



Sole trader

Earnings Report

2025/26



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A Message from the Founders

When we first started Hnry, we set out to make a positive difference in the lives of sole traders. We assumed this would mainly be through Hnry's tax automation service - now Australia's largest for sole traders - but what we've since realised is that Hnry is in a unique position to do so much more.

Sole traders are often underrepresented in research and statistics, and are therefore underserved by public institutions and policy. By tapping into and sharing the unique experiences and insights of our sole trader community, we've been able to advocate for real change.

Over the past few years, we've:

- Released our [Sole Trader Pulse](#) (the only survey of its kind in Australia!)
- Highlighted the [collective \\$28 billion in lost productivity](#) sole traders face every year from tax and financial admin
- Joined the [Small Business Consultative Group](#) to advocate for sole traders at a policy level to the Minister for Small Business
- Called for sole traders to be properly [counted and considered in the policy decisions that shape Australia's economy](#)
- Launched much-requested products and features, including [Mileage by Hnry](#) (our Mileage-tracking app), the [Hnry Business Mastercard](#)
- Committed to [never raising our prices – ever](#)

Now we're taking things a step further by releasing this: the inaugural Hnry Earnings Report, 2026. In these pages, you'll find the earnings ranges for more than 100 sole trader work types, providing a comprehensive view of sole trader earnings in Australia.

We put this report together because sole traders - especially those just starting out - don't always charge what they're worth. Unless they belong to a like-minded community, they can struggle to find accurate benchmarks of what other sole traders in their industry earn.

This report sets out to change that. We hope it offers sole traders of all types a transparent view of what their peers are earning, inspiring them to aim bigger and better. It takes courage and determination to build a business - and we're here to support the self-employed community every step of the way.

Claire and James Fuller,
Co-Founders of Hnry

How to read this report

To create this report, we analysed anonymised earnings data, looking at taxable income (i.e. profit, not revenue) from **tens of thousands** of sole traders who use the Hnry service.

The result: a comprehensive view of average earnings and income ranges, comparable to the ATO's taxable income figures, across **115** sole trader work types.

These bars represent the mid-range earnings for each sole trader work type.

Marketing

Working as a marketing freelancer is a fantastic way to retain a high level of flexibility and focus on the industries that interest you.

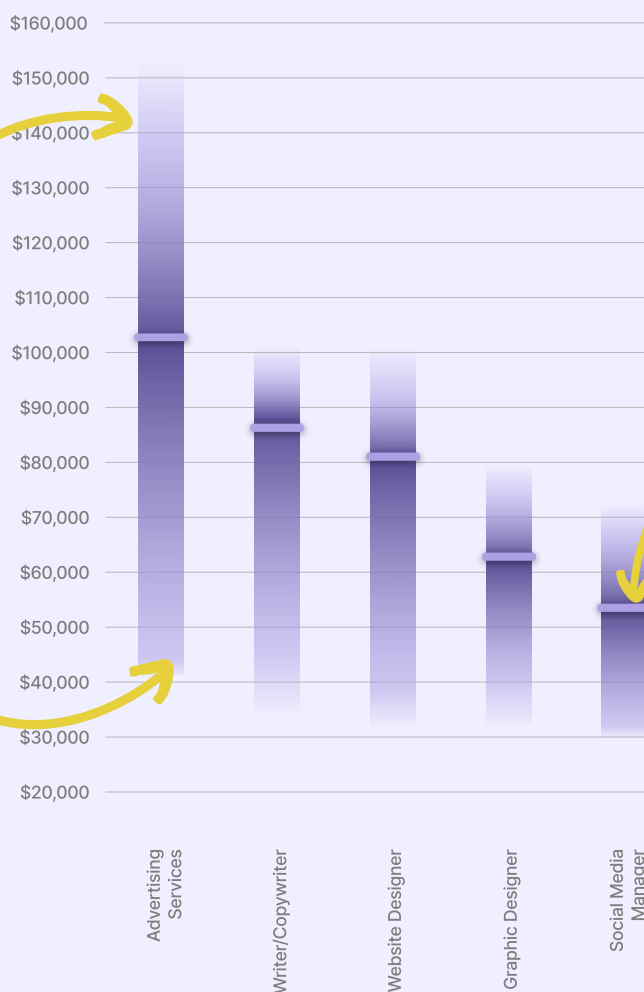
While in-house marketers only work for one company, and marketing agencies dictate the brands their teams work with, freelance marketers have the freedom to chase the projects, services, and niches that excite them most.

