

# **Apprentices and Trainees Employed by Small Business**

Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise  
Ombudsman

*August 2022*

This data includes the numbers, industries and demographics of Australia's small business apprentices and trainees and illustrates the diversity of this part of the small business workforce. Please note that the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (ASBFE0) defines small businesses as those with less than 20 employees for this data.

## 1. Small business apprentices and trainees

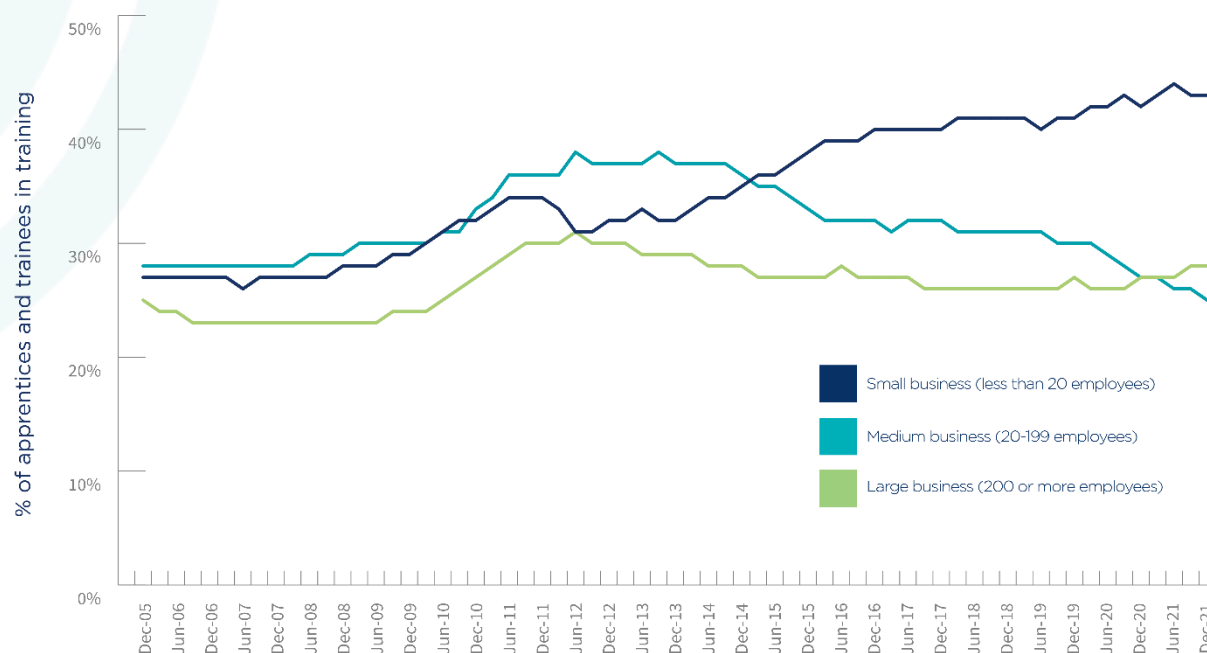
Number of small business apprentices and trainees

**Table 1: Apprentices and trainees in-training by employer size, December 2021**

Size of business	Number of apprentices and trainees in-training	% of apprentices and trainees in-training
0-19 (Small)	151,728	43%
20-199 (Medium)	96,812	28%
200+ (Large)	88,800	25%
Unknown	11,893	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>349,233</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 28/07/22.

**Chart 1: Apprentices and trainees in-training by employer size**



**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 28/07/22.

Small businesses employed 151,728 apprentices and trainees in-training on 31 December 2021. This was a 19% increase compared to the same time in 2020 and slightly lower than at the end of September 2021.<sup>1</sup>

The number of apprentices and trainees in-training has remained relatively high since the December quarter 2020. This has been supported by the Australian Government's Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements wage subsidy, introduced in October 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Small businesses accounted for 43% of all apprentices and trainees in-training in 31 December 2021. This proportion has been increasing over the last few years and is significantly higher than medium or large businesses.

## Industries of small business apprentices and trainees

**Table 2: Apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business, December 2021**

Industry	Number of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business	% of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business
Construction	77,329	51%
Other Services	21,811	14%
Manufacturing	10,248	7%
Accommodation and Food Services	8,173	5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	7,519	5%
Retail Trade	5,809	4%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	4,007	3%
Administrative and Support Services	2,873	2%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	2,506	2%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	2,269	1%
Education and Training	1,781	1%

<sup>1</sup> ASBFEO has sourced data from NCEVER's VOCSTATS. We note that NCEVER states that it is not responsible for the correct extraction, analysis or interpretation of the data obtained from VOCSTATS.

