



Australian Government



Australian
Small Business and
Family Enterprise
Ombudsman

Apprentices and Trainees Employed by Small Business

Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise
Ombudsman

May 2023

Apprentices and trainees employed by small business

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 (ASBFEO) defines small businesses as those with less than 20 employees for this data.

Key findings

- Small businesses employed 42% of all apprentices and trainees in-training as at 30 September 2022.
- Nearly half (49%) of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small businesses are in the construction industry.
- Over two thirds of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small businesses were aged 24 and under in September 2022.
- The number of apprentices and trainees in-training aged 45 years and over employed by small businesses grew 51% in the year to September 2022.
- The number of apprentices and trainees employed by small businesses who completed their training increased by 45% in September 2022 from the year prior.
- The number of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small businesses increased by 12% in the year to September 2022.

1. Small business apprentices and trainees

Number of small business apprentices and trainees

Small businesses employed 167,328 apprentices and trainees in-training on 30 September 2022. This was a 12% increase compared to the same time the previous year, and a 6% decrease compared to June quarter 2022.¹

Table 1: Apprentices and trainees in-training by employer size, September 2022

Size of business	Number of apprentices and trainees in-training	% of apprentices and trainees in-training
Small (Less than 20 employees)	167,328	42%
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	110,421	27%
Large (200 or more employees)	98,018	24%

¹ 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.

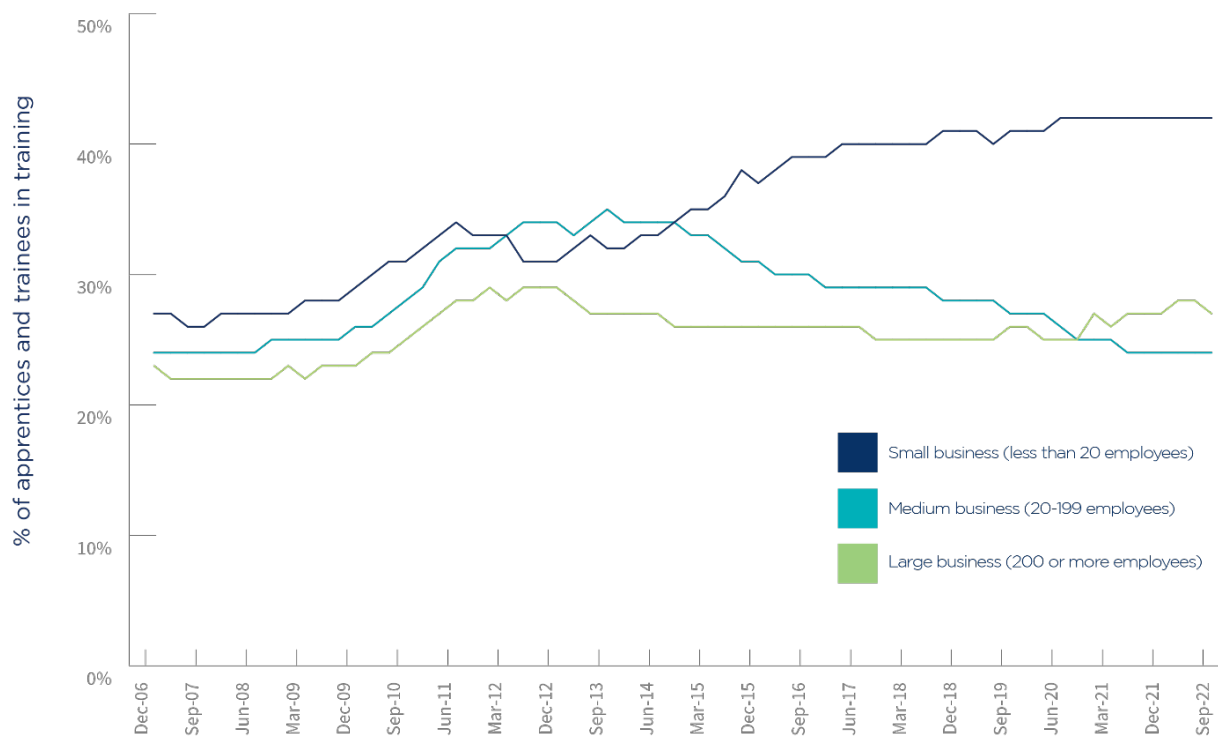
Government and unknown	26,479	7%
Total	402,246	100%

Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023.

