



Association of Consulting Architects
The Business of Architecture

Architects in Victoria – a view from the census

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an ACA resource

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ARCHITECTS IN VICTORIA 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.

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 Victoria 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.¹ 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.²

Overall findings

The report finds the following:

- Overall, the population of architects in Victoria has increased between each Census and substantially so between 2006 and 2011. This means the state's proportion of all architects in Australia has increased.
- In 2011, Victoria had more architects per capita than any other state.
- That substantial growth in numbers was especially in the younger age groups; by 2011, more than half of the state's architects were under the age of 40.
- Victoria has a consistently higher proportion of women architects than the national average. In 2011, the number of women in the 25–29 age group almost equals the number of men.
- In 2011, fewer architects seemed to be working long hours than in the past – state and country-wide.
- Architects are increasingly employees rather than employers.
- Architects in Victoria earn slightly less than the national averages.

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	Victoria	All Australia	VIC % of Aus
2001	3,121	11,442	28%
2006	3,724	13,285	28%
2011	4,669	14,973	31%
2001 to 2011 growth	50%	33%	

While the country showed a steady increase of 33% in the numbers of architects for the ten-year period, in Victoria that growth was significantly more at 50%. For the country, growth was stronger in the first five-year period than over the next Census period. However, for Victoria the reverse was true. The growth from 2001 to 2006 matched that of the country, but from 2006 to 2011 the state’s population of architects grew by 25%, whereas for Australia as a whole growth was 13%. Consequently, the state’s proportion of Australia’s architecture population increased; in 2011, Victorian architects comprised nearly one-third of the complement. This higher growth rate for Victoria runs counter to the perception of a slowdown in work for the construction industry as a whole because of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and suggests that the state was less affected by that event.

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:

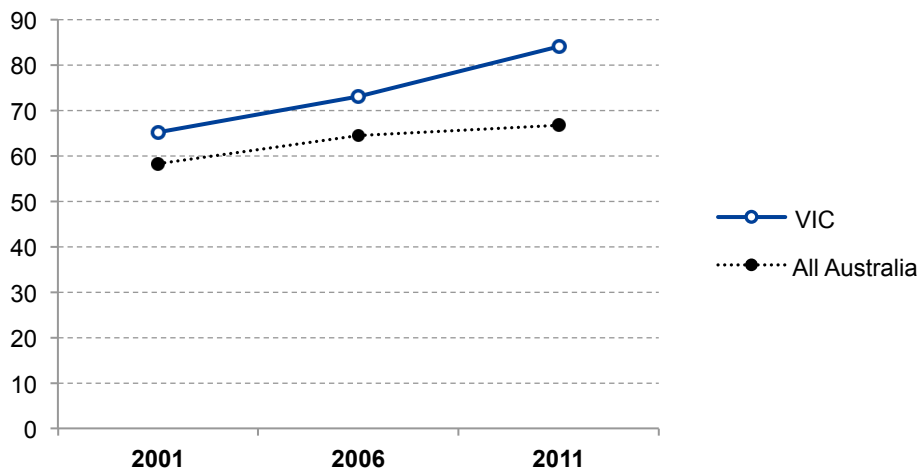


Figure 1: Number of architects for every 100,000 people³

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. For Victoria that growth figure was once again more substantial: double the national figure at 30%. Figure 1 also shows that, taken overall, Victoria has more architects per head of population compared to all of Australia,⁴ substantially so in 2011. This would suggest that the larger economy of a larger state supported a higher proportion of architects within the population for that period.

The age profile of architects

Figure 2 shows the distribution of architects in Victoria by age across the three Censuses.