The industry these sole traders work in.

A quick overview of who these sole traders are, and how they work.

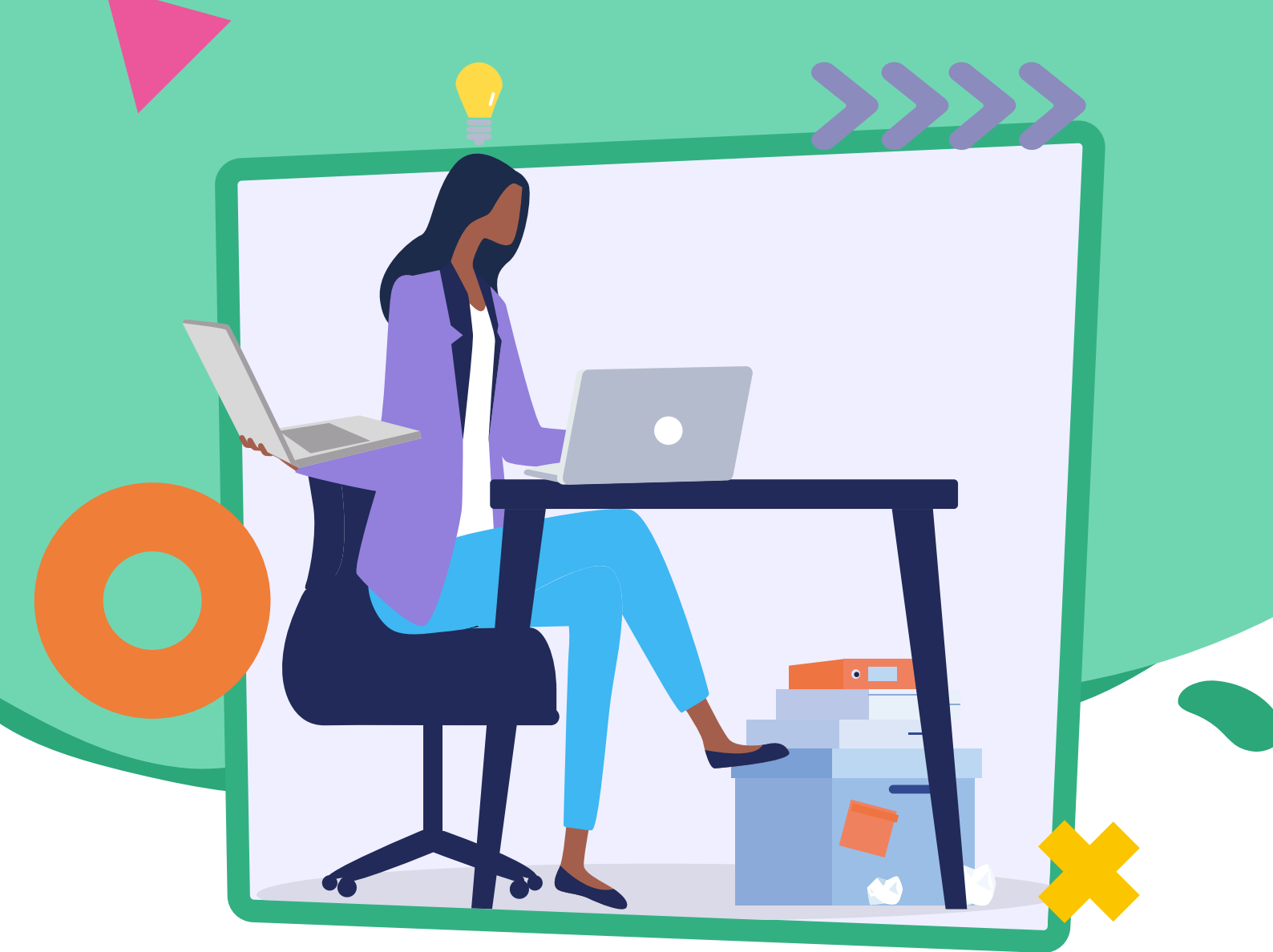
Where the bar fades out at the top is the upper quartile; 25% of workers earn above this amount.

