

Business Count Data

Introduction

Business count data is available that details the commercial activity in an area in terms of the types and sizes (by employee count) of businesses.

Data Source

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) releases the data on an approximately annual cycle. The raw data that is processed by the ABS includes business registrations as well as business activity as measured by GST submissions to the Australian Tax Office.

Data Structure

The data is published for geographic units at the 'Statistical Area 2' (SA2) level. There are approximately 2200 SA2s, with average residential population of approximately 10,000, and average employing business count of approximately 400 (excluding SA2s with very low counts).

Businesses are categorised by size and type. The size categories are:

- Non employing businesses
- 1 – 4 employees
- 5 – 19 employees
- 20 – 199 employees
- 200+ employees

The 'Non-Employing' category includes businesses with low levels of activity (but excludes businesses that have shown near-zero activity over multiple consecutive quarters), holding companies, and non-incorporated businesses such as owner-operators.

The Type categories are defined according to the Australia and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) system:

ANZSIC Category

A	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
B	Mining
C	Manufacturing
D	Electricity, Gas, Water, Waste
E	Construction
F	Wholesale Trade
G	Retail Trade
H	Accommodation, Hospitality
I	Transport, Postal, Warehousing
J	Information, Media, Telecoms
K	Financial and Insurance
L	Rental, Hiring, Real Estate
M	Professional, Scientific, Technical
N	Administrative and Support
O	Public Administration and Safety
P	Education and Training
Q	Health Care and Social Assistance
R	Arts and Recreation
S	Other Services
X	Not Stated/Unknown

Comments on Latest Data

After recording two years of net contraction (-0.1% during FY08 and -1.0% during FY09), confidence has bounced back with net growth of 3.6% and 0.4% in FY10 and FY11, respectively. Unsurprisingly, the Mining sector has led the way, with the business count increasing 4.2%. Another major trend in Australia is the aging population, and this was also reflected in the counts with Health Care and Social Assistance businesses increasing by 3.5%. On the other side of the ledger, the Agriculture and Manufacturing sectors posted their 5th straight year of net contraction.

Small Area Data – Disaggregation Method

For most purposes, SA2s are either too large or the wrong 'shape' (that is, they do not align with common use boundaries such as postcodes). We have disaggregated the data into the much smaller SA1 geographic unit (over 54,000 for Australia).

Using an unrelated business address database (Spectrum's Business Hit List, containing approximately 700,000 records across Australia), the business counts were distributed into the SA1s based on the relative proportion of business locations in a given SA1 compared with the source SA2. That is, if an SA2 contained 1,000 business locations according to the Hit List, and a given SA1 contained 100 of those, then 10% of each value from the ABS counts would be attributed to that SA1.

While any single count for a single SA1 will be highly approximate, the errors average down towards zero as large numbers of SA1s are grouped together (for example, to assess the business population of a given postcode). Small values and values from specific cells (that is, specifying both type and size) should always be interpreted with caution.

Contact Us

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