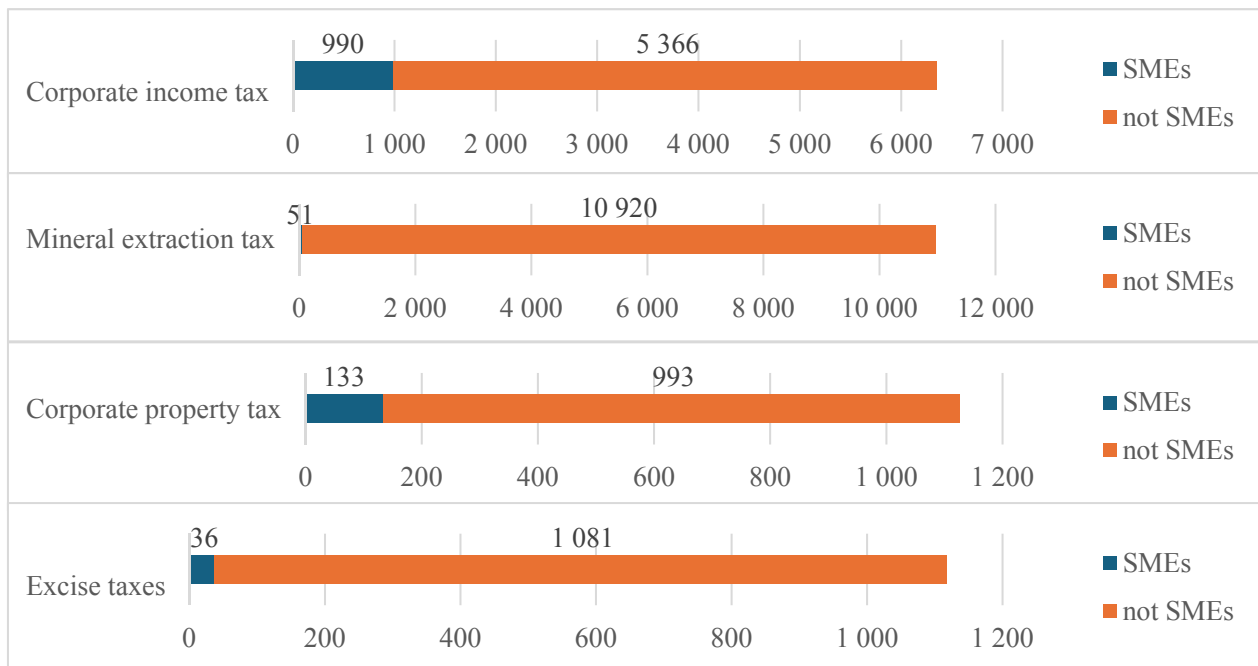


Fig. 2. Tax Revenues from SMEs on Individual Taxes in 2022, in Billion Rubles

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the Federal Tax Service. URL: <https://analytic.nalog.gov.ru>; <https://pb.nalog.ru/calculator.html> (accessed on 04.05.2024).

total land tax from organizations (according to 2022 data). *Figure 2* illustrates the contribution of SMEs in absolute terms.

The main contribution to the total VAT receipts (12.13% of the total 37.34% in 2022) is made by enterprises with an income of 120 to 500 million rubles. The VAT tax burden is generally the same for enterprises with different revenue levels and does not exceed 5% of income (on average, about 4.4%). The dynamics of the share of corporate income tax is not expressed, the share of SMEs accounts for 13–16% of the total amount of income tax paid. Income tax accounts for about 1% of the turnover of enterprises, while the tax burden on microenterprise income tax is lower than that of other SMEs. In 2021 the SME sector accounted for almost 8% of the revenue from all excise taxes. In 2022, excise taxes going to regional budgets, which are not affected by the “reverse” excise tax scheme, served as a comparison base: for 2022, this share is 3.25%, which does not allow us to talk about a significant share of SMEs in the proceeds from this tax. The share of SME income from

mineral extraction tax does not exceed 0.67% (according to 2021 data), it is obvious that enterprises with incomes of more than 800 million rubles demonstrate a large share. Other taxes, such as corporate property tax, transport tax, and land tax, range from 20% to 35% of the total tax burden, depending on the size of the SME.

The consequence of the lower tax burden in the SME sector compared to large companies is that SMEs contribute less to the formation of budget revenues. This is evidenced, in particular, by the fact that in the structure of tax revenues of the consolidated budget of the Russian Federation, a share that is less than the contribution of SMEs to GDP (21%) has: corporate income tax paid by SMEs (4.10% of GDP or 15.57% of the total amount of this tax); mineral extraction tax (4.18% GDP or 0.47% of the total amount of this tax); corporate property tax (0.73% of GDP or 11.82% of the total amount of this tax). Thus, it can be concluded that the tax burden on SMEs, even those under the general taxation regime, is lower than that of large companies.

