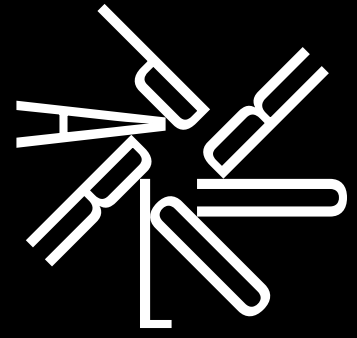


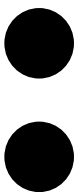
prepared by

**Gill Matthewson,  
Justine Clark &  
Anwyn Hocking**

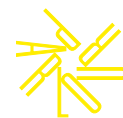


: gender  
equity,  
architecture.

# Parlour Census Report 2001–2021: Gender & diversity in Australian architecture



[parlour.org.au](http://parlour.org.au)



# Parlour Census Report 2001–2021: Gender & diversity in Australian Architecture

## Credits

Data analysis  
**Gill Matthewson  
& Anwyn Hocking**

Data visualisation  
**Anwyn Hocking  
& Justine Clark**

Writer & editor  
**Gill Matthewson  
& Justine Clark**

Graphic design direction  
**Studio Catherine Griffiths**

Layout  
**Justine Clark**

Editor  
**Susie Ashworth**

## Acknowledgments

The value of data is now broadly recognised, and key representative bodies in architecture have come together to support this work.

We thank the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA), the Association of Consulting Architects (ACA), ArchiTeam Cooperative and the Australian Institute of Architects for providing financial and moral support for this report.

The analysis of the data undertaken by Gill Matthewson was supported by the XYX Lab, Monash University.

We also thank the Parlour Collective and Parlour Partners who support all of our work.

Improving equity is a large undertaking, and we are more effective when we all work together.

**ISBN 978-0-6459571-0-5**

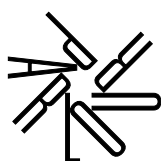
Copyright © 2023 Parlour : gender, equity, architecture.

You are permitted to download, display, print and reproduce this material in an unaltered form only for your personal, non-commercial use or for use within your organisation. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, all other rights are reserved.

Please cite as follows:

Gill Matthewson, Justine Clark and Anwyn Hocking, *Parlour Census Report 2001–2021: Gender and Diversity in Architecture in Australia* (Melbourne: Parlour, 2023)

Parlour Census Report 2001–2021 produced with the support of



Parlour



MONASH  
ART  
DESIGN &  
ARCHITECTURE

**XYXLAB**  
GENDER+PLACE

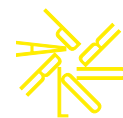


Australian  
Institute of  
Architects



**AACA**

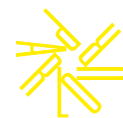
**ARCHITTEAM**



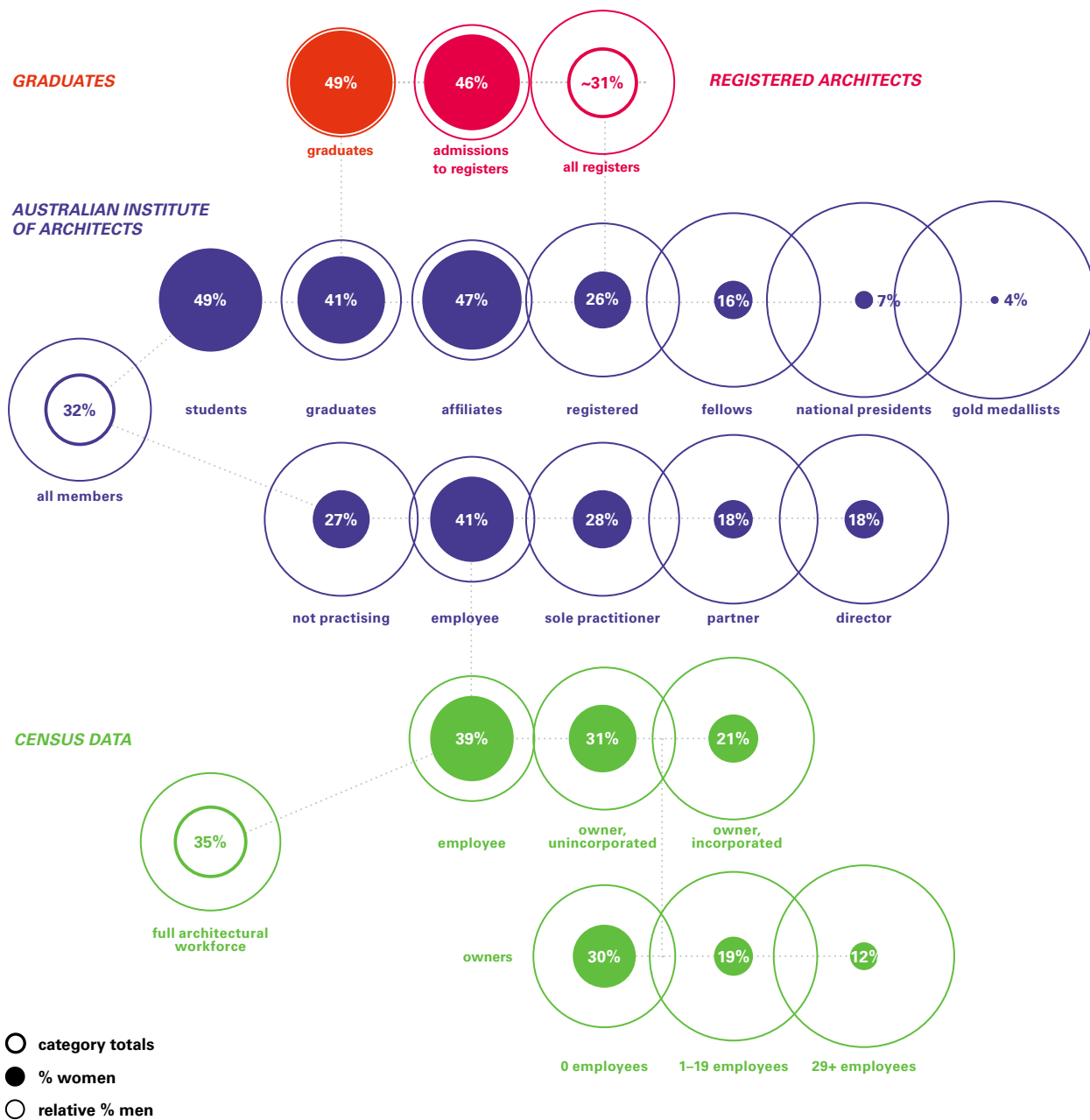
## Contents

Introduction	<b>5</b>
Key findings	<b>8</b>
1 : The Count	<b>13</b>
2 : Age profiles	<b>20</b>
3 : Joining, staying, leaving	<b>24</b>
4 : Employment & ownership	<b>27</b>
5 : Hours of work	<b>34</b>
6 : Income & the pay gap	<b>39</b>
7 : Impact of dependent children	<b>45</b>
8 : Indigeneity & cultural diversity	<b>48</b>
9 : Summary	<b>54</b>
Appendix A	<b>56</b>
Appendix B	<b>59</b>
Data sources	<b>61</b>

---



**Women in Australian Architecture, 2021**





## Introduction

Analysis of the Australian Census data provides a comprehensive picture of the architectural workforce at the macro level and reveals the varied experiences of broad groups.

This report provides evidence of structural advantages, of entrenched impediments, and the way that these impact careers.

The knowledge gained through data analysis is vital for developing, implementing and assessing the impact of strategies for change.

Parlour's work is grounded in the premise that greater diversity in the architecture profession will improve its ability to meet the complex, challenging and changing needs of the future. Simply put, diversity encourages a more robust profession, which ultimately produces architecture that better meets the needs of the community.

Activating data within architecture's workplaces and public and institutional spheres is a vital part of the push for gender equity.

This report analyses data from five Censuses to explore participation in the Australian architectural workforce over 20 years. It provides insight into the overall shape of the profession, and gendered patterns of participation. It includes new data on the impact of parenting, the cultural diversity pay gap and the size of practices.

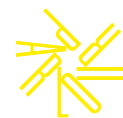
Over the course of the twenty-first century women have steadily increased their presence in most available metrics. At the turn of the century, women comprised just 20% of the architectural workforce as measured through the Census. Two decades years later, in 2021, they constitute 35%.

This growth is not unexpected. Since the mid-1990s, women have been over 40% of all architecture graduates. The 2021 data shows that the numbers of women who go on to register as architects has skyrocketed, and there are ever-increasing numbers of women visible in influential roles and senior levels of the profession. The numbers suggest that women are taking matters into their own hands regarding their presence in architectural workforce and profession.

Nonetheless, growth is more sluggish than might be expected from graduation rates. Analysis of all available data indicates that gender-based bias continues to impact careers in architecture. Structural, systemic and cultural factors still impede the progress of women. New data shows that this is exacerbated for women with diverse cultural backgrounds.

If we are to see serious change, we need more than individual women 'doing it for themselves' – as effective as that is. Structural and systemic change must continue. The importance of equity needs to be communicated and activated in every nook and cranny of the profession, individually and collectively.

The Parlour Census reports are a means to review the current state of the profession and develop strategies for that activation.



## Background – data-led action

This report is part of a body of research that examines the experiences of women as a group, and explores the impact of gender on careers and professional engagement. This work has been ongoing since 2011 and is integral to Parlour’s action and advocacy.

In 2014, Parlour published its first statistical portrayal of the profession in Australia in *Architecture Australia*. Drawing extensively on Census data, this analysis by Gill Matthewson presented a stark picture of the attrition of women from the architectural workforce over time. It recorded a sparsity at senior levels that was at odds with graduation rates of more than 40% women since the mid-1990s.

This was the first time the profession had been presented with a comprehensive statistical image of itself. The impact was significant. Individuals, practices and professional bodies were stunned, and many set to work to improve the situation.

In 2018 we published the *Parlour Census Report 2001–2016: Women in architecture in Australia*. This extended the initial statistical picture with a detailed analysis of trends since 2000.

This current report builds on that work through the analysis of the most recent Census, conducted in 2021. It explores earlier patterns, some of which continue into 2021, identifies shifts and analyses additional data sets.

Continuing to track participation in the architectural workforce via Census data is an important part of the work to improve equity. Analysing data allows us to identify patterns, the good and the bad. It provides evidence of the structural impediments faced by women as a group and gives important context for the stories of all people in Australian architecture. In documenting gendered patterns of participation we also gain a comprehensive picture of the profession as a whole.

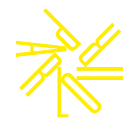
## Opportunities & limitations of the data

*Parlour Census Report 2001–2021* delves into data fields that we could not easily access in previous analyses. This is due to changes in the way the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data can be attained. The new TableBuilder Pro tool allows us to drill down into the 2021 data ourselves, rather than having to place an order with the ABS. This has enabled us to explore the data more fully, to investigate hunches as they occur, and to respond to evolving suggestions. Of note is the information about the impact of parenting on participation, the more extended material on cultural diversity (in particular in relation to the pay gap), information about size of businesses, and a small amount of material on mental health.

The way the Census collects and processes information, and the questions asked to garner this, impacts the data produced and thereby the analysis. This has a number of implications in the context of this report.

First, occupations are self-reported. This means that the Census is more inclusive than any other count of professional participation – such as registration or membership of professional associations. The resulting data captures a much larger array of people active in the profession.

Second, the Census randomly alters small numbers to maintain anonymity of individuals. This means that there are limits to how the Census data can be sliced and diced. If too many criteria are considered simultaneously, the numbers get too small to be meaningful. Following the release of preliminary data we received many questions about many topics. We explore some suggestions here – most importantly the cultural diversity pay gap requested by Maryam Gusheh – and provide basic information about other disciplines and fields in Appendix A. Other suggested analysis is not possible within the limits of the Census questions and the way the data is treated and made available by the ABS.



## **Diverse gender identities & binary data**

The data available from the ABS treats gender as a binary. Although the 2021 Census offered – for the first time – a third option for gender expression and identity (non-binary sex in addition to male and female), the ABS later announced that the way it framed the question failed to capture meaningful data. As a result ‘non-binary’ was not included as a sex category in the Tablebuilder data products and most of those who responded as non-binary were assigned a binary sex using random allocation.

The ABS has since released a statement of regret and committed to establishing an LGBTIQ+ Expert Advisory Committee to provide guidance into the wording, processing and dissemination of the 2026 Census questions.

Parlour welcomes this shift. We recognise that the available 2021 data erases and elides many people’s experiences and hides a great deal of difference and complexity. This absence is significant in terms of representation and visibility.

Despite this limitation, the Census offers important insight into the experiences of women and men as large-scale groups. This helps uncover inequity and tracks patterns of bias and discrimination over time.

The themes that emerge are significant, and we look forward to examining them in relation to more inclusive gender identities in coming years.

## **A note about the term ‘architect’**

The word ‘architect’ is legally protected by Architects Acts in each state and territory of Australia. The Census does not take this into account, and respondents are asked to identify their role using the available terms. It is important to note that this self-identification does not mean that people are wilfully misrepresenting themselves as registered architects. The Census data is important precisely because it is inclusive of the full workforce.

In this report we refer to the ‘architectural workforce’ and occasionally to ‘Census-identified architects’.

## **Resources to support change**

This report contains fundamental evidence of ongoing inequity in the architectural profession and points to unequal opportunity in the development of careers. It documents some gratifying improvements, but it is clear that there is much more to be done – at the scale of the profession, the workplace and the individual – and by us all.

Parlour has a range of excellent resources to help. We recommend that you refer to the Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice, to the editorial and event resources published through the Stepping Up program (in collaboration with the Champions of Change Architecture Group and the Association of Consulting Architects), to the Light at the End of the Tunnel event recordings, and our extensive, ever-growing editorial content. All can be found on the Parlour website.



## Key findings

These findings demonstrate that many of the positive patterns first identified in the 2016 Census report are strengthening. This is good news. However, the data also makes it clear that architecture is not equitable and does not offer equal opportunity for all. New analysis of data previously unavailable reveals concerning patterns that reinforce this overall finding.

Ongoing sustained attention is required from the profession and practices to create long-term, systemic, structural change.

### 1. Women comprise an increasing proportion of the rapidly growing architectural workforce.

- The size of the architectural workforce has increased by 71% in two decades – from 11,283 in 2001 to 19,323 in 2021.
- Women have almost tripled in number over this period – from 2,296 to 6,667.
- The proportion of women has increased from 20% in 2001 to 35% in 2021.
- Women comprise the entire overall growth in the architectural workforce relative to the Australian population.

There is a gendered difference in growth relative to the Australian population. The number of women in the architectural workforce per 100,000 people increases consistently over two decades, while the number of men holds steady.

### 2. Graduation rates have doubled since 2000, but less than half the graduates enter the Australian architectural workforce.

- The number of architecture graduates per annum grew from 704 in 2000 to 1,403 in 2021.
- Women have comprised 40% or more of all graduates since the mid-1990s.
- In 2021, 52% of graduates were international students.
- Only 38% of the 50,675 Census respondents who had studied architecture identified their current occupation as architecture – 42% of men and 32% of women.

Many people with architectural qualifications work across a wide range of industries and occupations. This reminds us that the profession and discipline is larger than those working directly in architectural practice, and that many graduates are shaping the built environment via many and diverse roles.

### 3. Registration numbers for women have increased significantly.

- The proportion of women identified in the Census who are registered has increased from barely half in 2011 to 71% in 2021.
- In 2021, women were 46% of those who attained registration that year – an increase on 41% in 2016 and 34% in 2011.
- Registration rates between men and women now nearly match graduation levels.

One of the most striking shifts identified in 2016 became a sustained pattern in 2021. Parlour advises women to register as a key career tactic. This is because, for many complicated reasons, credentials such as registration matter more in women's career development. Registration is also an important form of visibility. This data suggests that many women have taken direct action in terms of registration and the visibility it supports.





#### 4. The architectural workforce skews young, but the average age of women is increasing.

- Overall numbers increase up to age 40, at which point they start to decline.
- Men still dominate this younger cohort, despite the substantial increase in numbers of younger women seen in the 2021 Census.
- In 2021, for the first time, the largest group of women is aged 30–34 rather 25–29, as seen in earlier Censuses. Numbers of men also peak in this age group.
- In 2021, 54% of women in the architectural workforce are aged 35 or over. This is the opposite of previous years, when more than half the women were under 35.
- The average age of men has been getting slightly younger over the last two decades.
- Increasing numbers of men over 65 are remaining in the workforce.

Women are a maturing segment of the architectural workforce, and are increasingly in positions to influence and reshape the profession. Nonetheless, women are still under-represented in all age groups, and while numbers of younger women have increased dramatically, they still do not enter the workforce in numbers proportionate to graduation rates.

#### 5. Retention rates are equivalent for women and men over 40 years old.

- Older women and men are leaving the workforce at similar rates.

The relative stability identified in the 2016 Census holds in 2021. This points to a level of determination and suggests that the forces that compel or nudge older practitioners to leave may be being felt more equally, or may be having less of an impact on women than in previous years.

#### 6. Increasing proportions of the workforce are employees.

- In 2021, 68% of the architectural workforce were employees, compared with 57% in 2001.
- Women are over-represented as employees – 77% of women were employees in 2021, compared to 63% of men.

The increasing numbers of employees may reflect the increasing size of architectural practices, but this does not explain why a larger proportion of women are employees.

#### 7. Women are a growing proportion of owners of architectural businesses.

- In 2021, 31% of the architectural workforce were business owners. One quarter of these owners are women.
- Women owning incorporated businesses increased by 40% between 2016 and 2021.
- Women become owners of architectural businesses at a later age than men.

#### 8. Women are significantly under-represented as owners of larger businesses.

- Just 18% of owners who employ people are women. In contrast, women are 30% of the owners with no employees.
- Only 7% of all owners employ over 20 people.
- Only 52 women own practices employing over 20 people – just 12% of these employers and less than 1% of all owners.

The increase in women owning incorporated businesses is positive, but it is concerning that larger practices have only a very few women in ownership. This matters as these practices employ many people. Practices need to undertake serious work to understand and address impediments and examine how processes, policies and ownership agreements can be refined to ensure equality of access.



## 9. Gender pay gaps persist.

- The 2021 gender pay gap for full-time workers was 17.2%, down from 19% in 2016.
- The full-time pay gap for the younger age group reduced to 2.6% in 2021, down from 7.2% in 2001.
- The full-time pay gap increases with age.

Pay gaps are a fundamental indicator of inequity, and point to an imbalance of power and influence as well as economic inequity. The attention directed to pay gaps and pay inequity in recent years has had some impact, but there is much work to do.

## 10. Long hours persist, but have reduced over the last two decades.

- The architectural workforce works longer hours than 'all professionals' – 18% work 49+ hours a week, compared with 14% of all professionals.
- In 2021, 23% of women and 36% of men worked over 40 hours. There is a significant drop on earlier data for men in particular – in 2001, 58% of men worked these hours.
- Older men bear the brunt of long hours. In 2021, at least a quarter of men aged 40 to 60 work more than 48 hours per week.
- Owners of incorporated businesses work longer hours – 20% of women and 35% of men record working over 48 hours a week in 2021.

The marked easing in working hours recorded in the Census suggests that action and advocacy – at the level of the profession and some practices – has had some impact. This is positive, but there is more to do.

## 11. Patterns of part-time work are strongly gendered.

- In 2021, 19% of the architectural workforce were part time – 26% of women and 15% of men.
- There is a small increase in men working part time – from 13% in 2011 to 15% in 2021.
- The proportion of women working part time has dropped from 29% in 2011 to 26% in 2021.

- Patterns of part-time work for women and men without dependent children are roughly equal.
- Only 9% of the owners of businesses employing over 20 people work part time. In contrast, 45% of owners with no employees work part time.
- Architecture lags behind all professions in supporting part-time work. This is particularly apparent in the data on women – in 2021 36% of all professional women worked part time, compared to 26% of women in architecture.

The strongly gendered pattern of working hours reflects societal norms of women and care, which appear to be exacerbated in architecture. A great deal of work has been done on developing part-time and flexible work policies and protocols in the last decade. This has not yet impacted the data in a substantial way. Progress on equity will be evident when the patterns of working hours are balanced by gender.

## 12. Caring for dependent children has a significant and gendered impact.

- In 2021, 42% of the architectural workforce had dependent children – 40% of women and 43% of men.
- Women in the architectural workforce become parents at a later age than 'all professionals' – only 1% of women with dependent children working in architecture are in their 20s.
- Almost half of the women with dependent children work part time, compared to 11% of men with dependent children.
- One quarter of men with dependent children work more than 49 hours a week.
- Practitioners with dependent children are more likely to own their own business. This pattern is particularly pronounced for women – 36% of women with dependent children are owners, compared to 13% of women without dependent children.

This 2021 analysis is the first time that the impact of being a parent or guardian of dependent children has been investigated. The extreme gendered patterns revealed are both stunning and unsurprising. It is concerning that many practices seem unable to provide workplaces that are compatible with parenting.



### 13.

#### The number of Indigenous practitioners has doubled, but overall numbers remain low.

- In 2021, 65 people in the architectural workforce identified as Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander – 17 women and 48 men.
- Indigenous practitioners are approximately 0.34% of the architectural workforce – substantially less than the 3.2% of Indigenous people in the population as a whole.

This small number of Indigenous practitioners carries a substantial cultural load. There is clearly significant work to do in supporting this group, providing culturally safe working environments and improving pathways into architecture for First Nations peoples.

### 14.

#### The architectural workforce is culturally diverse.

- In 2021, 41% of the architectural workforce was born outside of Australia – 40% of men and 47% of women.
- The most common birthplace outside Australia for women was China and for men it was the United Kingdom.
- In 2021, 46% of the architectural workforce cited North-West European ancestry, followed by Southern and Eastern European (14%), North-Eastern Asian (14%) and Oceanian (12%).
- Almost 70% of the architectural workforce speak English at home. The second most common language is Chinese.

The measures available through the Census to understand cultural diversity are blunt – country of birth, ancestry and languages spoken at home. Nonetheless, the preliminary data drawn from these measures provides useful insight and could form the foundation for much-needed research and analysis. What is already apparent, is that the degree of cultural diversity apparent in the Census data is not reflected in the image and visible leadership levels of the profession.

### 15.

#### Cultural and gender pay gaps reveal significant inequity.

- Architects with North-West European ancestry are most numerous and are paid the most. There is a 17.7% pay gap between men and women in this group.
- There are pay gaps of over 30% between men with North-west European ancestry and women of most other ancestry groupings.
- Cultural and gender pay gaps persist when the data is examined by age groups. For example, there is a 17.8% pay gap between those with North-East Asian ancestry and those of North-West European descent in the 35–39 age group.
- People born in Australia – while the most numerous – are not the highest paid overall. Those born in North-west Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa have the highest incomes. (We assume the sub-Saharan group are predominantly immigrants from South Africa.)
- The gender pay gap persists in the most well-paid groups. For example, women born in North-west Europe earn 10.1% less than men born in Oceania.

The dominance of white men at senior levels of the profession is clear from this data. The cultural pay gaps suggest that people from Asian countries experience more barriers rising to senior levels of the profession, and that this impacts women most strongly.

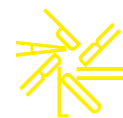
These findings are shocking. They point to unacceptable biases within the profession. This needs urgent attention!



Numbers matter!

We hope you find the *Parlour Census Report 2001–2021: Gender & diversity in Australian architecture* thought-provoking and useful.

