

# **Beyond Graduation 2015**

**A report of graduates' work and study outcomes  
three years after course completion**



## Acknowledgements

Dr David Carroll (Senior Research Associate) was the principal author of this report and the Project Director of the 2015 Beyond Graduation Survey.

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## 1. Introduction

Welcome to *Beyond Graduation 2015*, the seventh and final report in this series on the activities, outcomes and experiences of Australian higher education graduates in the years following the completion of their studies. This report is based on the 2015 Beyond Graduation Survey (BGS), conducted by Graduate Careers Australia (GCA) in association with 19 Australian higher education institutions, who assisted GCA in recontacting their graduates three years after course completion (see Table A1).

Graduates who completed a course of study at a participating institution in 2011 and provided a response to the 2012 Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) were invited to complete an online survey about their experiences since completing their original courses of study. Following an initial email invitation, sent either by GCA or graduates' 'home' institutions, up to three reminder emails were sent to non-responders over the approximately five-week fieldwork period. A gift card lottery was used as an incentive for completing the survey within the specified time.

A total of 10,334 usable responses were received, which is equivalent to 13.4 per cent of the 77,331 graduates from participating institutions who originally responded to the 2012 AGS.<sup>1</sup> The responses were found to be broadly representative of the target population in terms of age distribution and broad fields of education undertaken; however males were somewhat under-represented in the respondent sample, as is typical in this type of survey. Post-stratification weighting to correct the gender imbalance in the sample did not substantially impact the results, so for the sake of simplicity it was decided to analyse the data without applying weights.

The BGS questionnaire addressed graduates' employment and further study activities as at 30 April 2015, and gave them the opportunity to give a retrospective assessment of their higher education course experience. Data on graduates' personal characteristics and activities in 2012 were imputed into the data file from the 2012 AGS.

The focus of this report is on Australian domestic bachelor degree graduates, who represent the largest single group of BGS respondents. Key results for Australian postgraduates are presented in Section 5. The demographic and enrolment characteristics of bachelor degree and postgraduate respondents are presented in Table A2.

Due to the extent of non-response to the BGS, it is appropriate to consider the pool of responses a sample of the broader graduate population. As with all statistics based on a sample rather than the entire population of interest, these estimated figures are subject to error and therefore should be interpreted with due care, especially when the sample is sub-divided.

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<sup>1</sup> Since valid email addresses were not available for all graduates in the target population, the actual survey response rate will be higher than the figure given. The equivalent figure for the 2014 BGS, in which 40 higher education institutions took part, was 15.0 per cent.

## 2. Graduate Destinations

At the time of the 2012 AGS, 73.2 per cent of male graduates and 66.2 per cent of female graduates in the BGS sample reported themselves as being available for full-time employment—that is, in or seeking full-time employment (see Table 1). By 2015, the percentage of male graduates available for full-time employment had increased to 83.8 per cent, which reflects a decrease in the proportions in both full-time study and part-time work. The percentage of female graduates available for full-time employment increased to 73.5 per cent by 2015, which mainly reflects a substantial decrease in the proportion in further full-time study. Female graduates were notably and consistently more likely than male graduates to be in part-time employment with no desire to secure full-time work, or to be unavailable for further study or any employment.

**Table 1. Main activity of bachelor graduates, by sex, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

	Available for full-time employment (see Table 2)	In full-time study	In part-time or casual employment, not seeking full-time employment	Not working, seeking part-time or casual employment only	Unavailable for full-time study or any employment	TOTAL	TOTAL n
<b>Males</b>							
2012	73.2	17.2	6.3	0.0	3.3	100	1,717
2015	83.8	10.5	3.1	0.5	2.2	100	1,720
<b>Females</b>							
2012	66.2	20.4	9.9	0.0	3.5	100	3,519
2015	73.5	10.9	11.3	0.8	3.5	100	3,576
<b>Total</b>							
2012	68.5	19.4	8.7	0.0	3.4	100	5,236
2015	76.8	10.7	8.6	0.7	3.1	100	5,296

Of the graduates who were available for full-time employment, the proportion who had secured full-time work increased considerably within three years of course completion (see Table 2). At the time of the 2012 AGS, 76.6 per cent of males and 75.9 per cent of females in our sample were in full-time employment. By 2015, this had increased to 89.5 per cent and 87.9 per cent respectively. This was necessarily accompanied by a general decline in the proportion of graduates in the full-time labour market who were in part-time employment or unemployed.

Full-time employment rates are presented by field of education in Table 3. Graduates from the fields of health, education, and engineering and related technologies enjoyed particularly strong employment rates shortly after course completion, while those from natural and physical sciences, and creative arts recorded relatively low employment rates at that time. Three years after course completion, while employment rates increased across all fields of education, the employment rate for natural and physical sciences graduates remained relatively low, as did that for graduates from agriculture and environmental studies courses. These results are broadly consistent across the sexes; however, male natural and physical science graduates enjoyed higher full-time employment rates than their female counterparts shortly after course completion. This is likely due, at least in part, to male graduates being over-represented in science majors with relatively strong employment rates. The fields of engineering and related technologies, management and commerce, information

technology, and health have the highest full-time employment rates three years after course completion, each recording an overall rate of 90 per cent or more.

**Table 2. Bachelor graduates available for full-time employment, by sex, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

	In full-time employment	Seeking full-time employment, working part time or casual	Seeking full-time employment, not working	Total seeking full-time employment	TOTAL	TOTAL n
<b>Males</b>						
2012	76.6	14.5	8.9	23.4	100	1,257
2015	89.5	4.9	5.6	10.5	100	1,441
<b>Females</b>						
2012	75.9	17.2	6.9	24.1	100	2,329
2015	87.9	7.3	4.8	12.1	100	2,628
<b>Total</b>						
2012	76.2	16.2	7.6	23.8	100	3,586
2015	88.5	6.4	5.1	11.5	100	4,069

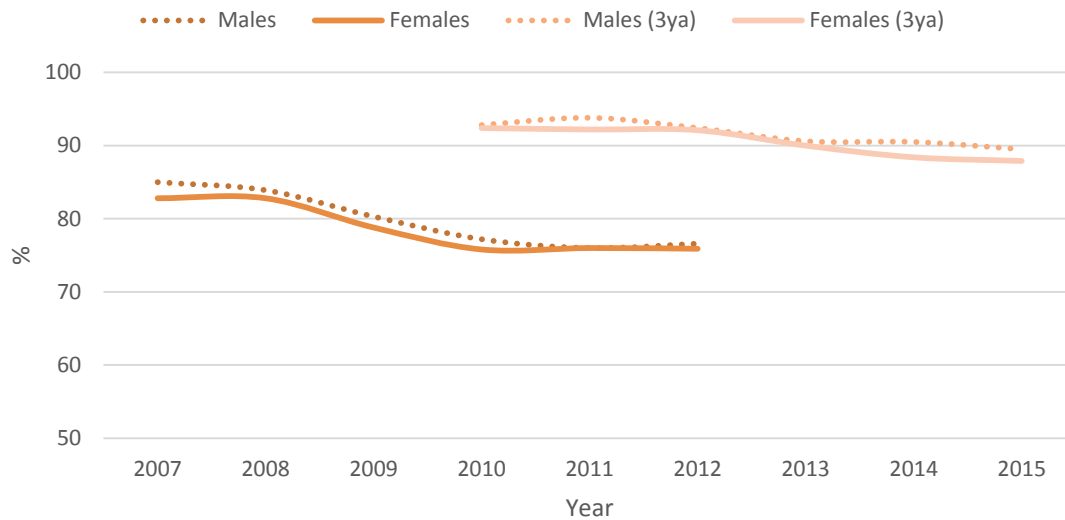
It is important to note that the results presented in Table 3 do not necessarily reflect the proportion of graduates in jobs that are related to their respective courses of study. This is addressed later in Figure 2, which examines graduates in educationally-relevant jobs.

