

# Women and men in arts and entertainment

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## Summary

As Australia continues to experience the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and looks to economic recovery, the arts and entertainment sector should be a key target for economic support.

The arts and entertainment sector employs an even mix of women and men, and employs many more people per million dollars of turnover than industries like building construction, coal mining and oil and gas extraction. Relative to turnover, arts and entertainment employs nine times as many people as coal mining does, including five times as many men and 34 times as many women.

Based on existing employment patterns, a fiscal stimulus package for the arts and entertainment sector of the same magnitude as the \$2 billion HomeBuilder stimulus would employ 8,593 people, including 4,068 men and 4,526 women, compared to the 2,483 people (2,042 men, 441 women) expected to be employed by HomeBuilder.

## Introduction

Australia Institute research finds that the arts and entertainment industry employs 193,000 Australians and contributes \$14.7 billion to Gross Domestic Product annually.<sup>1</sup>

However, the industry has been badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic shutdown. Some of the immediate effects of the shutdown were discussed in the Australia Institute papers cited above. More recently:

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<sup>1</sup> Browne (2020) *Art vs Dismal Science*, <https://www.tai.org.au/content/polling-gov-support-arts-industry-popular-and-necessary>; (2020) *Economic Importance of the Arts and Entertainment Sector*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/background-brief-economic-importance-of-the-arts-and-entertainment-sector/>

- A survey of Live Performance Australia members found that most live performance companies do not expect to recover until 2025, with \$24 billion in lost economic output and \$11 billion in lost industry value so far. About 80,000 jobs have already been lost in the live performance sector.<sup>2</sup>
- The music industry, led by music rights organisation APRA AMCOS, called on the Commonwealth Government to extend JobKeeper past the March 2021 deadline or create a replacement package for the live performance industry, in an open letter signed by 3,500 music industry artists, workers, venues and businesses.<sup>3</sup> JobKeeper was not extended.
- In a survey specifically of the Victorian music industry, 74% of music workers reported their incomes had decreased, 57% were worried about meeting basic costs like accommodation and food, 44% had lost “all music-related work during the pandemic” and those in full-time work fell from 34% to 7% of respondents.<sup>4</sup>

These difficulties for the industry come despite it being a good match for fiscal stimulus. The Australia Institute’s *Design principles for fiscal policy in a pandemic* identifies principles for fiscal stimulus. The arts and entertainment projects considered – a public arts fund and digitising old records – score well against the eight principles.<sup>5</sup>

The arts and entertainment sector identified by the Australia Institute consists of seven sub-industries across two Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) industry categories: Arts & Recreation and Information Media. This paper calculates the gender and employment implications were turnover in these sub-industries to increase.

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<sup>2</sup> Burke (2021) *Australian live entertainment industry warns more job losses*, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/feb/22/more-job-losses-ahead-for-australian-live-music-industry-operators-warn>

<sup>3</sup> APRA AMCOS (2021) *Plea to extend JobKeeper in Open Letter to Aus Government*, <https://www.apraamcos.com.au/about-us/news-and-events/music-and-live-entertainment-industry-implores-australian-government-to-extend-jobkeeper-in-open-letter>

<sup>4</sup> Strong & Cannizzo (2020) *Understanding Challenges to the Victorian Music Industry during COVID-19*, <https://www.vmdo.com.au/covid19-vic-music-industry>