Where the bar fades out at the bottom is the lower quartile; 25% of workers earn below this amount.



This crossbar marks the average earnings for this work type.



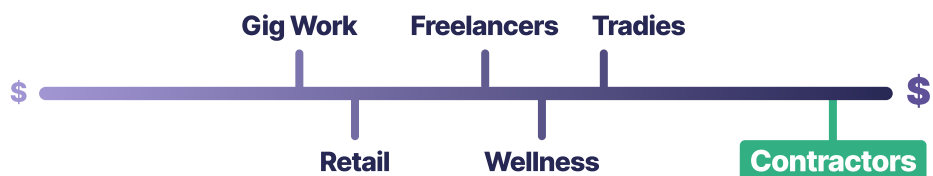


Contractors



Average earnings

\$111,400



Typical clients

- Mid to large companies
- Government agencies



Find work via

- Recruitment firms
- Professional networks



Industries

- Consulting
- Business leadership
- Administration

Contractors

Generally, there are three ways contractors are engaged: for a fixed period, for a specific project, or on a rolling basis. A fixed-period contract can help fill a gap or provide extra support for a set duration – like during a busy season or for a defined campaign. Project-based contracts are often tied to the completion of a specific piece of work, rather than a fixed timeframe. A rolling contract runs in short terms that renew as needed – the most flexible of the three.

Contractors and consultants have gotten a bad rap in recent years. There's been plenty of media reporting about the government's "shadow workforce", focusing on the high ratio of contractors and consultants to permanent employees – and the high fees they charge.

The argument that government agencies and businesses can save money by spending less on contractors is an attractive one. Hiring fewer contractors, and more equivalent full-time employees, would cut costs in the short term. Concerns about contractor costs often arise when they're used long-term or in roles that could be handled in-house.

But what this argument misses is the true value of contractors. Contractors and consultants are industry experts who bring immediate impact to any project or organisation. They're not just charging for their time – they're charging for their experience, their efficiency, and their ability to problem-solve.

It also understates the true cost of employees. A new employee will take time to onboard, while contractors can hit the ground running. Employees need to be paid annual and sick leave, and enticed with perks in a competitive job market; contractors factor all this into their pricing.



They're not just charging for their time – they're charging for their experience, their efficiency, and their ability to problem-solve.

Most importantly, hiring full-time employees for all available roles actually exposes a company to risk. Economic downturns or shifting business priorities may result in a lack of work – potentially leading to layoffs. Hiring contractors to solve short-term problems or complete short-term projects is a more efficient way of achieving outcomes without taking on more employees than a business needs. Because contractors are only engaged for the duration of their contract, they're more cost-effective in the long run.