Full-time employment rates from the last six BGS rounds are presented in Figure 1, to provide data on trends in bachelor degree graduate employment, both immediately after course completion and three years after (denoted with '3ya'). This figure clearly shows a weakening of the labour market in the years following the global financial crisis which was reflected in the 2009 AGS, with males and females similarly affected. The pace of the decline appears to have slowed in recent years; however the labour market for early career graduates remains soft, especially compared to pre-crisis levels.

**Table 3. Bachelor graduates working full time as a proportion of those available for full-time employment, by sex and broad field of education, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

	2012		2015	
	%	n	%	n
<b>Males</b>				
Natural and physical sciences	66.0	100	75.9	137
Information technology	76.8	112	93.0	115
Engineering and related technologies	85.3	191	93.4	198
Architecture and building	82.5	40	87.5	48
Agriculture and environmental studies	75.0	28	81.6	38
Health	88.5	148	90.9	165
Education	85.7	49	88.5	52
Management and commerce	75.2	290	92.9	322
Society and culture	69.9	229	89.0	283
Creative arts	61.4	70	88.0	83
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76.6</b>	<b>1,257</b>	<b>89.5</b>	<b>1,441</b>
<b>Females</b>				
Natural and physical sciences	62.1	161	81.9	221
Information technology	100.0	13	88.2	17
Engineering and related technologies	90.6	64	93.9	66
Architecture and building	77.8	27	96.8	31
Agriculture and environmental studies	75.7	37	80.0	45
Health	87.1	582	90.9	540
Education	73.8	260	89.0	283
Management and commerce	78.1	421	92.9	436
Society and culture	71.1	577	84.3	764
Creative arts	58.8	187	86.7	225
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75.9</b>	<b>2,329</b>	<b>87.9</b>	<b>2,628</b>
<b>Total</b>				
Natural and physical sciences	63.6	261	79.6	358
Information technology	79.2	125	92.4	132
Engineering and related technologies	86.7	255	93.6	264
Architecture and building	80.6	67	91.1	79
Agriculture and environmental studies	75.4	65	80.7	83
Health	87.4	730	90.9	705
Education	75.7	309	89.0	335
Management and commerce	76.9	711	92.9	758
Society and culture	70.7	806	85.6	1,047
Creative arts	59.5	257	87.0	308
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76.2</b>	<b>3,586</b>	<b>88.5</b>	<b>4,069</b>





**Figure 1. Full-time employment rates for bachelor graduates, by sex, 2007 to 2012, and 2010 to 2015 (%)**

### **2.1. Industries of employment**

Broadly speaking, the types of industries employing bachelor degree graduates did not change substantially in the years after course completion (see Table 4). Full-time employed males were most likely to be working in the professional, scientific and technical services industry group, followed by healthcare and social assistance, and public administration and safety. These three industry groups accounted for around half of all full-time employed males in both periods. Around three-quarters of full-time employed females were concentrated in four industry groups: health care, professional services, education and training, and public administration. They were most likely to be employed in health care in both periods; however the proportion in this industry group fell from 31.3 per cent in 2012 to 25.6 per cent in 2015. Meanwhile, the proportion employed in education increased from 14.8 to 21.5 per cent over the same time frame. While these results suggest that many graduates change industries within three years of course completion, the movement of graduates into and out of the full-time labour force is also likely to be a contributing factor.

**Table 4. Employing industries, bachelor graduates in full-time employment, by sex, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

	Males		Females		Total	
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0.3	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5
Mining	7.0	6.4	3.3	2.6	4.6	3.9
Manufacturing	3.3	4.2	1.8	2.6	2.3	3.2
Electricity, gas and water supply	2.3	1.9	0.8	1.0	1.3	1.3
Construction	4.0	3.6	1.8	1.4	2.6	2.2
Wholesale trade	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9
Retail trade	5.2	2.3	4.2	3.0	4.5	2.7
Accommodation and food services	1.2	0.4	2.2	0.8	1.9	0.7
Transport, postal and warehousing	2.3	2.0	1.1	0.7	1.6	1.2
Information media and telecommunications	3.1	2.9	2.5	3.2	2.7	3.1
Financial and insurance services	5.9	7.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	5.1
Rental, hiring and real estate services	1.8	1.5	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.0
Professional, scientific and technical services	26.7	26.2	17.9	16.0	21.0	19.6
Administrative and support services	1.1	1.0	2.2	1.4	1.8	1.3
Public administration and safety	10.1	12.7	8.6	10.5	9.1	11.3
Education and training	7.6	10.0	14.8	21.5	12.3	17.5
Health care and social assistance	14.5	12.8	31.3	25.6	25.4	21.1
Arts and recreation services	1.5	2.0	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.8
Other services	1.1	1.3	1.1	2.0	1.1	1.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TOTAL n</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>1,057</b>	<b>1,753</b>	<b>1,952</b>	<b>2,699</b>	<b>3,009</b>

## 2.2. Occupations

As shown in Table 5, the proportion of graduates employed in professional roles and, to a far lesser extent, managerial roles increased within three years of course completion.<sup>2</sup> This was necessarily accompanied by a general decline in the proportion of graduates in 'lower-skilled' occupations. Male graduates were consistently more likely than their female counterparts to be employed in a managerial capacity. Female graduates remained somewhat more likely than male graduates to be employed in clerical or administrative positions three years after course completion; however, only around one in ten were so employed by this stage.

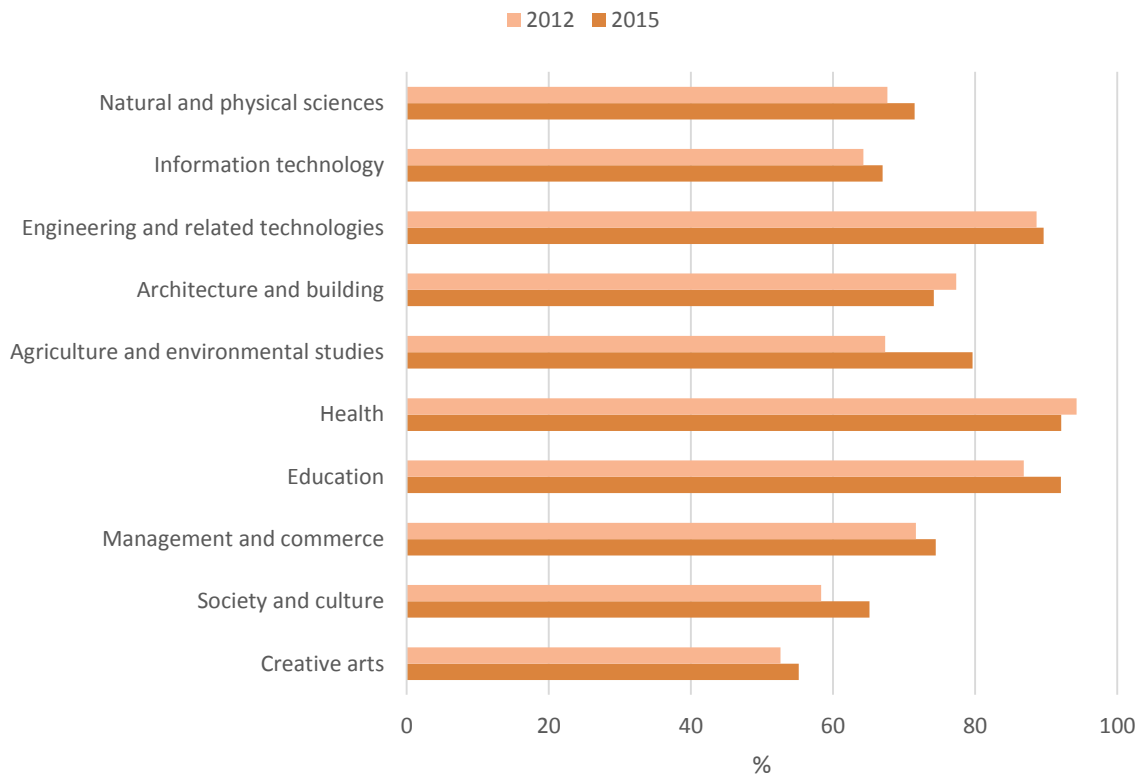
<sup>2</sup> In previous years, a much more pronounced shift towards managerial employment has been observed, especially for males. It is not immediately clear why this was not observed in 2015, but possibilities include a relatively soft labour market, changes in the composition of participating institutions, sampling error, or inconsistent coding of occupations, though the last is highly unlikely.