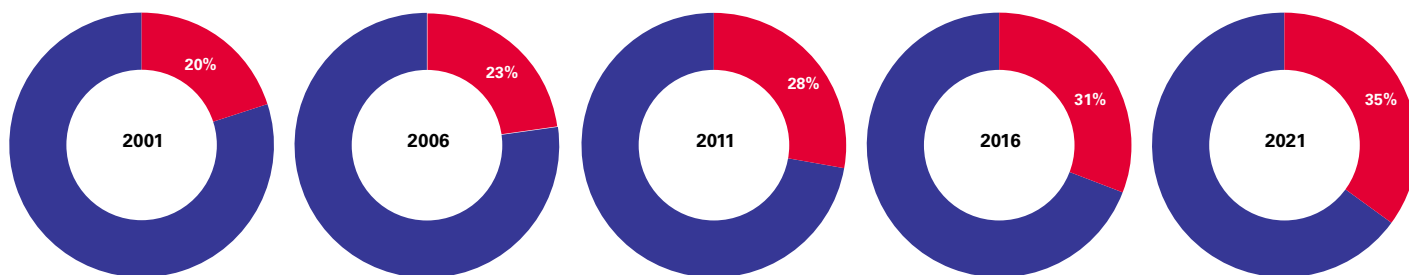
We trust you will activate this knowledge in your own context as we work together to improve equity for all.



# 1 : The Count

*The size of the architectural workforce, measured through the Census, has increased by 71% over the first two decades of the twenty-first century. This substantial growth is particularly pronounced in women who have almost tripled in number. As a result, the proportion of women in the profession has increased from 20% in 2001 to 35% in 2021.*

*Women account for the entire increase in architects per head of population. The proportion of the architectural workforce who are registered architects has also increased substantially – in 2021 approximately 79% of the overall workforce was registered, 71% of women and 81% of men. The jump for women over the last decade is dramatic – from 51% in 2011 to 71% in 2021.*



**Figure 1.1**  
Women as a proportion of the architectural workforce, 2001–2021

## **A bigger piece of the pie**

Between 2001 and 2021 the overall architectural workforce grew by 8,040 people – from 11,283 at the start of the century to 19,323 twenty years later (Table 1). This represents a constant 13% to 14% growth every five years since 2006.

The number of women almost tripled over these two decades – from 2,296 to 6,667. This growth has accrued year by year; with each Census count, the number of women increased between 25% and 34%. In percentage terms, the growth in numbers of men is much more muted – since 2006 there have been single-digit percentage increases for men from one Census to the next.

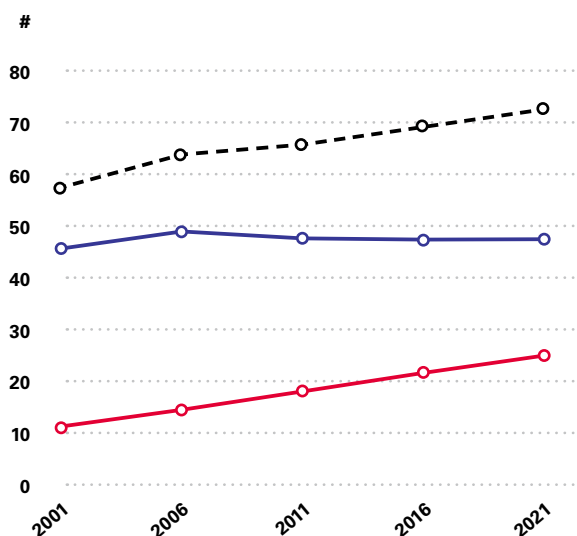
The overall addition to the workforce since 2001 comprises 4,371 women and 3,669 men. This greater number of women is not because women are graduating and entering the profession in larger numbers than men. Men continue to flood into the profession in high numbers, but these new men are almost balanced by those leaving the profession, the majority of whom are older men.

The overall impact is that women form an ever-larger proportion of the Census-identified architectural workforce. At the start of the century women were 20% of the profession. Over the years, their share of the pie has grown steadily to reach 35% in 2021.



**Figure 1.2**  
Architectural workforce per 100,000 people, by gender

- women
- men
- total



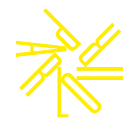
### Architectural workforce relative to population

The population of Australia has also grown. This means that the size of the architectural workforce per 100,000 people has increased at a much slower rate than the straight count. In 2001, the Census counted 58.4 ‘architects’ per 100,000 people; by 2021 this had increased to 73.1 (Figure 1.2). This represents 3% to 5% growth every five years relative to the Australian population, compared to the 13% to 14% growth every five years seen in the direct count since 2006.

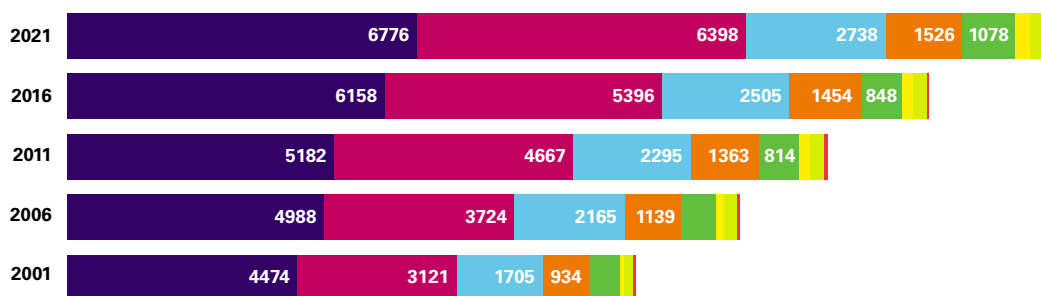
There is a strong gender difference in this growth. The number of women in architecture per 100,000 people is steadily increasing, while the number of men is holding steady relative to population. This means that women make up the entire overall growth in architects per head of population.

**Table 1.1**  
Architectural workforce by state & gender, 2001–2021

	2001				2006				2011				2016				2021			
	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w
<b>ACT</b>	188	35	223	<b>84 : 16</b>	238	66	304	<b>78 : 22</b>	243	71	310	<b>77 : 23</b>	232	71	303	<b>77 : 23</b>	273	110	383	<b>71 : 29</b>
<b>NSW</b>	3,476	998	4,474	<b>78 : 22</b>	3,754	1,234	4,988	<b>75 : 25</b>	3,634	1,554	5,182	<b>70 : 30</b>	4,147	2,011	6,158	<b>67 : 33</b>	4,385	2,391	6,776	<b>65 : 35</b>
<b>NT</b>	55	9	64	<b>86 : 14</b>	42	16	58	<b>72 : 28</b>	55	24	81w	<b>70 : 30</b>	34	22	56	<b>61 : 39</b>	36	22	58	<b>62 : 38</b>
<b>QLD</b>	1,450	255	1,705	<b>85 : 15</b>	1,734	431	2,165	<b>80 : 20</b>	1,759	537	2,295	<b>77 : 23</b>	1,801	704	2,505	<b>82 : 28</b>	1,863	875	2,738	<b>70 : 30</b>
<b>SA</b>	518	114	632	<b>82 : 18</b>	569	126	695	<b>82 : 18</b>	630	184	814	<b>77 : 23</b>	632	216	848	<b>75 : 25</b>	757	321	1,078	<b>71 : 29</b>
<b>TAS</b>	112	18	130	<b>86 : 14</b>	169	43	212	<b>80 : 20</b>	202	47	254	<b>81 : 19</b>	202	69	271	<b>75 : 25</b>	261	105	366	<b>71 : 29</b>
<b>VIC</b>	2,412	709	3,121	<b>77 : 23</b>	2,813	911	3,724	<b>76 : 24</b>	3,299	1,372	4,667	<b>71 : 29</b>	3,592	1,804	5,396	<b>67 : 33</b>	4,056	2,342	6,398	<b>63 : 37</b>
<b>WA</b>	776	158	934	<b>83 : 17</b>	880	259	1,139	<b>77 : 23</b>	1,010	355	1,363	<b>84 : 26</b>	1,011	443	1,454	<b>70 : 30</b>	1,025	501	1,526	<b>67 : 33</b>
<b>total</b>	<b>8,987</b>	<b>2,296</b>	<b>11,283</b>	<b>80 : 20</b>	<b>10,199</b>	<b>3,086</b>	<b>13,285</b>	<b>77 : 23</b>	<b>10,831</b>	<b>4,142</b>	<b>14,966</b>	<b>72 : 28</b>	<b>11,651</b>	<b>5,340</b>	<b>16,991</b>	<b>69 : 31</b>	<b>12,656</b>	<b>6,667</b>	<b>19,323</b>	<b>65 : 35</b>
<b># growth on previous census</b>					1,212	790	2,002		624	1,057	1,681		828	1,197	2,025		1,005	1,327	2,332	
<b>% growth on previous census</b>					13%	34%	18%		6%	34%	13%		8%	29%	14%		9%	25%	14%	



**Figure 1.3**  
Architectural workforce,  
by state 2001–2021



### Where does the architectural workforce live?

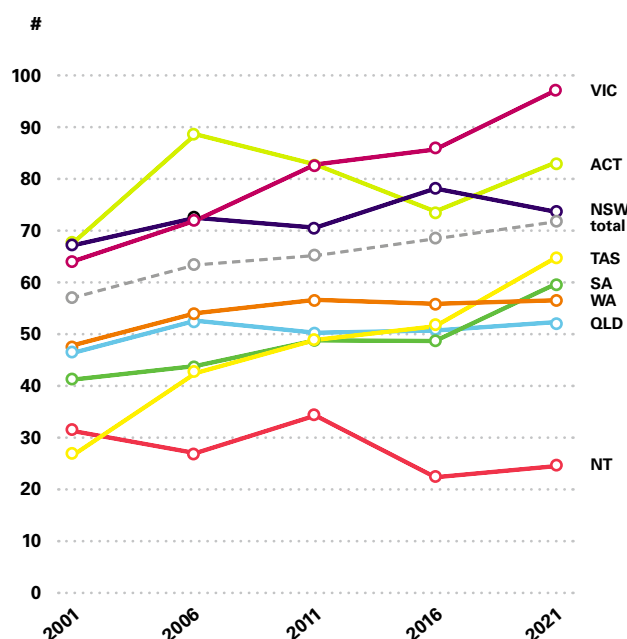
The size of the architectural workforce has increased in every state and territory since 2001 (Figure 1.3). New South Wales leads in raw numbers, with Victoria close behind.

Considered in relation to the population as a whole, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory have significantly more ‘architects’ per 100,000 people than the country as a whole (Figure 1.4). Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory have all seen significant jumps since 2016, while New South Wales has declined. Some shifts may be the result of population moves driven by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overwhelmingly, the architectural workforce is concentrated in metropolitan centres, with 88% of people living in cities (Table B1, Appendix B). This is much higher than other workers – 77% of all professionals and 69% of all workers live in the major cities. In architecture, a slightly larger proportion of women live in the metropolitan areas.

Historically, there has been a slow increase in the architectural workforce living in metropolitan areas, but that trend shifted in 2021 with a decline of two percentage points on the 2016 data. This pattern has occurred in all states and territories, apart from the Northern Territory and Tasmania, and is consistent between men and women. Most likely this is due to the shifts brought about by the pandemic. It will take some years to determine whether this pattern will continue.

**Figure 1.4**  
Architectural workforce  
per 100,000 people, 2001–2021





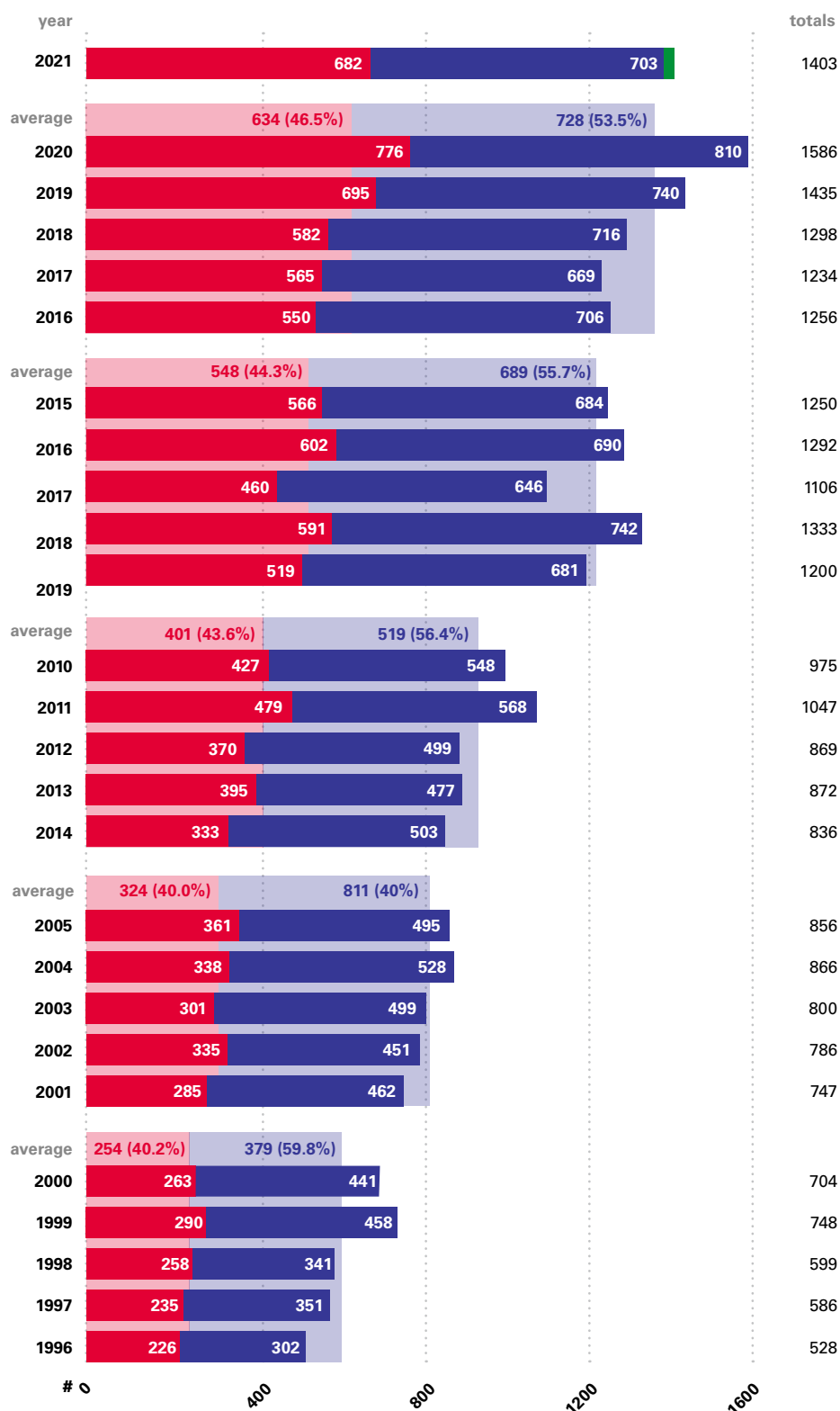


## Graduation rates

The number of people graduating from architecture programs has increased steadily across the twenty-first century – doubling from 704 graduates in 2000 to 1,403 in 2021. Women have comprised 40% or more of all graduates since the mid-1990s.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1.5**  
Australian graduates in  
architecture 1996–2021

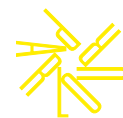
- women
- men
- unknown



1. 1990 to 2013 graduation data compiled by Gill Matthewson and Kirsty Volz drawing on the Australian Institute of Architects' *Architecture Schools of Australasia, 1988–2015*. Also published in Gill Matthewson, "The Gendered Attrition of Architects in Australia," *arq: Architecture Research Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (2017): 171–182.

More recent data is from the AACA *Annual Reports on Accredited Architecture Programs*.





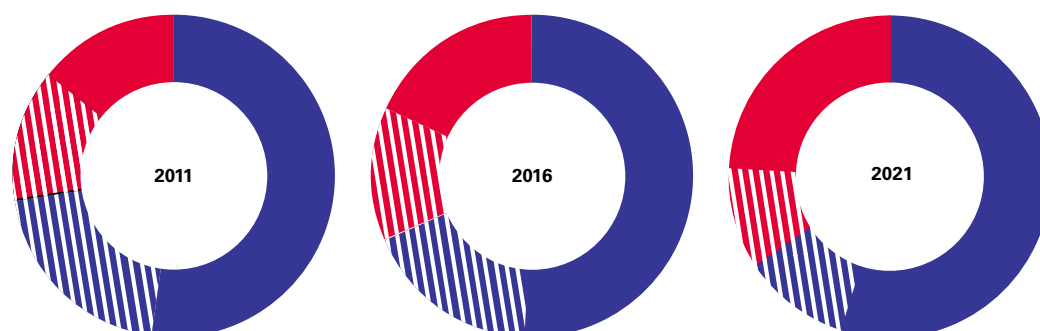
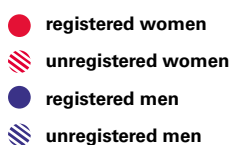
These growing numbers of graduates are in part due to swelling numbers of international students. This group comprised an annual average of 15% of graduates for the years 1995–2000, and 41% for 2016–2020. In 2021, 52% of the 1,403 graduates were international students. We do not have access to data about the proportion of these students who stay in Australia following graduation, but they are likely to feed into the data on cultural diversity discussed in Section 8 (p. 48).

The ever-increasing numbers of graduates impact the workforce as identified through the Census data, but cross-referencing these two data sets shows that less than half the graduates appear to enter the architectural workforce in Australia. This is tracked in detail through the analysis of age profiles and age cohorts in Sections 2 and 3 (pp. 20 & 24). An even smaller proportion become registered architects.

### Registered architects and the architectural workforce

Census data is the most inclusive representation available and provides important data about the full architectural workforce. Comparing this data with registration figures helps to understand the role of registration in the profession.

**Figure 1.6**  
Registered architects  
as a proportion of the  
architectural workforce,  
2011–2021



In 2021 there were over 15,000 registered architects – approximately 79% of the Census architectural workforce (Table 1.2). This is a significant jump on previous years. In 2011 and 2016, registered architects represented roughly 66% and 69% respectively of the Census figures. An even larger jump is seen in the percentage of women joining the ranks of registered architects. In 2021, approximately 71% of women in the architectural workforce were registered, up from 57% in 2016 and 51% in 2011 (Figure 1.6). Despite this increase, the persistent pattern of a higher proportion of men being registered continues, although the gap is reducing: in 2021 84% of men were registered, compared to 74% in 2016 and 72% in 2011.

Women comprised 46% of new registrants in 2021, continuing the pleasing pattern identified in earlier data – in 2016 women were 41% of newly registered architects, up from 34% in 2011.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note, however, that this comparison is approximate only, due to the uneven quality of available registration data. There is no publicly available national tally of registered architects, and while some state and territory registration boards make data easily accessible, others do not.<sup>3</sup> In particular, the available gender breakdown of Victorian data is imprecise. Victoria has the second-largest register in the country, so the uncertain nature of this data prevents accurate comparisons and compromises the entire data set. In addition to these challenges, a number of people are registered in

2. Registered, new admissions from Architects Accreditation Council, *2021–2022 Annual Report*, p.13.

3. Refer to page 61 for an outline of the data sources used to compile registration figures.



**Table 1.2**  
Registration number by state & gender (approximate), 2021

2021					
state	men	women	i	total	% women
ACT	290	72		362	19.9%
NSW	3,221	1,529	3	4,753	32.2%
NT	168	42		210	20.0%
QLD	1,540	610		2,150	28.4%
SA	709	192		901	21.3%
TAS	435	109		544	20.0%
VIC	3,172	1,762		4,934	35.7%
WA	1,059	340		1,399	24.3%
<b>total</b>	<b>10,594</b>	<b>4,656</b>		<b>15,253</b>	<b>30.53%</b>

more than one jurisdiction. A 2012 analysis of the registers by Matthewson found that duplicates accounted for 13% of the active registers. Of these, 6% of the women’s entries were multiples, compared with 17% of the men’s.<sup>4</sup> The registration data used in the current analysis includes such duplication.

This increase in women registering is encouraging, regardless of the caveats. Gaining registration is an important milestone for all architects, but credentials such as registration matter particularly in term of career progression for women.<sup>5</sup> Registration also helps increase visibility and, in principle, provides young architects with more employment options and enhanced mobility.

### Architectural graduates working in other fields

Analysis of the Census data provides some insight into where graduates go through examining fields of study in relation to current occupations. Preliminary findings are presented here, but there is more investigation to be done to unpack this topic.

The Census asks respondents “What is the main field of study for the highest qualification completed?” In 2021 nearly 70,000 people recorded architecture in response. When filtered to those with Bachelors and postgraduate degrees as their highest qualification, that number drops to 50,675 (Table 1.3).<sup>6</sup> This is a considerably larger group than those identified as working in architecture.

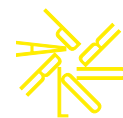
Overall, 38% of those who studied architecture identified ‘architect’ as their occupation, 42% of the men and 32% of the women (Figure 1.7). Of course, those who did not select ‘architect’ may well be using their architectural education in other ways. Nonetheless, it indicates that a significantly lower proportion of women graduates are currently working directly within the architectural workforce, as compared to men.

Digging further into this data shows that people with architecture qualifications are working in many different occupations. Clear patterns emerge in relation to older age groups – there is a large proportion who are most likely retired – and a sizeable group working in allied fields. Aside from these two groups, there are no significant numbers. People with architecture qualifications are spread far and wide.

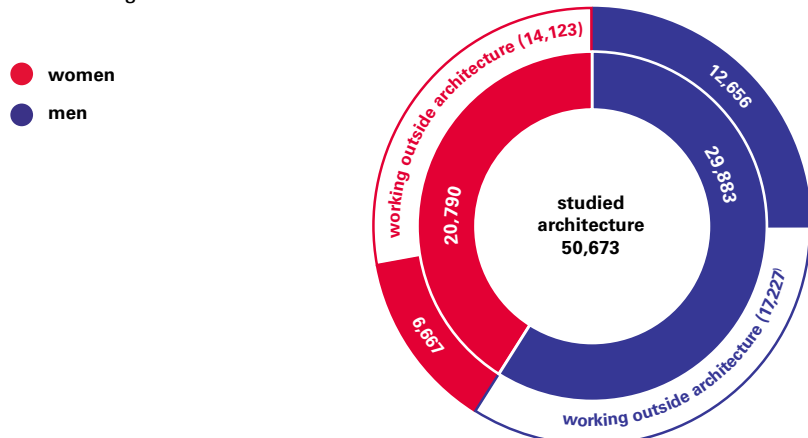
4 Gill Matthewson, “Dimensions of Gender: Women’s Careers in the Australian Architecture Profession” (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 2015), 56.

5. Deborah A. O’Neil, Margaret M. Hopkins and Diana Bilimoria, “Women’s Careers at the Start of the 21st Century: Patterns and Paradoxes,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 80, no. 4 (2008): 733.

6. During the first decade of this century most Australian universities changed architecture degree structures to a three-year Bachelor degree, followed by a two-year Masters. Prior to this, the professional qualification for architects was either a 5-year or 3+2 Bachelor program.



**Figure 1.7**  
Field of study translation  
into working in architecture



The largest segment of the group with architecture qualifications but not working in architecture has occupation categorised as ‘not applicable’ – 11,002 people. This includes people not in the labour force, unemployed people, those looking for either full-time or part-time work, and those who did not state their occupation. Of these 11,002 people, over one third (38%) are over the age of 65, which most likely indicates retirement. The second largest group was those under 30 (10% under 25 and 11% 25–29 years of age), suggesting that these may be students or graduates not yet working in the industry.

The second largest occupation for those with architecture degrees is construction managers (1,816), followed by interior designers (877), contract/program/project administrators (716), sales assistants (644) and university lecturers/tutors (550).