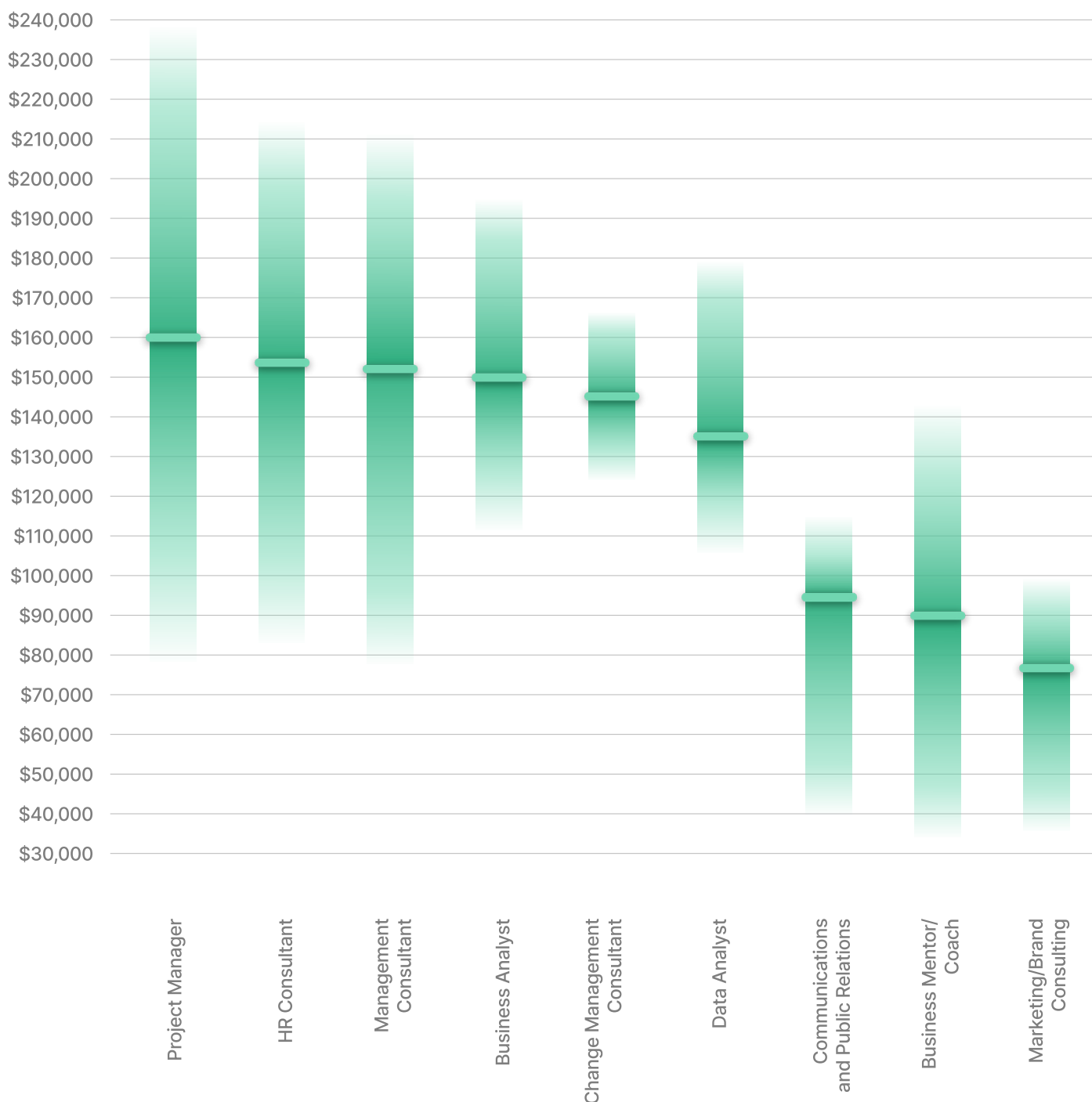
Finally, contractors don't always get to choose how they're engaged. High-compliance workplaces (e.g. banks, government agencies) have tightened their hiring arrangements in response to sham contracting regulations, and recruitment firms often require contractors to set up sole director companies just to get on their books. So while contracting is traditionally sole trader work, many Australian contractors end up operating under PAYG labour-hire arrangements or company structures instead – meaning some segments of the contractor workforce may be underrepresented in this report.

In short: Choosing short-term gains over long-term ROI can be short sighted. A contractor is expert help, on hand exactly when you need it most. When hired effectively, they're a bloody good investment.

Business Consulting and Advisory

Many Consultants are former leaders in their field who enjoy working across multiple companies, rather than being tied to just one.

They can solve a specific problem, create new internal processes, launch new products or services, or even provide ongoing support indefinitely – it all depends on business needs.



IT and Technology

IT Contractors can step in to solve specific problems a business might be having with its internal tech stack or customer-facing websites or apps.