**Table 5. Broad occupation types, bachelor graduates in full-time employment, by sex, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

	Males		Females		Total	
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
Managers	8.0	8.1	5.0	5.3	6.1	6.3
Professionals	68.6	73.3	69.7	73.7	69.3	73.6
Technicians and trades workers	4.7	4.2	2.7	2.3	3.4	2.9
Community and personal service workers	4.2	4.2	5.3	4.8	4.9	4.6
Clerical and administrative workers	8.5	7.3	13.7	11.2	11.9	9.8
Other occupations	5.9	2.9	3.5	2.8	4.3	2.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TOTAL n</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>1,048</b>	<b>1,747</b>	<b>1,946</b>	<b>2,697</b>	<b>2,994</b>

### 2.3. Importance of qualification

Being in full-time employment, even if in a managerial or professional capacity, does not necessarily mean that a graduate is in a job related to his or her course of study. To investigate this potential gap between employment and *relevant* employment, graduates were asked to rate the importance of the qualification they completed in 2011 to their main paid job using a five-point response format with categories labelled ‘formal requirement’, ‘important’, ‘somewhat important’, ‘not important’ and ‘don’t know’. The relative proportions of graduates who considered the qualification they completed in 2011 to be a formal requirement or important to their main paid jobs in 2012 and 2015 are given in Figure 2, stratified by field of education. Graduates who were unsure (don’t know) are excluded from the figures.



**Figure 2. Qualification important to main paid job, bachelor graduates in full-time employment, by broad field of education, 2012 and 2015 (%)**

There is considerable variation across fields of education in terms of the proportion of graduates who believed that their qualification was important to their main paid job. Graduates from the fields of health, education and engineering were consistently the most likely to be in a job for which their qualification is important. Creative arts graduates were consistently the least likely to be in a relevant job. Agriculture, society and culture, and education saw the largest increases in graduates employed in relevant jobs between 2012 and 2015. Only two fields recorded negative growth in relation to the proportion of full-time employed graduates working relevant jobs: architecture and building, and health; however, it should be noted that health fell from a high water mark. Overall, the proportion of graduates in relevant jobs increased by only 1.2 percentage points between 2012 and 2015, which may be further evidence of a relatively soft labour market for graduates.

It is important, however, to emphasise that graduates in non-relevant jobs (by the definition employed here) are not necessarily in unrewarding jobs or even jobs that are not in line with their own career goals. It simply means that they are employed in jobs that are not closely related to the degree they completed in 2011. While some graduates may take longer than others to secure work in their chosen field, others may develop a career in a different, potentially unrelated field. The nature of these non-relevant jobs is examined in Table 6, in which broad occupation types are cross-tabulated with graduates' perceptions of the importance of their qualification to their main paid job. It is worthy of note that 30.3 per cent of graduates who indicated that their qualification was not important to their main paid employment in 2012 were employed in managerial or professional roles. By 2015, this figure had reached 45.4 per cent. This finding goes some way to dispel the myth that graduates working in jobs unrelated to their field of study must necessarily be trapped in unskilled jobs; however, this is likely to be true for some.

**Table 6. Aggregated occupation type, by importance of qualification to main paid job, bachelor graduates in full-time employment, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

	Important		Somewhat important		Not important		Total	
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
Managerial/Prof.	86.0	86.9	57.5	65.4	30.3	45.4	75.4	79.9
Other	14.0	13.1	42.5	34.6	69.7	54.6	24.6	20.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TOTAL n</b>	<b>2,022</b>	<b>2,275</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>2,683</b>	<b>2,975</b>

#### **2.4. Average weekly working hours**

Average weekly working hours for full-time employed bachelor degree graduates in 2012 and 2015 are presented in Table 7, split by field of education and sex. At an overall level, males tended to work longer hours, although much variation in working hours was observed between different fields of education. Three years after course completion, male engineering graduates tended to work the longest hours, on average, out of any graduate cohort (44.8 hours), followed closely by male health graduates (44.1 hours). In spite of the general shift towards more highly-skilled occupations between 2012 and 2015 (see Table 5), average weekly working hours increased by just 1.3 hours for male graduates and 1.1 hours for female graduates over this period. The largest increase was observed for

female graduates from the fields of architecture and management, who saw their average weekly working hours increase by 2.8 hours between the two survey periods.

**Table 7. Average weekly working hours for full-time employed bachelor graduates, by broad field of education and sex, 2012 and 2015 (hours)**

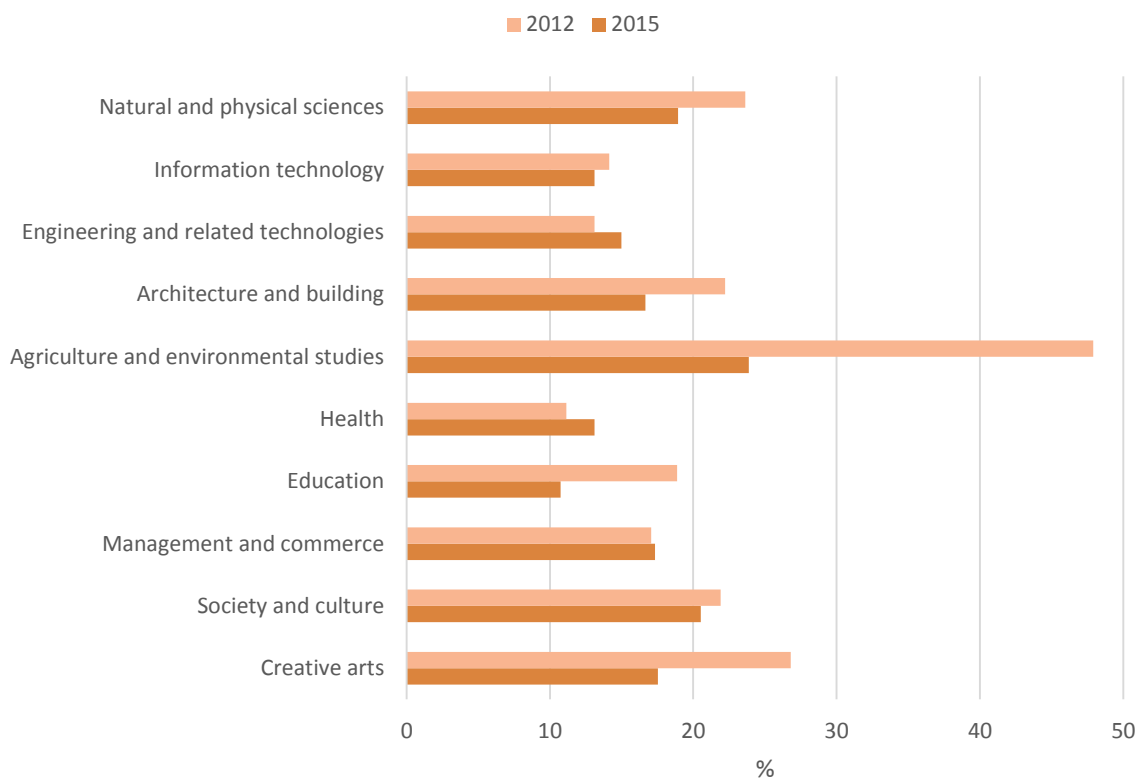
	Males		Females		Total	
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
Natural and physical sciences	42.2	41.8	39.3	40.4	40.4	40.9
Information technology	40.0	40.6	39.8	38.9	39.9	40.4
Engineering and related technologies	42.5	44.8	42.0	42.7	42.4	44.2
Architecture and building	42.8	43.2	38.5	41.3	41.2	42.4
Agriculture and environmental studies	42.8	42.4	39.4	40.0	40.9	41.1
Health	43.3	44.1	40.5	40.3	41.1	41.2
Education	42.9	43.2	39.0	39.9	39.7	40.4
Management and commerce	41.0	43.3	39.8	42.6	40.3	42.9
Society and culture	41.3	43.1	38.9	40.5	39.6	41.2
Creative arts	41.1	40.9	38.4	40.9	39.1	40.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41.8</b>	<b>43.1</b>	<b>39.7</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>41.6</b>
<b>TOTAL n</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>1,042</b>	<b>1,744</b>	<b>1,910</b>	<b>2,684</b>	<b>2,952</b>

### **2.5. Employment seeking behaviour**

In addition to their current employment, full-time employed bachelor degree graduates were asked whether they were actively seeking other employment at the time of the survey (see Figure 3). As may be expected, these figures broadly mirror those presented in Table 3 and Figure 2 concerning the proportion of graduates in full-time employment and whether graduates believed that their qualification was important to their main paid job, respectively. Three fields recorded a greater proportion of graduates seeking other employment three years after course completion than immediately afterwards—engineering and related technologies, health, and management and commerce. Agriculture and environmental studies graduates are consistently the most likely to be seeking alternative employment.

