



**Association of Consulting Architects**  
The Business of Architecture

---

# Architects in the ACT – a view from the census

Prepared by Gill Matthewson

an ACA resource

---

**ACA – SA**  
PO Box 3054  
Unley  
Adelaide, SA 5061  
T +61 1300 653 026  
E [sa@aca.org.au](mailto:sa@aca.org.au)  
[www.aca.org.au](http://www.aca.org.au)



## ARCHITECTS IN THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY A VIEW FROM CENSUS DATA

Prepared by Gill Matthewson

This report is an extension of the ACA State of the Profession research project, led by John Held and Sue Phillips of ACA – SA and funded through a grant from the Architectural Practice Board of South Australia. Because of the small number of architects in the ACT, some of the analysis completed for the large states is not possible for the Australian Capital Territory.

### Census data

This report is based on the analysis of customised data about those who identified themselves as architects (occupation code Architect, ANZSCO 232111) in the Australian Capital Territory in the 2001, 2006 and 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics Censuses of Population and Housing.

Census data includes all those who describe their occupation as 'architect', whether or not they are registered or members of professional associations.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, Census figures are more inclusive than other counts of professional participation and, internationally, researchers in architecture consider them to be 'reasonably accurate' data for the architecture workforce.<sup>2</sup>

### Overall findings

The report finds the following:

- Overall, the population of architects in the Australian Capital Territory has increased between each Census, but still constitutes a small proportion of the country's architects.
- The age profile of architects has changed over the ten years for the country and ACT with an increased percentage of older and younger architects.
- The Australian Capital Territory has a lower proportion of women architects than the rest of the country.
- In 2011, fewer architects seemed to be working long hours than in the past.
- Architects are increasingly employees rather than employers, particularly in the territory.
- Architects in the Australian Capital Territory earn slightly more than the national average.

### Detailed findings

#### Number of architects

As expected, the population of architects fluctuates across the three Censuses, as shown in Table 1:

*Table 1: Number of architects*

Year	Australian Capital Territory	All Australia	ACT % of Aus
2001	223	11,442	2.0%
2006	304	13,285	2.3%
2011	310	14,973	2.1%
2001 to 2011 growth	<b>39%</b>	<b>33%</b>	

Both the ACT and the country show increases in the numbers of architects for the ten-year period; however, in the ACT that growth was higher. In Australia as a whole, architect numbers grew by a third from 2001 to 2011, but numbers in the ACT increased by 39%. In part, this high percentage figure is a result of the smaller number of architects in the ACT. For the country, growth was stronger in the first five-year period and weaker over the next Census period. The Australian Capital Territory's growth repeated this pattern but was more extreme, with very little growth in the second Census period. The Australian Capital Territory has very slightly increased its share of the nation's architects; however, at just over 2% this is not a high figure.

Perhaps a more important figure is how those straight numbers of architects relate to the overall population, which has, of course, also increased between Censuses. Dividing the number of architects into the total population gives the number of architects per 100,000 people, shown in Figure 1:

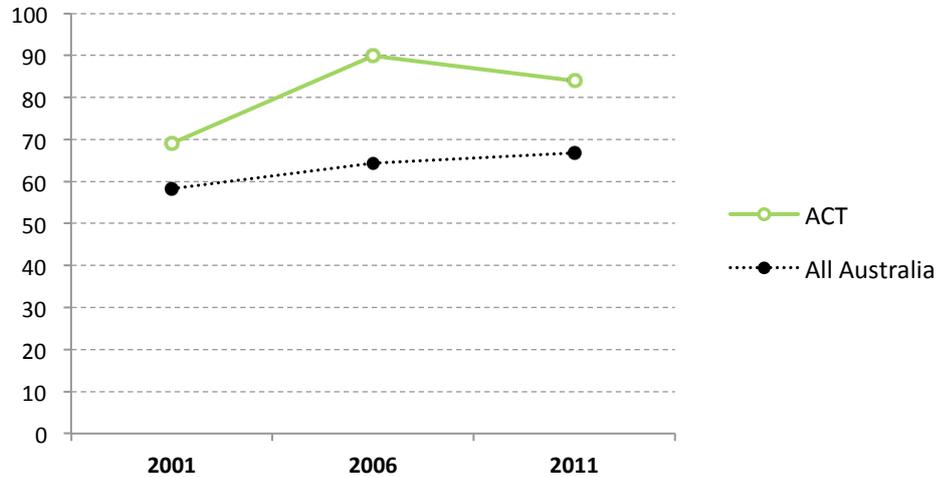


Figure 1: Number of architects for every 100,000 people<sup>3</sup>

By this measure, there was more subdued growth for the country than that shown in Table 1, but with Australia still supporting 15% more architects per capita in 2011 than it did in 2001. The Australian Capital Territory's growth was greater at 22% over the same period; however, it also shows marked fluctuation, growing strongly in the first five-year period but actually declining in the second. Nonetheless, the percentage of architects in the ACT still grew over the ten-year period at a greater rate than Australia as a whole. Figure 1 also shows that, taken overall, the ACT has significantly more architects per head of population than all of Australia. Its position as the centre for federal government would no doubt account for this.

### The age profile of architects

Figure 2 shows the distribution of architects by age across the three Censuses, comparing the Australian Capital Territory with all of Australia. Because of the small numbers in the ACT, there is considerable variation between it and the country, and within the territory from Census to Census.

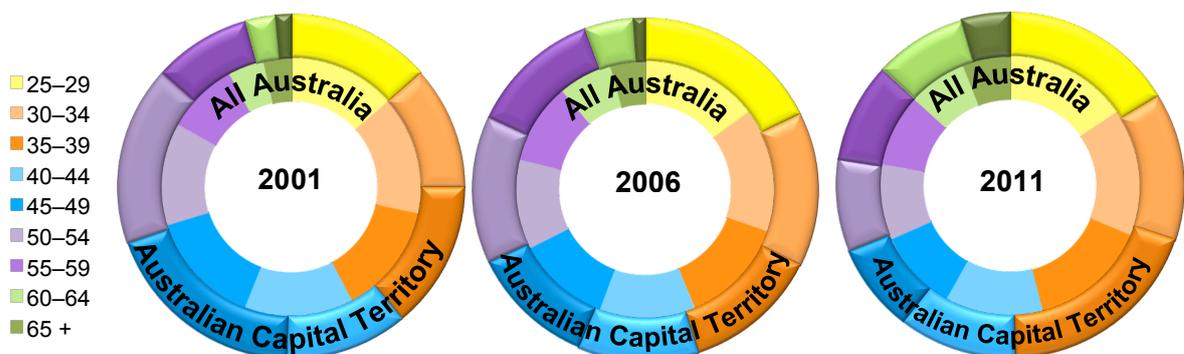


Figure 2: Architects by age group

The first point to note is that the proportion of architects under the age of 40 increased over the ten-year period in all Australia and particularly so in the Australian Capital Territory (depicted in yellow and oranges in Figure 2). The growth of this age group is not surprising given that the number of architecture graduates in the country increased by 40% from 2000 to 2010.<sup>4</sup>

However, the second point to note is that the proportion of architects over the age of 60 (in greens) also increased, for the ACT and the country. In 2001 architects of this age were 8% of the Australian architect population; by 2011 they comprised 13%. The ACT had an even greater growth, shifting from 4% in 2001 to 13% by 2011. This means that the proportion of architects in the middle band between 40 and 60 (in blues and purples) decreased. In 2001 this age group constituted around half the architect population; by 2011 this proportion had dropped to around 40% for the country and 37% for the ACT. The actual number of architects in this age group has not necessarily dropped but they make up a smaller proportion of the architecture workforce.