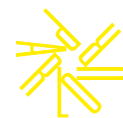
The significant number of people with architectural qualifications working across a wide range of industries and occupations might be considered a testament to the flexibility of an architectural qualification, and a reminder that many people find they can have more impact on shaping the built environment in roles beyond practice. It may also indicate that various factors push people away, such as the dependency of the profession on the state of the economy, low salaries and the cultures and work practices of the profession.<sup>7</sup> These factors co-exist and intersect in various ways.

This data reminds us that the profession and discipline of architecture is larger than the group of people working directly in practice. And this larger group of people – retirees, people taking a break, people working in allied fields – has much to offer.

**Table 1.3**  
Architectural workforce by age & gender, compared to field of study 2001–2021

	men	women	total	M : W
studied architecture at Bachelor or postgraduate degree level	29,883	20,790	50,675	59 : 41
# architects (from Table 1.1)	12,656	6,667	19,323	65 : 35
difference	17,227	14,123	31,352	55 : 45
% of those who studied & are working in architecture	42%	32%	38%	-

7. See, for example, ‘The Wellbeing of Architects: culture, identity + practice’, an interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers at RMIT and Monash University’s Department of Architecture and Department of Management funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage Projects scheme.



## 2 : Age profiles

*What happens to architects as they age? Tracking participation over time reveals very different patterns for women and men. This is fundamental to understanding the experiences of different cohorts. The profession still has trouble retaining women. Analysing the Census data allows us to understand if this is changing, and provides evidence of the need for structural change to support women to stay in the profession.*

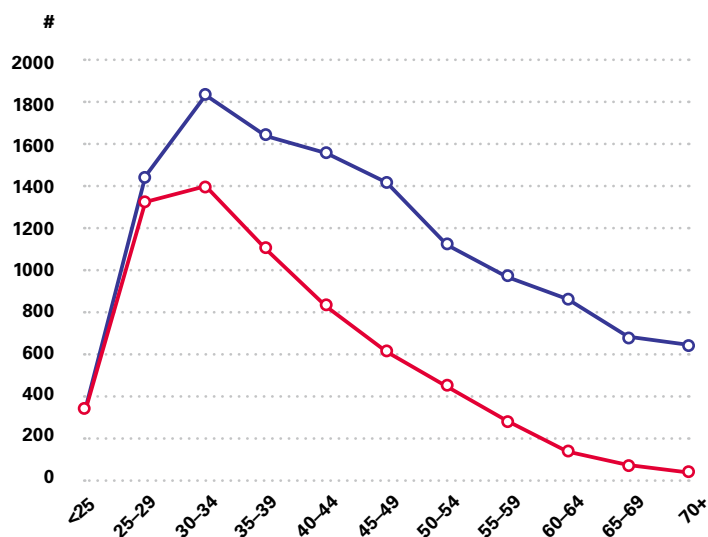
*The data from the 2021 Census is fascinating. On one hand, it shows the continuation of dominant patterns. On the other, it offers tantalising glimpses of positive change. Of particular note is the evidence of a significant increase in the numbers of women in the 30–34 age group. For the first time ever, this is the largest age group of women in the profession (in previous Censuses, this was when women’s numbers started to drop away).*

*Another significant shift is the relative stability seen in older age groups – women over 40 are no longer leaving the profession in higher proportions than men. This pattern was identified in the 2016 Census analysis. Its continuation in 2021 is cause for optimism. Also interesting is the evidence that men over 65 are staying in the workforce longer.*

*Overall, the average age of women working in architecture is slowly increasing, while the average age of men is very slowly decreasing.*

**Figure 2.1**  
Snapshot of the architectural workforce by age & gender, 2021.

● women  
● men





## Ski slopes and mountain ranges

The typical age profiles for women and men in architecture are distinctly different, although they are slowly aligning over time. Women have an increasingly steep ‘ski’ slope, while men show much more variation (Figure 2.2). These profiles demonstrate the disparate distribution of men and women and different patterns of participation. They allude to the complex factors that impact workforce participation, and the degree to which they have gendered effects. These topics are explored in subsequent sections.

The singular slope for women depicts a substantial cohort of younger women, with fewer and fewer women in each following age group. The slopes get steeper in each Census. Similar patterns are found in other fields (Appendix A). It is tempting to read these declining slopes as evidence that women are leaving the profession as they age. Women do indeed leave (as do men), but there are also other factors at play, and other data that better reflects attrition (refer to Section 3, p. 24).

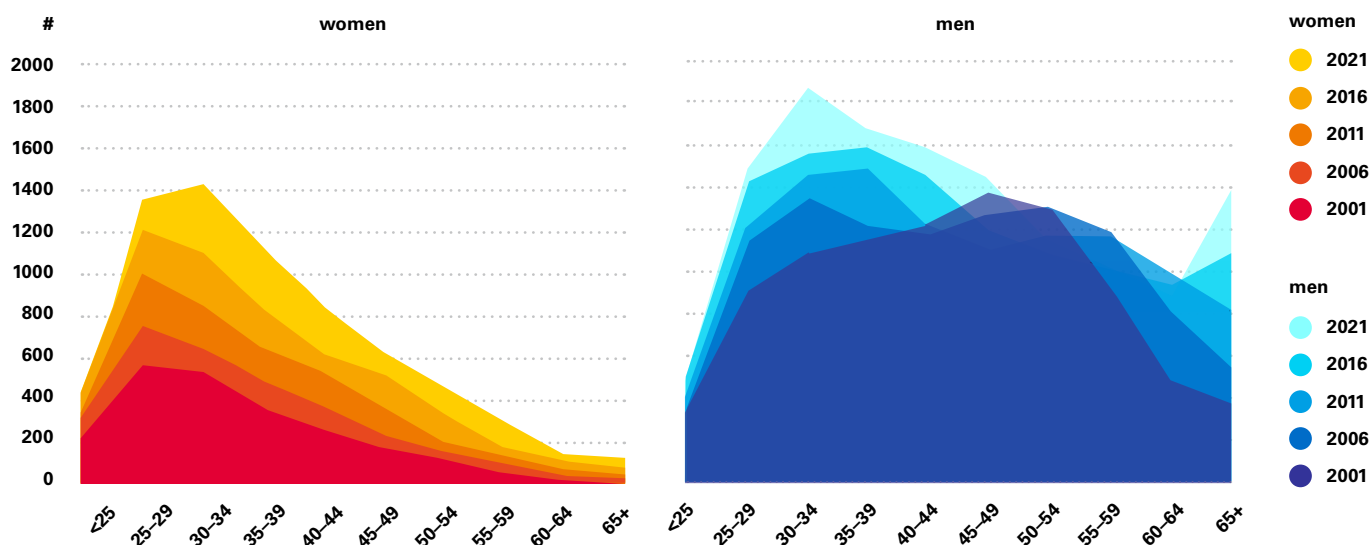
The age profile for men is much less consistent. The 2021 and 2016 data show steady declines in the numbers of men with age; however, earlier Censuses record ‘lumps’ in the numbers. Some of this irregularity may be the flow on from the very difficult architectural employment situation in the early 1990s, along with other economic cycles. It is unclear, however, why the profiles for women do not register similar impacts. This suggests that persistent structural factors overwhelmingly impact women’s careers, masking the effects of intermittent disruptions.

The 2021 Census reveals shifts in these age profiles – some striking, others nuanced. For the first time, both genders clearly peak in the 30–34 age group (Figure 2.1). For women, this is a notable shift – in all previous Censuses, the largest group was aged 25–29. For men, this peak is a shift from the pattern visible in 2001, 2011 and 2016 data, where the 30–34 and 35–39 groups were almost equally populous (Figure 2.2).

New patterns are also evident at the older end of the workforce. In 2021, increasing numbers of men over the age of 65 remain in the workforce. To better understand this pattern, we have separated the 65+ age category used in the previous Census reports into 65–69 and 70+ for 2021. This separation reveals almost equal numbers of men in each age group (Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.2**  
Architectural workforce by age & gender, 2001–2021

Note: These charts retain the 65+ age category to enable comparison with previous Censuses – the sharp uptick of men over 65 in 2021 is visible in the light blue.





The average age of women is increasing, indicating that women represent a maturing segment of the architectural workforce. This matters. It means that women, as a group, are increasingly in positions where they can influence and shape the profession.

In 2021 more than half the women in the architectural workforce were aged 35 or over (54%). This is a shift in the balance documented in previous Censuses, where those under 35 represented over half the workforce (51% in 2016, 52% in 2011, 55% in 2006 and 57% in 2001). In 2021 this younger group was 46% of the workforce, even though young women entered the profession in large numbers (Table 2.1).

This is an important new pattern. It indicates that mid-career and senior women are an increasing presence in architectural workplaces and the profession as a whole.

In contrast, men as a group are getting younger, albeit very slowly and slightly and despite the retention of men over 65. In 2006, one half of the men were under age 45; by 2021, 54% were in this cohort. Despite these changes, the overall proportion of the entire architectural workforce under the age of 45 remained the same in 2021 as in 2016 at 62% (Table 2.1).

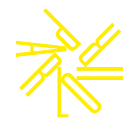
These shifts in age profiles are significant. They suggest that the pattern of women’s and men’s participation may be slowing aligning. This is meaningful because it suggests that some of the factors that impact workforce participation may be becoming less gendered. This is an encouraging pattern. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that women are still seriously under-represented across the profession – despite graduating in large numbers for decades.

**Table 2.1**  
Architectural workforce by age & gender, 2001–2021

age	2001				2006				2011				2016				2021			
	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w
15–24	313	209	522	60 : 40	336	303	639	53 : 47	372	329	701	53 : 47	472	424	896	53 : 47	341	334	675	51 : 49
25–29	895	562	1,457	61 : 39	1,129	748	1,877	60 : 40	1183	996	2,179	54 : 46	1,402	1,193	2,595	54 : 46	1,463	1,340	2,803	52 : 48
30–34	1,071	528	1,599	67 : 33	1,325	638	1,963	67 : 33	1439	841	2,280	63 : 37	1,538	1,089	2,627	59 : 41	1,852	1,416	3,268	57 : 43
35–39	1,132	365	1,497	76 : 24	1,203	486	1,689	71 : 29	1468	637	2,105	70 : 30	1,568	824	2,392	66 : 34	1,656	1,113	2,769	60 : 40
40–44	1,209	260	1,469	82 : 18	1,157	366	1,523	76 : 24	1208	523	1,731	70 : 30	1,440	618	2,058	70 : 30	1,574	838	2,412	65 : 35
45–49	1,359	177	1,536	88 : 12	1,254	233	1,487	84 : 16	1085	360	1,445	75 : 25	1,190	511	1,701	70 : 30	1,433	621	2,054	70 : 30
50–54	1,274	109	1,383	92 : 8	1,287	156	1,443	89 : 11	1156	203	1,359	85 : 15	1,065	324	1,389	77 : 23	1,134	454	1,588	71 : 29
55–59	912	53	965	95 : 5	1,179	95	1,274	93 : 7	1150	131	1,281	90 : 10	1,006	176	1,182	85 : 15	980	289	1,269	77 : 23
60–65	466	18	484	96 : 4	798	39	837	95 : 5	964	73	1,037	93 : 7	913	106	1,019	90 : 10	874	142	1,016	86 : 14
65–69*	356	15	371	96 : 4	531	22	553	96 : 4	798	50	848	96 : 4	1,057	75	1,132	93 : 7	694	78	772	90 : 10
70+			0				0				0				0		655	42	697	94 : 6
<b>total</b>	<b>8,987</b>	<b>2,296</b>	<b>11,283</b>	<b>80 : 20</b>	<b>10,199</b>	<b>3,086</b>	<b>13,285</b>	<b>77 : 23</b>	<b>10,823</b>	<b>4,143</b>	<b>14,966</b>	<b>72 : 28</b>	<b>11,651</b>	<b>5,340</b>	<b>16,991</b>	<b>69 : 31</b>	<b>12,656</b>	<b>6,667</b>	<b>19,323</b>	<b>65 : 35</b>
% < 35	25%	57%	32%		27%	55%	34%		28%	52%	34%		29%	51%	36%		29%	46%	35%	
% < 40	38%	72%	45%		39%	70%	46%		41%	68%	49%		43%	66%	50%		42%	63%	49%	
% < 45	51%	84%	58%		50%	82%	58%		52%	80%	60%		55%	78%	62%		54%	76%	62%	

Shaded cells show an age cohort. A ‘cohort’ tracks an age group of architects from Census to Census; for example, those aged 25–29 in 2001 become 30–34 in 2006, 35–39 in 2011, and so on. Refer to Section 3 for the discussion of these patterns.

\* 65+ for 2001–2016 Censuses.



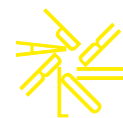
### **The impact of increasing graduation rates**

The overall pattern of lower numbers of both women and men in the senior age groups is partly an outcome of increasing numbers of graduates over time (Figure 1.5).

We can assume that, for each Census, graduates from the previous five years will predominantly feed into the 25–34 age group. This is an estimate only – for example, each graduating group will also include mature-aged students. Nonetheless, the broad pattern is important when considering the age profiles of the profession.

The number of graduates that could potentially feed into a Census has more than doubled over the twenty-first century. In 2001, the total number of architectural graduates from Australian universities for the preceding five years was 3,165. By 2021, the graduates potentially feeding into the Census had swelled to 6,809. The numbers for the intervening Censuses are 4,055 for 2006; 4,599 for 2011; and 6,181 for 2016.

This means that the numbers of people in the 25–34 age group in a Census will always be greater than those in the previous Census. The numbers can never be matched by those in the older age groups.



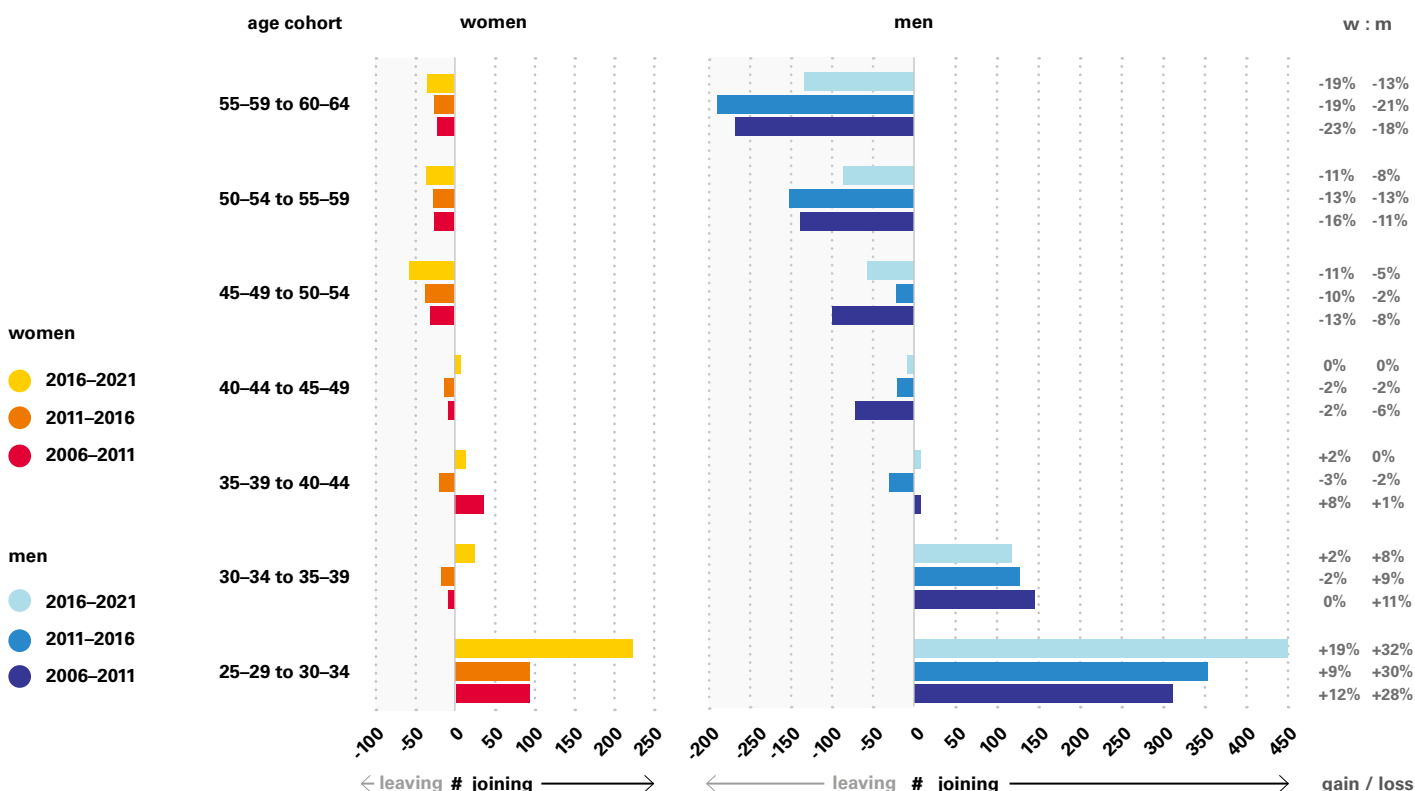
### 3 : Joining, staying, leaving

*The architectural workforce is a fluid and ever-changing entity, with people joining, leaving and returning. Examining the Census data in terms of shifting age profiles over time provides insight into this flux, and helps identify gendered patterns in relation to attraction, retention and attrition.*

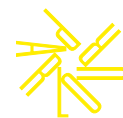
*In general, the architectural workforce skews young, with numbers increasing up to age 40. Men dominate this younger cohort despite the substantial jump in numbers of younger women seen in the 2021 Census. Women graduates are still not entering the architectural workforce at the same rate as men and those who do join start leaving at younger ages than men.*

*A fascinating positive pattern is found among senior women. Tracking the proportion of women in specific age cohorts over time reveals a new relative stability in women over 40 – retention rates in this group are now similar to men.*

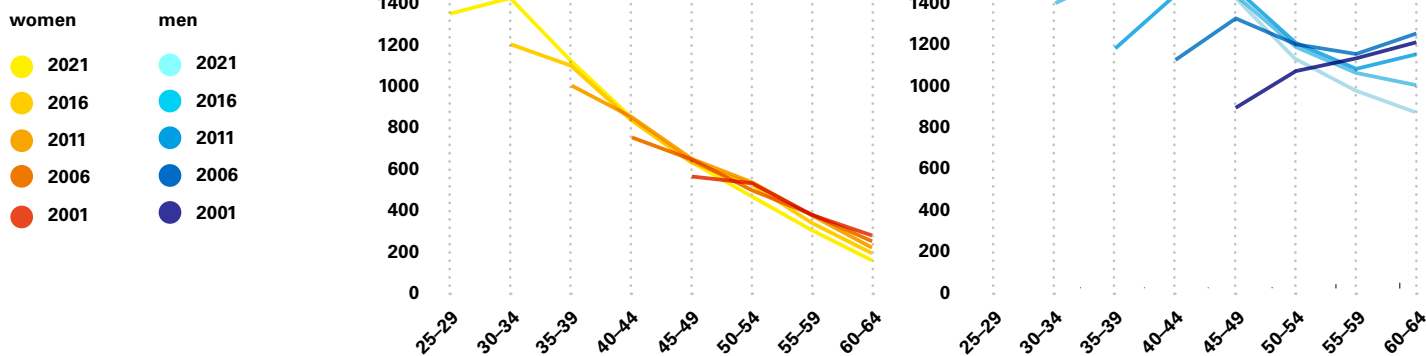
**Figure 3.1**  
Gains & losses, aligned age cohorts from Census to Census







**Figure 3.2**  
Age cohorts in the architectural workforce, by gender, based on ages in 2021.



Aligning data from the Censuses by age group cohorts helps to understand people joining, leaving and remaining in the architectural workforce.<sup>8</sup> The gains and losses for each age group cohort between the Censuses can be seen in Figure 3.1 – each horizontal bar shows the losses and gains of a particular age cohort over time.<sup>9</sup> Figure 3.2 shows the age profiles for each Census aligned vertically by age cohort.

### Early growth

The number of people in an age group cohort typically increases up to age 40, after which people start to leave. That is, there are significant ‘extra’ numbers of people in their 30s who were not there five years previously. The reasons for these ‘late arrivals’ into the architectural workforce are not clear, but are likely to include people taking breaks during or after study, travelling, delaying entry for varied reasons, mature students and experienced architects migrating to Australia from other countries.

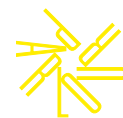
This pattern of significant ‘extra’ numbers is much stronger for men than women. There is a 32% jump in the numbers of men who were 25–29 in 2016, and are 30–34 in 2021 – compared to a 19% jump in women in the same age cohort in the same period. In numeric terms, 223 extra women and 450 extra men joined this age cohort between 2016 and 2021 (Figure 3.1). Women are just 34% of these extra numbers – significantly below the proportion of women graduates.

The 19% jump is, nonetheless, a significant change in the pattern for women, and gives rise to the shifting peak visible in Figures 2.1 and 2.2. In previous years, the increase in women between these age groups was much less – an average 11% growth (under 100 people). This compares to an average 29% increase in men between these age groups in the previous two Censuses. (The increase in men represents a very consistent pattern compared to the variability of women seen in Figure 3.1.)

The reasons for the strong gender differential in growth are unclear. However, the data strongly suggests that more women are leaving the architectural workforce within five years of graduating, or simply not entering in the first place.

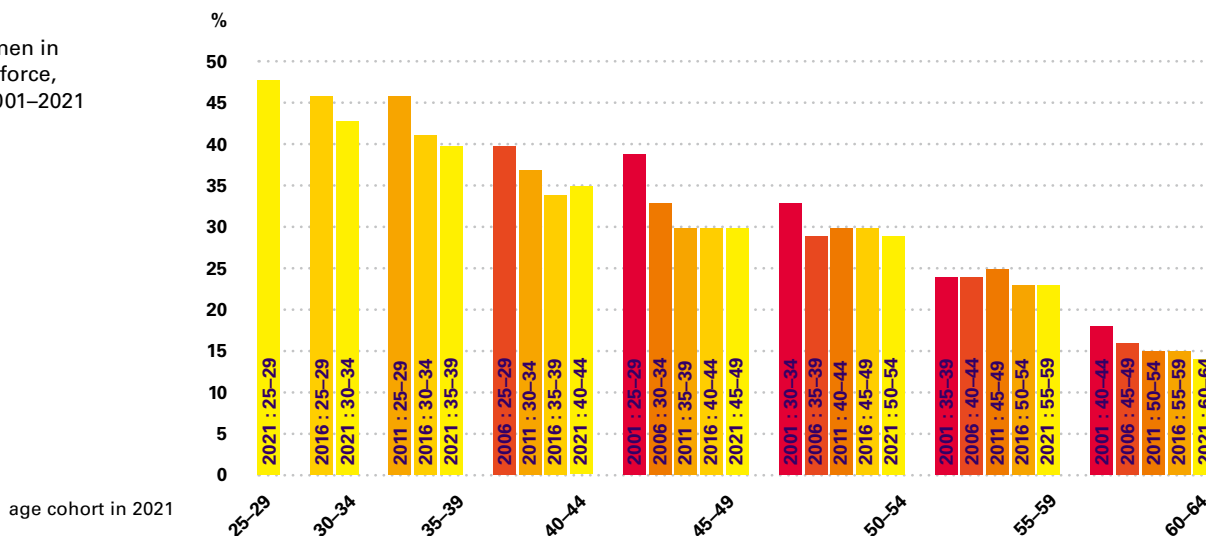
8. A ‘cohort’ tracks an age group of architects from Census to Census; for example, those aged 25–29 in 2001 become 30–34 in 2006, 35–39 in 2011, and so on.