### **2.6. Interstate mobility**

The interstate mobility of graduates in the full-time workforce is investigated in Table 8. The large percentage figures on the diagonal indicate that the majority of graduates are working in the same state or territory in 2015 as they were in 2012. Graduates who began their post-study careers in a mainland Australian state tended to be less mobile than those who were initially employed in Tasmania, the Northern Territory or the Australian Capital Territory. Graduates employed in the Northern Territory shortly after course completion were the most likely to move interstate within three years, with around 45 per cent having done so by the time of the 2015 survey wave. When interpreting the results in this table, the small cell sizes for some states and territories must be considered.



**Figure 3. Graduates seeking alternative work, bachelor graduates in full-time employment, by broad field of education, 2012 and 2015 (%)**

**Table 8. Interstate mobility of bachelor graduates in full-time employment, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

State of 2012 job	State of 2015 job									TOTAL n
	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	TOTAL	
NSW	88.8	2.8	3.2	0.0	1.2	0.4	0.0	3.6	100	250
Vic.	4.1	91.0	1.4	0.7	0.8	0.4	0.3	1.3	100	709
Qld	4.7	4.7	86.7	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.7	1.8	100	279
SA	2.6	6.4	0.0	84.6	2.6	0.0	2.6	1.3	100	78
WA	1.2	4.0	1.4	0.2	91.5	0.0	1.2	0.5	100	422
Tas.	9.1	18.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	72.7	0.0	0.0	100	11
NT	0.0	5.6	16.7	16.7	5.6	0.0	55.6	0.0	100	18
ACT	4.3	6.5	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0	2.2	82.6	100	46

### 2.7. Graduates in part-time employment

Because the vast majority of employed graduates were in full-time employment at the time of the survey, this report has thus far focused predominantly on full-time employed graduates. In order to present a comprehensive picture of graduate employment three years after course completion, the activities of part-time employed bachelor degree graduates are discussed in this section.

As shown in Table 9, graduates employed part time immediately after course completion were typically in 'lower-skilled' occupations, with slightly over one-third employed in managerial or professional roles. By contrast, three-quarters of full-time employed graduates were employed in

managerial or professional roles immediately after course completion (see Table 5). Three years later, 54.6 and 66.3 per cent of part-time employed males and females, respectively, held professional roles; however part-time employed graduates were still far less likely than their full-time employed counterparts to hold managerial positions.

**Table 9. Broad occupation types, by sex, bachelor graduates in part-time employment, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

	Males		Females		Total	
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
Managers	2.6	2.3	2.5	1.2	2.5	1.4
Professionals	31.2	54.6	34.9	66.3	33.9	64.4
Technicians and trades workers	6.3	2.3	4.2	3.2	4.8	3.1
Community and personal service workers	15.7	13.1	17.0	8.7	16.7	9.4
Clerical and administrative workers	13.5	4.6	16.1	11.9	15.4	10.7
Other occupations	30.7	23.1	25.2	8.7	26.8	11.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TOTAL n</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>1,276</b>	<b>647</b>	<b>1,735</b>	<b>777</b>

### **2.8. Graduates in further study**

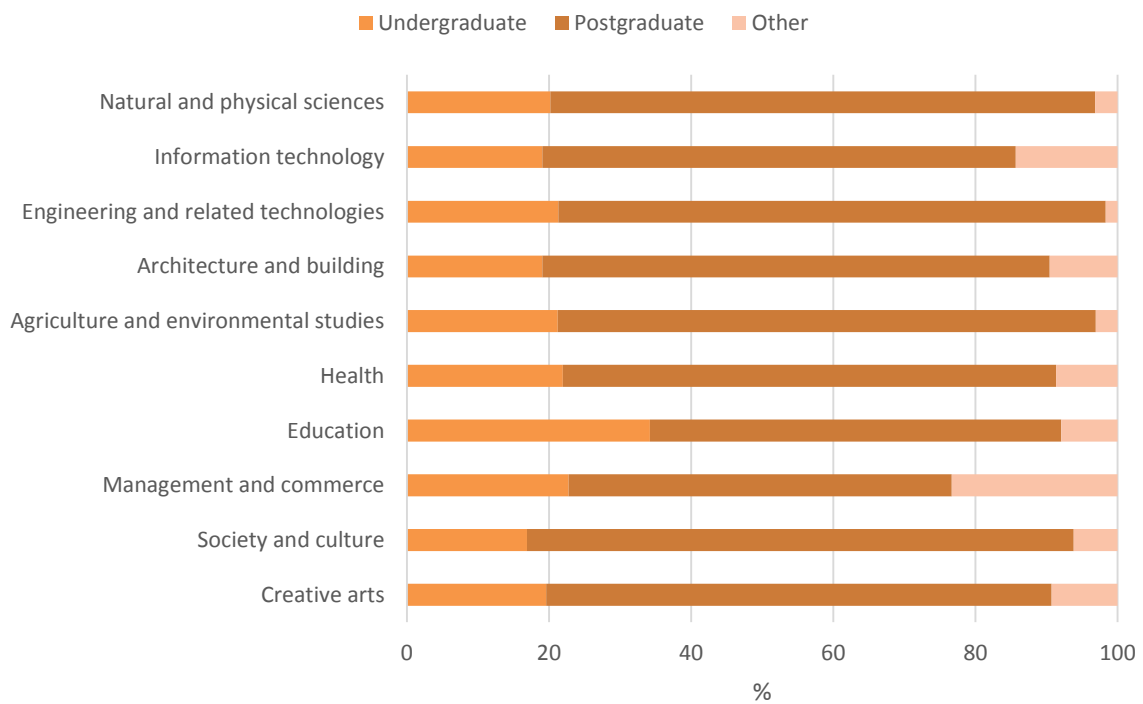
For many graduates, the completion of a course of study in 2011 did not represent the end of their tertiary education. As shown in Figure 4, 29.5 per cent of male bachelor degree graduates and 30.4 per cent of the female bachelor degree graduates in our sample were engaged in further study at the time of the 2012 AGS. At this point in time, graduates were more likely to be undertaking full-time study, with 22.0 per cent of male graduates and 23.5 per cent of female graduates so engaged—equivalent to 74.5 and 77.2 per cent of all further study enrolments for males and females, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Three years later, the total proportion of graduates in further study had increased slightly, with 30.5 per cent of male graduates and 31.2 per cent of female graduates studying at the time of the 2015 BGS. Part-time study constituted a far greater share of the total at this point in time—around half of all graduates in further study three years after course completion were enrolled part time. This is a logical finding, given that graduates three years after completing their original degrees would be more likely to be balancing further study with other commitments, such as family and employment.

Examining this further, it can be seen that the majority of bachelor degree graduates who were in further study three years after course completion were undertaking postgraduate study (see Figure 5). Graduates originally from the education field were the most likely to be studying for another undergraduate degree at the time of the 2015 BGS. Graduates from the fields of engineering and related technologies, society and culture, natural and physical sciences, and agriculture and environmental studies were the most likely to be undertaking a postgraduate course of study. Nearly one-quarter of management and commerce graduates in further study were enrolled in some other type of award course.