Table 2

**Tax Burden in the SME Sector, by Type of Economic Activity, %**

Type of economic activity	The tax burden on the economy (excluding insurance contributions)	The impact of insurance premiums on the economy
For all taxpayers	10.68	2.72
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	3.67	0.91
Mining operations	42.18	1.44
Manufacturing industries	6.78	1.65
Provision of electric energy, gas and steam; air conditioning	9.57	2.14
Construction	11.15	3.13
Agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing, fish farming	4.08	3.59
Transportation and storage	5.27	3.6
Information and communication activities	14.82	3.65
Water supply, sanitation, waste collection and disposal	9.57	4.03
Real estate operations activities	20.97	4.2
Activities of hotels and catering establishments	9.64	4.72
Administrative activities and related additional services	16.41	6.67

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the Federal Tax Service. URL: <https://analytic.nalog.gov.ru>; <https://pb.nalog.ru/calculator.html> (accessed on 04.05.2024).

The value of the tax burden varies significantly depending on the type of economic activity and the size of the company (the range of variation can be up to 35 percentage points) (see Table 2).

As can be seen from Table 2, the tax burden on SMEs varies: mining and real estate have the highest burden. However, the load is decreasing. For the period 2019–2022, the growth rate of the tax burden was 95.53% for all companies and activities. The increase in tax burden was recorded in two industries: mining (101.96%) and wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor

vehicles (129.69%). The burden on insurance premiums decreased overall by more than 20%.

The share of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in insurance premium receipts has decreased from 24% in 2019 to 19% in 2022. This is due to the fact that SMEs have been granted the right to reduce their insurance premium rates by 15%. This is indirectly evidenced by their large share in income tax revenues, as enterprises with lower incomes demonstrate a larger share in income from insurance premiums compared to personal income tax.

Structure of Tax Burden Depending on the Size of the Company, %

Types of enterprises	VAT	Corporate income tax	Other taxes
A microenterprise with an income of up to 30 million rubles	56	9	35
A small company with income from 120 million to 500 million rubles	72	26	2
A medium-sized company with annual revenue between 800 and 2000 million rubles	8	56	36

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the Federal Tax Service. URL: <https://analytic.nalog.gov.ru>; <https://pb.nalog.ru/calculator.html> (accessed on 04.05.2024).

For example, in 2022, enterprises with annual incomes up to 30 million rubles provided 5.38% of their income from insurance premiums, while they paid 4.30% in personal income tax. Enterprises with incomes between 120 and 500 million provided 7.19% of their income in personal income taxes and 4.75% in insurance premiums.

In terms of tax revenue, depending on the size of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the maximum share is provided by those with incomes between 800 and 2,000 million rubles (4.26% in 2022). The share of SMEs with revenues between 120 and 500 million rubles is also significant (4.02% in 2022).

At the same time, the structure of taxes paid by SMEs that apply the general tax system depends on the size of the enterprise. Micro and small enterprises account for the majority of taxes paid in the form of VAT, while medium-sized enterprises pay corporate income tax (see Table 3).

As mentioned above, the majority of taxpayers – SMEs operate as microenterprises. Based on our statistical analysis of the tax burden for microenterprises in Moscow, we have obtained the following results:

- The tax burden varies significantly depending on the type of economic activity. The minimum total tax burden was recorded for microenterprises engaged in fishing and fish farming (0.40%) and the maximum for real estate transactions (13.38%). For microenterprises with revenues up to 120 million rubles, the average total tax burden across all types of activity was 7.59% and 6.29% for those with revenues between 30 and 120 million rubles.

- It should be noted that the total tax burden including MET (excise) taxes is 14% higher for microenterprises with revenues of up to 30 million rubles and 13% for those between 30 and 120 million rubles compared to the tax burden without MET and excise taxes.

- The coefficient of variation for all types of tax burdens is significant, indicating a large amount of fluctuation in the values. The average value of the income tax burden for microenterprises with revenues up to 30 million rubles is only 0.71%, and for microenterprises with revenues from 30 to 120 million rubles it is 0.58%, which is 9.3% and 9.2%, respectively, of the total tax burden.

- The VAT tax burden accounts for approximately 55–63% of the overall tax burden.

