



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

BUREAU OF COMMUNICATIONS, ARTS AND REGIONAL RESEARCH

Frequently Asked Questions: Measuring Australia's Cultural and Creative Workforce, 2008–09 to 2023–24 (Interim Report)

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Overview

What is the purpose of the interim report?

The interim report provides new estimates using a refreshed methodology for measuring cultural and creative employment from 2008–09 to 2023–24, aligning with the objectives set out in the *National Cultural Policy – Revive*.

The report sets out ways to measure Australia's cultural and creative workforce – which forms 'Phase 2' of BCARR's cultural and creative research. After completing Phase 1 of the Cultural and Creative Account Methodology Refresh, which quantified the direct economic contribution of cultural and creative activity, Phase 2 shifts to the workforce conducting these activities — artists, designers, educators, technicians, and other support workers who work within the cultural and creative sector.

A robust methodology is used to estimate cultural and creative employment using various data sources published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The report also includes a detailed review of the new Occupational Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) to determine the in-scope cultural and creative occupations.

Data limitations are evident in the analysis due to the transition from the previous occupational framework—the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO)—to the new occupational framework—Occupational Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA). The analysis uses an interim solution to bridge classifications until the official OSCA statistics become widely available from 2027.

What is the focus of Phase 2?

Phase 2 focuses on cultural and creative employment. It develops a methodology to measure the cultural and creative workforce by incorporating new analytical dimensions, such as state and territory breakdowns, demographic characteristics, and representation of First Nations people.

Why are the estimates in the report considered ‘interim’?

The Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) has been used to determine the proposed in-scope cultural and creative occupations for Phase 2. OSCA was established by the ABS following an extensive review of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) conducted between July 2022 and December 2024. OSCA officially replaced ANZSCO in Australia in December 2024.

Although OSCA is now available, it will not be reported in official labour market statistics until September 2026 and in the 2026 Census data outputs.¹ The methodology developed is designed to provide interim workforce estimates in the absence of data available. Therefore, these estimates should be treated as ‘interim’ and interpreted with caution. Once new data becomes available, a revised occupational distribution will be developed to improve the accuracy of the cultural and creative employment estimates.

When is the final report expected to be published?

A final report is expected for release in 2027–28, following the publication of 2026 Census data and labour market statistics which incorporate updated occupational classifications.

Methodology questions

What framework is used to capture cultural and creative workforce?

There is no universally-accepted definition for cultural and creative activity, and there is similarly not a consistent definition for the cultural and creative workforce. However, there is a broadly consistent approach used to categorise the cultural and creative workforce. This approach applies across international frameworks, regardless of whether the sector is scoped broadly or narrowly, or how the framework is named in academic and public debates.

To measure the cultural and creative workforce, BCARR adopts these existing frameworks that classify employment by both industry and occupation. For clarity, the labels ‘specialised’, ‘embedded’, and ‘support’ from the ‘Creative Trident’ framework² are used for employment categories, which are defined as follows:

- workers in cultural and creative industries are classified as ‘specialised’ if they work in cultural and creative occupations
- workers in cultural and creative industries are classified as ‘support’ if they work in other occupations
- workers in other (non-cultural and creative) industries are classified as ‘embedded’ if they work in cultural and creative occupations.

However, it is important to note that while following the same labelling convention (‘specialised’, ‘embedded’ and ‘support’) as the Creative Trident framework, the scope of what constitutes cultural and creative industries and occupations differs from those defined in previous frameworks, including the Creative Trident.

How was the scope of cultural and creative occupations decided?

The release of the statistical working paper *Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia, 2008–09 to 2022–23 (Methodology Refresh)* quantified the size of cultural and creative activity in Australia based on a new scope for measuring this activity. In-scope activities were informed by a decision-making framework used to determine which industry and product lists were included as cultural and creative activity. Compared to the earlier measure of cultural and creative activity developed by the ABS, most activities continued to be in-scope, however, several main sources of ‘creative only’ activity from the previous industry scope were

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), [New occupation classification reflects modern Australian labour market](#), December 2024.