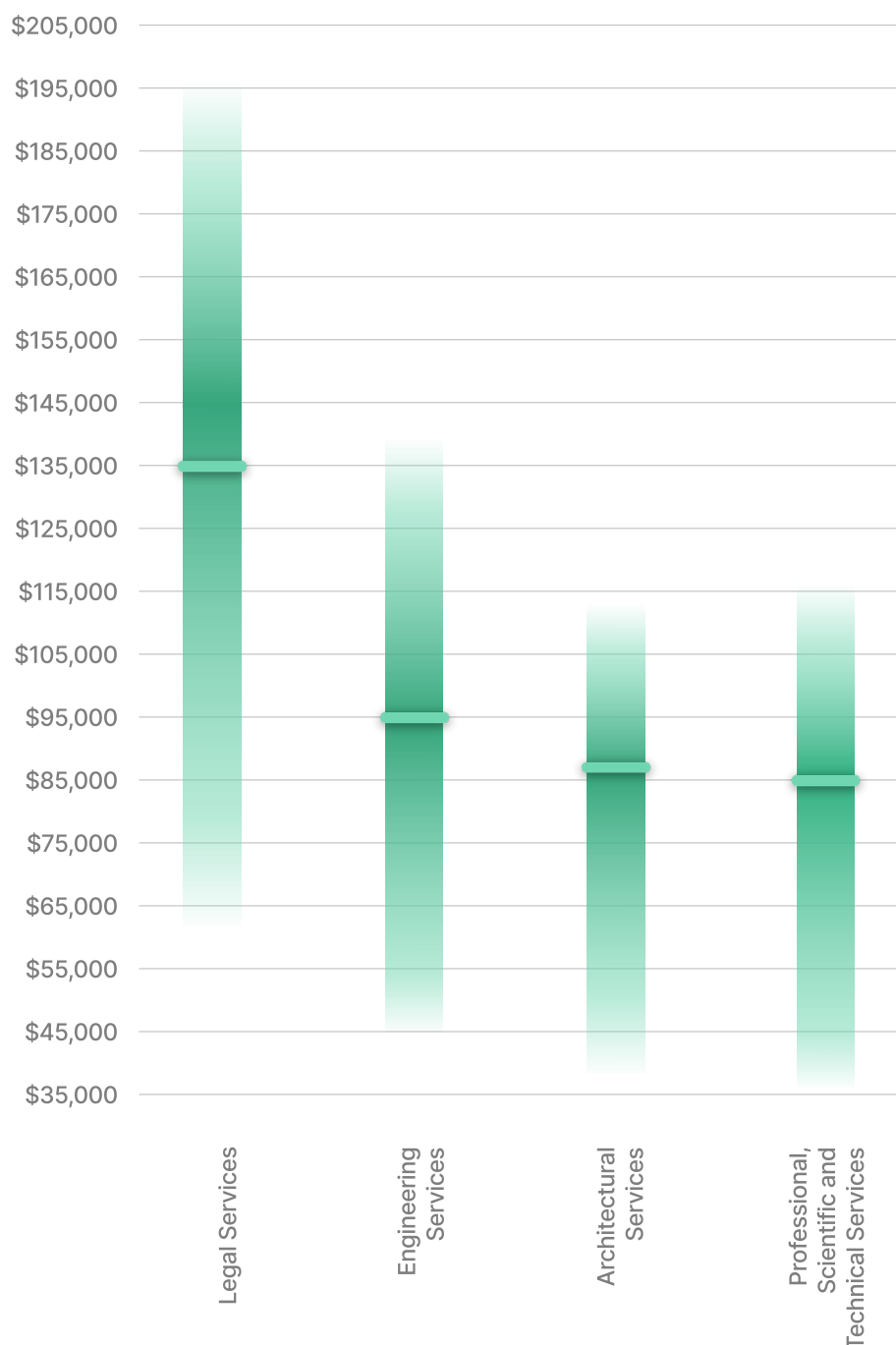
They can also provide support during busy periods. A Contract Support Agent can take some of the weight off a full-time support team, ending their contract when demand dies down.



Professional Services

For these classic white-collar professions - think Lawyers, Accountants, Architects - working as a sole trader involves more freedom than the traditionally employed equivalent.