<sup>3</sup> These figures may not reconcile with those presented in Table 1 due to different calculation methods.



**Figure 4. Graduates in further study, bachelor graduates, by sex, 2012 and 2015 (%)**



**Figure 5. Level of further study, bachelor graduates, by broad field of education, 2015 (%)**

The BGS also investigated whether graduates had completed another course of study in the three years since course completion (see Table 10). Bachelor degree graduates from the society and culture field were the most likely to have done so, with 48.3 per cent indicating that they had completed another qualification since 2012. On the other hand, graduates from the fields of engineering and related technologies was the least likely to have completed another qualification (15.2 per cent). Regarding those bachelor degree graduates who had completed another



qualification, those from the agriculture and environmental studies, and natural and physical sciences fields were the most likely to have completed another undergraduate degree; architecture and building graduates were the most likely to have completed a postgraduate degree; and graduates from the field of information technology the most likely to have completed some other type of award course.

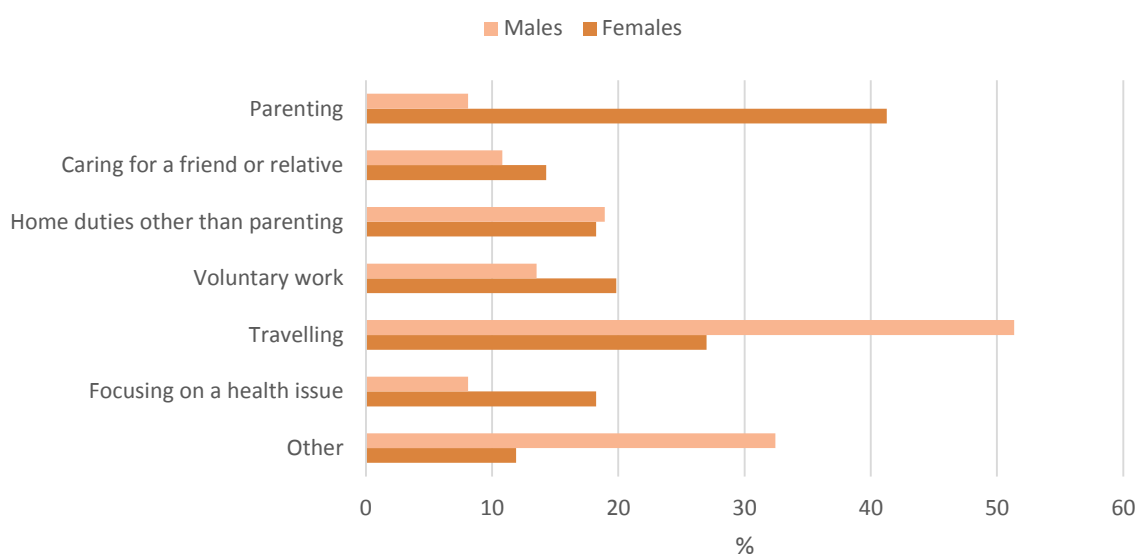
**Table 10. Completion of other qualification between 2012 and 2015, by degree level (% , n)**

	Completed other qualification		Level of completed qualification				
	Yes	n	UG	PG	Other	TOTAL	TOTAL n
Natural and physical sciences	44.8	594	39.8	53.4	6.8	100	266
Information technology	27.3	128	17.1	31.4	51.4	100	35
Engineering and related tech.	15.2	276	14.3	64.3	21.4	100	42
Architecture and building	28.3	92	7.7	69.2	23.1	100	26
Agriculture and env't	35.1	97	41.2	47.1	11.8	100	34
Health	26.7	948	19.4	64.8	15.8	100	253
Education	20.4	363	29.7	48.6	21.6	100	74
Management and commerce	33.4	740	22.0	54.5	23.6	100	246
Society and culture	48.3	1,314	23.4	67.1	9.5	100	632
Creative arts	39.5	377	20.8	55.0	24.2	100	149
Total	35.7	4,929	24.9	60.0	15.1	100	1,757

### 2.9. Other activities

Bachelor degree graduates who were unavailable for full-time study or any employment at the time of the 2015 BGS were asked to indicate the activities in which they were engaged (Figure 6).

Graduates were permitted to indicate more than one activity. The most common activity for female graduates who were neither available for work nor full-time study was parenting, with 41.3 per cent listing this as an activity. Male graduates in the same situation were most likely to be travelling (51.4 per cent), which was also a relatively common activity for females (27.0 per cent).



**Figure 6. Activities of bachelor graduates unavailable for full-time study or any employment, by sex, 2015 (%)**

### 3. Graduate Salaries

An overview of the median annual salaries of bachelor degree graduates in full-time employment is presented in Table 11. When interpreting these figures, it is important to bear in mind that graduate salary levels may potentially be influenced by myriad economic forces, and do not necessarily reflect the quality of graduates in terms of their academic results or employability skills. Following visual and statistical inspection of the survey data, salary values below the third percentile and above the 99th percentile were identified as outliers and excluded from the analysis.

**Table 11. Median salary, bachelor graduates in full-time employment, by sex and broad field of education, 2012 and 2015 (\$,000, n, %)**

	2012		2015		Growth	
	\$,000	n	\$,000	n	\$,000	%
<b>Males</b>						
Natural and physical sciences	55.0	61	74.0	61	19.0	34.5
Information technology	57.6	77	72.0	69	14.4	25.0
Engineering and related technologies	64.0	158	80.0	128	16.0	25.0
Architecture and building	57.8	31	80.0	33	22.2	38.4
Agriculture and environmental studies	56.0	20	67.1	23	11.1	19.8
Health	60.0	117	90.0	119	30.0	50.0
Education	56.9	37	70.0	35	13.1	23.0
Management and commerce	50.0	196	70.0	226	20.0	40.0
Society and culture	54.0	128	75.0	160	21.0	38.9
Creative arts	50.0	34	67.8	44	17.8	35.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56.7</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>32.3</b>
<b>Females</b>						
Natural and physical sciences	50.0	93	64.0	120	14.0	28.0
Information technology	53.5	12	70.0	12	16.5	30.8
Engineering and related technologies	65.0	55	84.0	46	19.0	29.2
Architecture and building	49.5	17	69.5	20	20.0	40.4
Agriculture and environmental studies	54.5	26	67.0	29	12.5	22.9
Health	53.0	431	70.0	387	17.0	32.1
Education	56.0	161	67.0	189	11.0	19.6
Management and commerce	50.5	303	68.0	287	17.5	34.7
Society and culture	51.0	355	67.0	444	16.0	31.4
Creative arts	42.0	92	60.0	120	18.0	42.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52.0</b>	<b>1,545</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>1,654</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>30.8</b>
<b>Total</b>						
Natural and physical sciences	51.9	154	67.0	181	15.1	29.1
Information technology	57.6	89	71.0	81	13.4	23.3
Engineering and related technologies	64.0	213	80.5	174	16.5	25.8
Architecture and building	56.4	48	77.0	53	20.6	36.5
Agriculture and environmental studies	55.0	46	67.0	52	12.0	21.8
Health	53.6	548	75.0	506	21.4	39.9
Education	56.0	198	67.0	224	11.0	19.6
Management and commerce	50.0	499	70.0	513	20.0	40.0
Society and culture	52.0	483	70.0	604	18.0	34.6
Creative arts	45.0	126	61.7	164	16.7	37.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>2,404</b>	<b>70.0</b>	<b>2,552</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>30.8</b>

At the overall level, full-time employed bachelor degree graduates earned a median salary of \$70,000 at the time of the 2015 BGS, an increase of 30.8 per cent since the 2012 AGS, at which point the median full-time graduate salary was \$53,500. By comparison, the level of consumer price inflation over this period was 6.9 per cent.<sup>4</sup> Graduates from the field of engineering and related technologies enjoyed the highest median salary in both periods, while creative arts graduates consistently earned the lowest median salary. Graduates from the management and commerce, and health fields experienced the strongest growth in their median salaries. Education graduates recorded the lowest median salary growth.