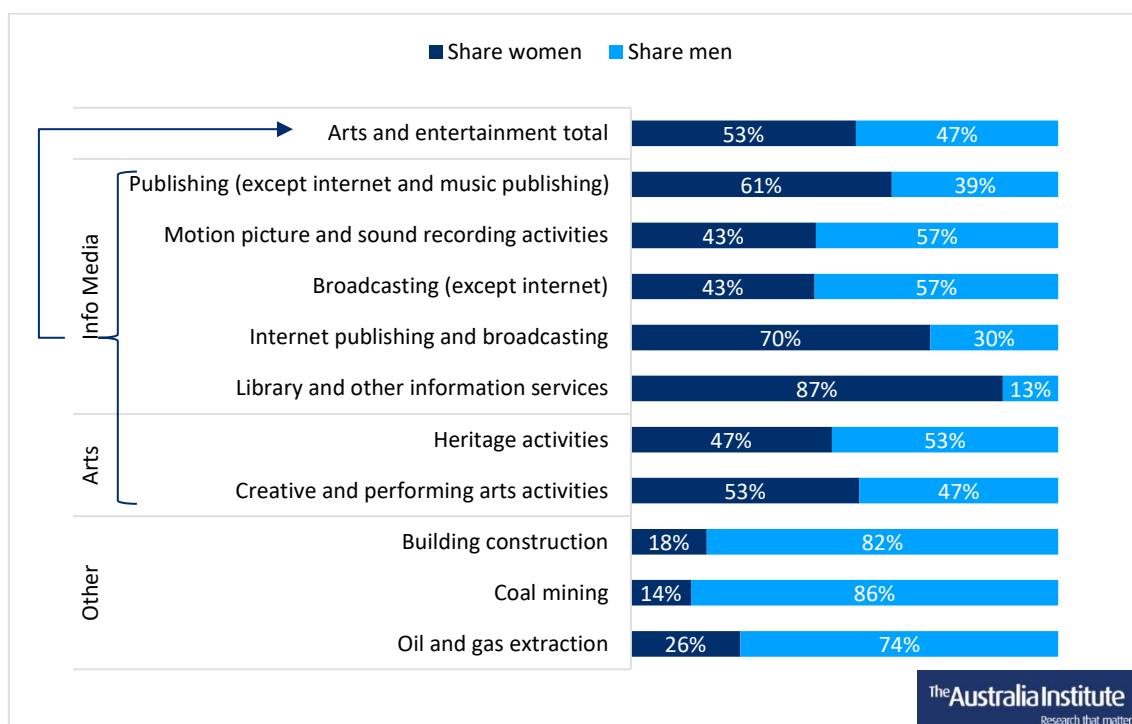
<sup>5</sup> Denniss, Grudnoff, & Richardson (2020) *Design Principles for Fiscal Policy in a Pandemic*, pp. 27, 33, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/design-principles-for-fiscal-policy-in-a-pandemic/>

## Gender intensity by industry

As a whole, the arts and entertainment sector employs a fairly even balance of women (53%) and men (47%). As shown in Figure 1, most sub-industries within the sector are also well-balanced.

This contrasts starkly with the building construction, coal mining and oil and gas extraction industries, which disproportionately employ men over women (14 to 26% women, depending on industry).

**Figure 1: Gender split of employment, by industry**



Source: ABS (2021) *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, February 2021*,  
<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release>

Note: Figures use an average of the last four quarters (May 2020 through February 2021).