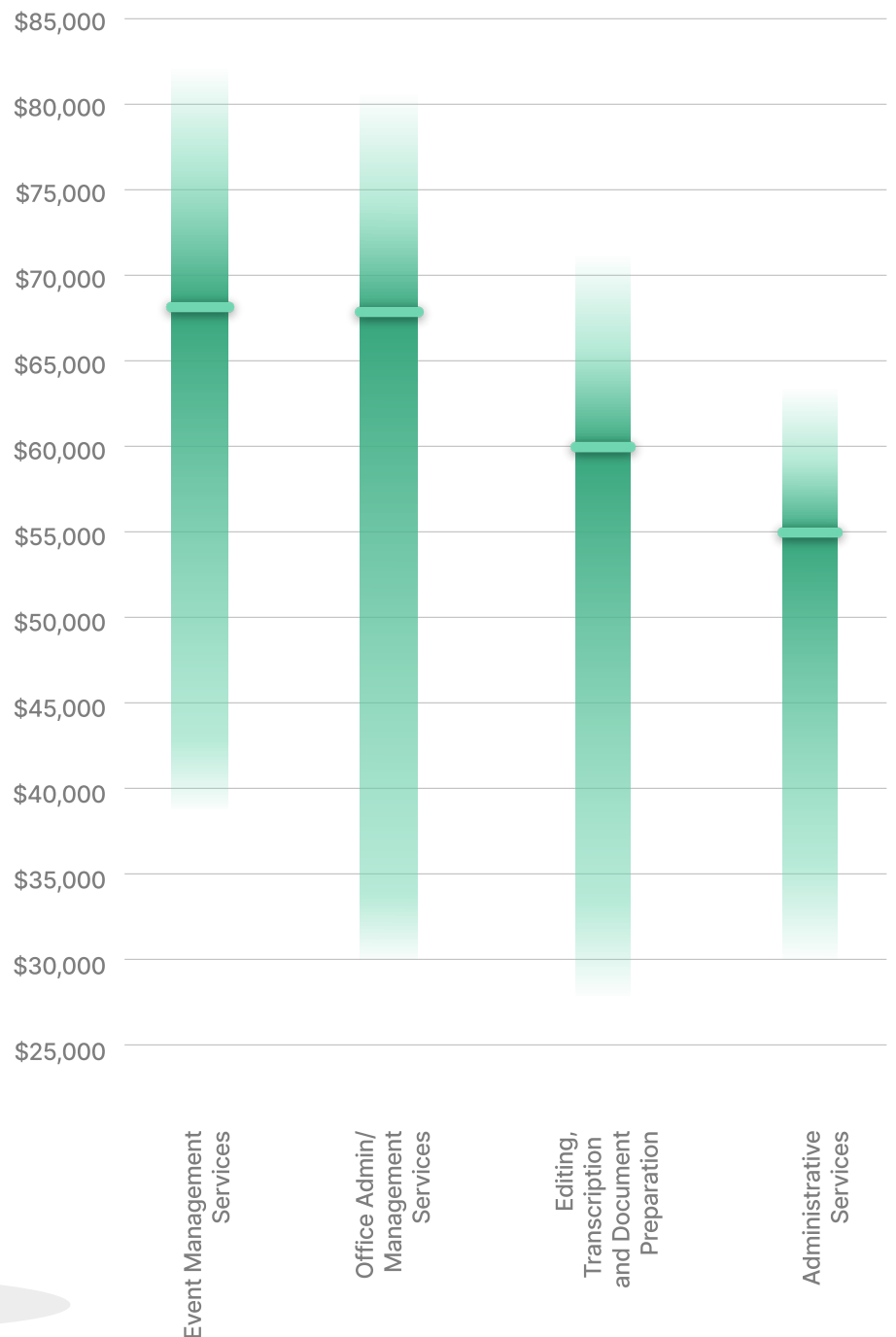
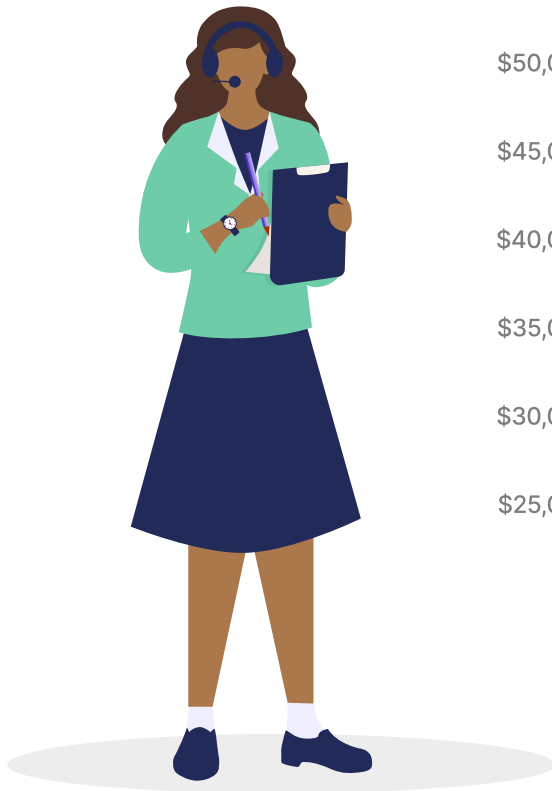
Think better work-life balance, higher earning potential, and the ability to design your career around the work that interests you.