9. Note, the overall smaller numbers of women in the older age groups mean that relatively small losses represent larger percentage losses. This means that although the losses are fewer in numbers than the men, the percentage drops are higher (Figure 3.1).



Examining these cohorts in relation to graduation data provides further insight (Figure 1.5). In the five years between 2016 and 2021 6,809 people graduated from Australian schools, 46.5% of whom were women (Figure 1.6). This group first appears in the 2021 Census. In 2016, the Census identified 6,118 people under the age of 35. In 2021, this large age cohort, now including all those under the age of 40, totals 9,515. That is an extra 3,397 ‘new-since-2016’ younger architects, just under half the number of graduates over the same period (assuming that the majority of graduates are under 40). Of note, 44% of these ‘new-since-2016’ architects were women – a proportion under their graduation rate average of 46.5% for the preceding five years.

**Figure 3.3**  
Proportion of women in architectural workforce, by age cohorts, 2001–2021



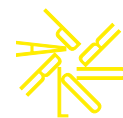
### Later stability for women

The patterns among the older age groups are also differentiated by gender. Increasingly larger numbers of men are leaving (Figure 3.1). Women have a slightly different pattern. Losses begin at a younger age group, but there is a new relative stability apparent in women over 40.

The implications of the gender differential of losses and gains between Censuses is more visible when tracking the proportion of women in an age cohort from Census to Census (Figure 3.3). The proportion of women in the 30–34 age group of every cohort has consistently dropped from their 25–29 proportion in the previous Census. For example, women were 46% of the 2016 25–29 age group, but in 2021 women are 43% of the same age group cohort (now aged 30–34). Nonetheless, this is a smaller drop than the five percentage point drop for the 2011 to 2016 transition – 46% down to 41% (age cohort 35–39 in 2021 in Figure 3.3) – because of that 19% jump in numbers of women noted earlier.

The stepping down pattern of the proportion of women in an age cohort is a persistent pattern until 2016 when there is a distinctive levelling off in the older age cohorts.

This means that while both older women and men are leaving the profession (as seen in Figure 3.1), they are doing so at similar rates. This relative stability is remarkable. It suggests that the forces that compel or nudge older architects to leave the profession are experienced more equally, or are having less of an impact on women. Good news!



## 4 : Employment & ownership

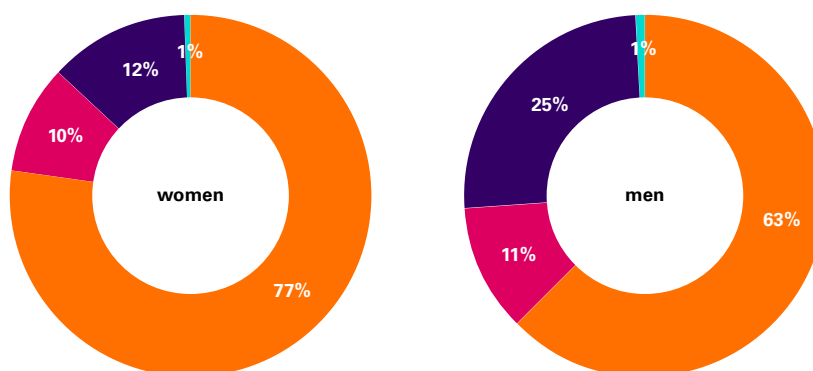
*Employment status and the ownership of architectural businesses are important indicators of participation in the architectural workforce and power and influence within the profession.*

*An increasing proportion of the architectural workforce are employees – from 57% in 2001 to 68% in 2021. One third of the workforce own businesses, most of which are small or very small. Just 7% of business owners have twenty or more employees.*

*Those who attain ownership generally achieve this at a later age than indicated in previous Censuses. This is more pronounced for women, who become owners more slowly than men.*

**Figure 4.1**  
Architectural workforce by employment status, 2021

- owner, incorporated
- owner, unincorporated
- employee
- contributing family worker



*There are overt gendered differences in all the employment data. Women have increased their presence in the three main categories, although they continue to be over-represented as employees and under-represented in the ranks of owners.*

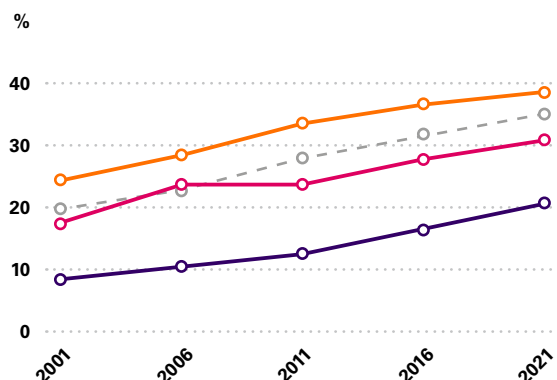
*In 2021 the number of women owners increased, with a particularly strong growth in women owning incorporated businesses – a 40% increase between 2016 and 2021. However, these numbers shrink when examined in relation to employing others.*

*Less than one-fifth of women business owners have employees, and only 4% of women owners employ over 20 people. This indicates that power in larger practices – and by extension the profession – still resides with men as a group, notwithstanding the presence of remarkable individual women.*



**Figure 4.2**  
Women as a proportion of  
employment categories,  
2001–2021

- employees
- owners, unincorporated
- owners, incorporated
- all



The Census categorises employment status in terms of whether the respondent is an employee, an owner, unemployed, or an unpaid worker in a family business. In 2021, no architects identified as unemployed or ‘not in the labour force’ and only a very small number nominated themselves as working unpaid in a family business (Table 4.1).

Ownership is further categorised in terms of whether the business is unincorporated or incorporated. Incorporated companies are limited liability companies, while unincorporated entities are typically used by sole practitioners, contract workers and consultants. Some traditional partnerships may also be unincorporated. At one time, only larger practices would have been incorporated; however, increasing concern over liabilities (combined with some tax advantages) means that sole practitioners and consultants might also choose to incorporate. This means that there is not a straightforward correlation between practice size and business structure. In this report we are, however, able to provide some insight into practice size through the Census data collected about the number of employees.

In each Census, women comprise an increasing proportion of each of the three main categories (Figure 4.2). This reflects the overall increase in the number of women active in the architectural workforce.

**Table 4.1**  
Architectural workforce by employment category, 2001–2021

	2001				2006				2011				2016				2021			
	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w
<b>employee</b>	4,837	1,605	6,442	<b>75 : 25</b>	5,518	2,263	7,781	<b>71 : 29</b>	6,147	3,149	9,296	<b>66 : 34</b>	7,045	4,077	11,122	<b>63 : 37</b>	7,944	5,169	13,113	<b>61 : 39</b>
<b>CFW</b>	11	5	16	–	–	–	0	–	82	29	111	–	82	29	111	–	101	33	134	–
<b>unknown</b>	–	–	0	–	127	38	165	–	34	12	46	–	82	33	115	–				–
<b>owner, uninc</b>	2,258*	500*	2,758*	<b>82 : 18</b>	1,251	387	1,638	<b>76 : 24</b>	1,603	499	2,102	<b>76 : 24</b>	1,526	605	2,131	<b>72 : 28</b>	1,437	642	2,079	<b>69 : 31</b>
<b>owner, inc</b>	1,881*	176*	2,057*	<b>91 : 9</b>	3,303	389	3,692	<b>89 : 11</b>	2,941	453	3,394	<b>87 : 13</b>	2,916	596	3,512	<b>83 : 17</b>	3,174	833	4,003	<b>79 : 21</b>
<b>total</b>	<b>8,987</b>	<b>2,296</b>	<b>11,283</b>	<b>80 : 20</b>	<b>10,199</b>	<b>3,077</b>	<b>13,276</b>	<b>77 : 23</b>	<b>10,807</b>	<b>4,142</b>	<b>14,949</b>	<b>72 : 28</b>	<b>11,651</b>	<b>5,340</b>	<b>16,991</b>	<b>69 : 31</b>	<b>12,656</b>	<b>6,677</b>	<b>19,333</b>	<b>65 : 35</b>
<b>all owners</b>	4,149	676	4,825	<b>86 : 14</b>	4,554	776	5,330	<b>85 : 15</b>	4,544	952	5,496	<b>83 : 17</b>	4,442	1,201	5,643	<b>79 : 21</b>	4,611	1,475	6,086	<b>76 : 24</b>
<b>% owners</b>	46%	29%	43%		45%	25%	40%		42%	23%	37%		38%	22%	33%		36%	22%	31%	
<b>% employees</b>	54%	70%	57%		54%	74%	59%		57%	76%	62%		60%	76%	65%		63%	77%	68%	



## Employees

An increasing proportion of the architectural workforce are employees – from 57% in the 2001 Census to more than two-thirds (68%) in 2021. An even higher percentage of women are employees (77% in 2021, historically over three-quarters). The increasing proportion of women in the architectural workforce partly drives the overall increase in employees, but this pattern is also visible in the men. In 2001, 54% of men were employees, rising to 63% in 2021 (in 2016 the figure was 60%). This is likely a product of the higher number of younger people in the profession, but may also suggest that architectural practices are getting larger or that some small and medium-sized practices are merging, and that ‘going out on one’s own’ (setting up and maintaining a practice, long a tradition in the profession) is becoming less viable or desirable.

## Business owners

Almost one-third (31%) of the Census architectural workforce are business owners, with men far out-numbering women. The 2021 Census sees an increase in the number of women in ownership positions; however, the percentage of women who are owners has held steady since 2016 at 22%. Men who are owners, on the other hand, have dropped two percentage points from 38% in 2016 to 36% in 2021.

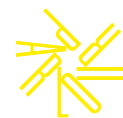
Women’s share as a percentage of all owners has also increased slightly – 24% in 2021 as compared to 21% in 2016 (up from 2001 when women were just 14% of all owners).

There is a marked growth in women owning incorporated businesses – an increase of 40% between 2016 and 2021. This represents sustained growth, and follows an earlier increase of 32% between 2011 and 2016. In numbers, the increase of women owning incorporated businesses in 2021 almost matched the men (women 237; men 258).

This growth has shifted the balance between women as owners of incorporated and unincorporated businesses. Prior to 2021, women owners were more or less equally distributed between the two categories; in 2021, 56% of women owners own incorporated entities (Table 4.2).

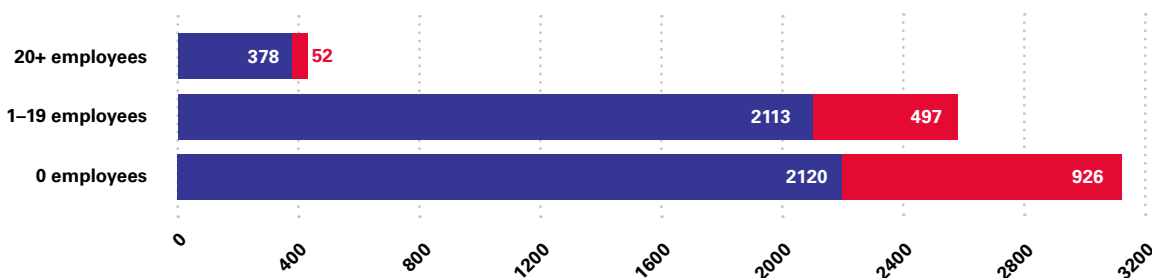
**Table 4.2**  
Growth of the architectural workforce by employment category, 2016–2021

	women				men				total			
	2016	2021	diff	growth	2016	2021	diff	growth	2016	2021	diff	growth
employee	4,077	5,159	1,082	27%	7,045	7,944	899	13%	11,122	13,103	1,981	18%
owner, incorporated	605	642	37	6%	1,526	1,437	-89	-6%	2,131	2,079	-52	-2%
owner, unincorporated	596	833	237	40%	2,916	3,174	258	9%	3,512	4,007	495	14%
all owners	1,201	1,475	274	23%	4,442	4,611	169	4%	5,643	6,086	443	8%



**Figure 4.3**  
Owners of businesses  
by number of employees  
& gender, 2021

● women  
● men



### Practice size / owners as employers

Reliable information about the number and size of architectural practices in Australia is not readily available, although all indicators point to the predominance of small and medium practices. (For example, fewer than 20 practices report to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, which is obligatory for all organisations with more than 100 employees).

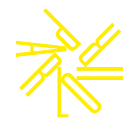
The Census cannot shed light on the number of practices, but it does offer limited insight into practice size, through a very basic breakdown of the number of employees working for an employer (Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3). The categories available in the Census are: no employees, 1–19 employees and 20+ employees. It would be very useful to break this 20+ group up further – into medium and large businesses – but the Census data does not enable such analysis. For the purposes of this report, 20+ employees is described as a ‘larger’ practice.

Census data confirms that larger practices are relatively rare. Just 7% of the 6,086 owners own enterprises with 20 or more employees (430 owners or co-owners). Very few of these owners report that their larger enterprises are unincorporated – only 8% (33 in number) – supporting the assumption that unincorporated businesses are typically smaller. However, the data also shows that one-third of incorporated owners have no employees (31% of the men owners and 42% of the women).

Women are significantly under-represented as employers – just 18% of owners who employ people are women. This imbalance is exacerbated when we look at practice size. Women are just 12% of all the owners of enterprises that employ more than twenty people and 19% of those with 1–19 employees. In contrast, women are 30% of the owners of businesses with no employees.

To put this numerically, only 52 of the 6,667 women counted in the Census own larger practices. These women are 4% of all women owners and 0.9% of all owners. This compares to the 378 men who own larger practices, and represent 8% of men owners and over 6% of all owners.

We are not able to access data about practice size historically for architects, but we can track it over time for architects and landscape architects together (Table 4.4). This combination boosts the number of owners in 2021 overall by 21% (from 6,086 to 7,378). This includes a substantial 32% lift to the number of owners of unincorporated businesses. Overall, the proportion of women owners increases to 28% (compared to the 24% for architect owners only – Table 4.3).



**Table 4.3**  
Owners of architectural businesses, by number of employees, 2021

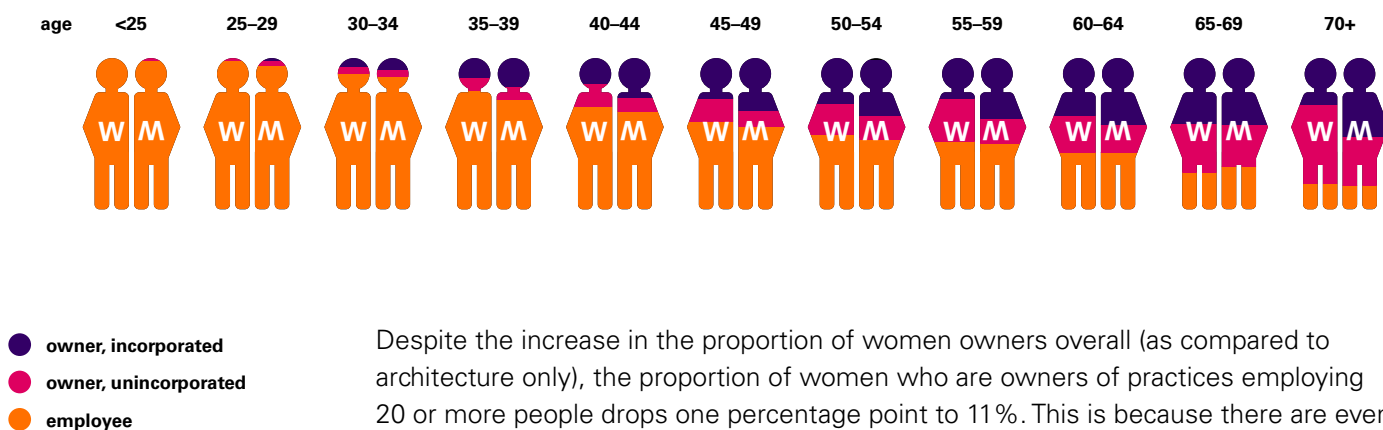
	men	women	total	m : w
<b>owner, incorporated</b>	<b>3,174</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>4,003</b>	<b>79 : 21</b>
0 employees	992	347	1,335	74 : 26
1–19 employees	1,833	438	2,271	81 : 19
20+ employees	349	48	397	88 : 12
<b>owner, unincorporated</b>	<b>1,437</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>2,079</b>	<b>69 : 31</b>
0 employees	1,128	579	1,707	66 : 34
1–19 employees	280	59	339	83 : 17
20+ employees	29	4	33	88 : 12
<b>all owners</b>	<b>4,611</b>	<b>1,475</b>	<b>6,086</b>	<b>76 : 24</b>
0 employees	2,120	926	3,046	70 : 30
1–19 employees	2,113	497	2,610	81 : 19
20+ employees	378	52	430	88 : 12
% with 0 employees	46%	63%	50%	
% with 1–19 employees	46%	34%	43%	
% with 20+ employees	8%	4%	7%	

**Table 4.4**  
Owners of architecture & landscape architecture businesses,  
by number of employees, 2016 & 2021

	2021				2016			
	men	women	total	m : w	men	women	total	m : w
<b>owner, incorporated</b>	<b>3,593</b>	<b>1,035</b>	<b>4,628</b>	<b>78 : 22</b>	<b>3,252</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>4,002</b>	<b>81 : 19</b>
0 employees	1132	442	1,574	72 : 28	1015	347	1362	74 : 26
1–19 employees	2,068	543	2,611	79 : 21	1,891	383	2,274	83 : 17
20+ employees	393	50	443	89 : 11	346	20	366	94 : 6
<b>owner, unincorporated</b>	<b>1,742</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>2,750</b>	<b>63 : 37</b>	<b>1,828</b>	<b>942</b>	<b>2,770</b>	<b>66 : 34</b>
0 employees	1,373	908	2,281	60 : 40	1,424	835	2,259	63 : 37
1–19 employees	336	95	431	78 : 22	370	103	473	78 : 22
20+ employees	33	5	38	87 : 13	34	4	38	89 : 11
<b>all owners</b>	<b>5,335</b>	<b>2,043</b>	<b>7,378</b>	<b>72 : 28</b>	<b>5,080</b>	<b>1,692</b>	<b>6,772</b>	<b>75 : 25</b>
0 employees	2,505	1,350	3,855	75 : 35	2,439	1,182	3,621	67 : 33
1–19 employees	2,404	638	3,042	79 : 21	2,261	486	2,747	82 : 18
20+ employees	426	55	481	89 : 11	380	24	404	94 : 6
% with 0 employees	47%	66%	52%	-	48%	70%	53%	-
% with 1–19 employees	45%	31%	41%	-	45%	29%	41%	-
% with 20+ employees	8%	3%	7%	-	7%	1%	6%	-



**Figure 4.4**  
Employment category by age  
by gender age pairs, 2021



Despite the increase in the proportion of women owners overall (as compared to architecture only), the proportion of women who are owners of practices employing 20 or more people drops one percentage point to 11%. This is because there are even fewer women owners of larger landscape architecture businesses (3 in landscape compared to 52 in architecture).

Meagre though these numbers are, they are a substantial improvement on the previous Census – in 2016 just 6% of the owners of larger architecture and landscape architecture businesses were women (24 women). In numerical terms, this group more than doubled from 24 in 2016 to 55 in 2021.

### The impact of age on ownership

Analysing the distribution of owners/employees by age provides a useful finer-grained picture of gender disparity in this area (Table 4.5 and Figure 4.5).

As might be expected, the number and proportion of those working as employees decrease as people age (Figure 4.5). The proportion of owners starts to increase for architects in their mid-30s, a pattern that holds for women and men (and aligns with conventional wisdom that this is when architects tend to strike out on their own or attain ownership levels). As a group, however, women become owners more slowly. This becomes clearer when the information is represented in age pairs (Figure 4.4).

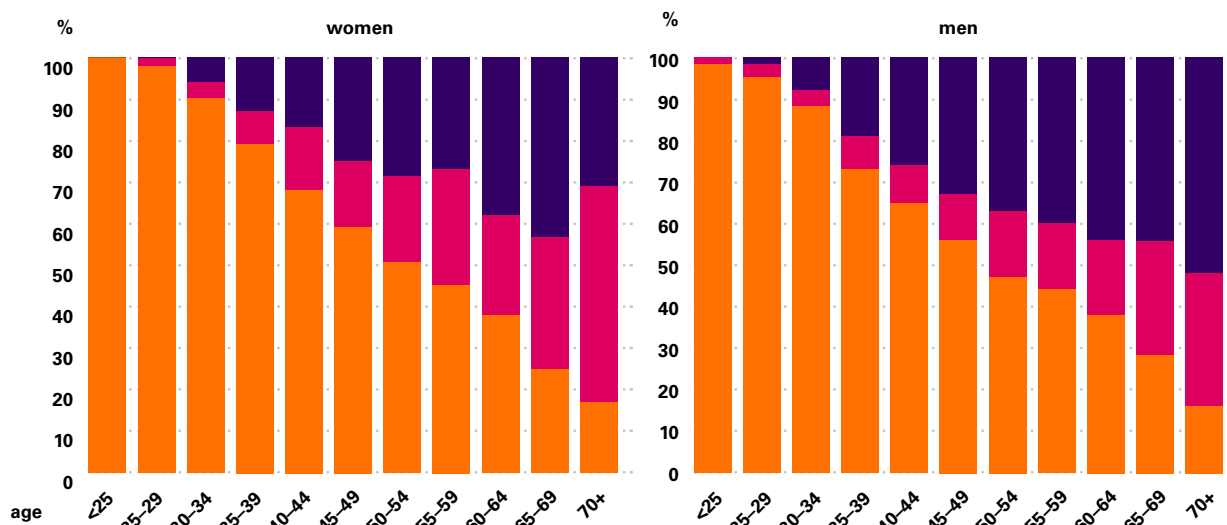
**Table 4.5**  
Ownership & employee by age group and gender, 2021

		<25	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54	55–59	60–65	65–69	70+	total
women	employee	334	1,312	1,267	877	568	367	227	128	54	18	7	5,159
	owner, unincorporated	0	23	61	89	122	97	93	81	34	23	22	645
	owner, incorporated	0	5	84	139	145	154	128	76	54	32	13	830
	<b>total</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>1,340</b>	<b>1,412</b>	<b>1,105</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>6,634</b>
men	employee	337	1,401	1,613	1,214	1,008	796	527	424	330	192	102	7,944
	owner, unincorporated	4	39	82	125	148	162	178	160	155	185	198	1,436
	owner, incorporated	0	23	146	313	415	469	422	390	376	301	320	3,175
	<b>total</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>1,463</b>	<b>1,841</b>	<b>1,652</b>	<b>1,571</b>	<b>1,427</b>	<b>1,127</b>	<b>974</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>12,555</b>





**Figure 4.5**  
Employment category  
by age & gender, 2021



- owner, incorporated
- owner, unincorporated
- employee

In almost all pairs more of the women’s bodies are in the orange of ‘employee’. The proportion of inky purple ‘owners of incorporated enterprises’ more often matches the men of the previous age group, while more of the women’s bodies are in the pink of ‘owners of unincorporated enterprises’. This pattern is very similar to 2016. However, ownership within age groups has decreased for both men and women from 2016 to 2021 in almost all age groups (Table 4.6). This means that people in architecture are moving into ownership at an older age than they were in 2016.

The increases in women in ownership positions is positive, but the very small numbers of women who own larger practices is cause for ongoing concern. These practices employ large numbers of people and therefore influence the work life of a substantial section of the profession. It is important to have women in positions of power in these practices – *and* to also increase the broader diversity of leadership in large practice.

The small numbers suggests that many women still experience gendered barriers to covering “the last mile” to ownership.<sup>10</sup> Many of the women who *have* attained ownership in larger business are at the forefront of the push for more equitable workplaces, and the removal of structural systemic barriers to ownership. These people are doing excellent work, but we need more of them.