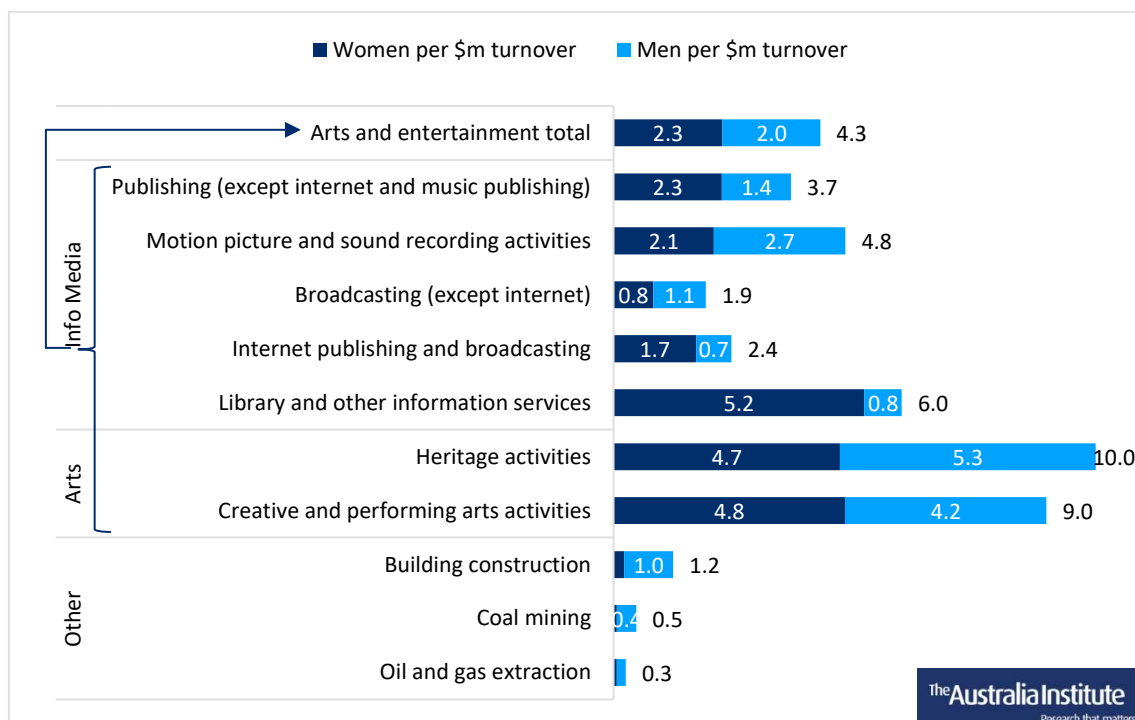
## Employment intensity by industry

Different industries are more labour-intensive or capital-intensive, meaning that they require relatively more workers or relatively more capital, respectively. Comparing an industry's employment with its turnover gives a rough measure of how many extra people it employs for every given amount in extra revenue.

The arts and entertainment sector as a whole employs 4.3 people for every million dollars of turnover, consisting of 2.3 women and 2 men. Two sub-industries that are included in the arts and entertainment industry – heritage activities and creative and performing arts activities – are particularly labour-intensive. For every million dollars of turnover, heritage activities employs 10 people, consisting of 4.7 women and 5.3 men, and creative and performing arts activities employs 9 people, consisting of 4.8 women and 4.2 men.

As shown in Figure 2, this compares very favourably to other industries like building construction, coal mining and oil and gas extraction. For every million dollars of turnover, building construction employs 1.2 people, coal mining employs 0.5 and oil and gas extraction just 0.3.

**Figure 2: Men and women employed per million dollars turnover, by industry**



Source: ABS (2020) *Australian Industry, 2018-19 financial year*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/industry-overview/australian-industry/latest-release>; (2021) *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, February 2021*

## Effect of additional spending on employment

The employment intensity figures calculated above allow the employment effects of different government spending measures to be compared.

The Commonwealth Government's HomeBuilder scheme provides households with grants for new builds and substantial renovations. It is expected to cost about \$2 billion,<sup>6</sup> and is intended to stimulate housing construction given the recent fall in demand.<sup>7</sup> If the additional demand for building construction follows existing patterns, this \$2 billion in extra spending would be expected to create 2,483 building construction jobs, including 2,042 jobs taken by men and 441 jobs taken by women.

By comparison, an additional \$2 billion in turnover for arts and entertainment would be expected to employ 8,593 people, including 4,068 men and 4,526 women, or twice as many men and 10 times as many women as HomeBuilder.

The fuel tax credit is a Commonwealth Government rebate on fuel tax paid for fuel used by businesses in machinery and plant, heavy vehicles and vehicles using private roads, and some other purposes.<sup>8</sup> Coal mining is the single biggest beneficiary of the credit scheme, receiving about \$1 billion each year.<sup>9</sup> On overall employment trends, additional turnover in the coal mining industry of \$1 billion would employ about 472 people, including 406 men and 66 women.

Conversely, spending \$1 billion on arts and entertainment could employ 4,297 people, including 2,034 men and 2,263 women.

For comparison, Figure 3 shows the approximate direct employment per \$1 billion turnover for each industry.

