

# SaCSA Response to the JSA Gender Economic Equality Study

## Purpose of this report

Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) is an industry-led Jobs & Skills Council (JSC), funded by the Department of Employment & Workplace Relations (DEWR), covering the Arts, Personal Services, Retail, Tourism and Hospitality industry sectors.

- SaCSA welcomes the opportunity to present this response to the Gender Economic Equality Study Consultation Paper released by Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA). As a JSC, the impacts of gendered trends and its relationship with other factors and identities, form a crucial part of the picture for our workforce planning function. However, as identified by the consultation paper, there are gaps in existing data sources that have limited the insights we have been able to explore within this topic.

## Key Points

This submission is structured around insights and findings from the [SaCSA 2024 Workforce Planning Reports](#) and updated analyses covering our five industry sectors.

- Key insights include:
  - **Nine of the 12 occupations under SaCSA’s remit that were listed in shortage on the 2024 Occupation Shortage List (OSL) have a gender imbalance of 10 per cent or more.** These include occupations that are predominantly female, such as Hairdressers (84 per cent female) and Beauty Therapists (97 per cent female), as well as those that are predominantly male, such as Sound Technicians (91 per cent male) and Light Technicians (83 per cent male) – see [Appendix A](#).<sup>1</sup>
  - **These occupations in shortage may also have gender imbalances in the uptake of Vocational Education and Training (VET) training supply.** For example, VET enrolments in qualifications leading to Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy are 81 per cent and 93 per cent female respectively, while enrolments for Sound Technicians and Light Technicians are 55 per cent and 46 per cent male respectively.
  - **In the Arts sector**, females make up 23 per cent of APRA AMCOS members and face challenges in receiving credit in certain roles such as conductors, with a gender pay gap of 23.3 per cent.
  - **In the Retail sector**, childcare accessibility is a barrier, particularly for Community Pharmacy roles in regional areas. Workforce shortages in Personal Services, especially hair and beauty, may be linked to gender inequality.
  - **SaCSA is applying a diversity and inclusion lens to our workforce planning and related projects, to further explore these challenges around gender imbalances across our sectors and occupations.** For example, SaCSA’s projects on customer aggression and drink spiking show that female workers in our sectors are more likely to experience unsafe working conditions at work, and these working conditions lead to issues with attraction and retention of staff.

Below is additional information on each of these aspects. SaCSA looks forward to collaborating with JSA on these issues, building on our already strong relationship with JSA.

## Gender Composition of SaCSA Sectors

JSA has previously stated that the likelihood of an occupation being considered ‘in shortage’ is more likely where there is a significant gender imbalance.<sup>2</sup> This holds true for the majority of the 12 occupations within SaCSA’s remit that had been identified by the 2024 Occupation Shortage List (OSL) as being ‘in

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2021: <https://tablebuilder.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/tableView/openTable.xhtml>.

<sup>2</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, OSL Key Findings and Insights Report, 2024: [https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024\\_osl\\_key\\_findings\\_and\\_insights\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024_osl_key_findings_and_insights_report_0.pdf).

shortage', with nine out of the 12 occupations having an imbalance one way or another of 10 per cent or greater. Further information of the occupations in shortage which are relevant to SaCSA can be found in **Appendix A**.

In addition, key findings from the SaCSA 2024 Workforce Planning Reports are that the gender imbalances may stem from the uptake of VET training, where there are many VET pathways within our five industry sectors that predominantly taken up those who identify as female, as of 2023 VET student enrolments data from the National Centre of Vocational and Education Research (NCVER). These include:

- Pastrycooks, 75 per cent female enrolments
- Hospitality Workers, 61 per cent female enrolments
- Visual Merchandiser, 92 per cent female enrolments
- Pharmacy Technicians, 90 per cent female enrolments
- Florist, 95 per cent female enrolments
- Beauty Therapist, 93 per cent female enrolments
- Hair or Beauty Salon Manager, 98 per cent female enrolments, and
- Make Up Artist, 98 per cent female enrolments.

However, for some training pathways in SaCSA's remit, this gender imbalance is reversed, particularly looking at qualifications associated with Chefs and Cooks, where the majority of enrolments in each training pathway are male dominated (61 per cent and 56 per cent respectively).

These imbalances will be researched further by SaCSA, and we look forward to collaboration and insights with JSA on this key work.