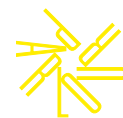
As discussed in Section 7, the presence of dependent children has a substantial impact on patterns of business ownership, and this is particularly pronounced for women.

**Table 4.6**  
Owners of architectural businesses by age group and gender, 2021 & 2016

		<25	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54	55–59	60–65
women	% owners 2021	0%	2%	10%	21%	32%	41%	49%	55%	62%
	% owners 2016	0%	2%	13%	23%	37%	44%	48%	60%	69%
men	% owners 2021	1%	4%	12%	27%	36%	44%	53%	56%	62%
	% owners 2016	3%	5%	16%	28%	36%	46%	57%	62%	65%

10. Champions of Change Architecture Group, *The Last Mile* podcast audio (Parlour, August 2023).

Brett Hudson, Gordana Milosevska, Ninotschka Titchkosky, “Stepping Up on Women in Ownership” video (Parlour, 2023).



## 5 : Hours of work

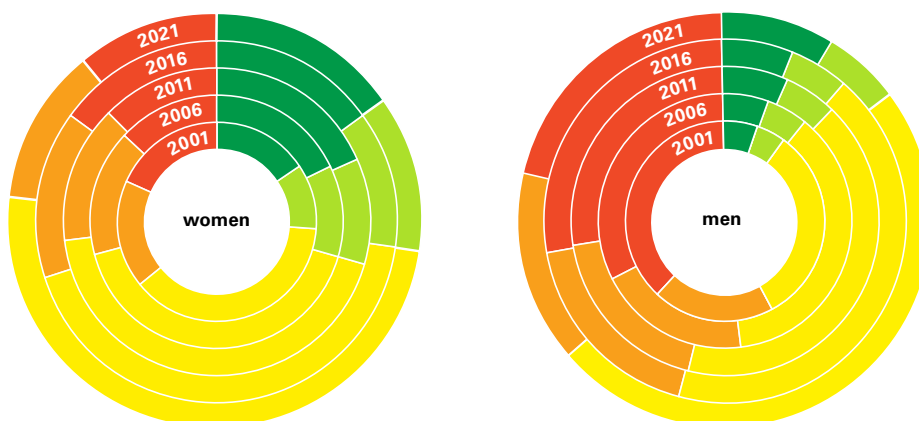
*Two core issues dominate conversations about hours in architecture – the prevalence of long hours and the scarcity of meaningful part-time work. Census data confirms that the architectural workforce works longer hours than professionals as a whole and is less tolerant of part-time work.*

*Analysis of the 2021 data indicates some change is underway. The overall proportion of people working more than 40 hours a week has reduced, and there has been a slight increase in part-time work among men. Nonetheless, many more women work part time, while a higher proportion of men work longer hours.*

*Owners of incorporated enterprises continue to work the longest hours – perhaps not surprising given that the 2021 Census was conducted in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which placed additional pressures on practice leadership (among many others).*

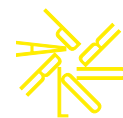
**Figure 5.1**  
Hours worked per week  
in the architectural workforce,  
by gender 2001–2021

- 49+ hours
- 41–48 hours
- 35–40 hours
- 25–34 hours
- 1–24 hours



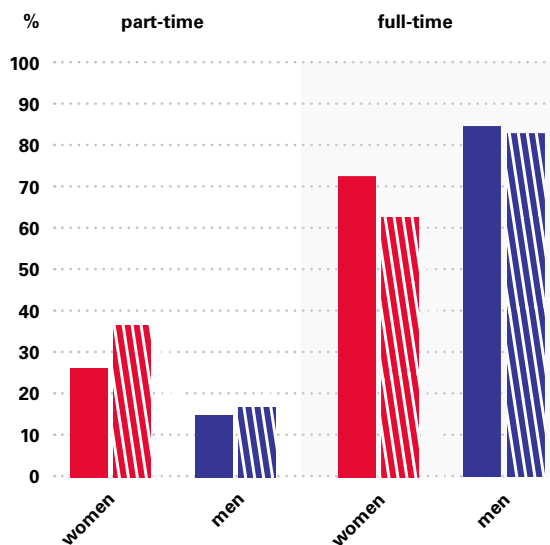
### Long hours

The most notable trend in terms of hours over time is the drop in the proportion of those working long hours (Figure 5.1). In 2001, 58% of the men and 36% of the women reported working longer than the standard working week of 35–40 hours. The proportion of women working these hours has fluctuated from census to census but sits at 23% in 2021. For men, that proportion has dropped a striking 22 percentage points: from 58% in 2001 to 36% in 2021 (it was 45% in 2011 and 2016). The corresponding shift recorded for men towards working standard rather than long hours is significant (from 32% of men in 2001 to 49% in 2021). It suggests that the culture of architecture may be moving away from the attitude that long hours are the only way to practise. In particular, the proportion of those men working 49 or more hours a week has dropped the most: from 38% in 2001 to 21% (compared with the smaller drop in those working 41–48 hours from 20% to 15%).



**Figure 5.2**  
Part-time & full-time work,  
architectural workforce & all  
professionals, 2021

- women 'architects'
- ▨ all professional women
- men 'architects'
- ▨ all professional men



Despite this remarkable trend of declining long hours, the architectural workforce still works longer hours compared to all professionals. In 2021, 18% of architects worked 49 or more hours a week, compared with 14% of all professionals. The gap is more strongly gendered for architects. In the architectural workforce 21% of men and 12% of women work hours within this range. In comparison, for all professionals 18% of men and 11% of women were working 49+ hour weeks.

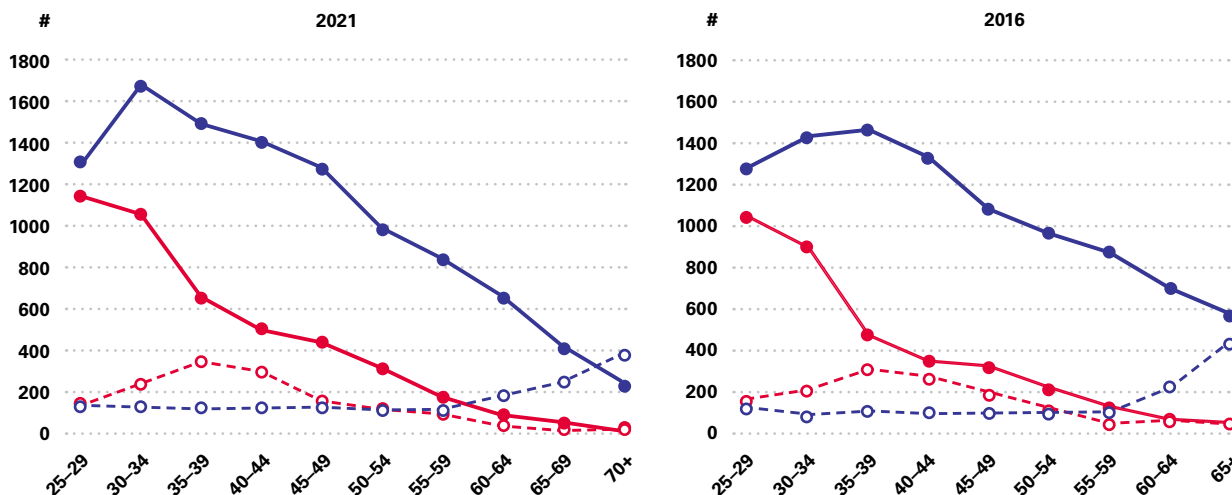
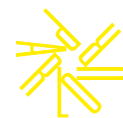
### Working part time

Access to meaningful part-time work is an important factor in enabling people with caring responsibilities and other commitments to stay in the profession. The Census documents some improvement, but also indicates architecture continues to be less supportive of part-time work than other professions. This is a concern, as are the persistent gendered patterns at play. On the positive front, the proportion of men working part-time in architecture has increased in the last decade.

In 2021, 19% of all architects worked part time – 15% of men and 26% of women. This is a slight improvement on ten years ago, when just 17% of architects worked part time. There has been an increase in the proportion of men working part-time hours, up from 13% in 2011. In contrast, the percentage of part-time women has dropped from the 29% recorded in 2011. Access to part-time work continues to be gendered, but these shifts hint that things may be changing slowly.

Owners of larger practices are very unlikely to work part time – 91% of the owners of practices employing more than 20 people work full time. In contrast, 45% of owners with no employees work part time.

Comparing the data on architects' hours with those worked by all professionals shows that architecture lags within this group, and that the gap is also gendered. In 2021, 27% of all professionals worked part time – a percentage that has stayed constant since 2011. Part-time men in architecture are just two percentage points under the average of 17% for all professional men, whereas the gap between women architects and all professional women is a full ten percentage points – in 2021 36% of all professional women worked part time, compared to 26% of women in architecture.



**Figure 5.3**  
Part-time and full-time hours by gender & age, 2021 and 2016

● women  
● men

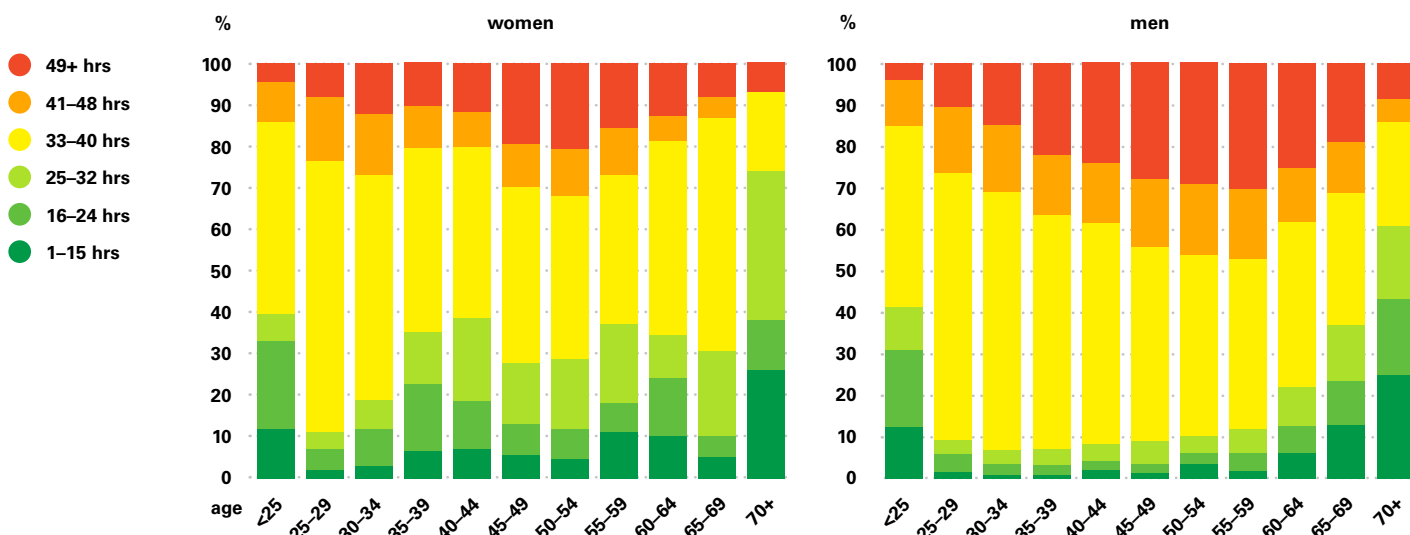
### The impact of age

Age has an impact on hours worked. This is particularly apparent in relation to long hours and part-time work (categorised in the Census as less than 33 hours a week). Once again, patterns are strongly gendered (Figures 5.3 and 5.4 and Table B.2 in Appendix B). Up until age 30 the hours worked by men and women are quite similar. After 30 the patterns start to separate, with differences becoming more marked for each age group.

Dividing the data into part-time and full-time hours reveals a clear bump up in the numbers of women in their 30s working part time (Figure 5.3). For many, this is no doubt due to the impact of parenting (see Section 7, p. 45). There is, however, no similar uptick for men in their 30s, reflecting wider societal norms that more women take time out for parenting and other caring roles than men.

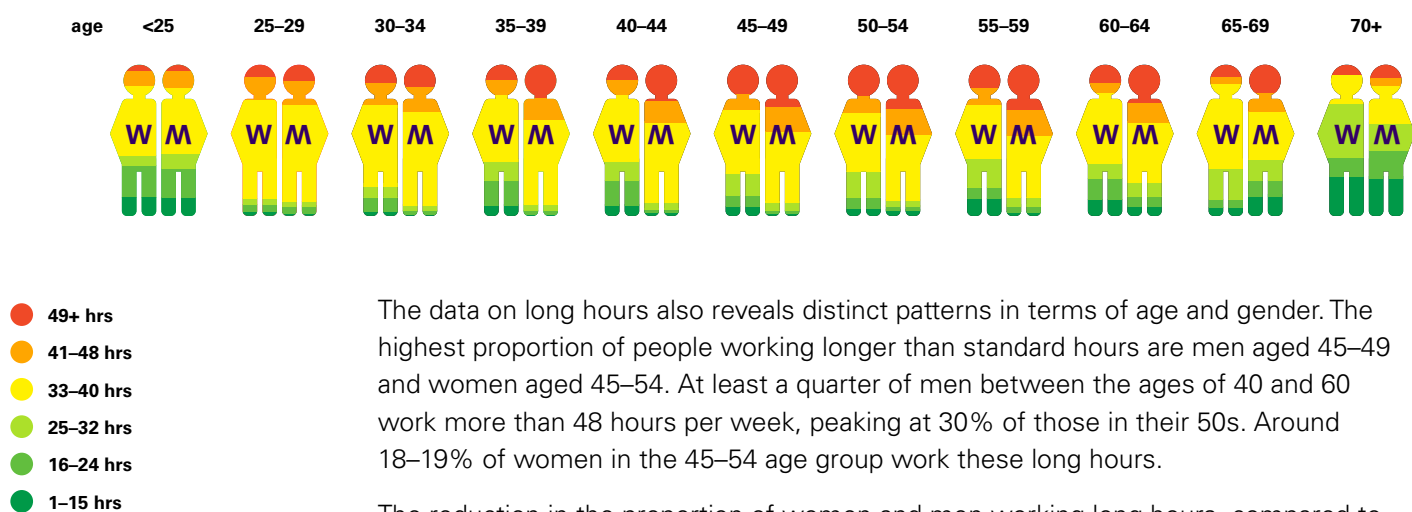
Significantly more women work part time in every age group after 30, except those aged over 60. These marked differences are particularly clear in the age pairs in Figure 5.5. The green part-time colours don't get much above men's ankles until they are over 60, but they cover the legs and above of the women once over the age of 35. The yellow of standard full-time hours generally goes to below the knees of the men.

**Figure 5.4**  
Hours worked per week by gender & age group, 2021





**Figure 5.5**  
Hours worked per week  
by gender age pairs, 2021



The data on long hours also reveals distinct patterns in terms of age and gender. The highest proportion of people working longer than standard hours are men aged 45–49 and women aged 45–54. At least a quarter of men between the ages of 40 and 60 work more than 48 hours per week, peaking at 30% of those in their 50s. Around 18–19% of women in the 45–54 age group work these long hours.

The reduction in the proportion of women and men working long hours, compared to 2016, is apparent in all age groups (Table 5.1). In 2016 around one-third of the women aged 25–34 worked more than 40 hours a week, but by 2021 the proportion had dropped to around a quarter. The drops are more dramatic for men. In 2016, more than half the men between the ages of 40 and 60 worked longer than 40 hours. In 2021 that had dropped to an average 44%. The biggest decreases were for those in their 40s.

**Table 5.1**  
Proportion of hours worked by age, by gender, 2016–2021

		age group	<25	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54	55–59	60–65	65–69	total
women	<b>1–24</b>		33%	7%	12%	23%	19%	13%	12%	18%	24%	10%	<b>15%</b>
	2016 comparison 1–24		31%	7%	10%	25%	22%	17%	17%	9%	25%	31%	<b>16%</b>
	<b>25–32</b>		7%	4%	7%	13%	20%	15%	17%	19%	10%	21%	<b>12%</b>
	<b>33–40</b>		46%	65%	54%	44%	41%	43%	39%	36%	47%	56%	<b>52%</b>
	<b>41–48</b>		10%	16%	15%	10%	9%	12%	13%	12%	7%	5%	<b>13%</b>
	2016 comparison 41–48		11%	22%	16%	11%	12%	11%	11%	12%	4%	10%	<b>15%</b>
	<b>49+</b>		4%	8%	11%	10%	11%	18%	19%	14%	12%	8%	<b>12%</b>
2016 comparison 49+		5%	12%	16%	11%	14%	17%	20%	26%	24%	14%	<b>14%</b>	
men	<b>1–24</b>		31%	6%	3%	3%	4%	3%	6%	6%	13%	23%	<b>9%</b>
	2016 comparison 1–24		28%	5%	3%	2%	2%	4%	4%	5%	13%	30%	<b>7%</b>
	<b>25–32</b>		10%	3%	3%	4%	4%	5%	4%	6%	9%	14%	<b>6%</b>
	<b>33–40</b>		43%	64%	62%	56%	53%	47%	43%	41%	40%	32%	<b>50%</b>
	<b>41–48</b>		11%	16%	16%	15%	14%	16%	17%	17%	13%	12%	<b>15%</b>
	2016 comparison 41–48		12%	19%	21%	19%	20%	20%	20%	17%	13%	8%	<b>18%</b>
	<b>49+</b>		4%	11%	15%	22%	24%	28%	29%	30%	25%	19%	<b>21%</b>
2016 comparison 49+		9%	15%	25%	26%	30%	34%	34%	37%	32%	18%	<b>27%</b>	

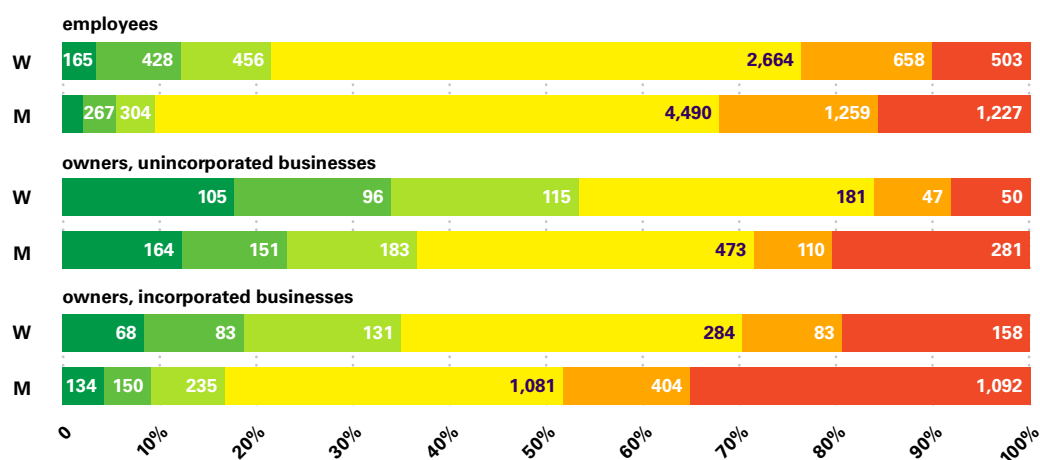
Note: The 2016 hours data for this table differs to that shown in Figure 5.1. The Census appears to classify part-time hours as <33 hours per week.



There are also decreases when looking at age group cohorts over time. For example, 45% of men aged 35–39 in 2016 worked longer hours but, by 2021, now aged 40–44, 38% of this group was working more than 40 hours a week. This may be a result of shifts in work patterns due to COVID-19. The largest decline for both women and men were for those aged 55–59 in 2016 and in their early 60s in 2021. Both genders record a double digit drop. In 2016, 38% of the women in this cohort worked more than 40 hours; by 2021 this had dropped to 19%. For men in this age cohort the shift was from 54% to 38%. This pattern may reflect people winding down prior to retirement (notwithstanding the numbers of those over the age of 65 still working).

**Figure 5.6**  
Hours worked per week  
by employment category  
& gender, 2021

- 49+ hrs
- 41–48 hrs
- 33–40 hrs
- 25–32 hrs
- 16–24 hrs
- 1–15 hrs



### The impact of employment status

Some of the reduction in the proportion of those working long hours visible in Table 5.1 may be connected to the drop in ownership levels by age group (Table 4.5). We might expect that owners of a business would work longer hours than employees, and this is borne out by analysis of the data (Figure 5.6). Owners of incorporated enterprises did indeed work the longest hours – both men and women. One-fifth (20%) of women owners recorded working over 48 hours a week, as did over one-third (35%) of the male owners. In 2016 these figures were 28% and 43% respectively. This drop registers the strong overall decline noted earlier, but the proportion of those working longer hours is still higher than other employment categories.

A higher proportion of people owning unincorporated firms worked part time. This pattern supports the contention that those working part-time as sole traders, consultants or contract workers are more likely to use this simpler business structure.

While long hours are still a strong feature of the architecture profession (especially when compared to all other professionals), there has been a marked easing off in recorded working hours since the 2001 Census, and even since 2016. Although these long hours have reduced substantially, they still persist for some and are certainly not equally shared between women and men. Men continue to bear the brunt of the long-hours work culture. It is possible that as women work fewer hours (often due to family care expectations), they are bearing the career consequences of that, such as reduced ownership levels, especially of the larger businesses.



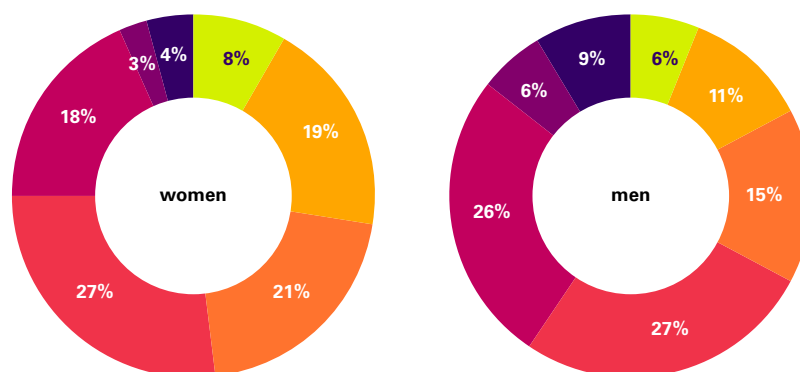
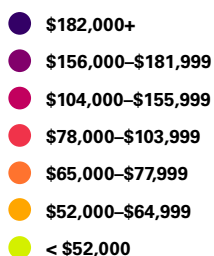
## 6 : Income & the pay gap

*Income is a very important indicator of inequity. Income data from the Census tells us about both gender pay gaps and the uneven distribution of income.*

*In 2021 the overall gender pay gap for full-time workers in architecture was 17.2%. This is a slight drop from the 19% pay gap of 2016. This reflects an average annual income of \$112,855 for full-time men and \$93,409 for full-time women. When the calculation is done for employees only, the gap drops again to 15.4%. These reducing gaps point to the impact on pay of demographic differences outlined in previous sections. Nonetheless, pay gaps persist for full-time workers in all age groups.*

*The distribution of income is very different for women and men. Employers are over-represented at both the low and high ends of income ranges.*

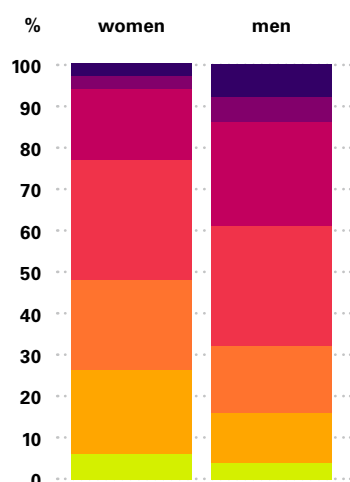
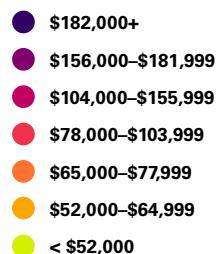
**Figure 6.1**  
Overall gender pay gap,  
full-time workers



*The good news is that the overall pay gap for full-time workers has decreased over time, as have the gaps within age groups. In particular, the pay gap in the 25–29 age group, which halved from 5.2% in 2016 to 2.6% in 2021. It seems that the attention directed to gender equity, pay gaps and pay inequity in recent years has had an impact, but there is still substantial work to be done.*



**Figure 6.2**  
Overall distribution of income for full-time workers, 2021



**Table 6.1**  
Gender pay gap by age, full-time workers, 2001–2021

age	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
25–29	7.7%	7.1%	5.8%	5.2%	2.6%
30–34	8.8%	9.0%	5.8%	7.0%	5.4%
35–39	16.3%	9.5%	8.3%	9.4%	7.7%
40–44	14.8%	14.4%	13.9%	10.3%	10.9%
45–49	13.5%	15.3%	8.5%	14.6%	13.7%
50–54	-	19.7%	14.8%	15.5%	11.0%
55–59	-	-	17.1%	15.8%	0.8%

### Gender pay gap

Gender pay gaps elicit a lot of attention in the general media. Any gap is a problem, but no indicator is more fraught in terms of process and reception than the pay gap. It is important, therefore, to understand what the pay gap refers to, and what it doesn't.