Gender is a factor in the number of architects by age group. Table 2 details the increasing numbers of women in the architecture workforce over the ten-year period. Of note, the Australian Capital Territory lags behind national figures for the percentage of women. The University of Canberra’s School of Architecture graduated a much lower proportion of women graduates than the national average (the school’s average for the ten years 2000–2009 was 31.0%, and for the country 41.2%<sup>5</sup>).

Table 2: Number of architects by gender

Year	Australian Capital Territory				All Australia			
	Male	Female	Total	% Female	Male	Female	Total	% Female
2001	188	35	223	16%	8,987	2,296	11,442	20%
2006	238	66	304	22%	10,199	3,086	13,285	23%
2011	243	67	310	22%	10,828	4,144	14,973	28%

### Hours of work

Long hours are generally considered endemic in architecture, but this is a pattern that appears to have changed over time. Figure 3 shows the proportion of architects working particular hours. The red bands indicate a work week in excess of 40 hours and the blue and green bands are for those working part-time (less than 35 hours a week); the orange/yellow bands are for standard working hours of 35–40 hours a week.

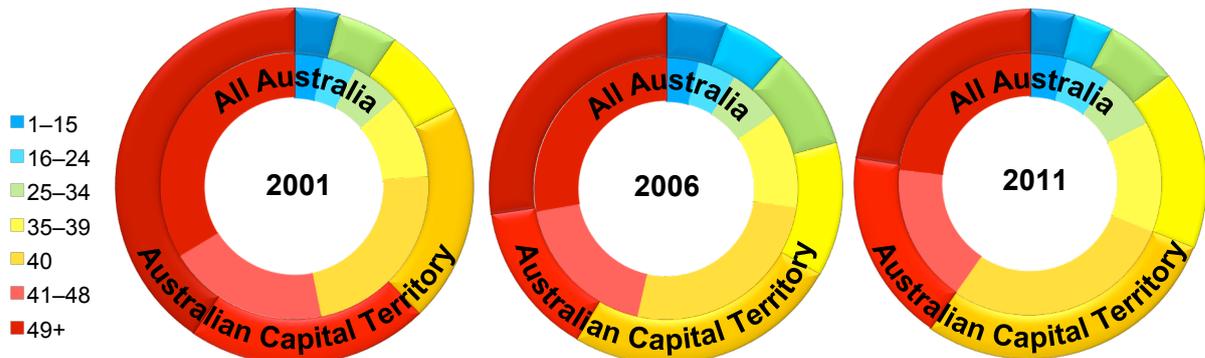


Figure 3: Hours per week worked

There is a strong trend visible across the Censuses. In 2001, more than half of all architects worked in excess of 40 hours a week, with more than a third of all architects working in excess of 48 hours a week (such hours are defined as ‘long’ in employment literature). However, by 2011, this proportion had dropped: around 40% reported working more than 40 hours a week, and the group that worked more than 48 hours a week had dropped to under a quarter. The Australian Capital Territory fluctuates but still shows this decline.

The changing demographic of architects is likely to be contributing to this shift. Figure 4 shows the difference between men and women for hours worked for all Australia.<sup>6</sup>

