Urgency and Opportunity – Fact Sheet

Background
This is the fourth edition of *Urgency & Opportunity*. The purpose of this report, and previous editions, is to analyse the published and unpublished Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from the *Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership (EEBTUM)* survey and report. The survey was conducted throughout Australia in August 2012 and is a portion of the sample used for the Labour Force survey. The results of EEBTUM were published in May 2013.

The Shape of the Australian Workforce
In 2012 there were:

- 10,117,400 employees,
- 1,840,400 employees were trade union members in their main job, and
- This is a union density of 18.2%, a slight decrease from 18.4% trade union density recorded in 2011.

*This is a representation of the relative size of the Australian workforce, divided between the public and private sectors and also employees aged under and over 45 years.*
Union Density

Union density has been on the decline since 1990, however in recent years there has been a stabilisation of the decline in density.

- Union density in the private sector fell to 13.0% in 2012.
- Union density in the public sector remained steady at 43.4% in 2012.

Union Density by Sector (%) – 1992 to 2012

Union density amongst female employees is now higher than union density amongst male employees at 18.9% compared to 17.5% in 2012.

- In raw numbers however there are still more male union members than female union members with 939,800 male union members and 900,600 female union members. This is a split of 51.1% male to 48.9% female, this is most even union membership has ever been and part of a long term trend which has seen men go from 63.3% of union membership in 1990 to 51.1% in 2012.

Union Density by Gender (%) – 1992 to 2012
Union Premiums
The data shows that in 2012, like in 2011 and in the previous editions of *Urgency & Opportunity* that on pay and important conditions employees who are union members are better off than non-union employees.

- Union members earned on average $142.85 more a week than on-union employees. This is a union wage premium of 13.3%. This is a slight decrease form 15.55 in 2011.
- Part-time workers who were union members experience the largest benefit earning $233.2 or 47.8% more than non-union employees.
- Female employees who are union members have a union wage premium of 25.4% compared to female non-union employees.
- Male union members have a wage premium of 7.5% compared to male non-union employees.
- The overwhelming majority (90.8%) of union members have paid leave entitlements compared to 66.0% of non-union employees.
- Union members were more likely to received superannuation paid by employers at 97.6% compared to 88.2% of non-union employees.

Projections
Using the DEEWR employment projection figures the ACTU has made calculations on not only employment growth, but on the union membership growth required to maintain and increase union density.

- Total employee numbers are projected to grow by 7.1% by 2017, taking the size of the workforce to 10.8 million in 2017.

To maintain a steady level of union density through to 2017:

- Union membership needs to grow by 131,600 members; this is a net growth in members of 26,320 per annum.
- From 2011 to 2012 the net growth in union membership was 5,700, another 20,620 is needed in addition to maintain union density.

To return to the 2002 union density figure of 23.1% by 2017:

- Union membership needs to grow to 2.5 million, a net membership growth of 666,250 by 2017.
- Top achieve this union membership would need to grow by 133,250 per year for the next 5 years.

Further Information
To obtain a copy of the full report please visit the ACTU website at: [www.actu.org.au](http://www.actu.org.au)
Any queries, comments, feedback or to have access to the data tables used in this report should be addressed to:

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An increase of 666,250 members would be needed by 2017 to return in the 2002 density level of 23.1%.

An increase of 131,600 members will be needed by 2017 to maintain the current level of density at 18.2%.
**Demographics**

Looking at the total workforce:

- 67.6% of employees had never been a union member,
- 13.3% of employees had previously been union members, and
- 19.1% of employees were current union members.\(^1\)

All three groups had distinctive demographic profiles:

- Employees who had never been union members were more likely to be younger, aged under 34 years (49.6%), more likely to be born overseas at 30.7% and be born in non-English speaking countries and they were also more likely than other groups to be working on a part time basis at 32.2%.

- Employees who have previously been union members were the group most likely to be male at 57.8%, born in Australia (77.9%) and aged over 44 years at 53.7%, the majority worked full time.

- Union members of all the groups are the most evenly spread along gender lines at 51.5% male and 48.5% female, were concentrated between the ages of 25 and 54 at 69.8%, overwhelming union members were born in Australia and of those who were born overseas at 24.1%, they were more likely to be born in a non-English speaking country. Finally, union members out of the all the status groups were mostly likely to be employed on a full-time basis at 75.7%.

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\(^1\) These figures use the data for all union members, not just union members in main job. This accounts for the discrepancy between this analysis and the headline figures.
**States**

Tasmania is the state with the highest level of union density at 25.7%, Western Australia has the lowest level of union density at 14.3%.

- Victoria is the state with the most stable levels of union density with a standard deviation of 0.4% over the five years.
- The Northern Territory has been the most volatile over the 5 years with a standard deviation of 1.5%.
- All states either increased in density or remained steady with the exception of Queensland (-0.7%) and Western Australia (-1.9%) in 2012.

Of the states where data is available South Australia has the largest proportion of union members at 20.5% and also the largest proportion of employees who have previously been union members at 25.6%. Western Australia has the largest proportion of employees who have never been a union member at 69.8%.

**Union Membership Status by State – 2012 (%)**

![Graph showing union membership status by state](image)

**Sectors**

Looking at the public and private sectors:

- Private sector is larger at 8.4 million employees at 1.08 million union members a density of 13.0%.
- Public sector is 1.74 million employees and 755,800 union members a density of 43.4%.

The majority of private sector employees have never been a member of a union at 73.2%, this is an increase from 71.4% in 2011. An additional 13.0% of employees had previously been a member of a union and finally 13.7% were current union members.
In contrast to the private sector, the public sector under half of employees have never been a union member at 40.7%. A further 14.6% of employees had previously been a member of a union, while more than 2 in 5 (44.6%) employees were currently trade union members.
**Industries**

The industries with the largest proportion of employees remain unchanged from 2011 at:

- Health Care and Social Assistance with 1.29 million employees in 2012.
- Retail trade with 1.12 million employees in 2012.
- Manufacturing at 898,400 in 2012.

The industries with the largest number of union members were:

- Health Care and Social Assistance with 397,300 members in 2012 up from 2011 figure.
- Education and Training with 321,200 members in 2012 up from 2011 figure.
- Public Administration and Safety with 233,300 members in 2012 down from 2011 figure.

The industries with the highest union density in 2012 were:

- Education Training at 39.1% up from 2011
- Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services at 35.0% up from 2011
- Public Administration and Safety at 35.0% down from 2011

The industries predicted to experience the largest employment growth from 2013 through to 2017 are:

- Health Care and Social Assistance at 13.0%;
- Construction at 10.1%; and
- Arts and Recreation Services at 10.0%.
- The only industry projected to contract over the same time was Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing with DEEWR projected that employment will reduce by -4.2% by 2017.

**All Employees Union Membership Status by Industry – 2012 (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Currently a trade union member</th>
<th>Previously a trade union member</th>
<th>Never been a trade union member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
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<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
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<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
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<td>Transport, Postal and Warehousing</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
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<td>Information Media and Telecommunications</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
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<td>Financial and Insurance Services</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
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<td>Professional, Scientific and Technical Services</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>84.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support Services</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Administration and Safety</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts and Recreation Services</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
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