



**2.6 million people – or 20.6% of the Australian workforce – work on a casual basis. 35% of casuals work in hospitality and retail. Over 80% work in small to medium businesses.**

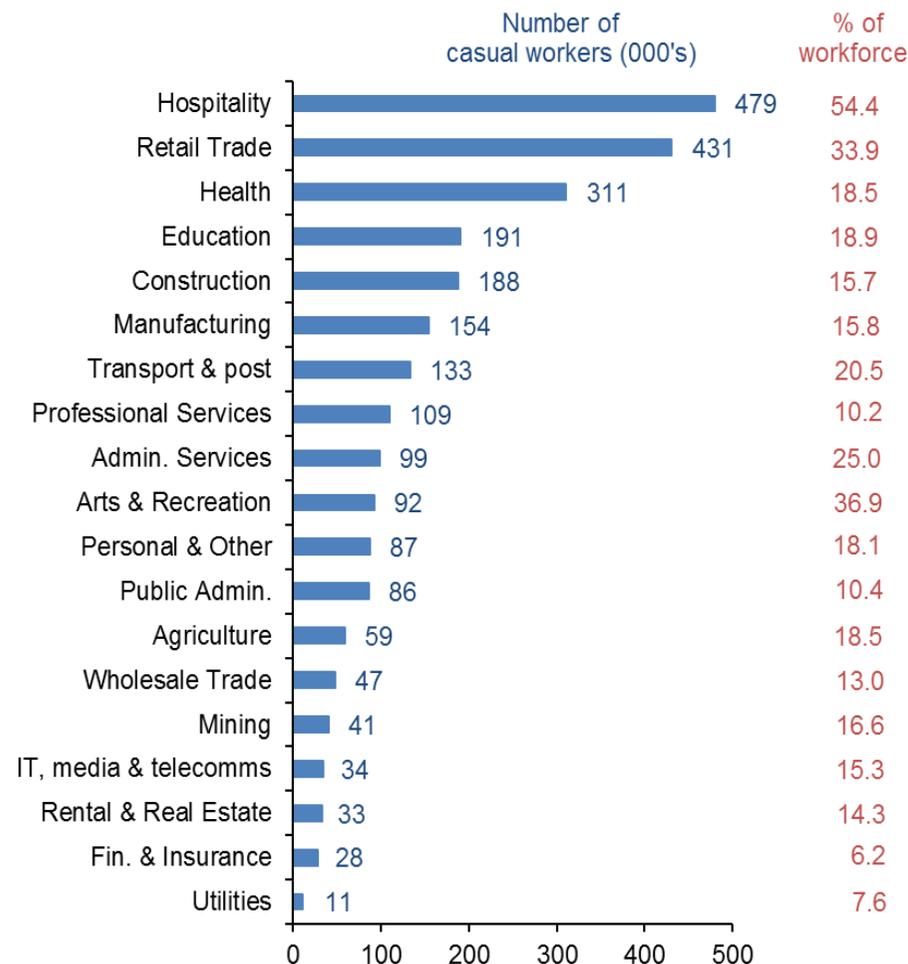
2.6 million Australian workers were casual employees in August 2018 (defined by the ABS as 'employees with no leave entitlements'). About the same share of the workforce are casual employees in 2018 (20.6%) as they were in 1998 (20.1%), even though the number of casual workers has increased from around 1.7 million workers in 1998 to 2.6 million in 2018, in line with growth in Australia's population (chart 2).

**Industry.** Casual workers are employed in all industries in Australia, but they are more evident in the hospitality (food and accommodation services), retail trade, healthcare and other services sectors (chart 1 and table 1). The largest concentration of casual work is in the hospitality industry, which employed around 480,000 casual workers in August 2018. Hospitality casuals accounted for 54.4% of the industry's workforce and 18.5% of all casual workers in Australia. Retail trade employs 430,600 casuals. They accounted for one third of workers in the retail industry or 16.5% of all casual workers. Healthcare, education and construction also employ relatively large numbers of casuals, but the very large size of these sectors means that casual workers comprise a much smaller proportion of their total workforces.

**Business size.** ABS data indicate that 39% of the total workforce worked in small businesses (those employing 1-19 people) as of June 2017. The industries with the highest proportion of workers in small businesses are also the industries in which high numbers and/or proportions of casual workers are employed (table 1). This means that casual workers are more likely to be employed in small businesses than are other types of workers. This is confirmed by data from the HILDA survey for 2015, which indicates that 51% all casuals worked in small businesses in 2015 (1-19 employees), and a further 31% work in medium sized businesses (20-99 employees) (table 1).

**State.** The industries in which casual workers are employed helps to explain the variation in casual work that has been observed across the states (chart 3). ABS data indicates that 25% of employees (excluding owner-managers and self-employed workers) were casual in 2017, ranging from a high of almost 30% of employees in Queensland to a low of 20% in the ACT. Queensland has a higher proportion of its (younger) workforce employed in hospitality, retail and construction than other states, while the ACT has the highest proportion of public administration workers. South Australia has higher proportions working in healthcare.