² P. Higgs and S. Cunningham (2008), [Creative Industries Mapping: Where have we come from and where are we going?](#), Creative Industries Journal, vol.1, no.1, pp. 7-30.

removed. These included computer system design and related services; clothing and footwear manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing.³

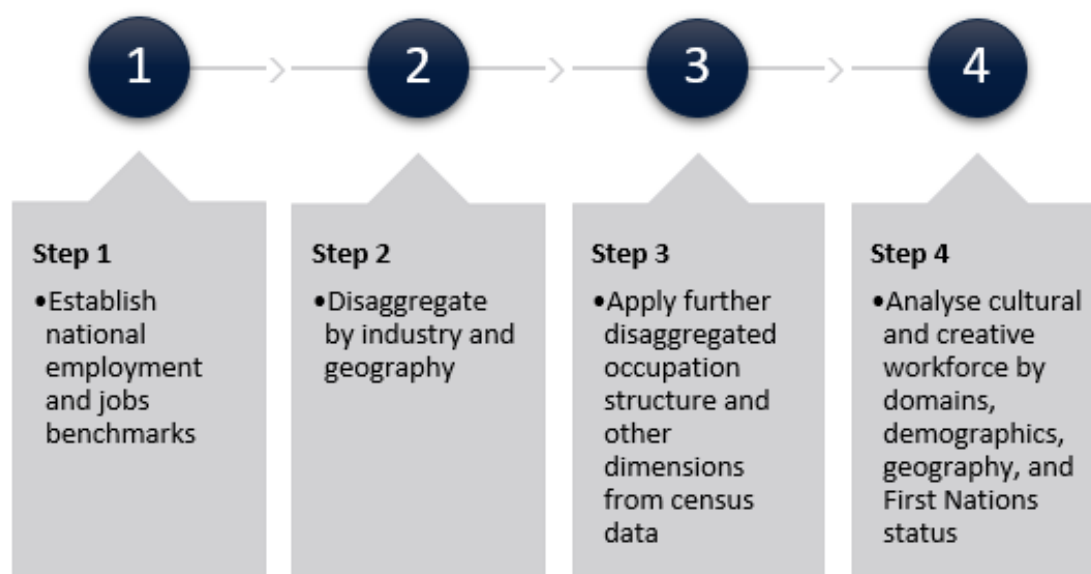
Cultural and creative occupations are aimed to **align with** the scope of cultural and creative activities produced by the sector – refer to *Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia, 2008–09 to 2022–23 (Methodology Refresh)*. This alignment ensures consistency between the measurement of cultural and creative output and classification of the cultural and creative workforce. The Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) has been reviewed to determine the in-scope cultural and creative occupations for Phase 2.

What is the approach and data sources used in the methodology?

Employment and secondary job estimates are developed using a top-down approach (Figure 1), ensuring alignment with national employment and jobs benchmarks. The estimation process starts with aggregating data from the ABS Labour Account, then further refined using labour force and jobs datasets for more detailed industry and state/ territory breakdowns.

Workforce composition within each industry class is determined using data from the Census, which provides detailed occupation-by-industry employment patterns and other dimensions. This allows for the mapping of occupations across industries in line with the ‘creative trident’ categories—specialised, support, and embedded workers—resulting in a detailed and representative view of cultural and creative employment across the Australian labour market.

Figure 1. Approach for measuring cultural and creative workforce



Source: BCARR.

How does this methodology estimate cultural and creative occupations across multiple domains?

Certain cultural and creative occupations span multiple domains. For example, *OSCA 231435 Production Manager (Screen or Live Performance)* may relate to both ‘Literature, creative and performing arts’ and ‘Film and television activities’. To address this complexity, a ‘**domain-industry**’ mapping approach is used.

Where an occupation can be directly linked to a domain through its industry, workers are allocated accordingly. For example, *Production Manager (Screen or Live Performance)* employed in industries associated with motion picture and video activities (ANZSIC 5511, 5512, 5513 and 5514) and television broadcasting (ANZSIC 5621 and 5622) are classified under the *Film and television activities* domain. Conversely, those

³ Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (2024), [Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia, 2008-09 to 2023-24 \(Methodology Refresh\)](#), December 2024, p. 10.

working in industries related to creative and performing arts activities (ANZSIC 9001, 9002 and 9003) are assigned to the *Literature, creative and performing arts* domain.

When the same occupation occurs in other industries – either elsewhere in the cultural and creative industries (e.g., ANZSIC 6940 *Advertising Services*) or outside them (e.g. ANZSIC 9114 *Sports and Physical Recreation Administrative Service*) – a **weighting approach** is applied. These weights are based on the share of workers already mapped to each relevant domain and are then applied to proportionally distribute workers whose industry does not allow a direct domain classification.

This approach ensures that occupations operating across multiple cultural and creative domains are estimated in a way that better reflects their real distribution. Further details on this approach are provided in the BCARR's interim report.

How are secondary jobs estimated?

Secondary jobs are partially estimated in the report. The coverage of secondary jobs which relate to the cultural and creative sectors includes:

- Individuals whose **main job is in a cultural and creative occupation** and take on secondary jobs in a **cultural and creative industry**. For example, a singer employed by a music company who also acts in the film sector
- Individuals whose **main job is in a cultural and creative occupation** but take on secondary jobs in a **non-cultural or creative industry**. For example, a visual artist who teaches part-time at a (non-arts) school
- Individuals whose **main job is outside the cultural and creative occupation** but take on secondary jobs **within cultural and creative industries**. For example, an administrative assistant takes on a secondary job at a gallery or performing arts venue.