<sup>2</sup> National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCEVER), *Numbers of apprentices and trainees in-training remain high* - <https://www.ncver.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/numbers-of-apprentices-and-trainees-in-training-remain-high>

Arts and Recreation Services	1,315	1%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1,267	1%
Wholesale Trade	1,255	1%
Information Media and Telecommunications	1,027	1%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	903	1%
Financial and Insurance Services	893	1%
Public Administration and Safety	398	<1%
Mining	277	<1%
Not known	69	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>151,728</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 28/07/22.

As shown in the tables above, the industries with the highest proportion of small business' apprentices and trainees in-training in December 2021 were:

- Construction (51%), mainly in electrical, carpentry and plumbing services.
- Other services (14%), mainly in hairdressing and beauty services and automotive repair and maintenance.
- Manufacturing (7%), in areas such as structural steel fabricating, fabricated metal product manufacturing and bakery product manufacturing (non-factory based).

## 2. Demographics of small business apprentices and trainees

### Sex<sup>3</sup>

**Table 3: Apprentices and trainees by sex and employer size, December 2021**

Size of business	Number of male apprentices and trainees in-training	Number of female apprentices and trainees in-training	Total number of apprentices and trainees in-training <sup>1</sup>
0-19 (Small)	116,547	35,178	151,728
20-199 (Medium)	66,104	30,708	96,812
200+ (Large)	58,959	29,840	88,800
Unknown	7,800	4,093	11,893
<b>Total</b>	<b>249,410</b>	<b>99,819</b>	<b>349,233</b>

<sup>1</sup>Includes apprentices and trainees where sex was not stated.

**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 30/07/22.

Over three quarters of apprentices and trainees in-training who were employed by small business were male in December 2021. They were mainly in the construction industry.

### Age

**Table 4: Age of apprentices and trainees in-training, by business size**

Size of business	19 years and under	20 to 24 years	25 to 44 years	45 years and over	Total <sup>1</sup>
0-19 (Small)	52,383	54,808	38,491	6,046	151,728
20-199 (Medium)	24,847	30,811	32,431	8,712	96,812
200+ (Large)	19,920	25,941	32,695	10,244	88,800
Unknown	3,139	3,648	3,969	1,126	11,893
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,289</b>	<b>115,207</b>	<b>107,585</b>	<b>26,128</b>	<b>349,233</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes apprentices and trainees in-training where age is not known.

**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 30/07/22.

Over 70% of apprentices and trainees in-training who were employed by small business were aged 24 years or under in December 2021. They were mainly in the construction industry.

<sup>3</sup> The term "sex" is used since the data is collected using only male or female designations.

## People with disability

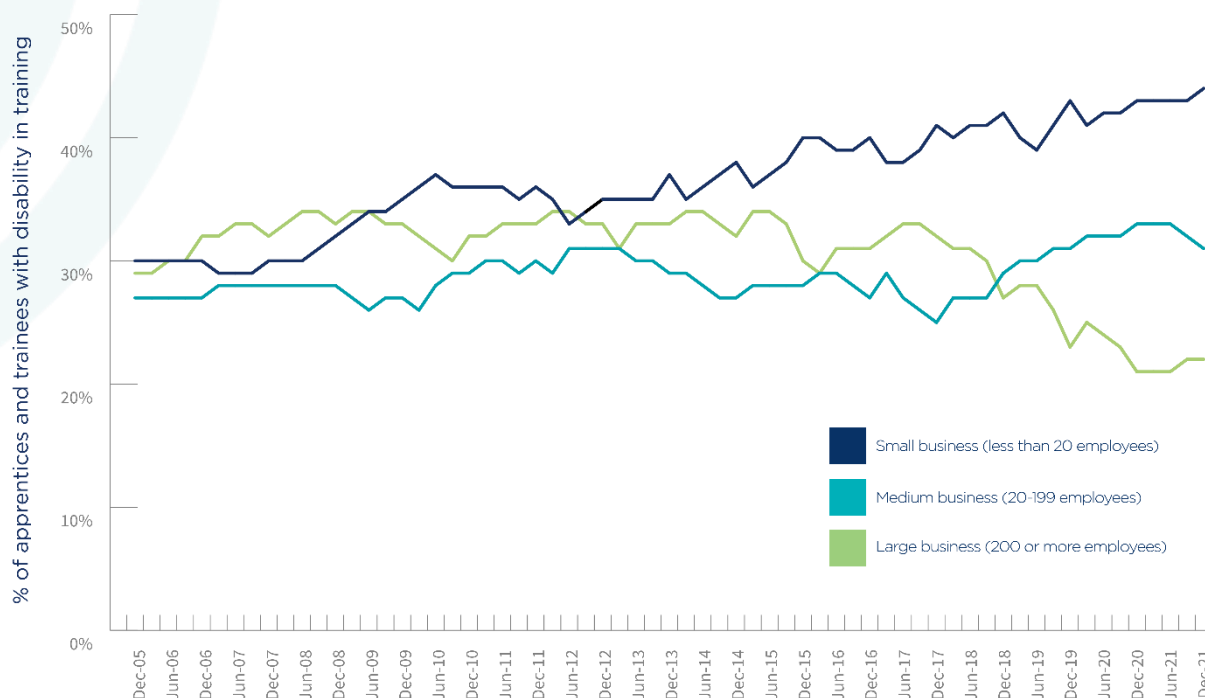
**Table 5: Apprentices and trainees with disability in-training by employer size, December 2021**

