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Australian
Small Business and
Family Enterprise
Ombudsman

Apprentices and Trainees Employed by Small Business

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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 31 December 2023.
- More than half (54%) of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small businesses are in the construction industry.
- Over two thirds (72%) of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small businesses were aged 24 and under in December 2023.
- The number of apprentices and trainees in-training aged 45 years and over employed by small businesses decreased 32% in the year to December 2023.
- The number of apprentices and trainees employed by small businesses who completed their training decreased by 7% in December 2023 from the year prior.
- The number of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small businesses decreased by 8% in the year to December 2023.

1. Small business apprentices and trainees

Number of small business apprentices and trainees

Small businesses employed 144,257 apprentices and trainees in-training on 31 December 2023. This was a 8% decrease compared to the same time the previous year, and a 5% decrease compared to September quarter 2023.¹

Table 1: Apprentices and trainees in-training by employer size, December 2023

Size of business	Number of apprentices and trainees in-training	% of apprentices and trainees in-training
Small (Less than 20 employees)	144,257	42%
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	89,262	26%
Large (200 or more employees)	86,946	25%

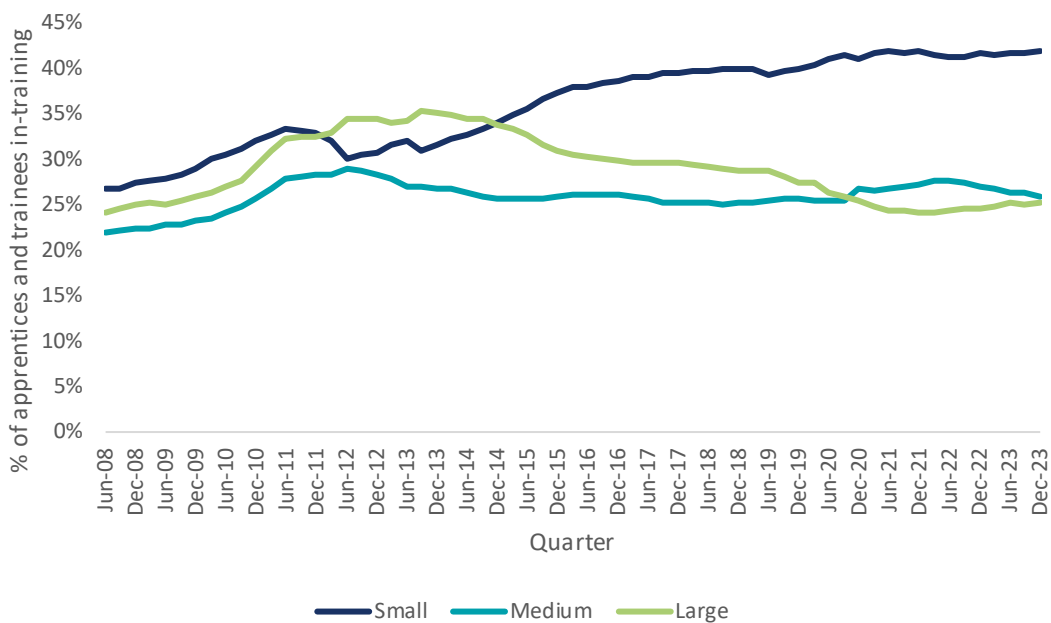
¹ ASBFEO has sourced data from NCEVER’s VOCSTATS. We note that NCEVER states that it is not responsible for the correct extraction, analysis or interpretation of the data obtained from VOCSTATS.

Government and unknown	23,176	7%
Total	343,642	100%

Source: VOCSTATS <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 27/08/2024.

Small businesses accounted for 42% of all apprentices and trainees in-training as at 31 December 2023. This proportion is significantly higher than medium or large businesses, accounting for 26% and 25% respectively.

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



Source: VOCSTATS <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 27/08/2024.

Industry of small business apprentices and trainees

The industries with the highest proportion of small business’ apprentices and trainees in-training in December 2023 were:

- Construction (54%), mainly in electrical, carpentry and plumbing services.
- Other services (15%), mainly in hairdressing and beauty services and automotive repair and maintenance.
- Manufacturing (7%), in areas such as structural steel fabricating, bakery product manufacturing (non-factory based) and furniture manufacturing.

Table 2: Apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business, December 2023

Industry	Number of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business	% of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business
Construction	78,123	54%
Other Services	21,538	15%
Manufacturing	9,888	7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	7,291	5%
Accommodation	5,125	4%
Retail Trade	4,760	3%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	3,281	2%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	2,378	2%
Administrative and Support Services	2,138	1%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (A)	1,846	1%
Arts and Recreation Services	1,264	1%
Education and Training	1,231	1%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1,110	1%
Wholesale Trade	1,002	1%
Information Media and Telecommunication	776	1%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	747	1%
Financial and Insurance Services	724	1%
Public Administration and Safety	447	0.3%
Mining	346	0.2%
Unknown	242	0.2%
Total	144,257	100%

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 27/08/2024.