Table 4

## Statistical Analysis of the Tax Burden on Microenterprises in Moscow Using OSNO, %

Indicator	Income up to 30 million rubles				Income from 30 to 120 million rubles			
	Total burden (excluding mineral extraction tax and excise taxes)	Total burden (including mineral extraction tax and excise taxes)	Income tax burden	VAT burden	Total burden (excluding mineral extraction tax and excise taxes)	Total burden (including mineral extraction tax and excise taxes)	Income tax burden	VAT burden
The average value	7.59	8.83	0.71	4.22	6.29	7.22	0.58	3.95
The median value	7.60	8.43	0.52	3.97	5.91	6.60	0.39	3.54
			25% value (first quartile)	5.30	5.53	4.09	0.26	1.83
75% value (third quartile)	9.69	10.43	0.77	6.21	8.29	9.36	0.60	5.79
Minimum	3.08	3.08	0.24	0.28	0.40	0.40	0.00	0.00
Maximum	13.38	26.72	3.72	8.44	13.11	23.87	5.29	10.11
The range of variation	10.30	23.64	3.48	8.16	12.71	23.47	5.29	10.11
Coefficient of variation	35.46	51.13	86.86	50.17	47.56	59.39	121.77	61.22

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the Federal Tax Service. URL: <https://analytic.nalog.gov.ru>; <https://pb.nalog.ru/calculator.html> (accessed on 04.05.2024).

Data for Moscow were used for the analysis, as the Federal Tax Service of Russia provides statistical information on the size of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) at the municipal level. Moscow, being a city of federal importance with a large number of SMEs, was

selected as the most suitable location for sampling, as it represents a wide range of businesses of different sizes and types.

A similar statistical analysis of all major types of activities conducted for small businesses in Moscow showed:

- On average, the total tax burden for small businesses with revenues between 120 and 500 million rubles is 6.76%, while for those with revenues between 500 and 800 million rubles, it is 7.18%. This is higher than the total tax burden including MET (local tax) and excise taxes by 9.8% and 4.3%, respectively.

- On average, the total tax burden for small enterprises is similar to that of microenterprises. For all small enterprises, excluding mineral extraction and excise taxes, the average tax burden was 6.97%. For microenterprises, it was 6.94%.

- The income tax burden for small businesses is higher than for microenterprises. The share of income tax in the total tax burden is 11.55% for businesses with incomes between 120 and 500 million rubles, and 14.93% for those with incomes between 500 and 800 million rubles.

- The coefficients of variation in the total tax burden are lower compared to those for microenterprises. This indicates that the tax burden indicators are not as differentiated depending on the type of business activity.

- On average, VAT accounts for 4.5% of the SME's total tax burden, which is more than 60% of the overall tax burden.

- The same cross-section for medium-sized enterprises in Moscow showed:

- In general, the value of the total tax burden for medium-sized and small enterprises with revenues between 500 and 800 million rubles was similar, both with and without MET (7.24% and 7.18%, respectively) and excise taxes (7.50% and 7.40%).

- On average, the total tax burden for all types of activity for medium-sized businesses was 7.24%, while the total burden, including mineral extraction and excise taxes, was 7.4%.

- VAT tax burdens were generally similar for enterprises with different income levels, not exceeding 5% (around 4.4% on average).

- Corporate income tax burdens are highest for small businesses with an income between 500 and 800 million and medium-sized companies.

- The highest values of the range of variation and coefficient of variation were recorded for medium-sized enterprises. This indicates that the indicators of the tax burden are more differentiated among the types of activities in this group, compared to small and micro enterprises.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our statistical analysis of the tax burden on small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in terms of their economic activities and size has shown that there is a heterogeneous qualitative composition of taxpayers. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about uniform behavioral patterns in the perception of tax liabilities among SMEs.

At the same time, SMEs contribute only 4 times less to the formation of budget revenue compared to large companies. Microenterprises, which account for almost three-quarters of all SMEs, contribute less than 3% of total taxes paid. Therefore, we can conclude that the smaller the business, the more the SME overestimates the value of the tax burden. The majority of tax revenues from SMEs are generated by medium-sized enterprises with revenue of 800 million rubles or more.. This suggests that the government provides the most support to micro-enterprises, as dictated by the goal of increasing the number of small businesses. Therefore, the hypothesis of the study that company size is important for assessing SMEs' perception of tax obligations has been confirmed. It should also be noted that the objectives of insurance premium rate regression have been met: the smaller the SME, the larger its share in insurance premiums.

The tax burden in the real sector of the economy is lower than in other sectors. However, the trend remains that as businesses grow, the tax burden increases. This is especially true for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The perception of the tax burden among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seems inadequate when compared to the

actual situation. To increase objectivity in the assessments of taxpayers' tax burdens, we need to focus on improving the tax literacy of SMEs. This means helping them to understand the size of their tax burden in comparison to other businesses, regardless of their size. This will help to adjust the tax behavior of micro and small businesses towards more objective levels.

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