

Women in Business

While it appears that the number of people operating as employers has fallen in recent years, the story for women in business is not so straightforward. Self-employment is an increasingly viable and popular option for women, including mature age women.

There are two principal sources of data on women in business in Australia, one is the five yearly Census and the other is the ABS labour force statistics. The 2011 census recorded that women accounted for 31.9 per cent of business operators, operating over 480 000 businesses. Women accounted for 32.1 per cent of small businesses (with 0-19 employees).

Labour force data provides information on individuals nominating as employees, contributing family workers or as employers and own account workers (sole trader or contractor). The latter two together represent people running a business (or business owners). While the labour force data does not include details on the size of businesses run by individual employers and own account workers, it is a reasonable assumption that the employment data used herein is mostly about small to medium sized enterprises. In total, 1.2 million workers or 10.8 per cent of people employed in Australia are employers or own account workers

Similarly to the Census headline data, women account for around a third (36.1 per cent) of those running a business in the labour force data. From the table below, in May 2013, 428,000 women were running a business, representing 3.7 per cent of women's employment. The relative figures for men were 757,000 and 6.5 per cent of men's employment.

Table 1: Employment trends for men and women, as at May 2013

Male	workers 000s (yr to May 2013)	% of total employment (yr to May 2013)	change over 1 yr period	change over 5 yr period	change over 10 yr period
Employee	5508	47.6%	1.9%	9.5%	27.1%
Employer	162	1.4%	-7.0%	-18.7%	-20.4%
Own account worker	595	5.1%	-3.5%	-6.0%	-4.9%
Contributing family worker	10	0.1%	0.3%	-14.2%	-33.6%
Total	6276	54.3%	1.1%	6.9%	21.2%
Running own business**	757	6.5%	-4.3%	-9.1%	-8.7%
Female	workers 000s (yr to May 2013)	% of total employment (yr to May 2013)	change over 1 yr period	change over 5 yr period	change over 10 yr period
Employee	4848	41.9%	2.0%	10.3%	28.6%
Employer	84	0.7%	-6.1%	-19.0%	-21.8%
Own account worker	344	3.0%	-2.7%	7.1%	14.2%
Contributing family worker	12	0.1%	-20.4%	-18.9%	-46.8%
Total	5288	45.7%	1.5%	9.4%	25.9%
Running own business**	428	3.7%	-3.4%	0.7%	4.8%

* Average of four quarters to May 2013. ** Employers plus own account workers.

Source: ABS - Labour Force, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.003, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, May 2013

Table 1 also shows that over the 10 year period to May 2013, the number of men running a business has fallen by 8.7 per cent. For women over this period there has been relatively strong growth, with the number running a business growing by 4.8 per cent.

When the data is disaggregated to consider employers and own account workers, it is clear this growth for women has been in working on their own account. The number of employers, both male and female, has reduced over 10 years, falling 20.4 per cent and 21.8 per cent respectively. The number of own account workers has also fallen for men (by 5.5 per cent) but for women, the number of own account workers has grown by 11.2 per cent.

There has also been a fall in the number of employees employed as contributing family workers, for men the number is down 33.6 per cent and for women the number is down by 46.8 per cent.

Industry

It is apparent from the table below that the industries where women and men operate businesses are quite different and demonstrate a similar pattern of industry/occupational segregation found in employment. Men dominate as business owners in mining (100 per cent), construction (91 per cent) and Transport, Postal and Warehousing (86 per cent) and are the majority operators for several other industries. While not dominating to the same extent, women are the majority of business owners in Health Care and Social Assistance (65 per cent) Education and Training (55 per cent) and Retail Trade (55 per cent). Women represent half or almost half of owners in Other Services, Accommodation and Food Services and Public Administration and Safety.

Table 2: Employment in Small to Medium Enterprises by industry and gender, May 2013