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 December 2023 (50% and 48% respectively).

Table 3: Apprentices and trainees in-training by workplace location and by employer size, December 2023

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	49,221	26,547	22,460	3,784	102,012
VIC	36,862	19,152	15,163	2,201	73,379
QLD	33,680	23,857	23,910	2,558	84,006
SA	3,462	3,767	4,571	13,134	24,934
WA	13,548	10,529	16,118	911	41,105
TAS	3,607	2,749	2,690	348	9,394
NT	1,315	967	801	111	3,194
ACT	2,349	1,506	1,088	81	5,025
Other Territories and unknown	214	188	146	48	594
Total	144,257	89,262	86,946	23,176	343,642

Source: VOCSTATS <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 27/08/2024.

2. Demographics of small business apprentices and trainees

Sex²

More than three quarters (79%) of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business in December 2023 were male. These were mainly in the construction industry.

² The term “sex” is used since the data is collected using only male or female designations.

Table 4: Apprentices and trainees in-training by sex and employer size, December 2023

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*
Small (Less than 20 employees)	113,955	30,244	144,257
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	61,955	27,260	89,262
Large (200 or more employees)	55,501	31,349	86,946
Government and unknown	16,177	6,985	23,176
Total	247,589	95,837	343,642

*Includes apprentices and trainees where sex was not stated.

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 27/08/2024.

Age

Over seventy per cent (72%) of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small business were aged 24 and under in December 2023. These were mainly in the construction industry. The proportion of apprentices and trainees in-training employed by small businesses aged 24 and under has increased from 68% in December 2022 to 72% in December 2023.

Table 5: Age of apprentices and trainees in-training, by business size, December 2023

Size of business	19 years and under	20 to 24 years	25 to 44 years	45 years and over	Total*
Small (Less than 20 employees)	52,716	50,939	35,485	5,118	144,257
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	25,167	28,644	29,030	6,421	89,262
Large (200 or more employees)	21,994	24,972	31,139	8,841	86,946
Government and unknown	5,177	6,837	8,577	2,585	23,176
Total	105,055	111,392	104,231	22,965	343,642

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

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 27/08/2024

People with disability

Small businesses employed 4,609 people with disability³ as apprentices and trainees in-training in December 2023. 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, December 2023

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)	4,609	41%	137,749
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	3,417	30%	84,685
Large (200 or more employees)	2,661	23%	83,089
Government and unknown	668	6%	22,062
Total	11,355	100%	327,585

Note: There were an additional 4,702 apprentices and trainees in-training where disability was unknown. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 27/08/2024

Over half (61%) of people with disability employed by small business as apprentices and trainees in-training employed were in two industries:

- Construction (40%). The most common areas were carpentry, electrical and plumbing services.
- Other services (21%). The most common areas were hairdressing and beauty services, automotive electrical services and other automotive repair and maintenance.

³ Includes people with impairment or long-term conditions.

Table 7: Apprentices and trainees with disability in-training employed by small business, December 2023

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	1,848	40%
Other Services	983	21%
Manufacturing	404	9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	326	7%
Accommodation	263	6%
Retail Trade	202	4%
Administrative and Support Services	107	2%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	86	2%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	81	2%
Education and Training	53	1%
Arts and Recreation Services	49	1%
Wholesale Trade	43	1%
Information Media and Telecommunication	39	1%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	35	1%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	30	1%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	19	0.4%

Public Administration and Safety	13	0.3%
Financial and Insurance Services	9	0.2%
Mining	5	0.1%
Unknown	15	0.3%
Total	4,609	100%

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 27/08/2024

First Nations Australians

Small businesses employed 7,457 First Nations Australians apprentices and trainees in-training in December 2023. This accounted for 36% of total First Nations Australians apprentices and trainees in-training.

Table 8: First Nations Australians apprentices and trainees in-training by employer size, December 2023

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)	7,457	36%	132,873
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	5,565	27%	81,450
Large (200 or more employees)	6,030	29%	78,956
Government and unknown	1,814	9%	20,675
Total	20,866	100%	313,954

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Note: There were an additional 8,822 apprentices and trainees in-training where it was unknown whether the individual identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Source: VOCSTATS <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 30/05/2024

People with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Small businesses employed 6,972 apprentices and trainees in-training from non-English speaking backgrounds (based on their country of birth) in December 2023. This accounted for 30% of total apprentices and trainees in-training from non-English speaking countries.

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

- Medium businesses: Tagalog, Mandarin, and Filipino.
- Large businesses: Tagalog, Filipino, Mandarin and Hindi.

Table 9: Apprentices and trainees in-training born overseas, by employer size, December 2023

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)	6,972	30%	137,240
Medium (20 – 199 employees)	6,051	26%	83,163
Large (200 or more employees)	8,418	36%	78,466
Government and unknown	2,089	9%	21,037
Total	23,530	100%	319,906

Note: There were an additional 206 apprentices and trainees in-training where the country of birth was unknown.

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: VOCSTATS <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vocstats>>, extracted on 27/08/2024

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.

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