The number of apprentices and trainees in-training has remained relatively high since the December quarter 2020. The Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements and Completing Apprenticeship Commencements wage subsidies supported businesses and Group Training Organisations to take on new apprentices and trainees during the economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. To be eligible, apprentices needed a commencement date between 5 October and 30 June 2022. From 30 June 2022, the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements and Completing Apprenticeship Commencements Program closed to new entrants².

Small businesses accounted for 42% of all apprentices and trainees in-training as at 30 September 2022. This proportion is significantly higher than medium or large businesses, accounting for 27% and 24% respectively.

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



Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023.

² Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2022, <https://www.dewr.gov.au/boosting-apprenticeship-commencements> Accessed 16 January 2023

Table 2: Apprentices and trainees in-training by employer size, September 2022

Size of business	Number of apprentices and trainees commenced in Sept 2022	% annual change in number of apprentices and trainees	Number of apprentices and trainees in-training in Sept 2022	% annual change in number of apprentices and trainees in-training
Small (Less than 20 employees)	8,864	-49%	167,328	12%
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	7,599	-48%	110,421	16%
Large (200 or more employees)	11,285	-20%	98,018	16%
Government and unknown	1,670	-56%	26,479	11%
Total	29,418	-41%	402,246	14%

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023.

There were 8,864 training contracts for apprentices and trainees employed by small businesses in September 2022. This was a 49% fall compared to September 2021. From 30 June 2022, the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements and Completing Apprenticeship Commencements Program closed to new entrants.

Industry of small business apprentices and trainees

The industries with the highest proportion of small business' apprentices and trainees in-training in September 2022 were:

- Construction (49%), 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).

Table 2: Apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business, September 2022

Industry	Number of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business	% of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business
Construction	81,468	49%
Other Services	23,197	14%
Manufacturing	10,906	7%
Accommodation and Food Services	9,571	6%
Health Care and Social Assistance	8,353	5%
Retail Trade	6,923	4%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	5,680	3%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	3,570	2%
Administrative and Support Services	3,390	2%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	2,586	2%
Education and Training	2,058	1%
Arts and Recreation Services	1,997	1%
Financial and Insurance Services	1,576	1%
Wholesale Trade	1,407	1%
Information Media and Telecommunication	1,379	1%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1,260	1%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	1,116	1%
Public Administration and Safety	427	<1%
Mining	349	<1%
Government and unknown	113	<1%
Total	167,328	100%

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023.

Location of small business apprentices and trainees

Small businesses employed nearly half of all apprentices and trainees in-training in Victoria and New South Wales in September 2022 (50% and 47% respectively).

Table 3: Apprentices and trainees in-training by location and by employer size, September 2022

State or territory	Small business (less than 19 employees)	Medium business (20 - 199 employees)	Large business (200 or more employees)	Government and unknown	Total
NSW	54,688	32,468	24,678	3,625	115,460
VIC	42,504	23,990	17,044	2,195	85,733
QLD	40,932	28,857	25,945	2,041	97,775
SA	4,124	4,546	5,312	16,661	30,643
WA	15,218	13,002	17,995	921	47,136
TAS	4,652	3,422	3,514	418	12,006
NT	1,331	1,107	867	159	3,465
ACT	2,720	2,037	1,439	368	6,564
Other Territories and unknown	1,158	990	1,225	90	3,463
Total	167,328	110,421	98,018	26,479	402,246

Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023.

2. Demographics of small business apprentices and trainees

Sex³

Three quarters of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business in September 2022 were male. These were mainly in the construction industry.