Size of business	Number of apprentices and trainees with disability in-training	% of total apprentices and trainees with disability in-training	Number of apprentices and trainees without disability in-training
0-19 (Small)	4,114	44%	143,356
20-199 (Medium)	2,887	31%	90,829
200+ (Large)	2,032	22%	83,599
Unknown	295	3%	10,969
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,329</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>328,753</b>

**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 30/07/22.

Small businesses employed 4,114 people with disability<sup>4</sup> as apprentices and trainees in-training in December 2021. They accounted for 44% of all apprentices and trainees with disability in-training.

**Chart 2: Apprentices and trainees with disability in-training by employer size**



**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 30/07/22.

<sup>4</sup> Includes people with impairment or long-term conditions.

The proportion of people with disability who were employed by small business as apprentices and trainees in-training is rising, reaching a record 44% in December 2021.

Growth of people with disability employed in small business as apprentices and trainees in-training has outstripped larger businesses over the past few years. Small business accounted for 44% of all people with disability employed as apprentices and trainees in-training in December 2021. This is a higher proportion of total employment for people with disability than other business sizes.

**Table 6: Apprentices and trainees with disability in-training employed by small business, 31 December 2021**

Industry	Number of apprentices and trainees with disability in-training employed by small business	% of apprentices and trainees with disability in-training employed by small business
Construction	1,543	38%
Other Services	880	21%
Manufacturing	382	9%
Accommodation and Food Services	336	8%
Health Care and Social Assistance	245	6%
Retail Trade	223	5%
Administrative and Support Services	101	2%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	82	2%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	64	2%
Education and Training	60	1%
Information Media and Telecommunication	39	1%
Wholesale Trade	36	1%
Arts and Recreation Services	33	1%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	27	1%

Transport, Postal and Warehousing	24	1%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	20	<1%
Financial and Insurance Services	10	<1%
Public Administration and Safety	6	<1%
Mining	2	<1%
Not Known	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,114</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 30/07/22.

Over half of people with disability employed by small business as apprentices and trainees in-training were employed were in two industries:

1. Construction (38%), particularly carpentry, electrical and plumbing services.
2. Other services (21%), particularly hairdressing and beauty services and automotive repair and maintenance.