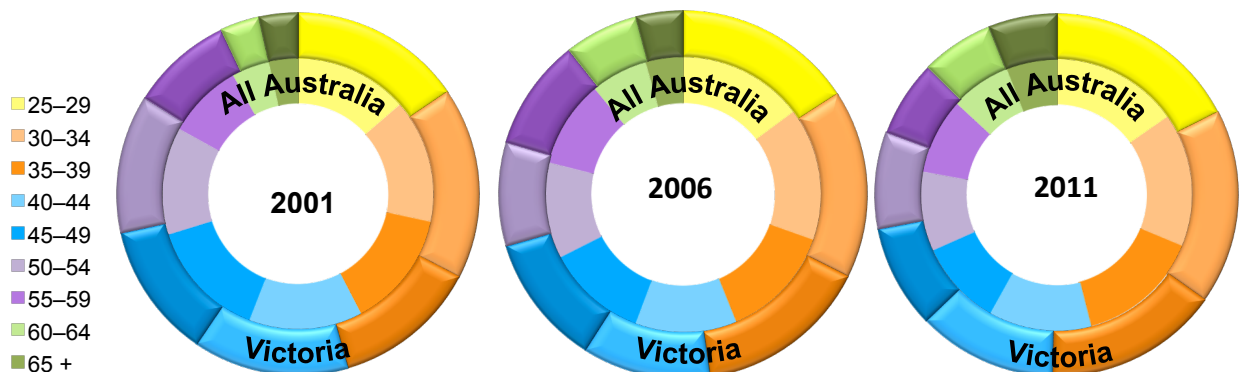


Figure 2: Architects by age group

The first point to note is that the proportion of architects under the age of 40 increased over the ten-year period in both Victoria and all Australia (depicted in yellow and oranges in Figure 2). This is not surprising, given that the number of architecture graduates Australia-wide increased by 40% from 2000 to 2010.⁵ However, in Victoria this growth was again more marked with a 69% growth in graduate numbers over the same period. By 2010, 36% of Australia’s graduates were being produced within the state of Victoria.

Consequently, the pattern of an increasing proportion of younger architects is accentuated with those under the age of 40 making up just over half the state’s architect population by 2011.

The second point to note is that the proportion of architects over the age of 60 (in greens) also increased, for the state and the country. In 2001 architects of this age were 8% of the Australian architect population (6% for the state); by 2011 they comprised 13%. This means that the proportion of architects in the middle band between 40 and 60 (in blues and purples) decreased, and even more markedly for Victoria. In 2001 this age group constituted around half the population; by 2011 this proportion had dropped to around 40% for the country and a lower 37% for the state. The actual numbers of architects in this age group has not necessarily dropped but, proportionally, less of them make up the architecture workforce.

What happens, then, to architects in the Census as they age? Architects who were 25–29 in the 2001 Census would be appearing in the 2011 Census in the 35–39 age group (and in the 30–34 age group in 2006). Figure 3 shows the number of architects aligned by age groups (the solid red line indicates their age in 2011, the green and blue lines the numbers for that cohort in 2006 and 2001 respectively).

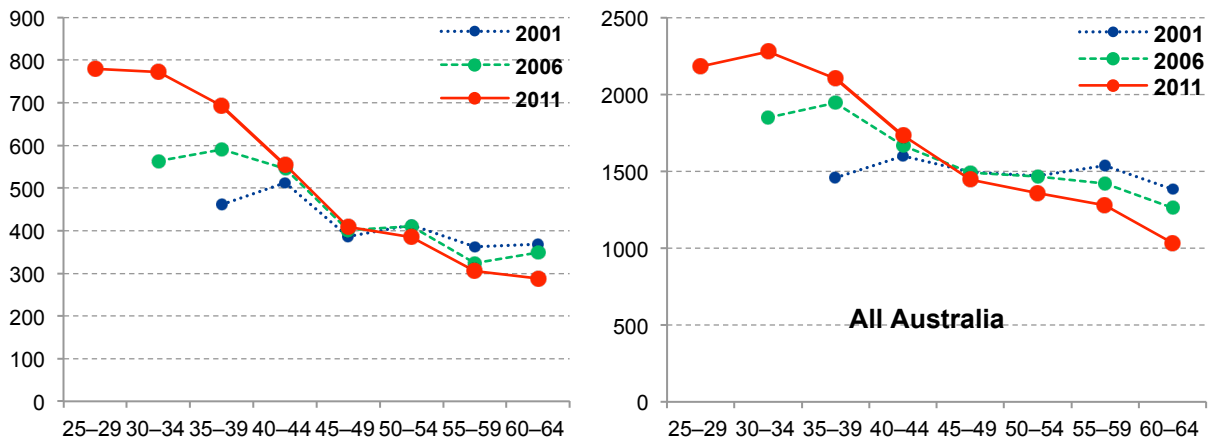


Figure 3: Loss and gain of architects from Census to Census

The All Australia graph shows a strong pattern: before architects reach their 40s, numbers increase, presumably due to mature graduates entering the workforce as well as international arrivals. However, at some time in their 40s a number of architects stop labelling themselves as such in the Census. Victoria shows the same pattern but with a less dramatic drop-off for older architects. In 2001, 461 people in Victoria aged 25–29 called themselves architects; in 2006, when these people were 30–35, there were 590 of them; and in 2011, when aged 35–39, the figure grew to 692. Conversely, around one-quarter of those who were 50–54 years old in 2001 in Australia disappeared by 2011. The drop was less for Victoria but nonetheless represents a significant numerical loss of experienced architects.