Male graduates tended to out-earn female graduates, with the gap between median male and female salaries marginally greater three years after course completion (9.3 per cent, compared with 8.3 per cent in 2012).<sup>5</sup> The largest percentage wage gaps three years after course completion were observed for health graduates (22.2 per cent), followed by natural and physical sciences (13.5 per cent), and architecture and building (13.1 per cent) graduates. Some of these gaps may be explained, at least in part, by the specific courses undertaken by men and women—male graduates tend to be over-represented in high-paying degrees, such as medicine, dentistry and mathematics. Notably, female engineering graduates earned a median salary 5.0 per cent higher than that of their male counterparts three years after course completion. The smallest wage gap in percentage terms three years after course completion was observed for agriculture and environmental studies graduates (0.1 per cent). It should be noted that these aggregate results do not account for differences in occupational destinations between males and females, the specific courses encompassed within broad fields of education, nor other factors that may affect earnings. As such, these figures do not necessarily imply unequal pay for equal work.

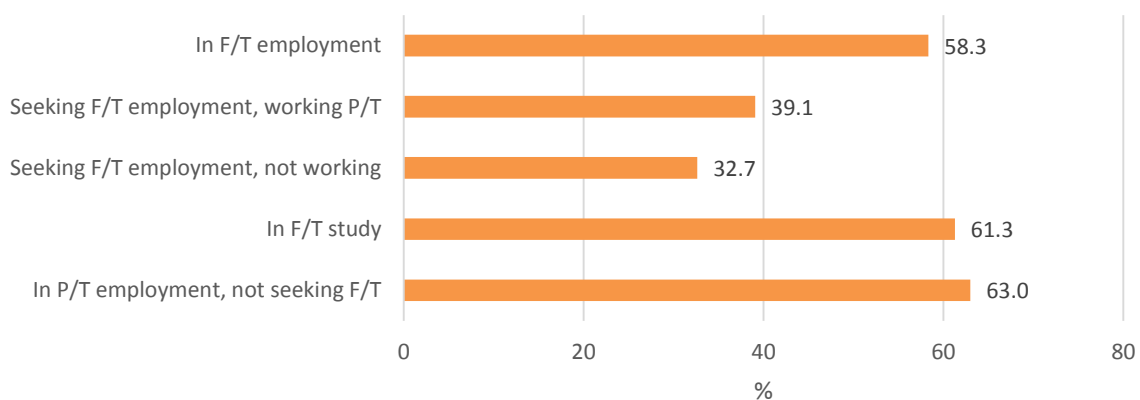
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<sup>4</sup> Calculated between the March 2012 and 2015 quarters. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015). *Consumer Price Index, Australia* (No. 6401.0). Canberra: Author.

<sup>5</sup> This is calculated by subtracting the median female salary from the median male salary, dividing the result by the median male salary, then multiplying by 100.

## 4. Course Review

As part of the 2015 BGS, bachelor degree graduates were invited to provide an indication of their likelihood of studying the same degree at the same institution if they were given the (hypothetical) opportunity to choose whether or not to repeat the course of study that led to the qualification they completed in 2011. The five-point response format consisted of categories labelled very unlikely, unlikely, neither unlikely nor likely, likely and very likely. As shown in Figure 7, graduates who were unemployed and seeking full-time employment at the time of the survey were the least likely to want to repeat the same degree at their graduating institution, with only 32.7 per cent indicating that they were either likely or very likely to do so given the opportunity. Graduates who were working part-time whilst seeking full-time employment were similarly unlikely to want to repeat the same degree (39.1 per cent). Similar proportions of full-time employed graduates, graduates in full-time study and part-time employed graduates not seeking full-time employment indicated that they were either likely or very likely to repeat the same degree at the same institution. This result suggests that poor labour market outcomes can strongly influence graduates' perceptions of the utility of their higher education experience, albeit possibly in the job search period only.



**Figure 7. Likelihood of bachelor graduates studying the same degree at the same institution again if given the choice, likely/very likely, by destination category, 2015 (%)**

## 5. Results for Postgraduates

Up to this point, this report has focused exclusively on the destinations and salaries of domestic bachelor degree graduates. The following section gives a brief overview of the destinations, salaries and experiences of individuals who completed a postgraduate degree in 2010. Postgraduates constitute around 38 per cent of responses to the 2015 BGS (see Table A2 for details of this cohort).

From Table 12, it can be seen that 89.9 per cent of male postgraduates and 77.3 per cent of female postgraduates indicated that they were available for full-time employment at the time of the 2012 AGS. Unlike bachelor degree graduates, who tended to be more likely to be available for full-time employment three years after course completion (see Table 1), there was no substantial change in this figure between 2012 and 2015 for male postgraduates, and female postgraduates were slightly less likely to be available for the full-time labour force three years after completing their degrees.

**Table 12. Main activity of postgraduates, by sex, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

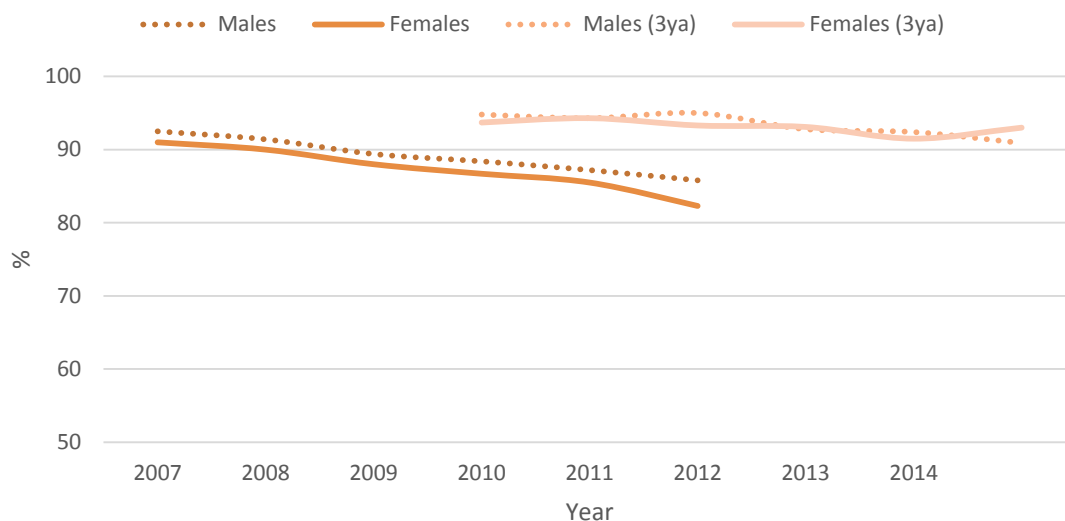
	Available for full-time employment (see Table 13)	In full-time study	In part-time or casual employment, not seeking full-time employment	Not working, seeking part-time or casual employment only	Unavailable for full-time study or any employment	TOTAL	TOTAL n
<b>Males</b>							
2012	89.9	3.1	4.6	0.0	2.5	100	1,097
2015	91.0	2.4	4.2	0.4	2.0	100	1,104
<b>Females</b>							
2012	77.3	3.3	15.3	0.0	4.1	100	2,116
2015	72.2	3.0	19.7	0.8	4.4	100	2,195
<b>Total</b>							
2012	81.6	3.2	11.6	0.0	3.5	100	3,213
2015	78.5	2.8	14.5	0.6	3.6	100	3,299

**Table 13. Postgraduates available for full-time employment, by sex, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

	In full-time employment	Seeking full-time employment, working part time or casual	Seeking full-time employment, not working	Total seeking full-time employment	TOTAL	TOTAL n
<b>Males</b>						
2012	85.8	7.3	6.9	14.2	100	986
2015	90.9	4.0	5.1	9.1	100	1,005
<b>Females</b>						
2012	82.3	12.2	5.5	17.7	100	1,636
2015	93.0	3.9	3.2	7.1	100	1,584
<b>Total</b>						
2012	83.6	10.4	6.0	16.4	100	2,622
2015	92.2	3.9	3.9	7.8	100	2,589

Of the postgraduates who were available for full-time employment, a considerable proportion had already secured full-time employment by the time of the 2012 AGS. As shown in Table 13, 85.8 per cent of male postgraduates and 82.3 per cent of female postgraduates were in full-time employment in 2012, which had increased to 90.9 per cent and 93.0 per cent, respectively, by 2015. Full-time employment rates tend to be higher for postgraduates than for bachelor degree graduates. It is important to note that postgraduates are typically older than bachelor degree graduates (see Table A2), and therefore generally have more extensive work histories. This, along with their higher level of education, may contribute to their generally superior labour market outcomes.