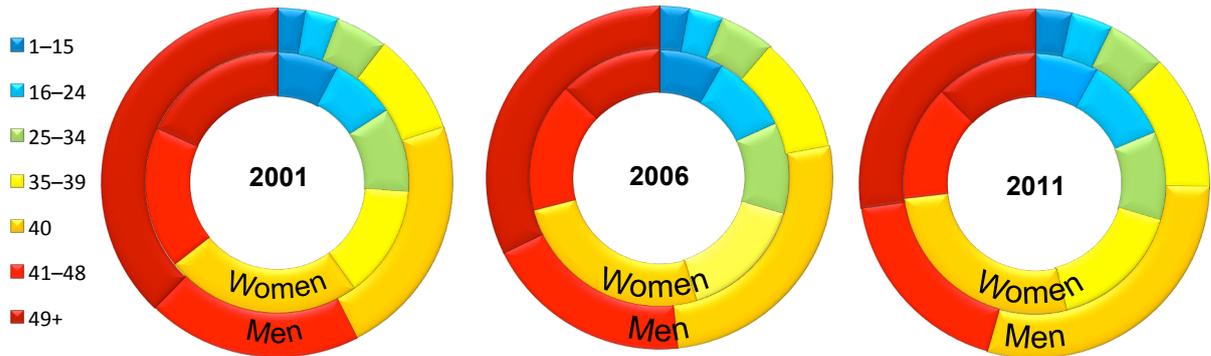


Figure 4: Hours per week worked, by gender, all Australia

The dramatic difference between men and women in terms of hours worked is a result of the wider societal pattern whereby mothers are much more likely to reduce their hours to accommodate children. Nonetheless, the drop-off in the proportion of those working in excess of 40 hours a week noted in Figure 5 is still visible in Figure 6 for both men and women. This is a significant shift for men to working standard rather than long hours, given that the proportion of men working part-time increased only slightly over the ten-year period (11% of men worked part-time in 2001 and 13% in 2011).

### Employment situation

The Census asks for information on whether someone is an employee, employer or an independent operator (such as a sole practitioner or contractor). In the 2001 and 2006 Censuses, the latter were termed 'own account worker'. In the 2011 Census, two new terms were used: 'Owner managers of unincorporated enterprises' and 'Owner managers of incorporated enterprises'. This distinction has affected some of the information presented in Table 3 and graphically in Figure 5.

Table 3: Architects by employment situation

	Australian Capital Territory			All Australia		
	2001	2006	2011	2001	2006	2011
Employee	143	198	213	6,451	7,781	9,323
Own account worker	57	34	29	2,768	1,638	2,102
Employer	40	65	68	2,070	3,701	3,394

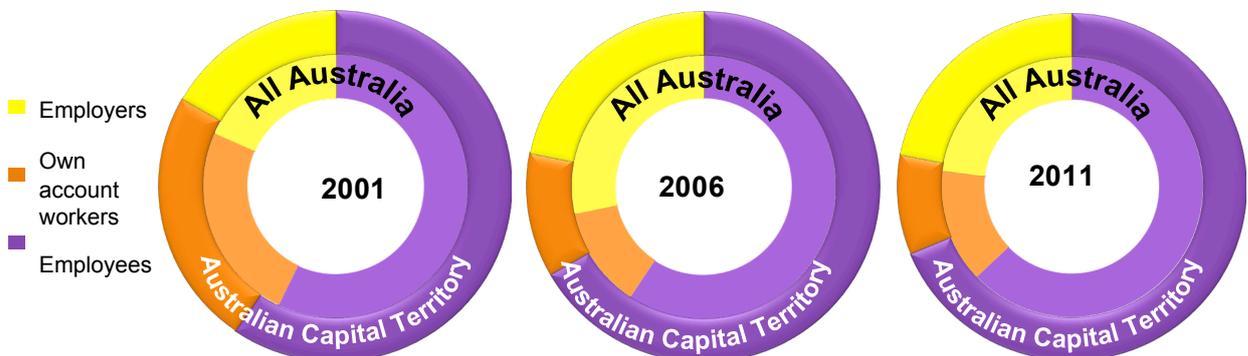


Figure 5: Architects by employment situation

Over the ten-year period, the proportion of those who are employees has steadily increased from 57% to 63% of the architect population in Australia. To an extent this would be expected given the increasing proportion of younger people in the workforce, as seen in Figure 2. The Australian Capital Territory is significantly ahead of the national average; by 2011, architects who were employees constituted more than two-thirds of architects in the ACT.