## Indigenous people

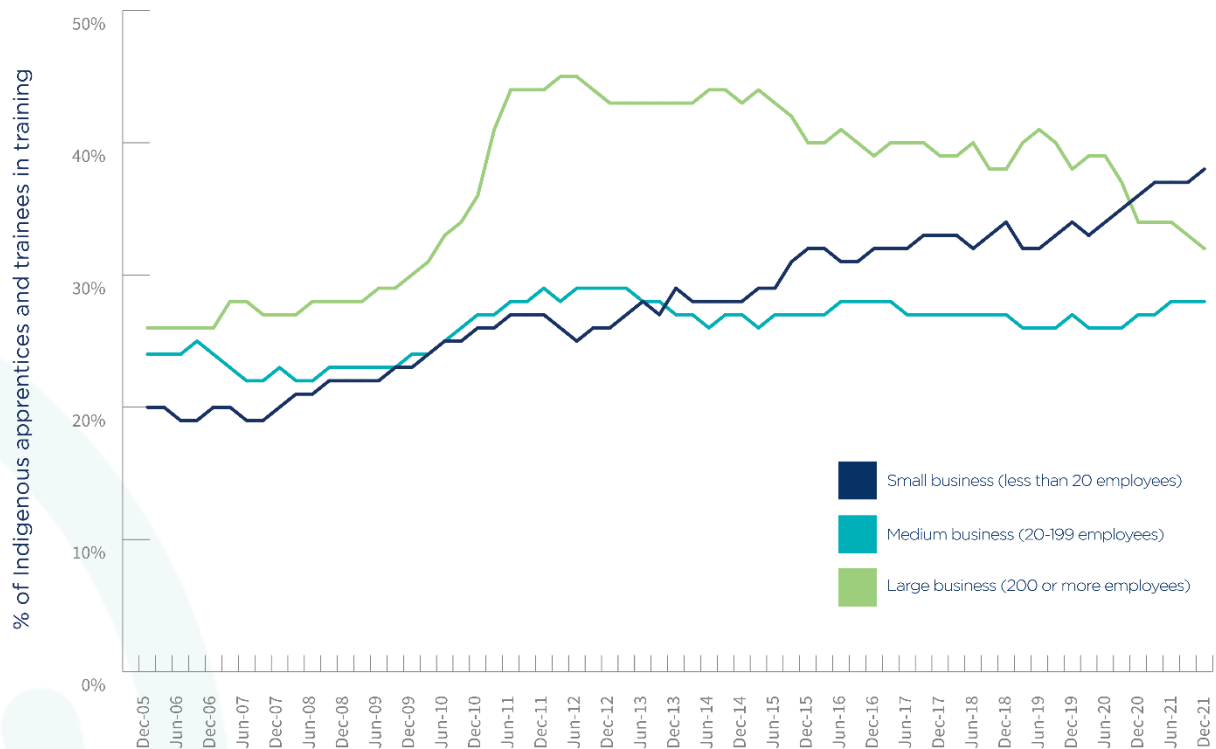
**Table 7: Indigenous apprentices and trainees in-training by employer size, December 2021**

Size of business	Number of Indigenous apprentices and trainees in-training	% of total Indigenous apprentices and trainees in-training	Number of total apprentices and trainees who are not Indigenous in-training
0-19 (Small)	6,949	38%	137,798
20-199 (Medium)	5,158	28%	87,126
200+ (Large)	5,914	32%	78,216
Unknown	387	2%	10,715
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,408</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>313,855</b>

**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 30/07/22.



**Chart 3: Indigenous apprentices and trainees in-training by business size**



**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 30/07/22.

Small businesses employed 6,949 Indigenous apprentices and trainees in-training in December 2021. This accounted for 38% of total Indigenous apprentices and trainees in-training.

Growth in Indigenous apprentices and trainees in-training in small business has outstripped the growth of those in larger business sizes over the last few years. As a result, small businesses account for a higher proportion of total employment of Indigenous people. Small business employed 38% of Indigenous apprentices and trainees in-training in December 2021.

## People with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

**Table 8: Apprentices and trainees in-training born overseas, by employer size, December 2021**

Size of business	Number of apprentices and trainees in-training from a non-English speaking country	% of total apprentices and trainees from a non-English speaking country	Number of total apprentices and trainees from an English-speaking country
0-19 (Small)	7,939	32%	143,681
20-199 (Medium)	7,029	29%	89,496
200+ (Large)	8,185	33%	80,506
Unknown	1,290	5%	10,539
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,444</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>324,221</b>

**Source:** VOCSTATS, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 30/07/22.

Small businesses employed 7,939 apprentices and trainees in-training from non-English speaking backgrounds (based on their country of birth) in December 2021. This accounted for 32% of total apprentices and trainees in-training from non-English speaking countries.

The most common languages spoken at home by small business apprentices and trainees in-training from non-English speaking backgrounds were Mandarin, Arabic and Hindi. This was slightly different to medium and large businesses. The most common languages spoken at home for:

- medium businesses were Tagalog, Mandarin, and Hindi
- large businesses were Tagalog, Hindi, and Punjabi.

## Scope of these statistics

To ensure ASBFEO statistics are as accurate as possible the scope used for these statistics has altered from our previous publications. As a result of this difference in scope, we previously published higher estimates of apprentices and trainees that are not comparable with this data.

These statistics provide information on employees who are in-training at the end of the reporting period. In-training includes apprentices and trainees who are actively training under the terms of their contracts. Our previous publications included all apprentices and trainees, irrespective of the status of their training contract. These numbers were considerably higher, as they included apprentices and trainees whose training:

- had been completed or cancelled, or
- contracts were expired, due to incomplete prescribed program requirements at a given point in time.