Figure 8 shows that new postgraduates, similar to their bachelor degree counterparts, suffered a downward trend in full-time employment rates in the years following the global financial crisis. Employment rates for male postgraduates three years out of their degrees have declined over the past few years; however employment rates for females have been much more stable.



**Figure 8. Full-time employment rates for postgraduates, by sex, 2007 to 2012, and 2010 to 2015 (%)**

Full-time employment rates for postgraduates are presented by field of education in Table 14. As with bachelor degree graduates, there is considerable variation in employment rates across fields. Health postgraduates recorded strong employment rates in both years. Creative arts postgraduates tended to have relatively low employment rates compared with other fields, as did those from the fields of architecture and building, and society and culture. Growth in full-time employment was less for postgraduates than bachelor degree graduates (*cf.* Table 3); however, recall that postgraduates were already more likely to be in full-time employment immediately after the completion of their studies than bachelor degree graduates.

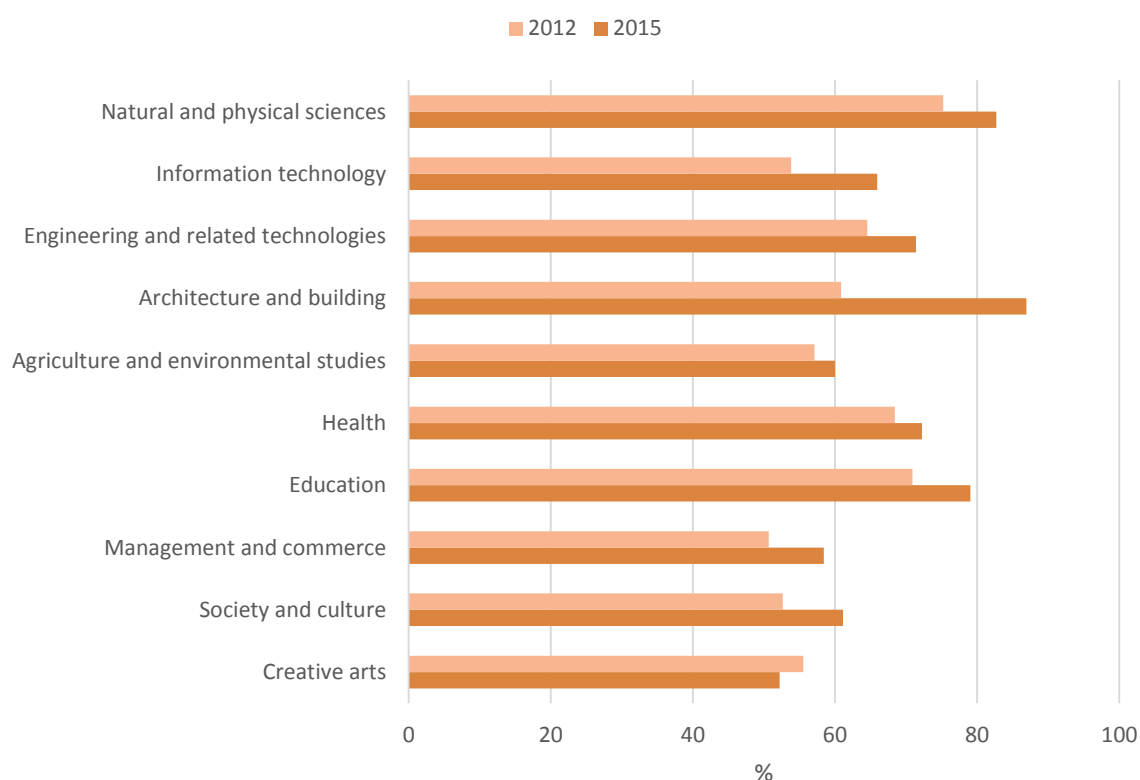
**Table 14. Postgraduates working full time as a proportion of those available for full-time employment, by sex and broad field of education, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

	2012		2015	
	%	n	%	n
<b>Males</b>				
Natural and physical sciences	77.6	67	90.0	70
Information technology	80.0	50	93.6	47
Engineering and related technologies	86.4	66	90.5	74
Architecture and building	70.4	27	92.9	28
Agriculture and environmental studies	85.7	21	90.9	22
Health	93.4	121	96.7	121
Education	84.8	112	89.2	111
Management and commerce	89.6	317	92.1	316
Society and culture	84.2	184	88.5	191
Creative arts	61.9	21	72.0	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85.8</b>	<b>986</b>	<b>90.9</b>	<b>1,005</b>
<b>Females</b>				
Natural and physical sciences	83.6	73	94.3	70
Information technology	86.7	15	93.3	15
Engineering and related technologies	95.7	23	100.0	22
Architecture and building	75.0	36	83.3	36
Agriculture and environmental studies	73.1	26	96.3	27
Health	87.3	307	95.0	298
Education	78.1	398	94.8	383
Management and commerce	87.8	271	95.3	257
Society and culture	81.1	413	90.1	404
Creative arts	70.3	74	83.3	72
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82.3</b>	<b>1,636</b>	<b>93.0</b>	<b>1,584</b>
<b>Total</b>				
Natural and physical sciences	80.7	140	92.1	140
Information technology	81.5	65	93.5	62
Engineering and related technologies	88.8	89	92.7	96
Architecture and building	73.0	63	87.5	64
Agriculture and environmental studies	78.7	47	93.9	49
Health	89.0	428	95.5	419
Education	79.6	510	93.5	494
Management and commerce	88.8	588	93.5	573
Society and culture	82.1	597	89.6	595
Creative arts	68.4	95	80.4	97
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83.6</b>	<b>2,622</b>	<b>92.2</b>	<b>2,589</b>

In terms of the occupations held by postgraduates (see Table 15), the proportion employed in professional roles increased marginally between 2012 and 2015 for males and females alike (1.9 percentage points). As with bachelor degree graduates, there was little change in the proportion employed as managers; however there was a relatively slight increase in the proportion of males employed as technicians and trades workers.

**Table 15. Broad occupation types, postgraduates in full-time employment, by sex, 2012 and 2015 (% , n)**

	Males		Females		Total	
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015
Managers	22.7	22.3	13.8	13.8	17.2	17.0
Professionals	65.8	67.7	74.1	76.0	70.9	72.9
Technicians and trades workers	1.6	2.5	1.5	1.1	1.5	1.6
Community and personal service workers	3.4	1.4	2.9	1.8	3.0	1.6
Clerical and administrative workers	5.6	4.8	7.1	6.7	6.5	6.0
Other occupations	0.9	1.2	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TOTAL n</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>1,331</b>	<b>1,293</b>	<b>2,165</b>	<b>2,085</b>



**Figure 9. Qualification important to main paid job, postgraduates in full-time employment, by broad field of education, 2012 and 2015 (%)**

Full-time employed postgraduates were asked to rate the importance of the qualification they completed in 2012 to their main paid job (see Figure 9). Notably, when these figures are compared with those for bachelor degree graduates from corresponding fields in Figure 2, postgraduates were generally less likely than bachelor degree graduates to indicate that their qualification was