General Administrative Services

Administrative Services includes everything from election-day poll workers and contract administrative assistants, to waiters and waitresses for special events - basically, anything that needs administrative support on an occasional basis.

For example, Event Management workers are the first port of call when a big headline act rolls into town – but because there aren't usually concerts every night, they're only contracted for the duration of the event planning.



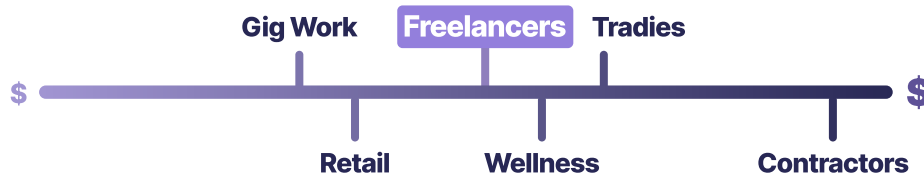


Freelancers



Average earnings

\$62,000



Typical clients

- Small businesses
- Startups
- Private individuals (occasionally)



Find work via

- Online marketplaces
- Professional networks
- Personal websites
- Social media



Industries

- Marketing
- Media/Multimedia
- Creative industries



Freelancers

Freelancers often work across multiple companies at once, taking on projects that don't require a full-time hire. They tend to have specialist knowledge that in-house teams might lack – think Graphic Designers, Writers, Videographers, Social Media Specialists and the like.

Although there's overlap between the work performed by freelancers and contractors, freelancers generally earn less. They have lower hourly rates, and are often spread across multiple clients simultaneously. Unlike contractors who have guaranteed weekly hours, a freelancer's workload can be difficult to predict. Not all their clients will need their services every month – and during busy periods, they might have more work than they can reasonably handle.

With that in mind, one of the biggest challenges freelancers face is pricing themselves and their services effectively. This has long been the case, as freelance gig platforms forced local talent to compete against international rates from countries with a lower cost of living.

Now, as we move further into an AI-centric job market, there's competition on a new front; some commentators argue that in the future, freelancers may be priced out of the market entirely!

But as freelancers continue to prove, in a world filled with AI slop, it's the human that shines through. This is the exact quality that freelancers bring to the table; they're storytelling veterans who can connect a brand with an audience in a way that feels genuine, empathetic, and mutually beneficial.



