



Casual employment in Australia: numbers and trends

As of November 2015, there were 2.4 million people employed on a casual basis in Australia. That is, they were employees without paid leave entitlements (sick leave or annual leave).

Casual workers comprise around 20% of the total workforce and 24% of all employees.

The proportion of all workers who are employed on a casual basis has not changed since 1998.

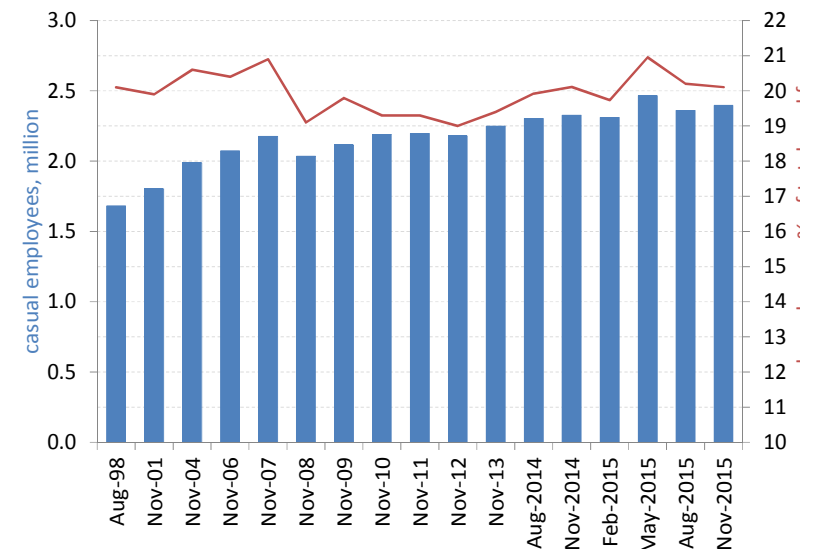
In the Australian bureau of Statistics (ABS) labour force data, casual workers are identified as employees who do not have any entitlement to paid leave (sick leave and/or annual leave).

In August 1998, the ABS identified 1,681,700 people as casual employees, or 20.1% of the workforce. In November 2015, the ABS identified 2,396,500 people as casual employees, or 20.1% of the workforce.

This means that the gross number of casual employees has grown since 1998 (up by 42% between 1998 to 2015), but this growth has been exactly in proportion to growth in the total Australian workforce over the same time period (up by 41% from 8,455,200 in August 1998 to 11,919,100 in November 2015). The proportion of all workers who are casual has not changed over this period.

The number of casual workers and their proportion in the Australian workforce fell in 2008 (to 19.1% of all workers) but they have since recovered as a share of the workforce. Other than this dip and its subsequent recovery, there is no evidence of any long-term change in the incidence of casual work in Australia, as reported in the ABS labour force data.

Chart 1: Casual employees, number and share of the workforce



Key numbers: casual employees, November 2015

2.4mn

NUMBER OF CASUAL
EMPLOYEES IN AUSTRALIA

20%

PROPORTION OF ALL
AUSTRALIAN WORKERS
WHO ARE CASUAL

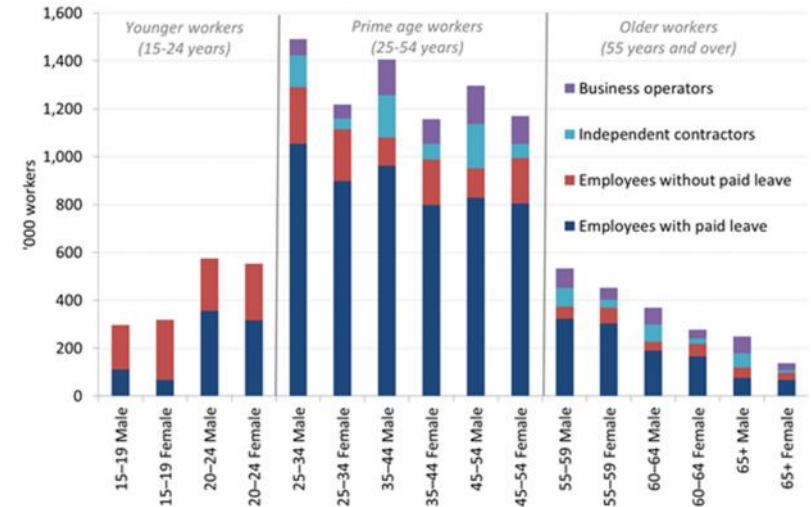
Detailed data from November 2013 (the latest data available with this level of detail) indicate that casual employees are more likely to be female and aged 15 to 24 years old and to be working in retail or hospitality businesses than are other types of workers (permanent employees, self-employed workers or employers). The age and gender profile of casual workers shows that:

- 70% of workers aged 15-19 years (441,100 people) were in casual work and 38% of 20-24 year old workers (453,700 people) in casual work in 2013. Indeed, 40% of casual workers were aged 15 to 24 years, versus 15% of all workers who are in this age bracket.
- For women in these younger age groups, the proportion of workers who are in casual employment rises to 79% of 15-19 year old women (253,500 young women) and 42% of 20 to 24 year old women (236,200 young women).
- Above the age of 25 years, the prevalence of casual work drops markedly for 'prime working age' people, with 17% of 25 to 34 year olds workers in casual employment and around 12% of workers aged 35 to 59 years in casual employment.
- Casual work then rises again, as a proportion of the workforce, for older workers, with 14% of 60 to 64 year old workers in a casual role and 20% of workers aged over 65 years. The total numbers of casual workers in these age groups is however, extremely low.

Across industries, casual employment is most common in accommodation and food services, with 58% of workers (440,000 people) in the hospitality industry in casual employment. For women in hospitality work, 61% are in casual employment (265,000 women). And of these female casuals, 85% (227,000 women) work part-time. Indeed, this single group – part-time women in hospitality work – account for 18% of all female casual workers and 10% of all casual workers in the Australian workforce. Other industries that have relatively high proportions (and numeric concentrations) of casual workers include retail trade (36%), arts and recreational services (33%) and administrative services (22%).

Across occupations, more casual workers are employed in sales occupations (44% of sales workers), labouring (41% of labourers) and community and personal service occupations (35% of these workers).

Chart 2: Age and sex of workers, by type of employment, 2013



Key numbers: Casual employment for men and women, 2013

16.2%

PROPORTION OF ALL MALE WORKERS WHO ARE CASUALS

23.2%

PROPORTION OF ALL FEMALE WORKERS WHO ARE CASUALS

Table 1: Casual employee numbers and share of the workforce, November 2013

Demographic characteristics	'000	% of all employed persons of this type
Male	1,017.3	16.2
Female	1,232.4	23.2
15-19 years	441.1	70.0
20-24 years	453.7	38.0
25-34 years	451.2	17.0
35-59 years	737.3	12.3
60-64 years	89.7	13.8
65 years +	76.6	19.8
Industry of employment (ranked by size of casual workforce)		
Food and accommodation services (hospitality)	440.0	57.7
Retail trade	451.0	35.9
Healthcare and welfare services	239.0	16.9
Education	155.8	17.2
Manufacturing	138.2	14.6
Construction	130.1	12.7
Transport	112.4	18.8
Administrative services	87.9	22.1
Agriculture	70.2	21.7
Arts & recreation	65.2	32.7
TOTAL CASUAL WORKFORCE	2,249.7	19.4

Data source: ABS 6359.0, *Forms of Employment, Australia, November 2013* (released 7 May 2014)

What is 'casual employment'?

The ABS defines 'casual employment' as an employee who does not receive paid leave entitlements. Employees without leave entitlements are those who were not entitled to paid holiday leave or paid sick leave, or did not know whether they were entitled to paid holiday leave or paid sick leave. Employees 'without leave entitlements' is the most objective and commonly used measure of casual employment.

Data on whether employees have access to paid leave entitlements have been collected by the ABS every three months in the Labour Force Survey from August 2014 onwards. Prior to 2014, data on leave entitlements were collected through annual Labour Force supplementary surveys, including Forms of Employment (cat. no. 6359.0) and Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership (cat. no. 6310.0).

For more information about the ABS labour force surveys and data see:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/>

Next detailed labour force data release date:
February Quarter 2016 due for release on 24 March 2016.

[Link to Ai Group release, survey and submission: Fair Work Commission's Casual and Part-time Employment Case](#)

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