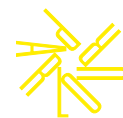
The gender pay gap is the difference between the average earnings of women and men across a workforce, expressed as a proportion of men's earnings. This is not the same as unequal pay, which refers to the situation in which women are paid less for the same work or work of equal value. On one hand, unequal pay is a contributor to gender pay gaps, along with many other social and economic factors that affect income and earning capacity. On the other hand, the presence of a pay gap does not in and of itself demonstrate pay inequity. It does, however, point to unequal representation and imbalance in power, influence and even the economic ability to stay in an industry. Pay gaps contribute to and are driven by inequality.

Pay gaps can be calculated at the level of a nation, a sector, a profession or a business. They can be calculated for all workers or for particular segments within a workforce. Each offers a different kind of insight, from the nationwide gap that indexes broad social and economic inequity to pay gaps within closely targeted groups with shared demographic characteristics. The Census data is particularly important in relation to pay gaps within architecture because it counts almost everyone involved in the workforce, and because it allows a breakdown by demographic characteristics such as age, employment status and hours worked. One limit of Census-based pay gap calculations is that they do not include discretionary payments such as bonuses, overtime and other forms of additional remuneration.

Within architecture, the overall full-time pay gap of 17.2% encapsulates the gendered imbalance within the profession as a whole. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency calculates the sector-wide gap in architecture and construction at 29% – the largest of any industry, pointing to the entrenched gendered segregation of the workforce.

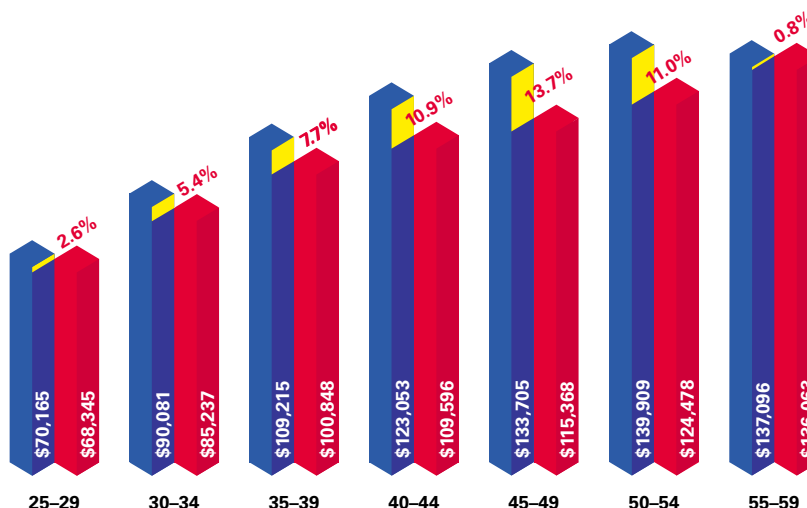
The capacity to filter Census data and calculate the gender pay gap according to age and employment status matters because men in architecture, as a group, are older than women, and therefore are likely to be more experienced and senior (Section 2). This combination of age and experience translates into higher earnings, generating the





**Figure 6.3**  
Gender pay gap by age  
& annual income, 2021  
(full-time workers)

● women  
● men  
● pay gap



income band patterns visible in Figure 6.3.<sup>11</sup> Men are also more likely than women to be owners, with the potential for higher incomes. Census data can also be filtered in for full-time and part-time workers. Substantially more women work part time, which also lowers their overall average earnings (Section 5). Figures that are not adjusted in relation to these distortions can obscure the issues rather than clarify them.

The average income in 2021 for men working full time in every age group is consistently higher than that for women, except for the 55–59 age group (Figure 6.3). The pay gap is glaringly obvious.

Analysing pay gap data across the Census years for full-time workers by age group shows a number of patterns (Table 6.1).<sup>12</sup> The first is that the gap within an age group has generally lessened over time; for example, in 2001 the gap for 35–39 year olds was 16.3%, while in 2021 it was 7.7%. The second pattern is that the pay gap is smallest for younger age groups. But, as Table 6.1 shows, any gap is the beginning of a pay difference that grows over time. The shaded cells track what happens to an age group cohort over time. Those aged 30–34 in 2001 had an 8.8% difference; in 2021 (now aged 50–54), the gap has widened to 11.0%, although it was considerably more at 14.6% in 2016. It is a very clear illustration of how a pay disadvantage at the beginning of a career casts a long shadow.

The good news for 2021 is that the gap visible for the 25–29 age group in 2016 of 5.2% has halved to 2.6%. It marks an average difference of about \$35 a week. However, it is still a problem because the 25–29 age cohort has near equal numbers of women and men (Table 2.1), and we can assume similar levels of experience. In addition, the Architects Award (2020) establishes legally mandated minimum rates of pay for junior levels including the early years following registration.<sup>13</sup> Any average gender pay difference at all for this age group is problematic in terms of long-term economic security. It contributes to women, on average, having student debts far longer than men,<sup>14</sup> having less superannuation and – as already noted – is the start of a pay gap that builds over time. All of this may discourage women remaining in the profession. This is also the period before one of the major impediments to career progression and increased earnings (namely, maternity) arises for many women.

11. The income steps presented in the Census are not equally distributed. Up until \$2,000 a week the steps are in \$249 increments; the next step is \$999 (\$2,000–\$2,999 or \$104,000 to \$155,999 annual income), and the following one \$499 (\$3,000–\$3,499 or \$156,000 to \$181,999 annually). This uneven stepping probably obscures more of a gender pay gap. Some of the lower income bands have been combined for this analysis.

12. Age group 60–64 is not shown because the data has fewer than 100 women, which tends to distort this calculation.

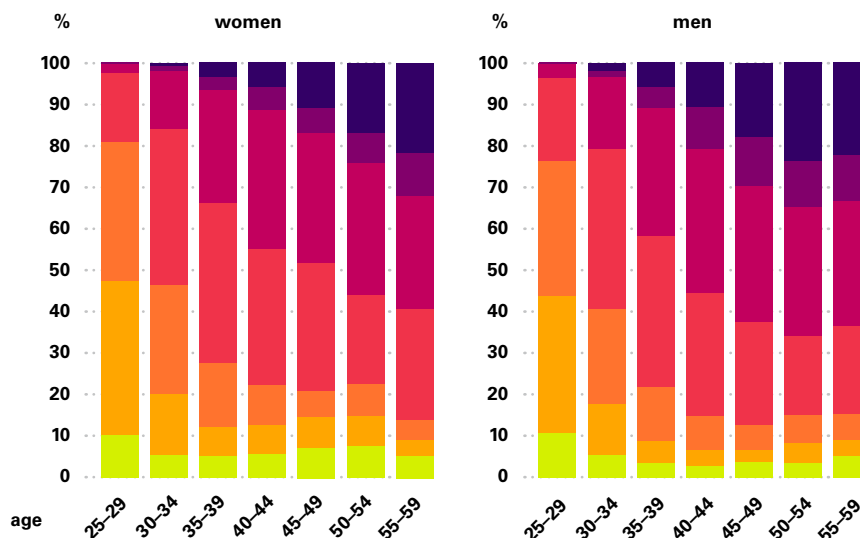
13. Refer to Architects Award pay rates 2021.

14. *The Financial and Social Impact of the Cost of University Education* (Melbourne: Futurity Investment Group, 2023).



**Figure 6.4**  
Distribution of full-time earnings, by age group, & gender, 2021

- \$182,000+
- \$156,000–\$181,999
- \$104,000–\$155,999
- \$78,000–\$103,999
- \$65,000–\$77,999
- \$52,000–\$64,999
- under \$52,000



### Income disparity

Another way of understanding income disparity is to consider the distribution of the different income ranges per age group. Figure 6.4 shows this distribution for full-time workers. Once again, the pattern for women is very different to that of men. The purple bands of higher earnings are far more dominant for men than they are for women. Conversely, the green/orange bands of lower earnings are more prominent in the chart for women. This becomes even clearer in the age pairs shown in Figure 6.5. This diagram shows how full-time women architects as a group wear the green/orange ‘socks and leggings’ of lower earnings for longer than men, and men’s faces and the upper parts of their bodies turn purple well before women’s do.

**Figure 6.5**  
Distribution of full-time earnings by age pairs, 2021



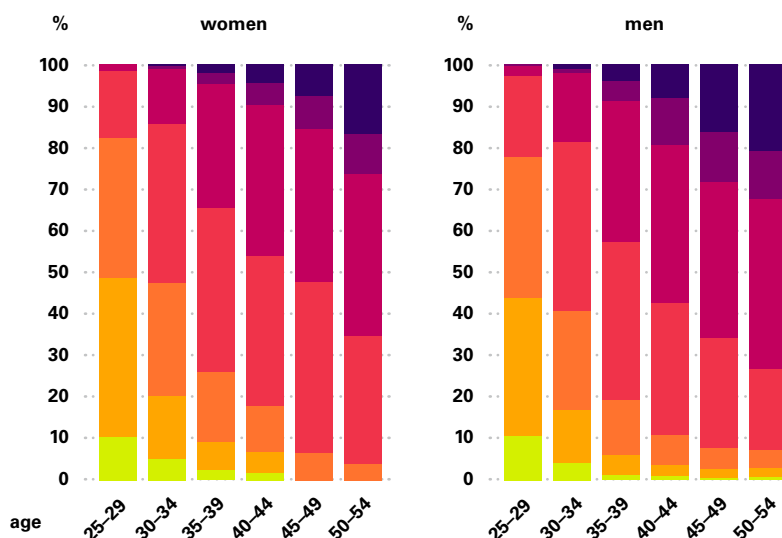
Once over the age of 45, at least 30% of the men earn over \$156,000, taking the purples down to their chests, while their heads and necks flush the darker purple of over \$182,000. Women never reach that level of coverage, except for the 55–59 age group; there is no more than their head in the purple zones.

More than half the men aged 40–44 (56%) earn over \$104,000; women do not reach that proportion in an age group until ten years later, aged 50–54. More than one third of men in their 50s (34%) earn more than \$156,000, as compared to 27% of women in that age group.



**Figure 6.6**  
Distribution of employee full-time earnings by age group, by gender, 2021

- \$182,000+
- \$156,000–\$181,999
- \$104,000–\$155,999
- \$78,000–\$103,999
- \$65,000–\$77,999
- \$52,000–\$64,999
- under \$52,000

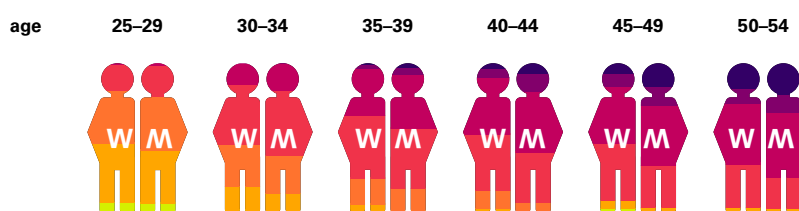


### Income of employees

Analysing the 2021 income data for full-time workers by employment category reveals further interesting patterns. The earnings of owners at both the high and the low end of income have a distorting effect on the overall figures seen in Table 6.1 and Figures 6.3 and 6.4. When the same age group analysis is done for full-time employees only, the picture changes (Figures 6.6 and 6.7 and Table 6.2).

Gender pay discrepancies persist when controlling for the significant variable of ownership; however they do reduce in most age groups. In younger age groups, the pay gap remains almost identical – the difference for those aged 25–39 is less than one percentage point (Table 6.2).<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 6.7**  
Distribution of employee full-time earnings by age pairs, 2021

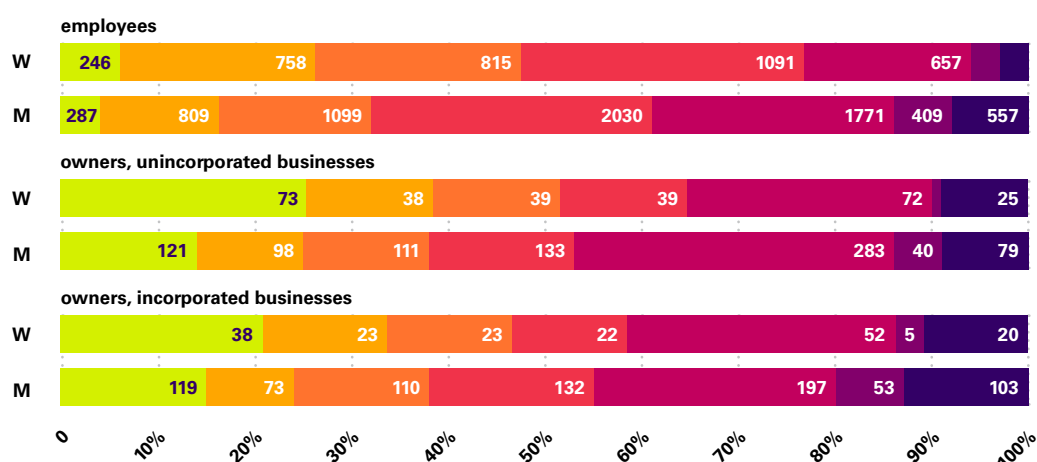
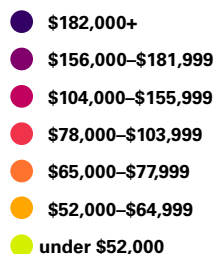


### Income of owners

Owners are over-represented at both the higher and lower end of the income range (Figure 6.8). Although there are some employees earning under \$52,000 (which is perilously close to being under the Architects Award and therefore illegal), there are much higher proportions of owners working full time in that range. This is especially so for women. These low pay rates may reflect the difficulty of running an architectural business in fluctuating economic contexts, but it should also be remembered that



**Figure 6.8**  
Distribution of full-time earnings, by employment category & gender, 2021



these figures do not include discretionary payments, bonuses, other types of remuneration, or the tax write-offs available to owners of businesses. A greater proportion of owners of incorporated businesses are also in the high income bracket of over \$156,000 (Figure 6.8). For the men, a similar proportion of employees are in the high earning brackets as male owners of unincorporated businesses. A smaller proportion of women employees earn in this higher range.

The income of owners varies depending on the number of employees (Table 6.3). Owners of practices with over 20 employees earn significantly more – and, remember, these figure exclude bonuses, shareholder payments and other discretionary income.

As outlined above, pay gaps result from a multitude of factors, and do not necessarily indicate unequal pay for equivalent work – although pay inequity certainly contributes to pay gaps. Despite all the caveats, it is important to recognise that discrepancies can and do slip in over time within a firm. Maintaining pay equity requires constant vigilance, and equitable policies and procedures in relation to recruitment and remuneration. It is important for practices to understand that even if they are careful and thorough about equal pay for equal work, the practice as a whole will still have a gender pay gap if men are over-represented in senior, higher-paying levels.

15. Note older age groups are not shown in Table 6.2 because the small numbers of women in these groups distort the calculations.

**Table 6.2**  
Gender pay gap by age, 2021, all full-time workers & employees only

age	all full-time	employees only
25–29	2.7%	2.4%
30–34	5.4%	5.1%
35–39	7.7%	7.4%
40–44	10.9%	9.3%
45–49	13.7%	11.6%
50–54	11.0%	5.4%

**Table 6.3**  
Full-time owners average income

# of employees	average income	# full time
0 employees	\$91,959	1,668
1–19 employees	\$127,213	2,173
20+ employees	\$205,516	392



## 7 : Impact of dependent children

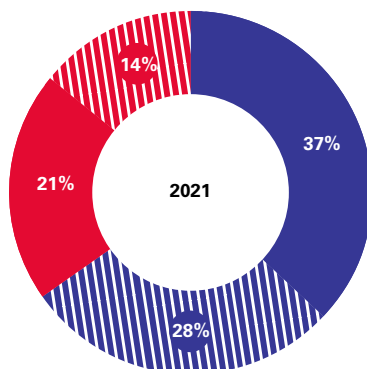
*Becoming a parent or guardian of dependent children has a huge impact on the participation of women in the architectural workforce. The impact on men is much less visible in the data.*

*Close to half the women with dependent children work part time. In contrast less than 12% of men in architecture with dependent children work part-time. Not only are these men more likely to be working full-time, but 26% work more than 49 hours a week.*

*Women and men with dependent children are both more likely to be owners of practices than the general architectural workforce. Nonetheless, a higher proportion of women are employees than men.*

**Figure 7.1**  
Architectural workforce  
with & without dependent  
children, by gender, 2021

- men without dependent children
- ▨ men with dependent children
- women without dependent children
- ▨ women with dependent children

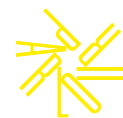


In 2021, 42% of the architectural workforce identified in the Census had dependent children (8,185 people): 40% of the women and 43% of the men. (The ABS defines a dependent child as “a person who is either a child under 15 years of age, or a dependent student aged 15–24 years.”) Numerically, there are twice as many men with dependent children in the architectural workforce than women.

Compared to all professionals, people in the architectural workforce are *less* likely to have dependent children. In 2021, 46.4% of all professionals had dependent children – 47.3% of the women and 45.2% of the men. Note that the gender difference is the opposite of the situation in architecture, with a higher proportion of professional women having dependent children than the men.

Women in the architectural workforce become parents or guardians at a later age than professional women as a whole. Over one third (38%) of all professional women with dependent children are under the age of 40, including those in architecture (Table 7.1). A higher proportion of women in architecture are at the older end of this range – one-quarter are aged 35–39, compared with 21.5% of all professional women. In contrast, just 1% of women in the architectural workforce with dependent children are in their 20s, compared to 3.4% of all professional women parents.

We might expect that caring responsibilities mean that some parents are more likely to work part-time hours than those without dependent children. This is borne out in the



**Figure 7.2**  
Hours worked by dependent children & gender, 2021

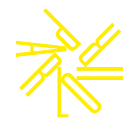
- 49+ hours
- 41–48 hours
- 33–40 hours
- 25–32 hours
- 16–24 hours
- 1–15 hours

data, but only for some (Figure 7.2). There is a starkly gendered difference – almost half the women with dependent children work part time (45%) and just 11.4% of the men (Table 7.2). This is a dramatic contrast to patterns of part-time work among those without dependent children, where the percentage of men and women working part time is almost equal (17% of men and 16% of women). It is also notable that a higher proportion of men without dependent children work part time than those with children (17% of men without dependent children and 11% of men with dependent children).

Higher proportions of people with dependent children are owners of architectural businesses than the architectural workforce as a whole (Figure 7.3). This partly relates

**Table 7.1**  
People with dependent children by age group, architectural workforce & all professionals

age	all professionals		architectural workforce	
	men	women	men	women
20–24	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
25–29	1.5%	3.2%	0.8%	1.0%
30–34	9.4%	13.6%	7.4%	11.8%
35–39	19.9%	21.5%	16.6%	25.4%
40–44	20.6%	20.4%	20.2%	23.5%
45–49	18.0%	17.6%	18.9%	18.2%
50–54	14.1%	12.9%	14.8%	13.0%
55–59	9.2%	6.9%	10.7%	5.6%



**Figure 7.3**  
Employment status,  
by dependent children  
& gender, 2021.

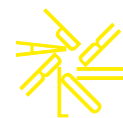
- owner, incorporated
- owners, unincorporated
- employee
- contributing family worker

to the age at which people become parents, but also reflects the tendency of some with parenting responsibilities to start their own businesses in an attempt to increase flexibility and gain a measure of control over their work life. Nonetheless, significant gendered differences in employment status persist in this group – 64% of women with dependent children are employees, compared to 56% of men. Of these, a significantly higher proportion of men with dependent children are owners of incorporated enterprises – 32% of men compared to 20% of women.

The data confirms anecdotal evidence that being a parent or guardian has a substantial impact on women’s participation in the architectural workforce, while working in architecture also impacts the age at which some women become parents. These challenges will persist until parenting responsibilities are more evenly shared.

**Table 7.2**  
Hours worked by people with dependent children in the architectural workforce

	# of parents		% of parents	
	men	women	men	women
1–15 hours	145	197	2.6%	8.2%
16–24 hours	169	366	3.0%	15.3%
25–32 hours	327	504	5.8%	21.0%
33–40 hours	2,719	884	47.9%	36.8%
41–48 hours	827	189	14.6%	7.9%
49 hours +	1,484	260	26.2%	10.8%



## 8 : Indigeneity & cultural diversity

*The number of Indigenous people counted in the architectural workforce has doubled since the 2016 Census; however, proportionally Indigenous representation remains very low.*

*The architectural workforce is increasingly culturally diverse according to the key measures available via the Census data – ancestry, country of birth and language. Approximately half the architectural workforce cites North-West Europe ancestry, and an increasing proportion of architects are born overseas – a trend slightly more pronounced for women.*

Gender is, of course, not the only factor that can hinder or help people as they make careers in the architectural profession. Cultural background intersects with gender and class to influence and impact career pathways and professional experiences and opportunities. The 2021 Census offers some insight into the cultural diversity of the architectural workforce through a variety of questions about ancestry, country of birth, year of arrival in Australia, country of birth of parents, citizenship and language spoken at home.<sup>16</sup> Here we look at country of birth and ancestry, the two key indicators used by the ABS to understand ethnicity and cultural diversity, along with languages spoken at home. These are all fairly blunt measures. Nonetheless, they provide useful insight – some interesting patterns emerge, and some alarming ones. While the analysis offered here is more detailed than in the 2016 Parlour Census Report, this is still preliminary work. We encourage more research and analysis about cultural diversity in Australian architecture and we hope the data here helps with this work.

### **Indigenous peoples in architecture**

In the 2021 Census, 65 people in the architectural workforce identified as Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander – 17 women and 48 men. This is double the number from the 2016 Census (a total of 31 people – 5 women and 26 men). It is important to note that these figures are not necessarily precise, as the ABS randomly adjusts data to protect privacy when numbers are this small. With this caveat, Indigenous practitioners are now approximately 0.34% of the 2021 architectural workforce – almost doubling from 2016 when they were just 0.18%. This proportion is still substantially less than the proportion of Indigenous people in the population as a whole – 3.2% in 2021.<sup>17</sup>

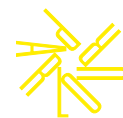
A huge groundswell of activity is currently underway in terms of Indigenising the built environment and educating the architectural profession about Country and Indigenous knowledge systems. These are now embedded in the National Standards of Competency for Architects. There is a large cultural load carried by a small number of Indigenous practitioners and there is clearly significant work to do in growing this group.

16. Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Cultural diversity of Australia"

17. Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: Census, 2021"

18. In the Census, ancestry is coded using the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG), 2019.

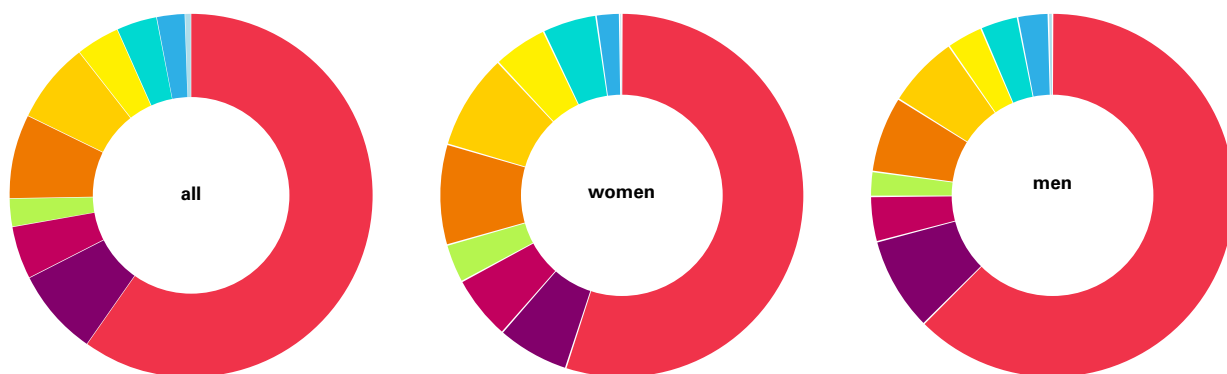




### Country of birth

The 2021 Census reveals a broad range of countries of birth. Over half of the architectural workforce was born in Australia, 60% of men and 53% of women. (Figure 8.1). These figures are a slight reduction on the 2016 data of 61% of men and 56% of women (Appendix B, Table B3). Those born elsewhere come from a wide geographical range, and there are slightly different patterns by gender – for women, the most common birthplace outside Australia was China (5%), while for men it was the United Kingdom (6%). Figure 8.1 uses the same geographic groupings as the ABS ancestry fields, while Table 8.1 provides more specificity.

**Figure 8.1**  
Country of birth (region)  
by gender, 2021

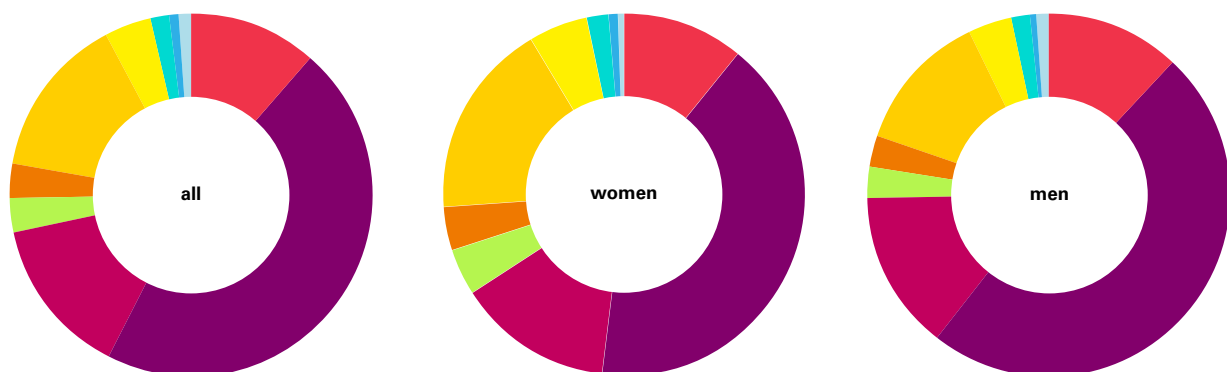


- Oceania & Antarctica
- North-West Europe
- Southern & Eastern Europe
- North Africa & Middle East
- South-East Asia
- North-East Asia
- Southern & Central Asia
- Americas
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Other

### Ancestry

Ancestry is another indicator of cultural diversity available from the Census. Nine main fields are available.<sup>18</sup> (The Australian Bureau of Statistics data can be explored through multiple ancestry fields; however, the architectural workforce is not large enough to enable this level of analysis.) Within architecture, the most prominent ancestry cited is North-West European (46% of the whole workforce, 41% of women and 48% of men). This group is more than three times larger than any other (Table 8.2). The next most dominant ancestries are Southern and Eastern European (14% of both men and women) and North-East Asian (17% of women and 13% of men).

**Figure 8.2**  
Ancestry by gender, 2021





## Language spoken at home

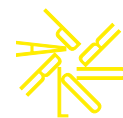
Language spoken at home is another approximate indicator of cultural diversity (Table 8.3). Almost 70% of the architectural workforce speak English at home (63% of the women and 72% of men). The second most common language is Chinese – spoken at home by 11.7% of women and 8.8% of men (reflecting the higher proportion of women born in China) – followed by French/Greek/Italian/Spanish/Portuguese. It is important to note that there is likely to be another cohort of people whose first language is not English that are not picked up by this measure.

**Table 8.2**  
Ancestry of architectural workforce by gender, 2021

ancestry	women	men	total
North-West European	2,737	6,171	<b>8,912</b>
Southern and Eastern European	923	1,791	<b>2,713</b>
North-East Asian	1,158	1,595	<b>2,751</b>
Oceanian	720	1,518	<b>2,244</b>
Southern and Central Asian	355	478	835
North African and Middle Eastern	268	354	<b>618</b>
South-East Asian	259	345	<b>606</b>
Peoples of the Americas	128	210	<b>338</b>
Sub-Saharan African	48	91	<b>140</b>
not stated	34	68	<b>103</b>
inadequately described	-	44	<b>81</b>

**Table 8.3**  
Languages spoken at home of architectural workforce, by gender, 2021

language	women	men	total
English	63.1%	72.4%	<b>69.2%</b>
Chinese	11.7%	8.8%	<b>9.8%</b>
French/Greek/Italian/Spanish/Portuguese	7.5%	6.1%	<b>6.6%</b>
Southwest and Central Asian languages	7.4%	5.1%	<b>5.9%</b>
South East Asian	3.5%	2.5%	<b>2.8%</b>
Eastern European languages	3.1%	2.0%	<b>2.4%</b>
German/Dutch/Scandinavian languages	2.3%	1.3%	<b>1.7%</b>
Other Eastern Asian Languages (Japanese, etc)	0.9%	1.0%	<b>1.0%</b>



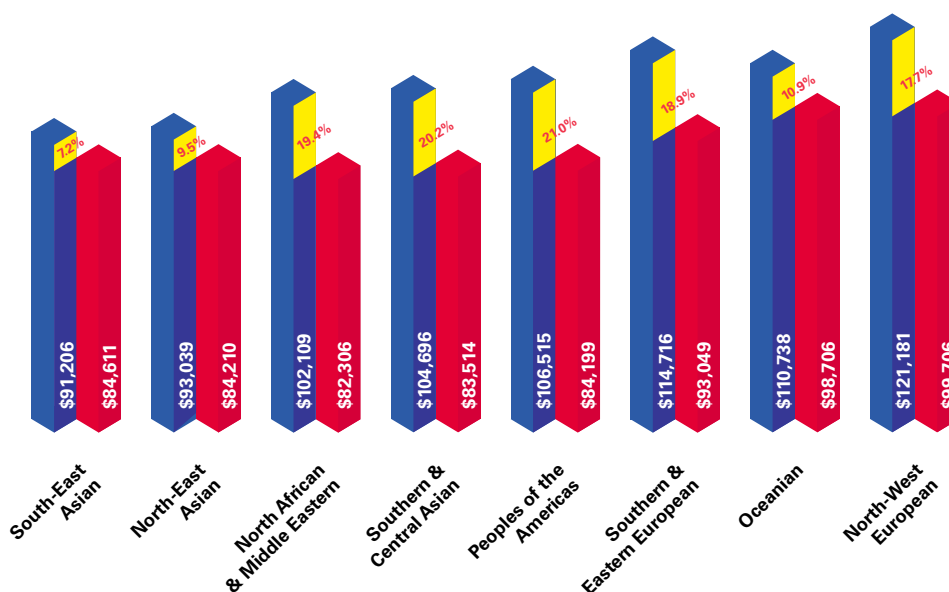
### Limitations of cultural diversity measures

Each of these measures is very blunt. The data on country of birth gives no indication of the extent to which people identify culturally with that country, nor when they arrived in Australia. Some would have immigrated as children; others would be international students who have stayed on in Australia; and still others would have immigrated here after study in another country. The single level data on ancestry does not account for the complex mixes in many, many people’s backgrounds. The prominence of North-West European ancestry is also complicated by histories of colonisation. It is unclear how people from settler-colonial countries might state their ancestry. For example, white people from North America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand might declare ancestry in terms of the colonised country or go further back to a European origin. Lastly, people may have a first language other than English but speak English at home, depending on the languages spoken by the people they live with.

Despite all of these complexities, the data does tell us that the architectural workforce is increasingly culturally diverse, but it is not equitable.

**Figure 8.3**  
Gender pay gap  
by ancestry, 2021

- women
- men
- gender pay gap

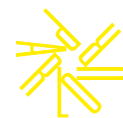


### Cultural diversity pay gap

The cultural diversity apparent in these basic measures does not translate in terms of the distribution of power and influence in the profession. As with gender, the pay gap offers useful insight into the uneven playing field in terms of cultural background – and when gender and cultural background are combined the results are devastating.

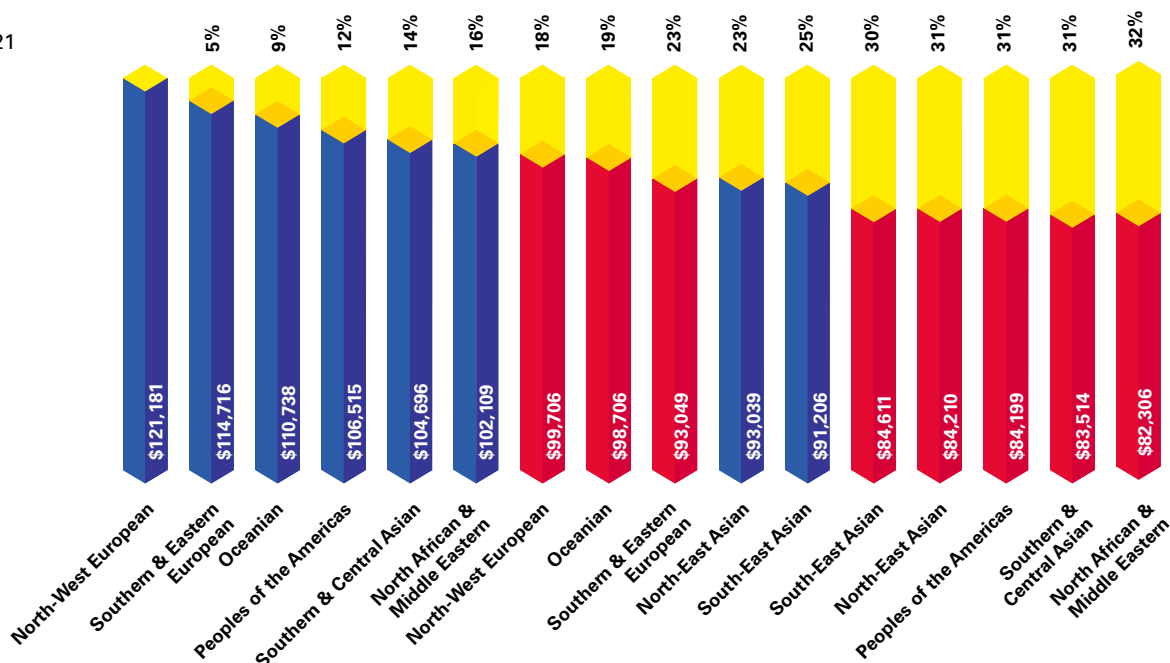
We have analysed the pay gap for full-time workers in terms of gender and both ancestry (Table 8.4 and Figure 8.3) and place of birth (Table 8.5).<sup>19</sup> In both calculations the gender pay gap is absolutely consistent. And there are significant pay gaps between the different groups. There are the usual caveats to be considered here – particularly around age – but the overall figures provide an important indication.

19. Sub-Saharan African ancestry numbers are too low for meaningful comparison.



**Figure 8.4**  
Pay gap, compared to  
N-W European men, 2021

● women  
● men  
● gender pay gap



Architects with a North-West European ancestry are most numerous and are paid the most (Figure 8.3 and 8.4). There is a 17.7% pay gap between the men and the women in this grouping. Indeed, the men from all but two of the ancestry groupings earn more on average than the women with North-West European ancestry.

An intersectional analysis combining gender + cultural pay gaps demonstrates gaps of over 30% between North-West European men and the women of most of the ancestry groupings. These gaps are apparent in the right hand column of Table 8.4.

The smallest gender pay gaps within an ancestry group are for those with North-East Asian and South-East Asian backgrounds; but these are also the groups that have the highest cultural pay gap overall (over 22%) compared to those with North-West European origins.

The dominance of white men at senior levels of the profession is clear from this data.

The age caveat is important. Over two-thirds of the people with Asian ancestry are under the age of 40, compared to 41% of those with North-West European ancestry. This is significantly more so for the women – around three-quarters of women with Asian ancestry are under the age of 40. This age distribution undoubtedly contributes to the diversity pay gap. However, it does not explain it all. A deeper dive into the data by age group reveals a 17.8% pay gap between those with North-East Asian ancestry and those of North-West European descent in the 35–39 age group. The gap is 5.8% for those aged 25–29 and 7.5% for those aged 30–34.<sup>20</sup>

This age imbalance also means that these younger women may face additional challenges in terms of career progression in environments where many senior leaders still support and sponsor younger colleagues who look like them.

20. Breaking the data by age group generated very small numbers except for these two ancestry groups.



The pay gap by country of birth suggests further complexities (Table 8.5). Those born in Australia – while the most numerous – are not the highest paid overall. The more than 1,000 people born in North-West Europe and 405 people born in Sub-Saharan Africa earn more – particularly the men, but the women of this group also earn more relative to other women. However, when diversity and gender are added together, that advantage disappears (right-hand column Table 8.5); women born in North-West Europe still earn 10.1% less than men born in Oceania.

Census data can give only approximations of cultural diversity, but what it shows is that although the architectural workforce includes people from a wide range of backgrounds the profession is most definitely dominated by those from predominantly white countries. This manifests not just numerically, but also in higher pay. Those from Asian countries appear to experience more barriers rising to senior levels of the profession. As with women as a whole, it is not that there are not people of Asian birth and descent in such positions. There are! But they are fewer in number than their proportion of the profession might suggest. This indicates that this group experiences additional obstacles and, for women, these intersect with gender-based bias.

**Table 8.4**  
Pay gap by ancestry & gender

ancestry	#			\$			pay gap		
	women	men	total	women	men	all	gender pay gap	cultural pay gap to NW Europeans	cultural + gender gap
North African & Middle Eastern	185	286	471	\$82,306	\$102,109	\$94,331	19.4%	18.3%	32.1%
Southern & Central Asian	253	407	660	\$83,514	\$104,696	\$96,577	20.2%	16.3%	31.1%
Peoples of the Americas	95	184	279	\$84,199	\$106,515	\$98,916	21.0%	14.3%	30.5%
North-East Asian	864	1,343	2,207	\$84,210	\$93,039	\$89,582	9.5%	22.4%	30.5%
South-East Asian	199	307	506	\$84,611	\$91,206	\$88,612	7.2%	23.2%	30.2%
Southern & Eastern European	632	1,458	2,090	\$93,049	\$114,716	\$108,164	18.9%	6.3%	23.2%
Oceanian	449	1,267	1,716	\$98,706	\$110,738	\$107,590	10.9%	6.8%	18.5%
North-West European	1,842	5,043	6,885	\$99,709	\$121,181	\$115,436	17.7%	-	17.7%

**Table 8.5**  
Pay gap by country of birth & gender

country of birth	#			\$			pay gap		
	women	men	total	women	men	all	gender pay gap	diversity pay gap to Oceania	diversity + gender gap
Southern and Central Asia	238	321	559	\$82,158	\$108,341	\$97,193	24.2%	11.7%	28.6%
Americas	224	359	583	\$82,666	\$114,874	\$102,499	28.0%	6.9%	28.1%
North-East Asia	431	667	1,098	\$83,948	\$92,386	\$89,074	9.1%	19.1%	27.0%
North African & Middle East	160	237	397	\$84,760	\$101,093	\$94,510	16.2%	14.2%	26.3%
South-East Asia	431	715	1,146	\$85,362	\$94,473	\$91,047	9.6%	17.3%	25.8%
Southern & Eastern Europe	271	403	674	\$95,432	\$105,519	\$101,463	9.6%	7.9%	17.0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	112	293	405	\$99,798	\$118,779	\$113,530	16.0%	-3.1%	13.2%
North-West Europe	288	903	1,191	\$103,358	\$131,852	\$124,962	21.6%	-13.5%	10.1%
Oceania	2,447	6,505	8,952	\$97,076	\$115,013	\$110,110	15.6%	-	-



## 9 : Summary

*The Australian Census data is an immensely valuable source of information about the architectural workforce. It records changes over time and the slow shifting of participation. Women's participation is increasing in every metric the Census measures, but growth is much slower than the burgeoning numbers and proportions of women graduates might project.*

In recent years women have become increasingly visible in places of influence. There are more women in senior roles in practice, and many of the profession's leadership positions are filled by women. This is significant and meaningful. Like the fast growing registration figures, and the stabilising numbers of women over 40, the multitude of women putting themselves forward for leadership roles is a clear indication that, individually and collectively, women are seizing opportunities, speaking up, and making change. This is exciting and admirable. Nonetheless, the proportions of women in senior roles are still at lower levels than we might expect. For example, in the more than 60 years of the Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal award, women have won just four times – two of those in partnership with their male spouse. All four winners have been this century, two in the last five years. There is a great deal of work underway, and a great deal more to do.

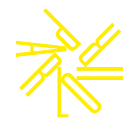
The Census data answers many questions, and poses even more. With each Census report we have delved into more detail and additional data sets. There are, however, some important areas where the Census is not that helpful. In terms of diversity, we know that socio-economic background matters in professions;<sup>21</sup> however, it is currently almost impossible to ascertain this information from the Census data.

The Census can also give answers that might contradict other sources. Given the recent concern about mental health within the architecture profession, we checked the numbers. In the 2021 Census, people were asked: "Has the person been told by a doctor or nurse that they have any of these long-term health conditions?" and one of the options provided was 'Mental health condition (including depression and anxiety)'. 9.3% of all professionals declared a long-term mental health condition, but a lower 6.2% of architects did. It is, of course, possible that those architects with such a condition might have left the architectural workforce and be working in the other fields.

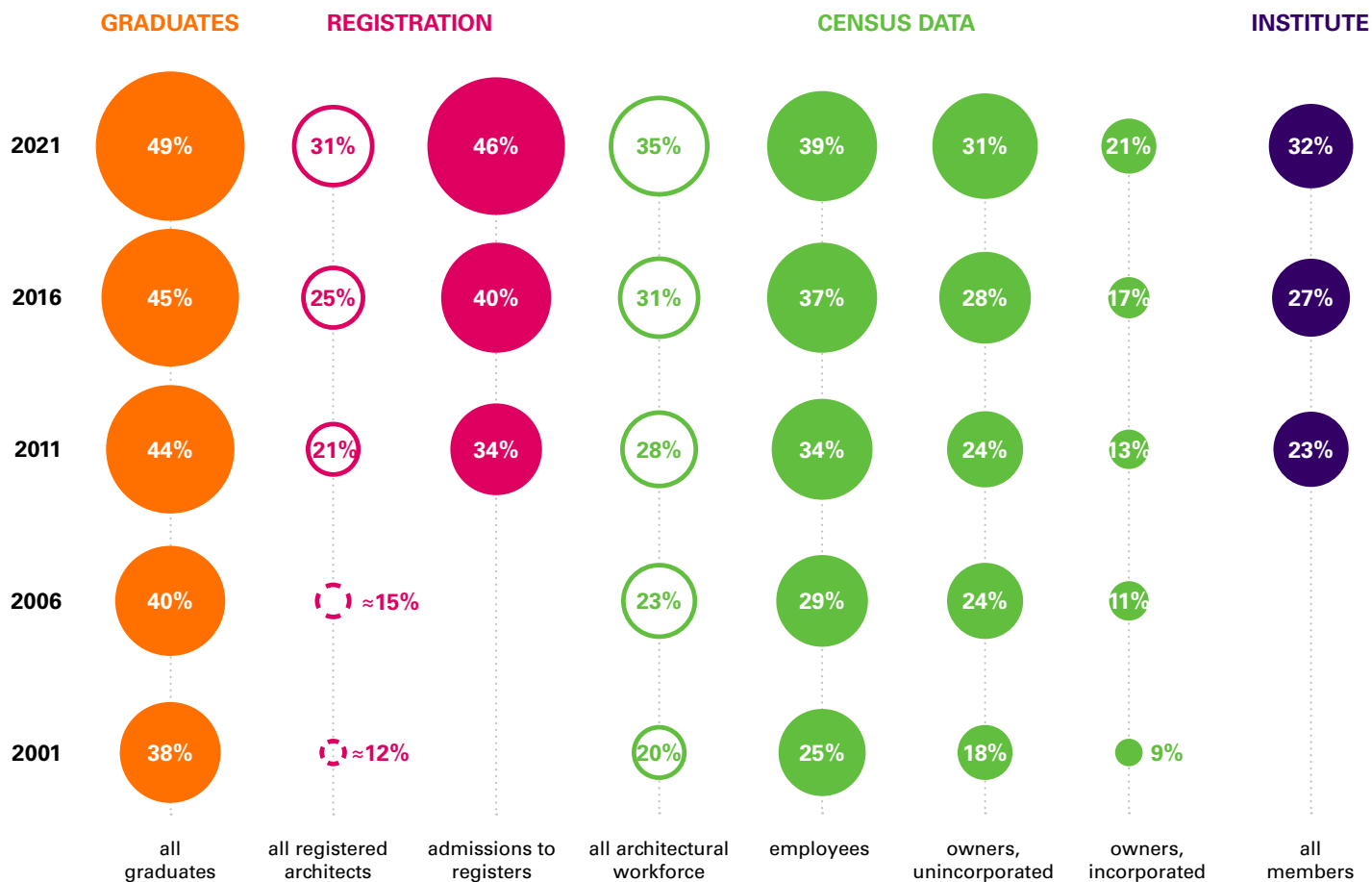
Collecting and analysing data is a fundamental part of understanding the current shape of the profession and provides an essential foundation on which to build action and advocacy. Parlour is committed to the ongoing analysis and publication of essential data – and we are currently the only organisation to consistently undertake this work.

We acknowledge and thank the organisations that have come together to support this Census report. We urge all organisations and institutions to publicly report their own data as part of the ongoing efforts to understand and improve our profession. In particular, we strongly encourage the registration boards across Australia to work together to publish consistent, reliable, publicly accessible data.

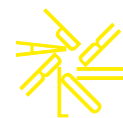
21. Luke Beck, "Opinion: Why are there no poor kids in the legal profession?" *Law Society Journal Online*, 13 December 2022.



**Figure 9.1**  
Women in Australian Architecture, 2001–2021



We hope you, our readers, find the *Parlour Census Report 2001–2021: Gender & diversity in Australian architecture* useful. We trust you will put this knowledge to work in your own context as we work together to improve equity for all.