Due to data limitations, the analysis **cannot capture the full occupational profile** of secondary jobs, particularly in the following cases:

- Where a person's main job is in a cultural and creative occupation, but their secondary job is neither in a cultural and creative occupation nor in a cultural and creative industry. For example, a singer who also works in a club – the estimates can identify that this secondary job is in the pub/club industry, but cannot further identify whether the role is still as a singer (a cultural and creative occupation) or as a waiter (a non-cultural or creative occupation).
- When a person's main job is in a non-cultural or creative occupation, but their secondary job is in a cultural and creative industry. For example, a cleaner whose secondary job is in a museum – the estimates can identify the industry as cultural and creative, but not whether the role itself is cultural and creative (e.g. a museum guide) or not (e.g. a cleaner).

The current estimation focuses on observable linkages between main job occupations and the industries of secondary jobs, rather than further identify the occupation of the secondary job itself.

Key interim findings in the report

How many people were employed in the cultural and creative sector as their main job?

An estimated 591,302 people were employed in a cultural and creative industry or occupation as their main job in 2023–24. This is an increase of 7.1% from 2022–23 and 33% since 2008–09.

As a share of total employment, cultural and creative employment (4.1%) is comparable to the employment share of transport, postal and warehousing (4.6%), and wholesale trade (3.8%).

In 2023–24, the most prominent domains of cultural and creative employment were architecture services, advertising and promotion, and visual arts and crafts.

How many secondary jobs are in the cultural and creative sector?

Secondary jobs are partially estimated in this analysis. In 2023–24, an estimated 49,214 secondary jobs were related to the cultural and creative sector. The number of secondary jobs within the cultural and creative sector was 4.5% of all secondary jobs, higher than the sector's share of main job employment in the economy (4.1%). The largest domains of cultural and creative secondary jobs in 2023–24 are film and television activities; literature, creative and performing arts; and advertising and promotion.

How does cultural and creative employment differ by states and territories?

In relative terms, cultural and creative employment is higher in New South Wales and Victoria, with these states having higher shares of their respective total workforces in cultural and creative employment.

- Different patterns of cultural and creative employment are evident across Australia. New South Wales leads across nearly all domains particularly in advertising and promotion and architecture services, while Victoria shows strong representation in print media and publishing (excl. internet) and design and fashion.
- Queensland has a large cultural and creative presence supported by tourism, yet it remains under-represented across all domains compared to its population size.
- South Australia and Western Australia also make significant contributions, though on a smaller scale, such as in visual arts and crafts; radio broadcasting, and events (arts).
- Tasmania, Northern Territory, and the Australian Capital Territory exhibit niche strengths in museums and galleries; events (arts); and radio broadcasting.
- Emerging fields such as digital games development are experiencing growth, mainly in New South Wales and Victoria, indicating potential areas for future industry expansion.

How does cultural and creative employment differ by demographics?

In 2023–24, women made up 56% (331,130) of cultural and creative employment, while men accounted for 44% (260,172). This contrasts with overall employment figures for the same period, in which men accounted for 52.2% and women for 47.8%.

Women have been prominent in the cultural and creative workforce, particularly in the domains of libraries and archives, arts health and wellbeing, and arts education. Conversely, men represented a larger share of roles in music production and distribution, architecture services, digital games development, and film and television activities.

Individuals working in cultural and creative domains were predominantly between the ages of 20 and 49 years. The mean age of the cultural and creative workforce increased from 39.5 years in 2008–09 to 40.6 years in 2023–24, while the median age changed from 38 years to 39 years over the same period. The median age of those employed within the cultural and creative sector was in line with total employment in Australia – also 39 years in 2023–24.

The libraries and archives domain had the oldest workers on average, with a mean age of 48.6 years and a median age of 50 years in 2023–24. Conversely, the digital games development domain had the youngest workers on average, with a mean age of 36.9 years and a median age of 36 years.

How many First Nations were employed in the cultural and creative sector?

In 2023–24, an estimated 4,955 First Nations people were employed in the cultural and creative sector, an increase of 82.5% from 2,716 in 2008–09. First Nations share of total cultural and creative employment rose from 0.6% to 0.8% during this period.

Most First Nations workers were employed in the domains of visual arts and crafts; events (arts); literature, creative and performing arts; and advertising and promotion. These four domains constituted approximately 52% of total First Nations employment within the cultural and creative sectors in 2023–24.