The figures for employers and 'own account workers' fluctuate, with a high for the former and a low for the latter in 2006 in the country. This, however, may be due to the change in description between the 2006 and 2011 Censuses. In 2006, a sole practitioner or partnership who employed just one person might have described themselves as employers, but in 2011 they would be categorised by the legal basis of their business, which (as a small business) is more likely to be an 'unincorporated enterprise'. In that case,

although the 2001 and 2006 Censuses can be compared, a 2006 and 2011 comparison needs to be treated with caution. Between 2001 and 2006 there was a marked drop in the number of own account workers and an increase in employees and employers both nationally and in the ACT. This was possibly a response to the ‘boom’ period for architecture in the middle of the 2000s with practices of all sizes employing staff. The changes between 2006 and 2011 suggest a slight drop in the proportion of employers. It is possible that this lacklustre growth – compared to the growth overall in numbers seen in Table 1 and Figure 1 – can be attributed to the downturn after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, which may have made small practices less viable and resulted in practices consolidating. However, the differing ways of categorising between these two Censuses mean that this is a tentative connection.

### Income

Income information was sought for all full-time architecture workers; the Census gathers this in terms of income per week. Figure 6 gives the information for 2006 and 2011 (2001 is omitted because the income ranges differ from the later two Censuses).

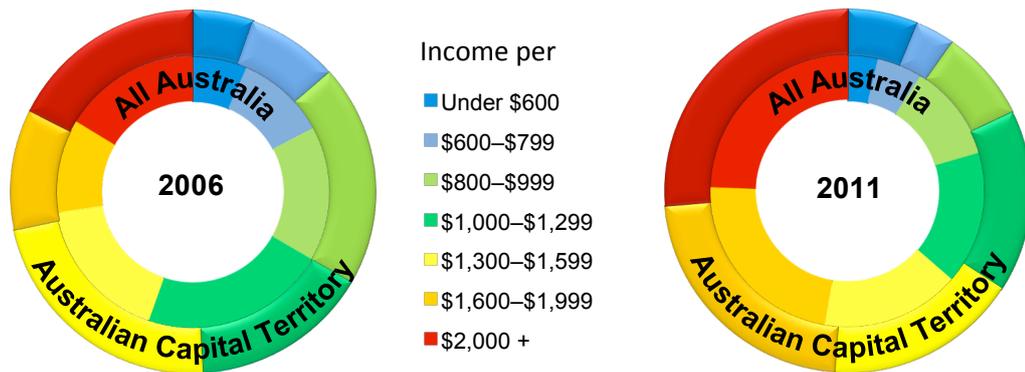


Figure 6: Architects by income

Figure 6 demonstrates that architects in the Australian Capital Territory earn slightly more on average than the national average. By 2011, nearly half (47.3%) of Census-identified architects in Australia were earning more than \$1,600 a week (orange plus red segments), whereas in the Australian Capital Territory that proportion was a couple of percentage points higher. In addition, 20.5% were earning less than \$1,000 a week in Australia as a whole (blues and light green), but 17.8% were doing so in the Australian Capital Territory.

Income, of course, varies with age. Figure 7 shows the breakdown by age for 2011.<sup>7</sup>