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. Victoria is consistently just ahead of all Australia from Census to Census. Of note, Victoria’s Schools of Architecture graduated a higher proportion of women graduates than the national average (the Victorian average for the ten years 2000–2009 was 43%, and for the country 41%⁶).

Table 2: Number of architects by gender

Year	Victoria				All Australia			
	Male	Female	Total	% Female	Male	Female	Total	% Female
2001	2,412	709	3,121	23%	8,987	2,296	11,442	20%
2006	2,813	911	3,724	24%	10,199	3,086	13,285	23%
2011	3,299	1,370	4,669	29%	10,828	4,144	14,973	28%

Figure 4 shows the breakdown of the data by age group and gender. (Figures for all Australia have been scaled down to match the Victorian figures; the scaling point is the number of men age 25–29).

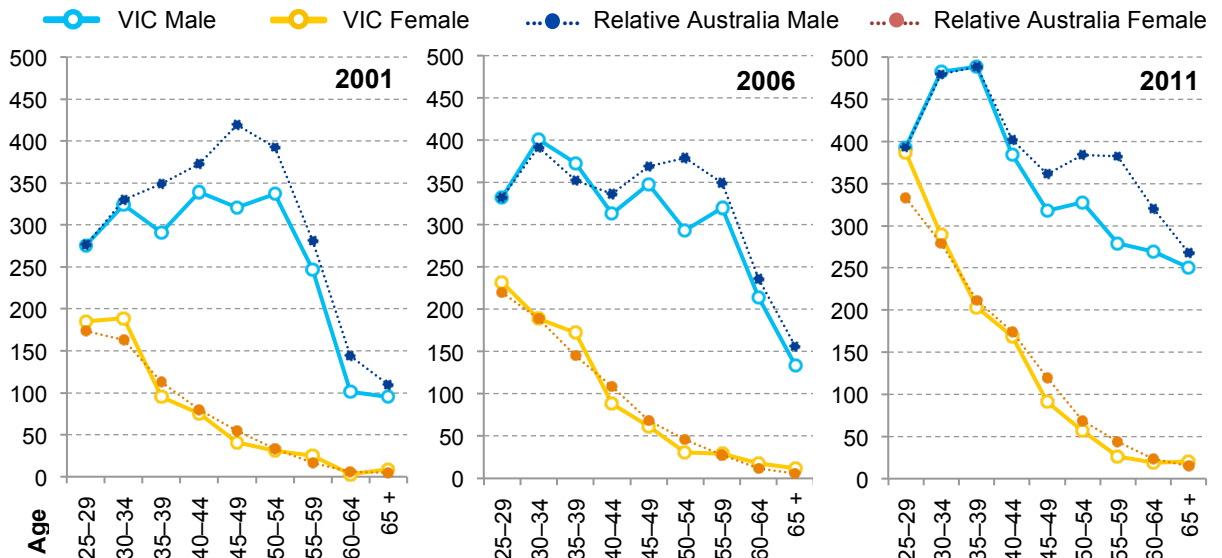


Figure 4: Number of architects by age group and gender, Victoria relative to all Australia

Figure 4 reveals some notable patterns. First, in all cases women are concentrated in the younger age groups and the men more evenly spread; women have an almost straight line ‘downhill’ from a high point in the youngest category of 25–29. In 2011, the number of men and women in that youngest age group very nearly equalised in Victoria (387 women and 393 men – Victoria was the only state in the nation to show such a close 50/50 gender split). Second, Victoria has become increasingly aligned with the pattern of the whole country over time for both men and women. The figures from the 2001 Census show greater amounts of difference, but by the 2011 Census there is closer alignment. Third, despite the drop-out rate of architects after age 45 shown in Figure 3, the actual number of older architects has grown over the ten-year period (those 55 and over nearly doubling in Victoria from 2001–2011), contributing to their increased piece of the pie (Figure 2).