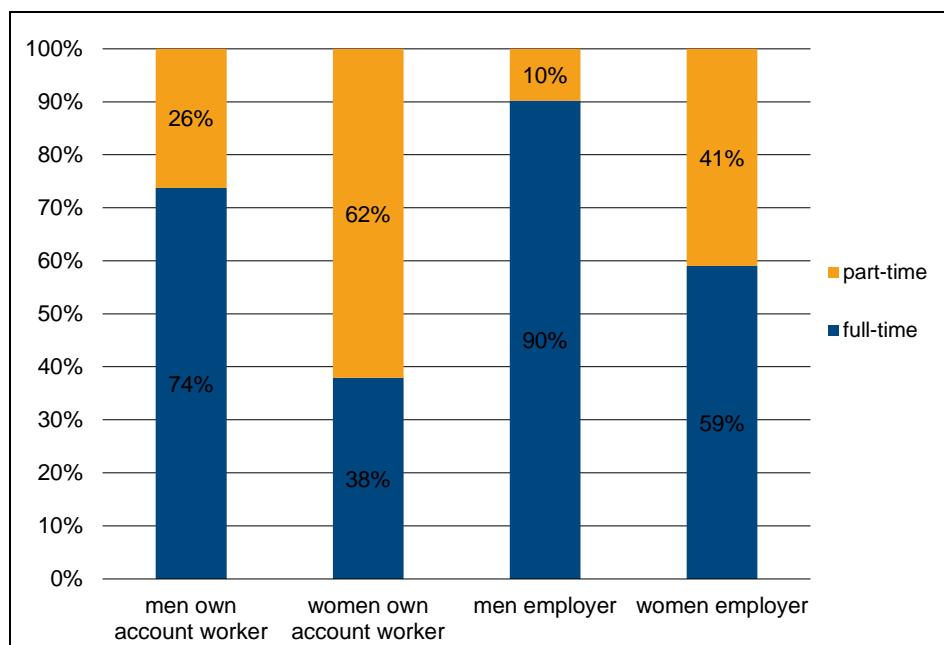
Industry	No. Male workers running a SME 000s (yr to May 2013)	No. Female workers running a SME 000s (yr to May 2013)	% Male workers running a SME	% Female workers running a SME
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	86.5	44.3	66 %	34 %
Mining	1.3	0.0	100 %	0 %
Manufacturing	41.0	21.0	66 %	34 %
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	2.8	1.0	73 %	27 %
Construction	221.8	23.3	91 %	9 %
Wholesale Trade	15.5	10.0	61 %	39 %
Retail Trade	34.0	42.3	45 %	55 %
Accommodation and Food Services	27.3	25.8	51 %	49 %
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	55.8	8.8	86 %	14 %
Information Media and Telecommunications	7.8	3.1	72 %	28 %
Financial and Insurance Services	11.0	3.8	75 %	25 %
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	11.3	8.8	56 %	44 %
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	74.3	56.8	57 %	43 %
Administrative and Support Services	47.8	39.5	55 %	45 %
Public Administration and Safety	2.3	2.0	53 %	47 %
Education and Training	18.5	22.3	45 %	55 %
Health Care and Social Assistance	27.8	52.3	35 %	65 %
Arts and Recreation Services	20.3	12.5	62 %	38 %
Other Services	50.5	51.3	50 %	50 %
Total	757.3	427.5	64 %	36 %

Note: ** Employers plus own account workers. SME workers include all employed as Employer or Own account worker
Source: ABS, *Labour Force, Australia*, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.003 Detailed, Quarterly, May 2013

Employment status – part-time and full-time

Options to work flexibly are more important for women. Some 77.3 per cent of men who run their own business work full time well ahead of the proportion of women who run a business and work full time (42.2 per cent). Male employers are far more likely to be working full time (90 per cent) than female employers (59 per cent) and the same disparity is evident for male own account workers (74 per cent full-time) compared to female own account workers (38 per cent). The option to work part-time may contribute to the increase in women own account workers in recent years.

Chart 1: Employment by gender and full-time/part time status, May 2012-13



Source: ABS, *Labour Force Detailed, Quarterly*, Cat. No.6291.0.55.003 - Australia, May 2013

Mature age women in business

The table below presents data on business owners by both gender and age and the percentage change over ten years to May 2013. Anecdotally it is understood that running micro business (less than 5 employees) and small businesses (less than 20 employees) is a growth area of employment for mature age women as well as for women of child bearing age. The table below provides support for the anecdotal evidence for women as they grow older but not for women of child bearing age. The percentage change over the past ten years in the number of women running a business varies considerably between age ranges. There is an evident decline in running a business for women aged 15-19, 25-34 and 45-54. For women aged from 55 however there has been a considerable increase including a 117 per cent increase for women aged 65 and over running a business.

Table 3: SME Employment trends by age, May 2013

Age	No. of workers running and SME 000s (yr to May 2013)	% of workers in age bracket running an SME	% change over 10 yr period
15 - 19	2.5	0.6%	-33.3%
20 - 24	11.6	2.7%	14.8%
25 - 34	66.8	15.6%	-11.9%
35 - 44	118.3	27.7%	0.1%
45 - 54	104.9	24.5%	-12.8%
55 - 59	49.9	11.7%	22.0%
60 - 64	39.1	9.1%	63.9%
65 and over	34.5	8.1%	117.3%
Total	427.5	100.0%	4.7%

Source: ABS, *Labour Force Detailed, Quarterly*, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.003 Australia, May 2013