

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio  
Additional Estimates Hearing 2010-11  
23 February 2011

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**AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** INNOVATION, INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

**TOPIC:** Demographics of Small Business owners

**REFERENCE:** Written Question – Senator Ryan

**QUESTION No.:** AI-36

Does DIISR collect data on the demographics of small business owners? For example:

- What proportion of small business owners are Australian born?
- What proportion are from an English speaking background?
- What proportion of small business owners are not Australian born?
- What proportion are from a non-English speaking background?
- What proportion of small business owners are male/female?

Can this information be provided to the Committee?

**ANSWER**

The Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research does not collect aggregate representative business demographic data on Australian small business owners.

However, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides some useful business demography information using the standard ABS definition of small businesses (0–19 employees).

- In 2006, 68.5 per cent of small business operators were male and 31.5 per cent of small business operators were female<sup>1</sup>.
- In 2006, 71 per cent of small business operators were born in Australia and 29 per cent were born overseas<sup>2</sup>.

The Forms of Employment Survey<sup>3</sup> provides information about country of birth of ‘independent contractors’ and ‘other business operators’ (outlined below). However, a small business breakdown of this information is not freely available to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (the ABS can provide a customised table with this information on request at a fee).

- 73.4 per cent of independent contractors were born in Australia, 11.8 per cent were born in ‘main English-speaking countries’ and 14.8 per cent were born in ‘other than main English-speaking countries’.
- 72.8 per cent of other business operators were born in Australia, 10.3 per cent were born in ‘main English-speaking countries’ and 16.9 per cent were born in ‘other than main English-speaking countries’.

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<sup>1</sup> ABS Cat. No. 8175.0, *Counts of Australian Business Operators*.

<sup>2</sup> ABS Cat. No. 8127.0, *Australian Small Business Operators—Findings from the 2005 and 2006 Characteristics of Small Business Surveys*.

<sup>3</sup> ABS Cat. No. 6359.0, *Forms of Employment*.