Hours of work

Long hours are generally considered endemic in architecture, but this is a pattern that appears to have changed over time. Figure 5 shows the number of hours architects reported working in each Census. The red bands indicate the proportion for those in excess of 40 hours a week and the blue and green bands are for those working part-time (less than 35 hours a week); the yellow/orange bands are for standard working hours of 35–40 hours a week.

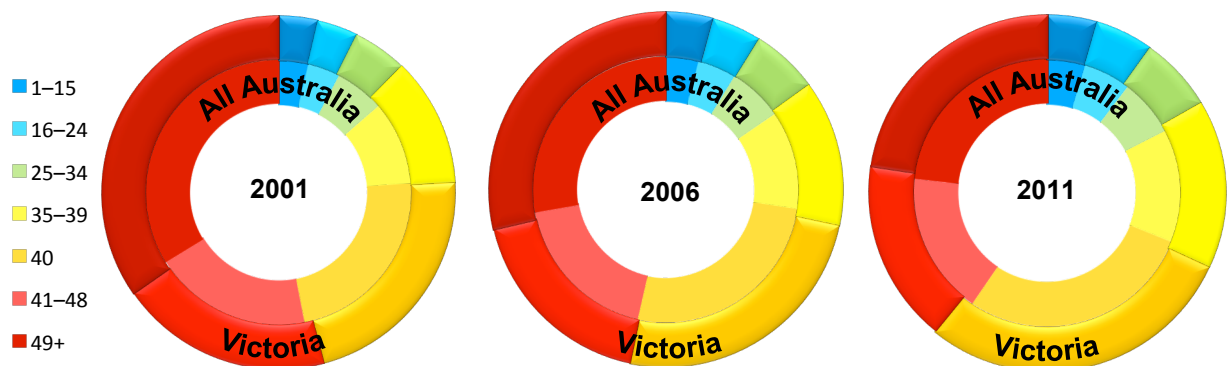


Figure 5: Hours per week worked, Victoria and Australia

There is little difference between Victoria and architects in all Australia for hours worked per week. However, there is a strong trend visible across the Censuses. In 2001, over half of all architects worked more than 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 (39% for the state), and the over 48 hours a week group had dropped to under a quarter. In addition, part-time workers increased, with 14% working part-time in 2001 and 17% in 2011 nationwide, with Victoria less than a percentage point under the national figures.

The changing gender demographic of architects is likely to be contributing to this shift, particularly as Victoria has a higher proportion of women than the national average. Figure 6 shows the difference between men and women for hours worked for all Australia.⁷

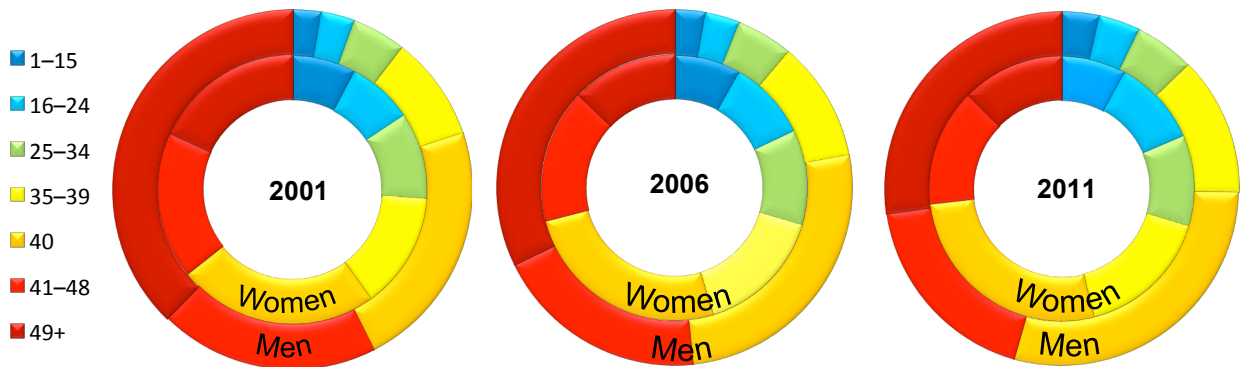


Figure 6: Hours per week worked, by gender, all Australia

The dramatic difference between men and women in terms of hours worked is a result of the wider societal expectation 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 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 7.

