

# Self-sustainability

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**Self-sustainability** and **self-sufficiency** are overlapping states of being in which a person or organization needs little or no help from, or interaction with, others. Self-sufficiency entails the self being enough (to fulfill needs), and a self-sustaining entity can maintain self-sufficiency indefinitely. These states represent types of personal or collective autonomy.<sup>[1]</sup> A self-sufficient economy is one that requires little or no trade with the outside world and is called an autarky.

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## Description

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Self-sustainability is a type of sustainable living in which nothing is consumed other than what is produced by the self-sufficient individuals. Examples of attempts at self-sufficiency in North America include simple living, food storage, homesteading, off-the-grid, survivalism, DIY ethic, and the back-to-the-land movement.

Practices that enable or aid self-sustainability include autonomous building, permaculture, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy. The term is also applied to limited forms of self-sustainability, for example growing one's own food or becoming economically independent of state subsidies. The self-sustainability of an electrical installation measures its degree of grid independence and is defined as the ratio between the amount of locally produced energy that is locally consumed, either directly or after storage, and the total consumption.<sup>[2]</sup>

A system is self-sustaining (or self-sufficient) if it can maintain itself by independent effort. The system self-sustainability is:

1. the degree at which the system can sustain itself without external support
2. the fraction of time in which the system is self-sustaining

Self-sustainability is considered one of the "ilities" and is closely related to sustainability and availability. In the economics literature, a system that has the quality of being self-sustaining is also referred to as an autarky.

## Examples

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## Political states

Autarky exists whenever an entity can survive or continue its activities without external assistance. Autarky is not necessarily economic. For example, a military autarky would be a state that could defend itself without help from another country.

## Labor

According to the Department of Labor of the state of Idaho, an employed adult shall be considered self-sufficient if the family income exceeds 200% of the Office of Management and Budget poverty income level guidelines.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Peer-to-peer swarming

In peer-to-peer swarming systems, a swarm is self-sustaining if all the blocks of its files are available among peers (excluding seeds and publishers).<sup>[4]</sup>

## Discussion

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### Self-sustainability and survivability

Whereas self-sustainability is a quality of one's independence, survivability applies to the future maintainability of one's self-sustainability and indeed one's existence. Many believe that more self-sustainability guarantees a higher degree of survivability. But just as many oppose this, arguing that it is not self-sustainability that is essential for survivability, but on the contrary specialization and thus dependence.<sup>[5]</sup>

Consider the first two examples presented above. Among countries, commercial treats are as important as self-sustainability. An autarky is usually inefficient. Among people, social ties have been shown to be correlated to happiness and success as much as self-sustainability.<sup>[6]</sup>

## See also

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- [Availability](#)
- [Back-to-the-land movement](#)
- [Eating your own dog food](#)
- [Homesteading](#)
- [Independence](#)
- [List of system quality attributes](#)
- [Localism](#)
- [Rugged individualism](#)
- [Survivalism](#)
- [Tiny house movement](#)
- [Food sovereignty](#)
- [Five Acres and Independence](#)

## Notes and references

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1. Maurice Grenville Kains (1973). *Five acres and independence* ([https://archive.org/details/fiveacresindependen00kai\\_i08](https://archive.org/details/fiveacresindependen00kai_i08)). Courier Corporation. p. 1 ([https://archive.org/details/fiveacresindependen00kai\\_i08/page/1](https://archive.org/details/fiveacresindependen00kai_i08/page/1)). ISBN 978-0-486-20974-6. "Five acres and independence."

2. Guilherme de Oliveira e Silva; Patrick Hendrick (September 15, 2016). "Lead-acid batteries coupled with photovoltaics for increased electricity self-sufficiency in households". *Applied Energy*. **178**: 856–867. doi:10.1016/j.apenergy.2016.06.003 (<https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.apenergy.2016.06.003>).
3. IDAHO Department of Labor (1999). "Definition of Self-sufficiency." (<http://labor.idaho.gov/wia1/policies/wiap7-99.pdf>) Retrieved on 2010-06-26.
4. Menasche, Rocha, de Souza e Silva, Leao, Towsley, Venkataramani (2010). "Estimating self-sustainability in peer-to-peer swarming systems" (<https://arxiv.org/abs/1004.0395>) Retrieved on 2010-06-26.
5. What and Who is Self-Sufficient? by Katrien Vander Straeten
6. Social Networks in Plain English ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a\\_KF7TYKVc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a_KF7TYKVc)) on YouTube

## External links

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-  Media related to [Self-sustainability](#) at [Wikimedia Commons](#)
  - Foundation for Self-Sufficiency in Central America (<http://www.fssca.net/>)
  - Development Initiatives Strategies for Self-Sustainability (<http://www.autonomy.viainteraxion.org/>)
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