**Chart 1: Casual workers by industry, Aug 2018**



**Table 1: Total workers and casual workers, by industry and business size, 2017 and 2018**

Industry	Total workforce* (Aug 2018)	Workforce in small business ** (Jun 2017)	Casual workers (Aug 2018)	
	'000 (seas. adj.)	% of industry workforce	'000	% of industry workforce
Agriculture	320.6	77.7	59.3	18.5
Mining	245.5	6.5	40.8	16.6
Manufacturing	976.4	28.8	154.3	15.8
Utilities	144.9	9.5	11.0	7.6
Construction	1,194.3	67.2	187.5	15.7
Wholesale trade	363.5	33.8	47.3	13.0
Retail trade	1,270.3	33.8	430.6	33.9
Hospitality	881.4	52.2	479.5	54.4
Transport and warehousing	648.5	43.5	133.0	20.5
IT, Media & Telecomms	221.4	23.4	33.9	15.3
Financial and insurance	458.6	na	28.4	6.2
Rental and real estate services	228.3	76.1	32.6	14.3
Professional services	1,073.1	53.8	109.5	10.2
Administrative services	395.3	30.0	98.8	25.0
Public administration	825.0	na	85.8	10.4
Education and training	1,008.3	9.3	190.6	18.9
Health care	1,679.0	20.7	310.6	18.5
Arts and recreation services	249.1	na	91.9	36.9
Other services	481.8	65.9	87.2	18.1
<b>All industries</b>	<b>12,661.2</b>	<b>38.9</b>	<b>2,608.2</b>	<b>20.6</b>

\* ABS total workforce includes: permanent employees (with leave entitlements); casual employees (without leave entitlements); owner-managers without employees; owner-managers with employees; and family workers.

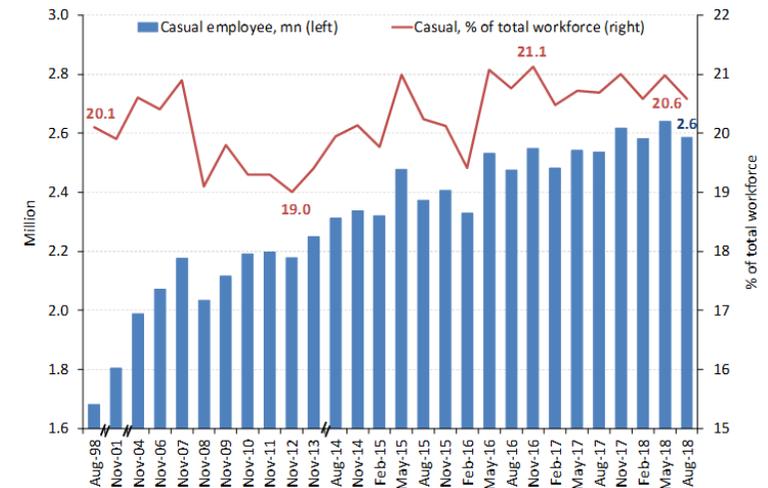
\*\* Small business = 0 to 19 employees. Private sector businesses only.

**Table 2: Total employees and casual employees by business size, 2015**

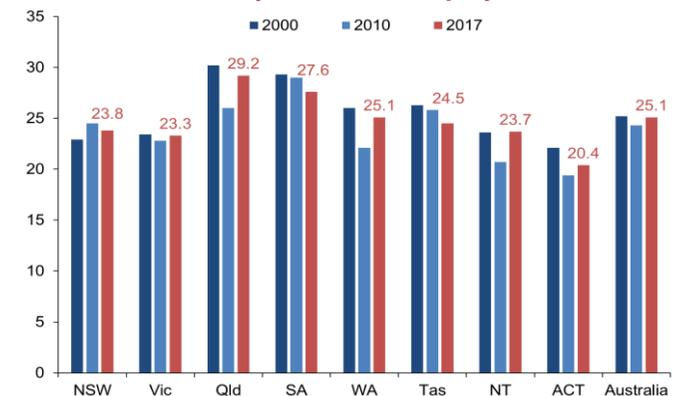
Business size (HILDA 2015)	Total employees*	Casual employees	
	% of total employees	% of casuals	% of total employees
HILDA Small (1-19 employees)	34.3	51.4	33.0
HILDA Med (20-99 employees)	31.6	30.7	21.4
HILDA Large (100+ employees)	34.1	17.9	11.6
<b>All businesses</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>22.1</b>

\* HILDA 'employees' includes: fixed term contract employees, permanent employees (with leave entitlements) and casual employees (without leave entitlements). Excludes all owner-managers, contractors and self-employed workers.

**Chart 2: Casual workers, number and % of workforce, 1998 to 2018**



**Chart 3: Casual workers by state, % of employees, 2000 to 2017**



**Data sources**

ABS, *Labour force quarterly detail*, Aug 2018  
 ABS, *Australian Industry*, 2016-17.  
 ABS, *Australian Labour Markets*, 6105.0 and HILDA 2015, cited in Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, *Characteristics and Use of Casual Employment in Australia*, Jan 2018

**Ai Group Economics and Research Team**

Website: [www.aigroup.com.au/policy-and-research/economics/](http://www.aigroup.com.au/policy-and-research/economics/)  
 Email: [economics@aiigroup.com.au](mailto:economics@aiigroup.com.au)