Table 3: Architects by employment situation

	Victoria			All Australia		
	2001	2006	2011	2001	2006	2011
Employee	1,754	2,151	2,960	6,451	7,781	9,323
Own account worker	769	454	631	2,768	1,638	2,102
Employer	607	1,079	1,037	2,070	3,701	3,394

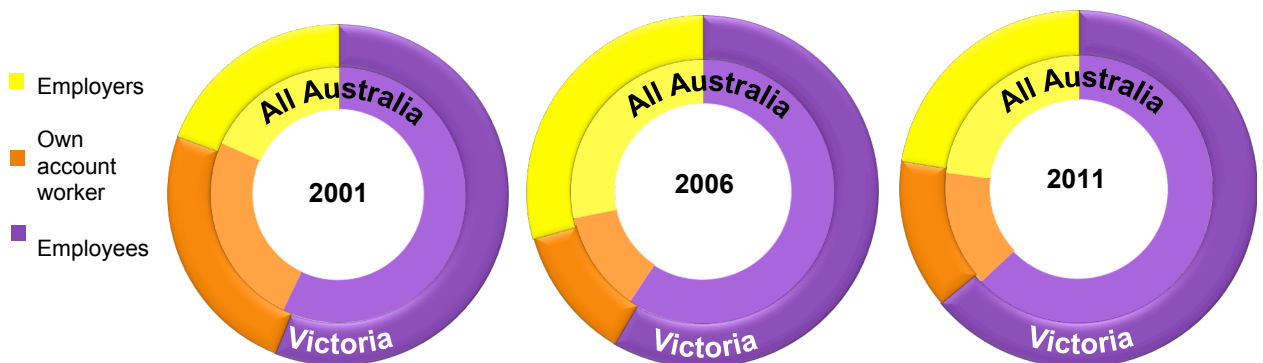


Figure 7: Architects by employment situation

Over the ten-year period, the proportion of those who were employees has steadily increased from 57% to 63% of the architecture 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. Victoria was a couple of percentage points below the national average in 2001 but above it in 2011; this is due to the great increase in numbers of young architects visible in Figure 2.

The figures for employers and ‘own account workers’ fluctuate with a high for the former and a low for the latter in 2006 in both Victoria and the whole 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 is a marked drop in the number of own account workers and a large increase in employers. 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 drop in the proportion of employers. It is possible that this 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 9 gives the information for 2006 and 2011 (2001 is omitted because the income ranges differ from the later two Censuses).

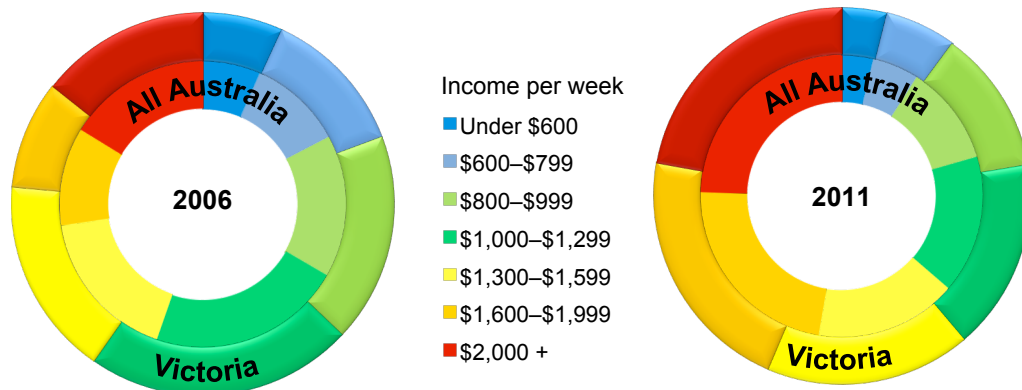


Figure 9: Architects by income

Figure 9 demonstrates that architects in Victoria on average earn slightly less than the national averages. By 2011, nearly half (47.3%) of Census-identified architects in Australia were earning more than \$1,600 a week (orange plus red segments), but in Victoria that proportion was nearly 4 percentage points less at 43.6%. Conversely, Australia-wide 20.5% were earning less than \$1,000 a week, but 22.4% were doing so in Victoria. Income, of course, varies with age. Figure 10 shows the breakdown by age for 2011.⁸