Table 4: Apprentices and trainees in-training by sex and employer size, September 2022

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 ¹
Small (Less than 20 employees)	124,983	42,323	167,328
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	73,095	37,302	110,421
Large (200 or more employees)	62,547	35,448	98,018
Government and unknown	17,492	8,982	26,479
Total	278,118	124,055	402,246

³ Includes apprentices and trainees where sex was not stated.

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023.

Age

Over two thirds of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business were aged 24 and under in September 2022. These were mainly in the construction industry. The proportion of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small businesses aged 24 and under has fallen from 72% in September 2021 to 67% in September 2022. Apprentices and trainees in-training increased in all age groups in the year to September 2022. Growth was slowest for those aged 24 and under and fastest for those aged 45 and over. The number of apprentices and trainees aged 45 years and over employed by small businesses grew 51% in the year to September 2022.

Table 5: Age of apprentices and trainees in-training, by business size, September 2022

Size of business	19 years and under	20 to 24 years	25 to 44 years	45 years and over	Total ¹
Small (Less than 20 employees)	55,617	56,852	46,567	8,293	167,328

³ The term “sex” is used since the data is collected using only male or female designations.

Medium (20 – 199 employees)	28,133	33,345	38,408	10,534	110,421
Large (200 or more employees)	24,368	26,857	35,656	11,137	98,018
Government and unknown ¹	5,972	7,381	10,064	3,059	26,479
Total	114,090	124,435	130,695	33,023	402,246

⁴ Includes apprentices and trainees in-training where age is not known.

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023

People with disability

Small businesses employed 4,725 people with disability⁴ as apprentices and trainees in-training in September 2022. They accounted for 41% of all apprentices and trainees with disability in-training.

Table 6: Apprentices and trainees with disability in-training by employer size, September 2022

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
Small (Less than 20 employees)	4,725	41%	158,921
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	3,576	31%	104,218
Large (200 or more employees)	2,606	23%	92,627
Government and unknown	643	6%	24,897
Total	11,550	100%	380,662

Note: There were an additional 10,034 apprentices and trainees in-training where disability was unknown.

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

⁴ Includes people with impairment or long-term conditions.

Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023

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

- Construction (36%). The most common areas were carpentry, electrical and plumbing services.
- Other services (20%). The most common areas were hairdressing and beauty services, automotive electrical services and other automotive repair and maintenance.

Table 7: Apprentices and trainees with disability in-training employed by small business, September 2022

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	1,724	36%
Other Services	948	20%
Manufacturing	423	9%
Accommodation	393	8%
Health Care and Social Assistance	297	6%
Retail Trade	263	6%
Administrative and Support Services	117	2%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	98	2%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	95	2%
Education and Training	68	1%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	64	1%
Information Media and Telecommunication	51	1%
Wholesale Trade	46	1%

Arts and Recreation Services	44	1%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	27	1%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	26	1%
Financial and Insurance Services	23	<1%
Public Administration and Safety	9	<1%
Mining	3	<1%
Industry Unknown	5	<1%
Total	4,725	100%

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023

First Nations Australians

Small businesses employed 7,673 First Nations Australians apprentices and trainees in-training in September 2022. This accounted for 35% of total First Nations Australians apprentices and trainees in-training.

Table 8: First Nations Australians apprentices and trainees in-training by employer size, September 2022

Size of business	Number of First Nations Australians apprentices and trainees in-training	% of total First Nations Australians apprentices and trainees in-training	Number of total apprentices and trainees who are not First Nations Australians in-training
Small (Less than 20 employees)	7,673	35%	153,213
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	5,921	27%	100,424
Large (200 or more employees)	6,276	29%	87,740