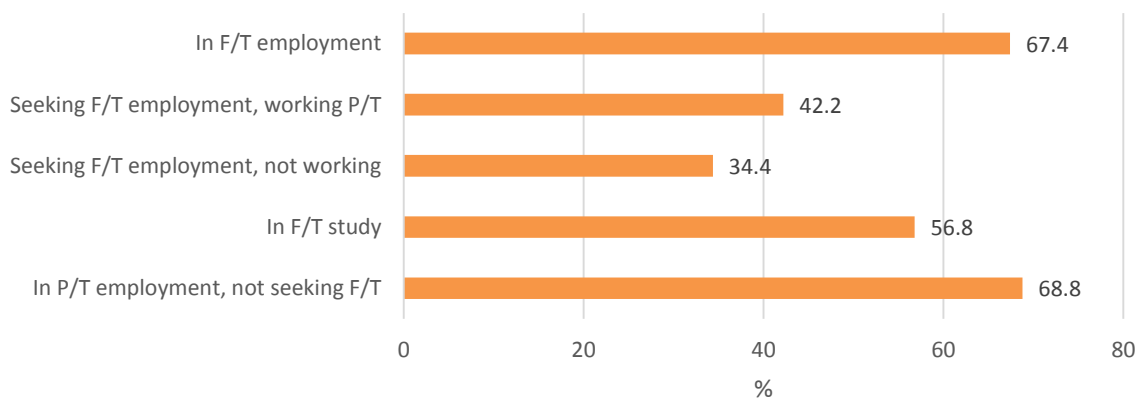
important to their main paid job, with the natural and physical sciences field the notable exception. While postgraduates do enjoy strong full-time employment rates, these findings suggest that many do not necessarily believe themselves to be in jobs that fully utilise the specialised knowledge and skills acquired during postgraduate study. (The fact that only 17.8 per cent of full-time employed postgraduates were seeking other work at the time of the 2015 BGS suggests that this situation is not necessarily seen as a negative one by many.) Postgraduates from the architecture and building, natural and physical sciences, and health fields were the most likely to be in relevant full-time employment three years after the completion of their studies.

**Table 16. Median salary, postgraduates in full-time employment, by sex and broad field of education, 2012 and 2015 (\$,000, n, %)**

	2012		2015		Growth	
	\$,000	n	\$,000	n	\$,000	%
<b>Males</b>						
Natural and physical sciences	73.0	42	88.5	33	15.5	21.2
Information technology	77.0	33	92.0	27	15.0	19.5
Engineering and related technologies	87.5	46	110.0	43	22.5	25.7
Architecture and building	60.0	17	76.5	18	16.5	27.5
Agriculture and environmental studies	72.0	13	89.5	16	17.5	24.3
Health	80.0	89	99.0	90	19.0	23.8
Education	79.0	80	90.0	79	11.0	13.9
Management and commerce	100.0	242	124.0	213	24.0	24.0
Society and culture	75.0	131	100.0	118	25.0	33.3
Creative arts	59.3	12	85.0	13	25.7	43.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82.0</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>22.0</b>
<b>Females</b>						
Natural and physical sciences	72.0	46	81.0	50	9.0	12.5
Information technology	80.0	12	89.0	12	9.0	11.3
Engineering and related technologies	80.0	22	100.0	19	20.0	25.0
Architecture and building	51.5	26	80.0	20	28.5	55.3
Agriculture and environmental studies	76.0	17	87.5	16	11.5	15.1
Health	70.0	225	86.0	211	16.0	22.9
Education	70.0	263	80.0	282	10.0	14.3
Management and commerce	81.2	210	100.0	179	18.8	23.2
Society and culture	71.0	299	81.0	270	10.0	14.1
Creative arts	58.0	41	70.0	41	12.0	20.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72.0</b>	<b>1,161</b>	<b>85.0</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>18.1</b>
<b>Total</b>						
Natural and physical sciences	72.0	88	82.1	83	10.1	14.0
Information technology	80.0	45	90.0	39	10.0	12.5
Engineering and related technologies	85.0	68	104.0	62	19.0	22.4
Architecture and building	52.0	43	77.0	38	25.0	48.1
Agriculture and environmental studies	74.5	30	89.0	32	14.5	19.5
Health	70.0	314	90.0	301	20.0	28.6
Education	70.0	343	80.0	361	10.0	14.3
Management and commerce	92.0	452	110.0	392	18.0	19.6
Society and culture	72.7	430	86.0	388	13.3	18.3
Creative arts	58.0	53	72.5	54	14.5	25.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>1,866</b>	<b>90.0</b>	<b>1,750</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>20.0</b>

Full-time employed postgraduates earned a median salary of \$90,000 at the time of the 2015 BGS, which represents an increase of 20.0 per cent in the three years following course completion (*cf.* 30.8 per cent for bachelor degree graduates), at which time their median salary was \$75,000 (see Table 16). Postgraduates from the field of management and commerce enjoyed the highest median salary in 2015, followed by those from the field of engineering and related technologies. Creative arts postgraduates earned the lowest median salary, but enjoyed above-average salary growth (25.0 per cent). Information technology postgraduates experienced the lowest median salary growth overall (12.5 per cent), largely due to the low salary growth of females in this field (11.3 per cent). The highest median salary earned by postgraduates of either sex in 2015 was observed for males from the management field (\$124,000), whereas the lowest was earned by females from the creative arts field (\$70,000). The widest gender pay gap in 2015 was observed in relation to the management field (19.4 per cent, favouring males). Female architecture postgraduates earned a higher median salary than their male counterparts in 2015 (4.6 per cent), which is especially notable considering that female architecture postgraduates earned substantially less than their male counterparts shortly after the completion of their studies (14.2 per cent).

In terms of studying the same degree at the same institution again if given the (hypothetical) choice (see Figure 10), postgraduates were more likely than bachelor degree graduates to respond in the affirmative across all destination categories aside from those in full-time study (*cf.* Figure 7). The difference was smallest in relation to unemployed graduates; and largest in relation to full-time employment. The pattern of results across destination categories closely echoes that observed for bachelor degree graduates.



**Figure 10. Likelihood of postgraduates studying the same degree at the same institution again if given the choice, likely/very likely, by destination category, 2015 (%)**

**Table A1. Included higher education institutions, 2015**

Australian Catholic University	Murdoch University
Bond University	Queensland University of Technology
Charles Sturt University	RMIT
Curtin University of Technology	University of Melbourne
Deakin University	University of New England
Edith Cowan University	University of Notre Dame, Australia
Flinders University of South Australia	University of Sydney
Griffith University	University of Western Australia
La Trobe University	University of Western Sydney
Monash University	

**Table A2. BGS respondent characteristics, 2015 (% , n)**

	Bachelor degree		Postgraduate	
	%	n	%	n
<b>Broad field of education</b>				
Natural and physical sciences	12.0	648	5.2	176
Information technology	2.7	147	2.1	71
Engineering and related technologies	5.4	295	3.1	105
Architecture and building	1.8	97	2.2	73
Agriculture and environmental studies	1.9	102	1.7	57
Health	18.8	1,021	18.2	612
Education	7.4	403	19.6	658
Management and commerce	15.3	832	19.3	647
Society and culture	26.7	1,446	24.5	821
Creative arts	7.9	431	4.0	134
<b>Means of financing study</b>				
HECS paid upfront	20.7	1,119	10.9	364
HECS deferred some or all	70.9	3,844	31.5	1,051
International fee-paying student	0.9	48	2.0	66
Australian fee-paying student	7.5	407	44.7	1,491
APA or RTS research student	0.0	0	11.0	367
<b>Main attendance type</b>				
Mainly full time	83.8	4,540	38.7	1,296
Mainly part time	16.2	875	61.3	2,054
<b>Main attendance mode</b>				
Internal (on campus)	81.5	4,417	52.4	1,757
External (off campus)	8.8	475	34.4	1,153
Mixed mode (internal and external)	9.7	527	13.2	442
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	32.3	1,751	33.2	1,114
Female	67.7	3,671	66.8	2,240
Unknown	0.0	0	0.0	0
<b>Age group</b>				
Under 25	67.2	3,643	9.3	312
25 and over	32.8	1,779	90.7	3,042
<b>Main language spoken at home</b>				
English	87.7	4,711	87.0	2,880
Other	12.3	662	13.0	431
<b>Disability identification</b>				
Yes	3.4	186	3.3	109
No	96.6	5,232	96.7	3,244
<b>Paid work during final year of study</b>				
Yes	82.1	4,438	86.7	2,905
No	17.9	969	13.3	445



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