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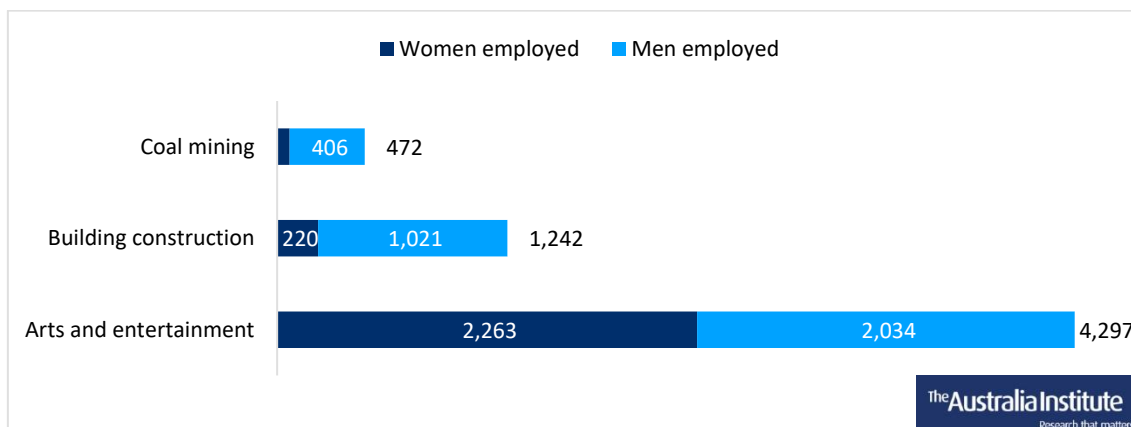
<sup>6</sup> Haydar (2021) *Cash spent on HomeBuilder scheme to reach nearly \$2 billion, more than double original forecast*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-20/homebuilder-construction-scheme-demand-spike-coronavirus-support/13071034>

<sup>7</sup> Pascoe (2020) *HomeBuilder not enough to ease three-year construction slide*, <https://thenewdaily.com.au/finance/property/2020/08/13/construction-downturn-homebuilder-pascoe/>

<sup>8</sup> ATO (2017) *Fuel tax credits - business*, <https://www.ato.gov.au/business/fuel-schemes/fuel-tax-credits--business/?default>

<sup>9</sup> RMIT ABC Fact Check (2020) *Matt Canavan says there's no government subsidisation of Australia's fossil fuel industries. Is he correct?*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-29/fact-check-matt-canavan-fossil-fuel-industry-subsidies/12496310>

**Figure 3: Approximate direct employment from \$1 billion extra turnover**



Source: Australia Institute calculations from sources in Figure 2.

These are approximations only, and do not reflect indirect employment or the extra spending that stimulus programs can create beyond the money spent by government. In practice, the number of people employed depends on the particular project, and may even be part of the project selection criteria. However, what these approximations do illustrate is the benefits that stimulating labour-intensive industries like arts and entertainment can bring over capital-intensive industries like resource extraction and construction.

## Conclusion

The arts and entertainment sector has been particularly badly affected by the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sector employs a balanced mix of women and men, and for every million dollars of turnover employs many more people than industries like building construction and coal mining. That makes it an ideal target for support as governments try to stimulate the economy.

## Methodology

Figures are calculated from two Australian Bureau of Statistics releases.

The detailed labour force quarterly data provides the number of people in Australia employed in each sub-industry, split by gender. The most recent data available is for February 2021. From this, “gender intensity” percentages can be calculated: the share of workers that are male or female in any given sub-industry. The ABS does not separately report figures for people who identify as neither male nor female.

The Australian industry data uses an economic activity survey and business tax data to calculate turnover (“sales and service income”), employment and other statistics by sub-industry for each financial year. The 2018–19 financial year is the most recent year available. This paper calculates an “employment intensity” figure for each sub-industry by dividing employment by sales and service income.

This method was used earlier in *Gender experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown*, which includes details of the approach used and its limitations. In particular, these figures should be seen as indicative estimates because they rely on the assumption that new jobs in a sub-industry follow the existing patterns for the industry, and they only reflect “first round” employment effects.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Richardson & Grudnoff (2020) *Gender experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown*, pp. 8–10, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/gender-experiences-during-the-covid-19-lockdown/>