Government and unknown	1,936	9%	23,276
Total	21,805	100%	364,653

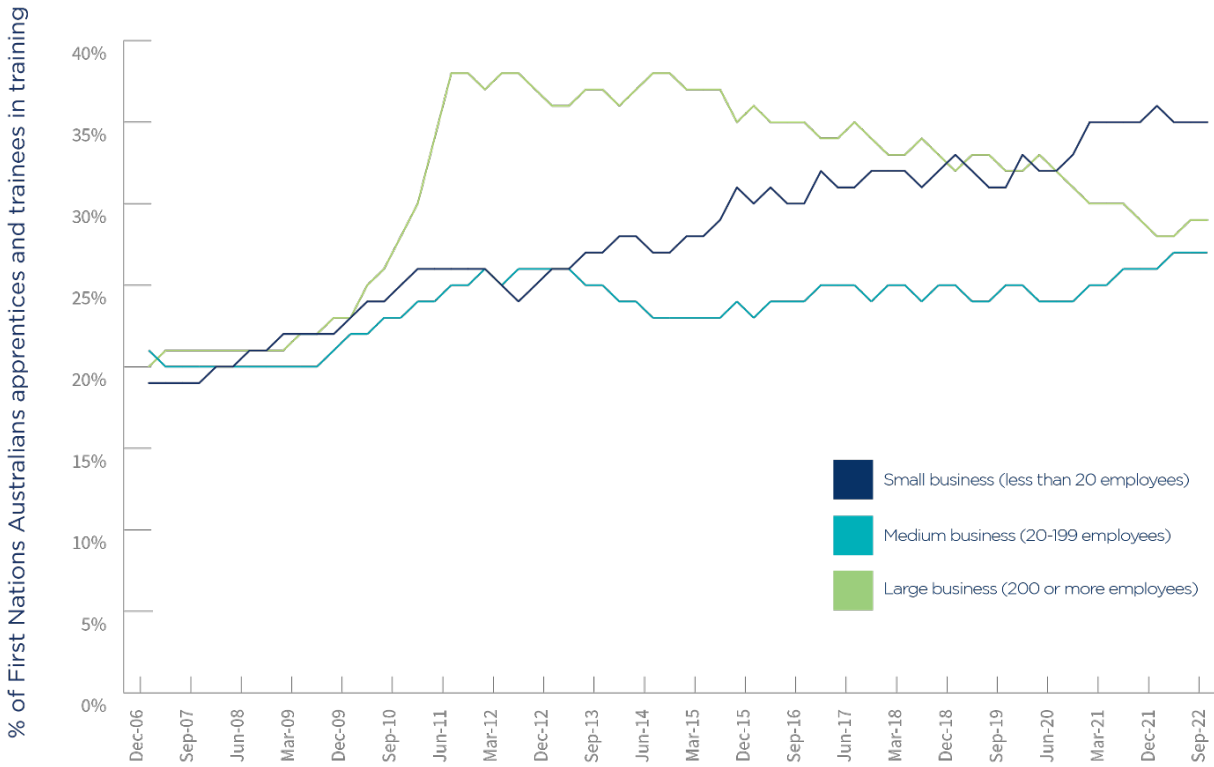
Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Note: There were an additional 15,787 apprentices and trainees in-training where it was unknown whether the individual identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023

Growth in First Nations Australian apprentices and trainees in-training in small business has outstripped larger business sizes over the last several years. As a result, small businesses account for a higher proportion of total employment of First Nations Australian peoples.

Chart 2: First Nations Australians apprentices and trainees in-training by business size



Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023

People with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Small businesses employed 10,174 apprentices and trainees in-training from non-English speaking backgrounds (based on their country of birth) in September 2022. This accounted for 33% 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 Vietnamese. This was slightly different to:

- Medium businesses: Mandarin, Arabic, and Vietnamese.

- Large businesses: Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Arabic.

Table 9: Apprentices and trainees in-training born overseas, by employer size, September 2022

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
Small (Less than 20 employees)	10,174	33%	157,080
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	8,498	27%	101,763
Large (200 or more employees)	9,892	32%	88,009
Government and unknown	2,728	9%	23,661
Total	31,292	100%	370,514

Note: There were an additional 440 apprentices and trainees in-training where the country of birth was unknown.

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS, extracted on 28/03/2023

About the data

We define small businesses as those with less than 20 employees in 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. Tables may not sum to totals due to rounding.