## Examples of SaCSA's work on gender-related issues

As part of SaCSA's 2024 Workforce Planning Reports, stakeholder feedback provided insights into some of the challenges experienced by workers in our five industry sectors. This feedback was broadly in line with the well-established gendered trends as outlined in the JSA consultation paper. These insights are explored below:

### Issues with Gender Disparities

From **SaCSA's Arts 2024 Workforce Planning Report**, stakeholders highlighted issues with gender diversity across the sector, with only 23 per cent of APRA AMCOS members identifying as women, non-binary or gender diverse individuals. In addition, within individuals working in Opera Director roles, a study by the International Journal of Cultural Policy showed that women are not only less likely to see initial credits compared to men but are also less likely to have opportunities to work on more than one production.<sup>3</sup>

These gendered trends continue throughout the range of roles that go into making a production, with women more likely to assume traditionally feminised roles, typically being credited as costume designers, while men were credited with technical roles.<sup>4</sup>

These issues with gender diversity have also translated to pay, with the gender pay gap for female workers in the Arts sitting at 23.3 per cent, which is much higher than the overall gender pay gap.<sup>5</sup>

Moving forward, it is important to explore the need for additional or complementary data sets to provide an evidence base to support SaCSA's ability to interrogate these issues in greater detail, which SaCSA

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<sup>3</sup> International Journal of Cultural Policy, Vincent, Johanson and Coate, Risky Business: Policy legacy and gender inequality in Australian opera production, August 2023: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10286632.2023.2239266>.

<sup>4</sup> The Conversation, 95% male conductors, 70% ageing classics and zero appetite for risk: what's wrong with elite Australian opera, August 2023: <https://theconversation.com/95-male-conductors-70-ageing-classics-and-zero-appetite-for-risk-whats-wrong-with-elite-australianopera-211270>

<sup>5</sup> Visual Arts Work, Arts Workers: Insights into insecure work and career patterns, September 2023: [https://www.visualartswork.net.au/uploads/1/3/9/3/139379831/mcquiten\\_et\\_al\\_september\\_2023\\_arts\\_workers\\_insights\\_into\\_insecure\\_work\\_and\\_career\\_patterns.pdf](https://www.visualartswork.net.au/uploads/1/3/9/3/139379831/mcquiten_et_al_september_2023_arts_workers_insights_into_insecure_work_and_career_patterns.pdf). Note, the overall pay gap was estimated as 13.3 per cent in this source but Creative Australia have estimated it at 12 per cent

notes is a key goal of the JSA Gender Economic Equality Study. SaCSA looks forward to collaboration with JSA on these issues, and with other data custodians.

### **Caring Responsibilities**

A common theme across SaCSA's five industry sectors is the long and varied hours that workers in these sectors have to negotiate in order to maintain their employment.

For example, stakeholders from the Tourism and Hospitality sectors raised the issue of access to services, such as childcare options during evening and weekend work hours as a barrier for workers remaining in these sectors. This issue is particularly prevalent in regional and remote areas where access to these options is further restricted.

### **Customer Aggression and Drink Spiking**

Insights from the 2024 Workforce Planning Report and initial research from SaCSA's projects on customer aggression and drink spiking show that female workers in our sectors are more likely to experience unsafe working conditions at work, and these working conditions lead to issues with attraction and retention of staff across these sectors.

On Customer Aggression, research indicates that female retail workers are more likely to experience verbal and sexual abuse compared to male workers, with young women at higher risk.

In terms of Drink Spiking, women are more frequently victims of drink spiking than men, yet fewer than 15% of related sexual assaults are reported to the police.

SaCSA will continue to explore and work to address these key issues and would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with JSA to support these projects.

### **Other areas for collaboration**

SaCSA is interested in greater availability of data and more granular data for gender and other intersectional cohorts – including the First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse individuals.

As SaCSA's suite of projects continue to develop, we welcome the opportunity to work with JSA to identify gaps in current data sources, which would help to provide the evidence base required to develop fit for purpose solutions in line with stakeholder and industry needs.

## Appendix A – Gender composition of selected OSL Shortage Occupations relevant to SaCSA

ANZCO Code	ANZCO Title	OSL Rating (National)	Male Proportion	Female Proportion	Imbalance
392211	Graphic Pre-press Trades Worker	Shortage	67.1%	32.9%	17.1% (male)
399513	Light Technician	Shortage	83.2%	16.8%	33.2% (male)
399516	Sound Technician	Shortage	90.7%	9.3%	40.7% (male)
391111	Hairdresser	Shortage	16.3%	83.7%	33.7% (female)
451111	Beauty Therapist	Shortage	3.0%	97.0%	47.0% (female)
311215	Pharmacy Technician	Shortage	11.7%	88.3%	38.3% (female)
451412	Tour Guide	Shortage	51.6%	48.4%	1.6% (male)
451612	Travel Consultant	Shortage	21.9%	78.1%	28.1% (female)
141311	Hotel or Motel Manager	Shortage	55.9%	44.1%	5.9% (male)
351112	Pastrycook	Shortage	37.1%	62.9%	12.9% (female)
351311	Chef	Shortage	72.8%	27.2%	22.8% (male)
351411	Cook	Shortage	45.9%	54.1%	4.1% (female)

Source: JSA and ABS Census.