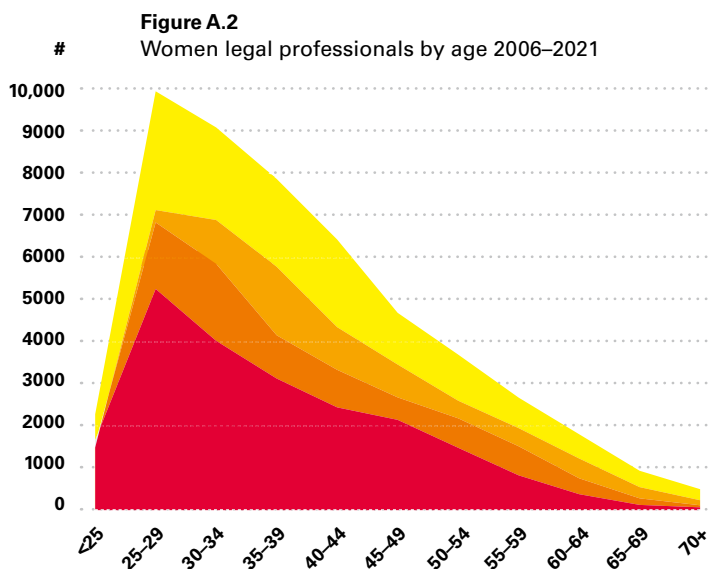
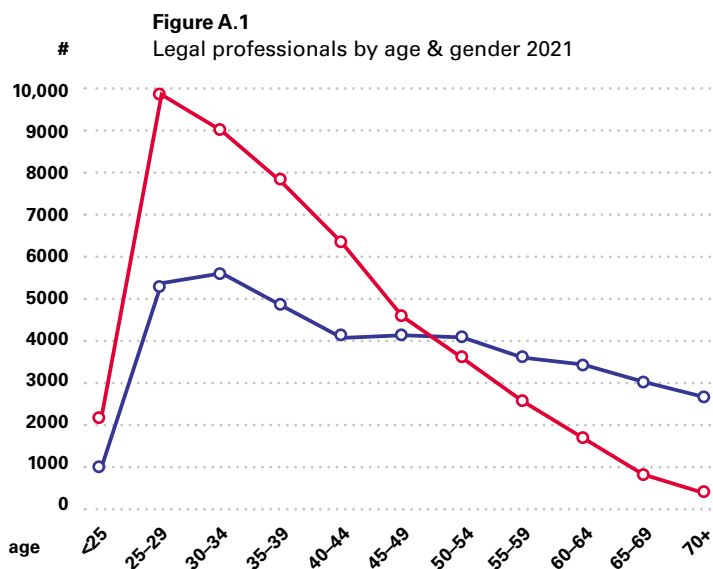
# Appendix A

Appendix A presents a set of charts from related professions and disciplines, demonstrating participation in these fields by gender and age.

The pattern of declining numbers in older age groups is visible in other occupations recorded by the Census. Some have an even more striking gender participation pattern than architecture. We are not able to comment much on these patterns except to say that discrimination by gender is endemic in Australian society.

## Legal profession

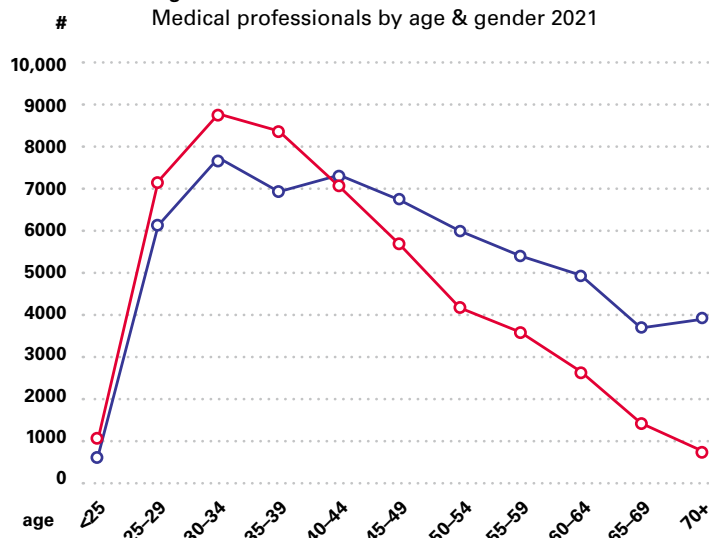
The Census OCCP Occupation 'legal professionals' category includes solicitors, judicial and other legal professionals, intellectual property lawyers, tribunal members, magistrates, judges, barristers as well as all legal professionals not further defined. As with the architectural workforce, there are fewer women in the older age groups, which is a reflection of graduation and employment rates last century. Now, however, women are now very much the majority of law school graduates. Law is a shorter program of study than architecture, which is reflected in the high numbers in the 25–29 age group. While men show the typical drop-off in numbers in increasing age groups, it is a very shallow decline.



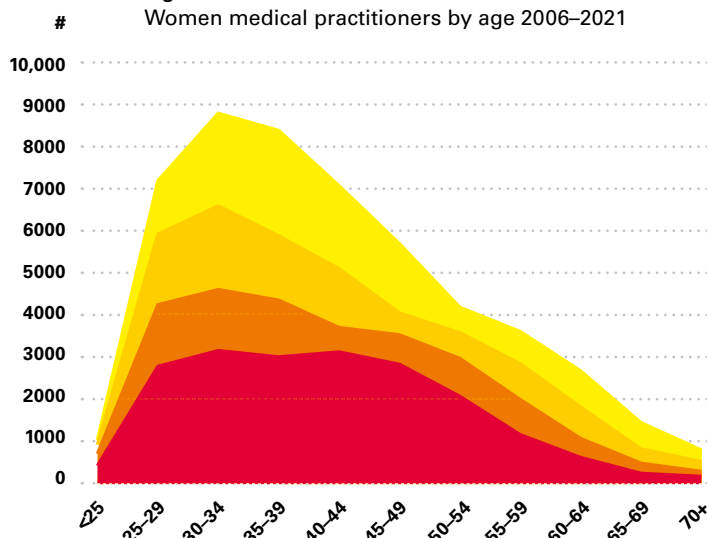




**Figure A.3**  
Medical professionals by age & gender 2021



**Figure A.4**  
Women medical practitioners by age 2006–2021



### Medical profession

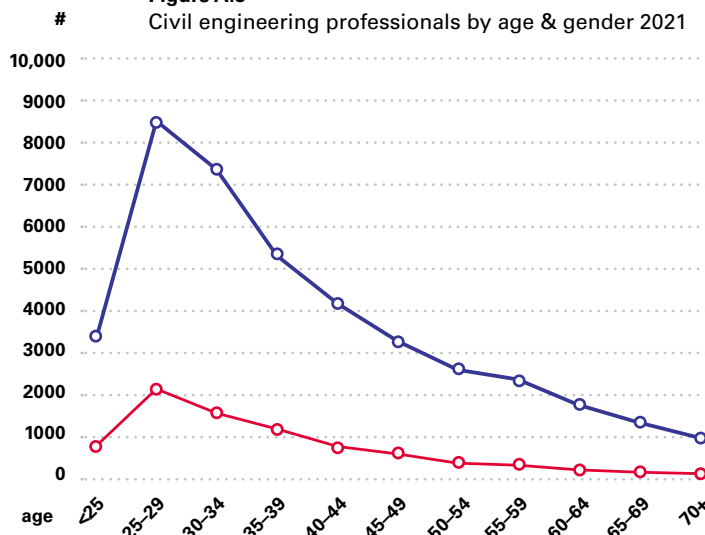
The Census OCCP Occupation ‘medical practitioners’ includes general practitioners and resident medical officers, anaesthetists, specialist physicians, psychiatrists, surgeons, other medical practitioners and those medical practitioners not further defined. Similar to legal professionals, more women than men are becoming medical practitioners in the immediate years after graduation.

- women
- men
- 2021
- 2016
- 2011
- 2006

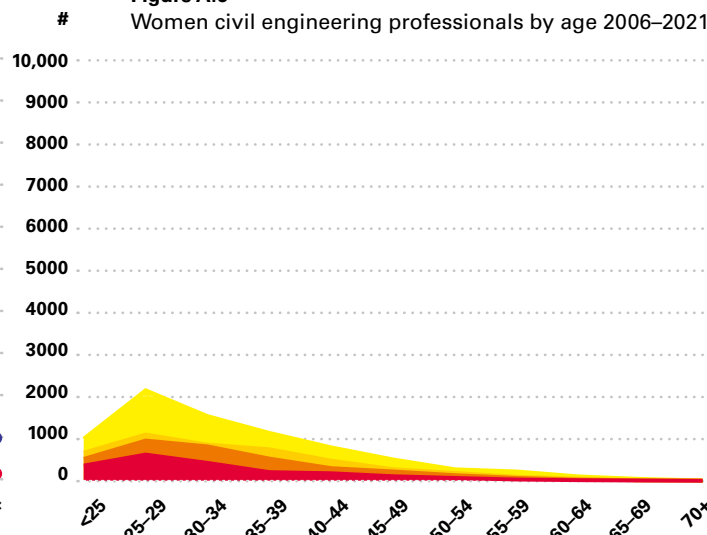
### Civil engineers

The Census OCCP Occupation ‘civil engineering professionals’ includes transport engineers, structural engineers, quantity surveyors, geotechnical engineers, civil engineers, and civil engineering professionals not further defined. The gender difference for civil engineers is very striking, but the numbers of women in the younger age groups is increasing markedly year on year.

**Figure A.5**  
Civil engineering professionals by age & gender 2021



**Figure A.6**  
Women civil engineering professionals by age 2006–2021

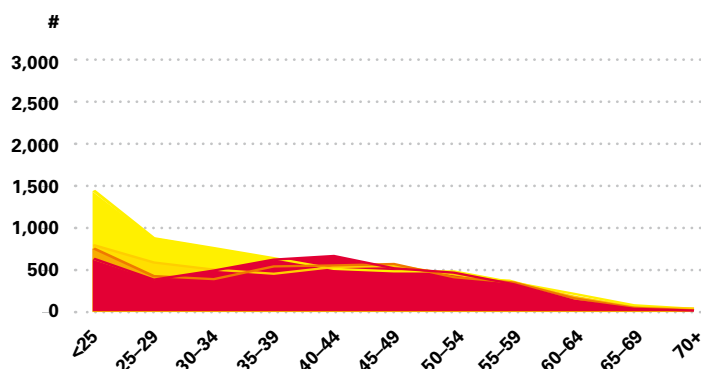




**Figure A.7**  
Construction workers by age & gender 2021



**Figure A.8**  
Women construction workers by age 2006–2021



**Construction sector**

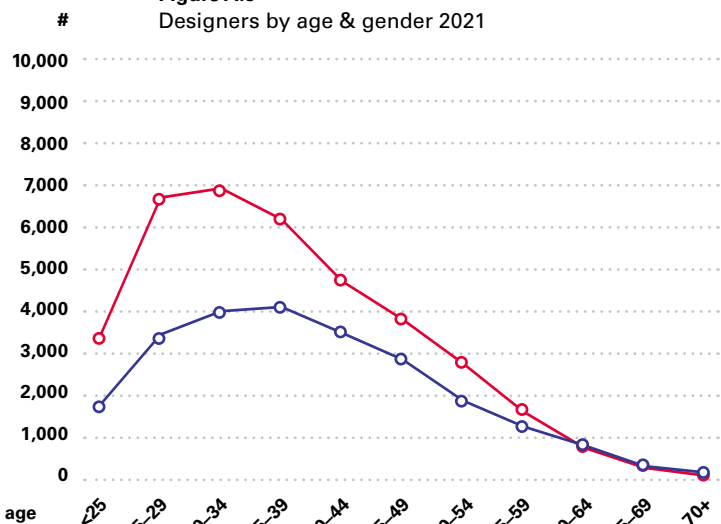
The Census OCCP Occupation ‘construction trades workers’ category includes plumbers, glaziers, plasterers, tilers, floor finishers, painting trades workers, bricklayers, carpenters, joiners, and other not further defined construction trades workers.

- women
- men
- 2021
- 2016
- 2011
- 2006

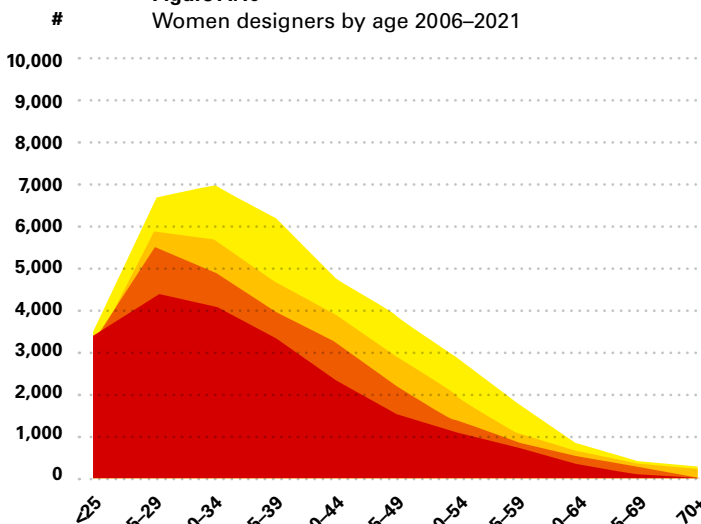
**Design fields**

For the purposes of this professional comparison, we have combined the OCCP Occupation data of ‘Fashion, Industrial and Jewellery Designers’, ‘Graphic and Web Designers, and Illustrators’ and ‘Interior Designers’. This is a complicated comparison because some of these fields are numerically dominated by women (such as interior design) and others by men (industrial design), but splitting these out produces small numbers so we have combined them.

**Figure A.9**  
Designers by age & gender 2021



**Figure A.10**  
Women designers by age 2006–2021





## Appendix B

Appendix B presents additional data tables, which provide extra detail relevant to the main report.

**Table B.1**  
Proportion of architectural workforce living in metropolitan areas, by gender & state, 2001–2021

	2001			2006			2011			2016			2021		
	men	women	total	men	women	total	men	women	total	men	women	total	men	women	total
<b>NSW</b>	89%	92%	<b>90%</b>	88%	91%	<b>89%</b>	88%	90%	<b>89%</b>	88%	92%	<b>89%</b>	86%	89%	<b>87%</b>
<b>NT</b>	76%	60%	<b>72%</b>	77%	71%	<b>76%</b>	85%	74%	<b>82%</b>	68%	73%	<b>70%</b>	69%	82%	<b>74%</b>
<b>QLD</b>	72%	78%	<b>73%</b>	72%	80%	<b>73%</b>	77%	83%	<b>78%</b>	77%	84%	<b>79%</b>	76%	80%	<b>77%</b>
<b>SA</b>	96%	97%	<b>96%</b>	95%	100%	<b>96%</b>	97%	98%	<b>97%</b>	98%	98%	<b>98%</b>	97%	97%	<b>97%</b>
<b>TAS</b>	74%	70%	<b>74%</b>	71%	68%	<b>71%</b>	66%	65%	<b>66%</b>	68%	59%	<b>66%</b>	69%	67%	<b>68%</b>
<b>VIC</b>	92%	93%	<b>92%</b>	92%	94%	<b>92%</b>	92%	95%	<b>93%</b>	93%	95%	<b>93%</b>	91%	93%	<b>92%</b>
<b>WA</b>	94%	98%	<b>95%</b>	94%	97%	<b>95%</b>	96%	97%	<b>96%</b>	95%	95%	<b>95%</b>	95%	93%	<b>94%</b>
<b>total</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>88%</b>

**Table B.2**  
Hours worked by age & gender, 2021

		hours	<25	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54	55–59	60–65	65–69	70+	total
<b>women</b>	<b>0</b>	12	32	96	82	17	6	6	5	6	0	0	<b>262</b>	
	<b>1–15</b>	39	29	39	70	58	35	21	32	14	4	11	<b>352</b>	
	<b>16–24</b>	68	64	117	163	95	45	32	19	19	4	5	<b>631</b>	
	<b>25–32</b>	21	55	93	131	163	91	76	55	14	16	15	<b>730</b>	
	<b>33–40</b>	149	855	719	458	340	262	176	102	64	44	8	<b>3,177</b>	
	<b>41–48</b>	31	205	202	108	75	71	57	35	9	4	0	<b>797</b>	
	<b>49+</b>	14	100	150	101	90	111	86	41	16	6	3	<b>718</b>	
	<b>total</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>1,340</b>	<b>1,416</b>	<b>1,113</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>6,405</b>	
<b>men</b>	<b>0</b>	8	15	25	26	18	7	17	9	13	15	13	<b>166</b>	
	<b>1–15</b>	41	24	15	14	33	18	38	18	52	88	159	<b>500</b>	
	<b>16–24</b>	61	62	47	41	35	31	30	40	58	70	117	<b>592</b>	
	<b>25–32</b>	34	50	61	63	61	78	45	58	79	92	113	<b>734</b>	
	<b>33–40</b>	143	924	1130	911	827	664	485	397	341	216	161	<b>6,199</b>	
	<b>41–48</b>	37	234	298	237	222	234	192	164	113	83	35	<b>1,849</b>	
	<b>49+</b>	14	154	276	364	378	401	327	294	218	130	57	<b>2,613</b>	
	<b>total</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>1,463</b>	<b>1,852</b>	<b>1,656</b>	<b>1,574</b>	<b>1,433</b>	<b>1,134</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>874</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>12,487</b>	

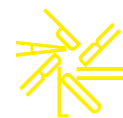


**Table B.3**  
Countries of birth of the architectural workforce, by region & gender, 2016–2021

Country of birth (region)	2016			2021		
	men	women	total	men	women	total
Oceania and Antarctica	7,304	3,045	<b>10,349</b>	7,913	3,667	<b>11,580</b>
North-West Europe	1,139	432	<b>1,571</b>	1,058	428	<b>1,486</b>
Southern and Eastern Europe	133	112	<b>245</b>	509	381	<b>890</b>
North Africa and the Middle East	154	107	<b>261</b>	279	230	<b>509</b>
South-East Asia	743	429	<b>1,172</b>	859	597	<b>1,456</b>
North-East Asia	660	432	<b>1,092</b>	817	569	<b>1,386</b>
Southern and Central Asia	258	161	<b>419</b>	406	322	<b>728</b>
Americas	309	174	<b>483</b>	423	321	<b>744</b>
Sub-Saharan Africa	239	90	<b>329</b>	345	139	<b>484</b>
All other countries	614	297	<b>911</b>	-	-	-
Not stated	90	41	<b>131</b>	54	17	<b>71</b>

**Table B.4**  
Top 20 countries of birth of the architectural workforce, by gender, 2016 –2021

Country of birth	2016			2021		
	men	women	total	men	women	total
Australia	7,030	2,943	<b>9,972</b>	7,569	3,538	<b>11,104</b>
England	595	161	<b>754</b>	615	173	<b>794</b>
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	277	220	<b>499</b>	430	345	<b>772</b>
Malaysia	362	220	<b>583</b>	388	275	<b>666</b>
India	175	114	<b>291</b>	268	206	<b>471</b>
New Zealand	274	102	<b>375</b>	293	111	<b>409</b>
South Africa	203	82	<b>287</b>	224	110	<b>336</b>
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	191	105	<b>296</b>	197	125	<b>322</b>
Italy	146	51	<b>202</b>	159	68	<b>225</b>
Iran	68	87	<b>155</b>	82	123	<b>201</b>
Vietnam	122	43	<b>167</b>	143	64	<b>199</b>
Germany	96	99	<b>198</b>	88	102	<b>189</b>
Singapore	82	45	<b>130</b>	107	67	<b>174</b>
Philippines	69	45	<b>118</b>	89	76	<b>163</b>
Indonesia	78	61	<b>141</b>	75	81	<b>160</b>
United States of America	92	39	<b>134</b>	94	63	<b>158</b>
Korea, Republic of (South)	97	48	<b>146</b>	88	48	<b>139</b>
Brazil	33	42	<b>72</b>	40	97	<b>139</b>
Ireland	94	23	<b>116</b>	89	24	<b>117</b>
Poland	50	53	<b>103</b>	54	60	<b>116</b>
All other countries	1,509	737	<b>2,260</b>	1,529	906	<b>2,465</b>



## References

Connolly, Julie *Architects in Australia: A Snapshot from the 2011 Census*, ARC Linkage Project: Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: Women, Work and Leadership (2011–2014). September 2013.

Matthewson, Gill. *Parlour Census Report 2001–2016: Women in Architecture in Australia* (Melbourne: Parlour, 2018).

Matthewson, Gill. “Dimensions of Gender: Women’s Careers in the Australian Architecture Profession” (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 2015).

Matthewson, Gill. “The Gendered Attrition of Architects in Australia,” *Architecture Research Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (2017).

Parlour. “Dossier: The State of Gender Equity in Australia,” *Architecture Australia*, September 2014.

Willis, Julie and Bronwyn Hanna. *Women Architects in Australia 1900–1950* (Red Hill, ACT: Royal Australian Institute of Architects, 2001).

Royal Australian Institute of Architects, *Architects in Australia: A snapshot from the 2006 Census* (Canberra: Royal Institute of Australian Architects, 2007).

## Data sources

### Australian Institute of Architects membership data

Raw data courtesy of Beata Davey, National Policy and Advocacy Manager.

### Census

Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing. Occupation code Architect, ANZSCO 232111.

### Graduate data

Matthewson, Gill. “The Gendered Attrition of Architects in Australia.” *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (2017): 171–182.

AACA. *Annual Reports on Accredited Architecture Programs in Australia, 2019, 2020, 2021* (Sydney: AACA, 2020, 2021, 2022).

### Registration numbers

AACA. *2022 Annual Report: Architects Accreditation Council of Australia* (Sydney: AACA, 2022). <https://aaca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022-Annual-Report.pdf>

### Australian Capital Territory

ACT Open Data Portal. Register downloaded and gender assigned by name and Google search (imprecise).

### New South Wales

NSW Architects Registration Board, *Annual Report 2020–2021*, p. 16. (Note: only practising architects counted).

### Northern Territory

Northern Territory of Australia, Government Gazette, G19, 12 May 2021, pp. 3–14. Gender assigned by name and Google search (imprecise).

### Queensland

Board of Architects of Queensland online register. Downloaded, gender assigned through supplied title (Mr, Mrs, Ms etc).

### South Australia

Architectural Practice Board of South Australia, *Annual Report: Financial Year ended 30 June 2021*, p. 10.

### Tasmania

Board of Architects of Tasmania online register. Downloaded and gender assigned by name and Google search (imprecise).

### Victoria

Architects Registration Board of Victoria online register. Downloaded and gender assigned by name and Google search (very imprecise), only practising counted.

### Western Australia

Architects Board of Western Australia, *Annual Report, July 2020 – June 2021*, p. 7 (count includes non-practising).



# On Parlour

**Parlour: gender, equity architecture is a research-based advocacy organisation working for equity in architecture and the built environment. Our work is based in Australia and our material, resources and tools used across the world.**

**As activists and advocates we generate debate and discussion. As researchers and scholars we provide serious analysis and a firm evidence base for change. As active participants in Australian architecture we seek to open up opportunities and broaden definitions of what architectural activity might be.**

**Parlour provides a “space to speak”. It brings together research, informed opinion and resources on gender, equity and architecture. It provides places for active exchange and discussion, online and off. It seeks to expand the spaces and opportunities available to women and gender-diverse people while also revealing the many who already contribute in diverse ways.**

Instagram: `_parlour`

[www.parlour.org.au](http://www.parlour.org.au)

**Copyright**

© 2023, Parlour : gender, equity, architecture. You are permitted to download, display, print and reproduce this material in an unaltered form only for your personal, non-commercial use or for use within your organisation. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, all other rights are reserved.



Parlour Census Report 2001–2021 produced with the support of