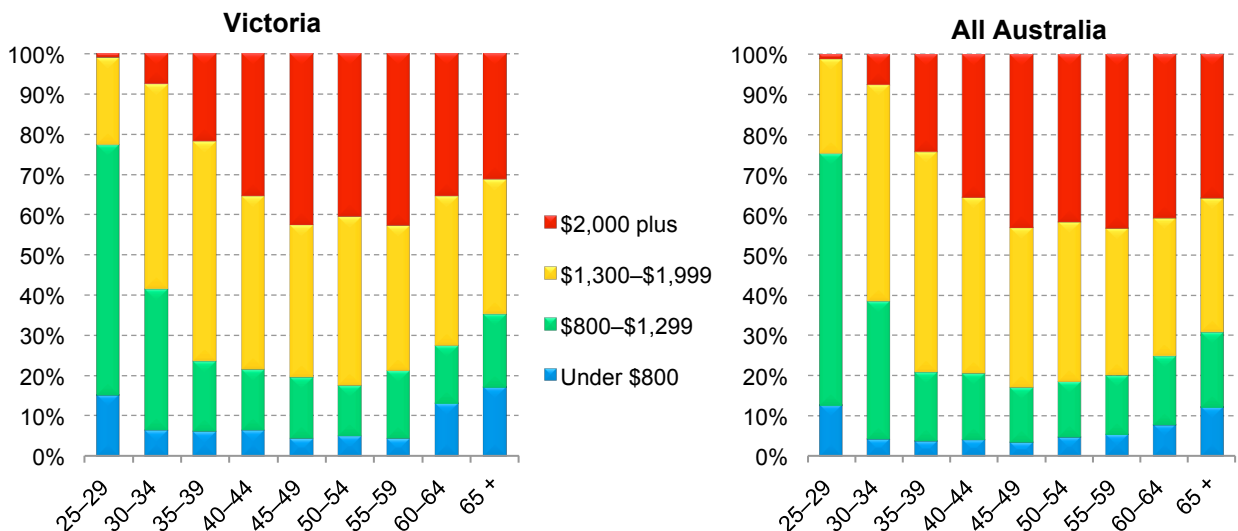


Figure 10: Proportion of age group in earnings brackets by age, 2011

Australia-wide, income increases with age, peaking in the 45–59 age bands. In Victoria, the overall pattern mirrors that of all Australia. However, the pattern of Victorian architects earning slightly less than

architects in Australia as a whole (visible in Figure 9) appears again. The variance occurs in the lowest and highest bands (red and blue in Figure 10) with Victoria generally having a slightly greater proportion of those in the low band across all age groups: slightly more than 2 percentage points for those under the age of 45, rising to 5 percentage points for those over the age of 60. In the higher income band, it is the over 60s who are most markedly at variance with the country, with 5% less of those age groups earning this income.

Summary

This report has explored what might be read from data about architects from three Censuses for Victoria 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, especially so in Victoria. Curiously, as a group, architects are getting both older and younger – nationwide but, again, particularly so in Victoria – with mid-career/middle-aged architects not keeping pace proportionally with the other age groups. The increasing numbers of graduates can perhaps explain the growth in the number of younger architects. 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. This may reflect the increasing complexity of buildings and the need for teams to work on them, although the data is a little too variable 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. 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. This was less so for Victoria, which has a higher proportion of women architects than Australia overall. The slowing down of the pace of work in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis may be another possible explanation for this drop in hours worked.

The Census data strongly indicates that architecture is very dependent on the economy. Victoria is one of the most populous states in the nation and has a consequent high number of architects. While Australia as a whole seemed to be affected by the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, Victoria seemed more resilient than other states and dramatically grew its numbers. However, architects in the state are generally paid slightly less than the national average, and they are also younger. This may indicate that there is an over-supply of graduates in the state.

Overall, Victoria’s architects constitute a growing profession, but one that may be at risk due to an over-supply of architects.

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ 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>

⁴ The Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victoria all have a higher than average number of architects per head of population.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Figures calculated by author from *Architecture Schools of Australasia*, 2000–2011 editions.

⁷ State data not shown because there are relatively small numbers of women in each state, which would tend to distort the proportions.

⁸ Income brackets have been amalgamated because small numbers in a category can cause distortions.