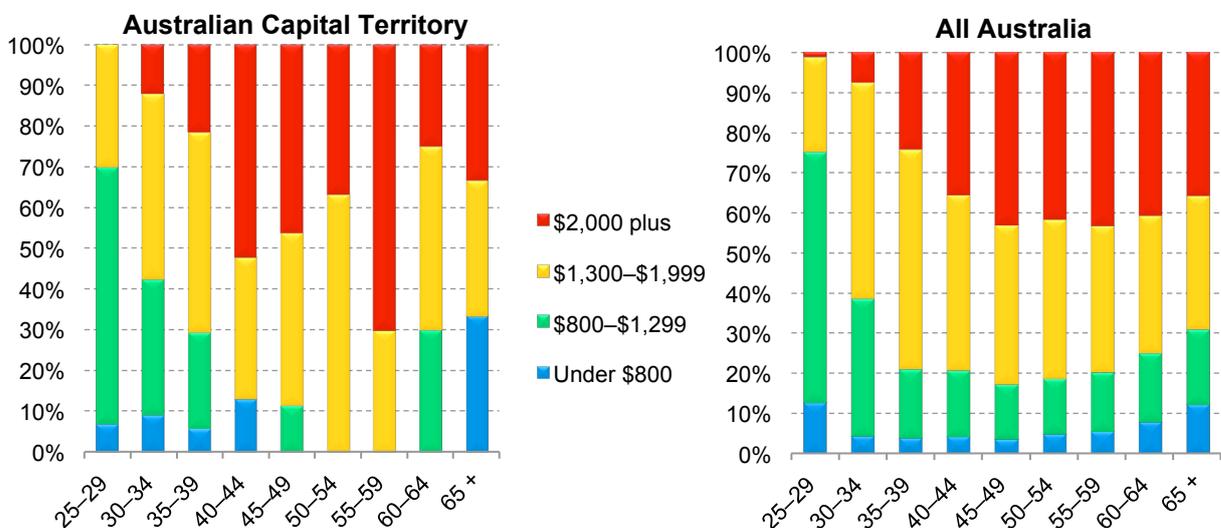


Figure 7: Proportion of age group in earnings brackets by age, 2011

Australia-wide, income increases with age, peaking in the 45–59 age bands. In the Australian Capital Territory, because of the smaller numbers of architects, the figures jump around. However, the pattern of Australian Capital Territory architects earning more than all Australian architects (visible in Figure 6)

shows up again, with a greater percentage in most age groups earning in the high brackets, and in some age brackets considerably so (although small numbers would contribute to such variation).

## Summary

This report has explored what might be read from data about architects from three Censuses for the Australian Capital Territory compared to the rest of Australia. Data such as this helps articulate and indicate broad patterns.

The first of these patterns is that architects are increasing their presence in the community in relative numbers, but more so in the Australian Capital Territory where the percentage of architects per capita is much higher than the national rate. Curiously, as a group, architects are getting both older and younger – nation-wide and in the Australian Capital Territory – with mid-career/middle-aged architects not keeping pace proportionally with the other age groups. The growth in the number of younger architects can, perhaps, be explained by the increasing numbers of graduates. The reasons for the increasing proportion of older architects are less clear, especially as the data also records the departure of older architects. However, since the 1970s there have been increasing numbers of architects overall.

Architects are increasingly employees and employers rather than independent workers, and the percentage of architects that are employees is even higher in the Australian Capital Territory. This may reflect the increasing complexity of buildings and the need for teams to work on them, although the data is a little too unreliable because the method for categorising employers and independent workers in the Census has recently changed. Of interest, fewer architects seem to be working long hours than in the past, including in the Australian Capital Territory. While this might suggest those in the profession are moving towards a better work–life balance, the still weak representation of women in the profession might indicate otherwise. The slowing down of the pace of work in the wake of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis may be another possible explanation for this drop in hours worked.

Overall, the Australian Capital Territory’s architects constitute a small profession that appears to be growing but also has some volatility because of its size.

---

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, each Census includes a very small number of 15–19 year olds who identify themselves as architects – at that age they are unlikely to meet any acceptable notion of an architect. However, this number of people is very small.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Gutman, *Architectural Practice: A Critical View* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), 23; Annmarie Adams and Peta Tancred, *Designing Women: Gender and the Architectural Profession* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Population data from ABS, ‘Estimated Residents Population, State and Territories’, *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, 2013, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3101.0Jun%202014?OpenDocument>

<sup>4</sup> There were 704 graduates in 2000 and 975 in 2010. Numbers from *Architecture Schools of Australasia* (Barton, ACT: Australian Institute of Architects National Office), 2001 and 2012 editions.

<sup>5</sup> Figures calculated by author from *Architecture Schools of Australasia*, 2000–2011 editions.

<sup>6</sup> Territory data not shown because there are relatively small numbers of women in each state, which would tend to distort the proportions.

<sup>7</sup> Income brackets have been amalgamated because small numbers in a category can cause distortions.