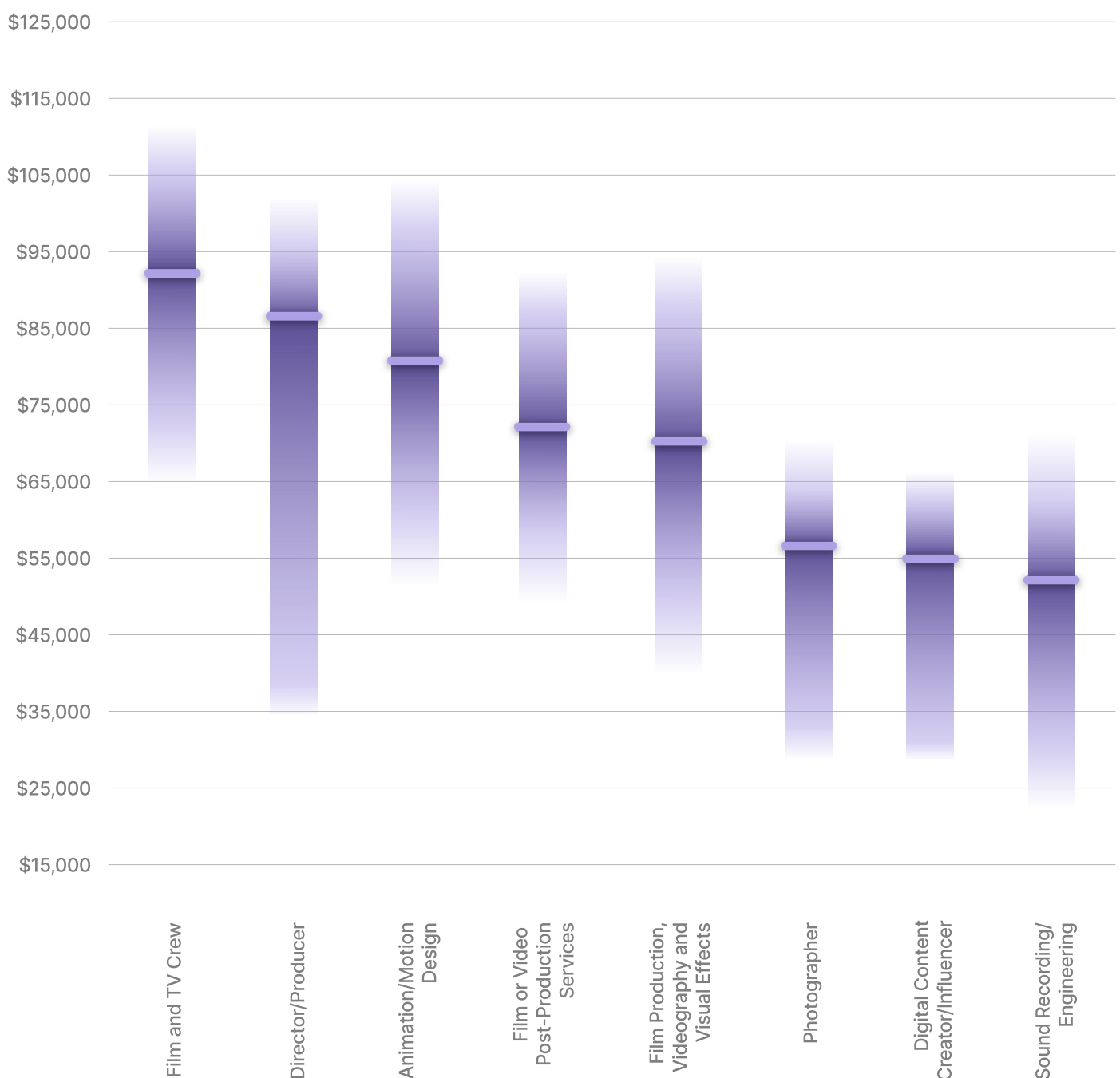
They're storytelling veterans who can connect a brand with an audience in a way that feels genuine, empathetic, and mutually beneficial.

Brands who invest in human stories are the ones who stand out. At Hnry, freelance creatives have been the backbone of some of our most influential campaigns: from video ads, to billboards, to written articles and website illustrations. They're a part of what makes Hnry feel like Hnry – and it's why we continue to lean on their expertise.

Media/Multimedia

Media/Multimedia productions often don't need full-time staff – instead, they might rely on freelance talent to support specific projects, depending on the expertise needed. This includes working across different locations, requiring either flexible working arrangements or local crew.

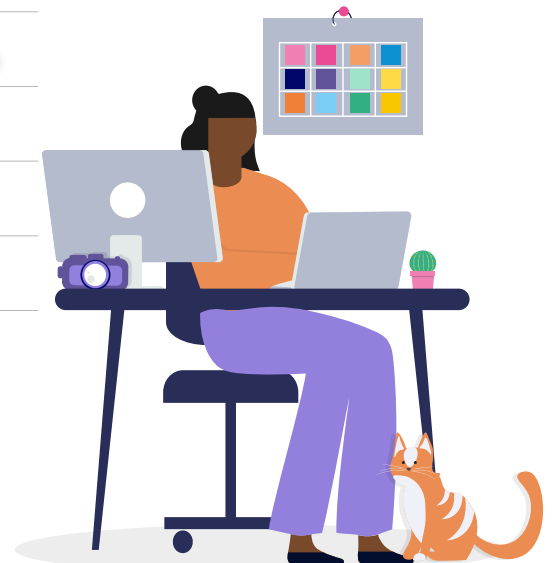
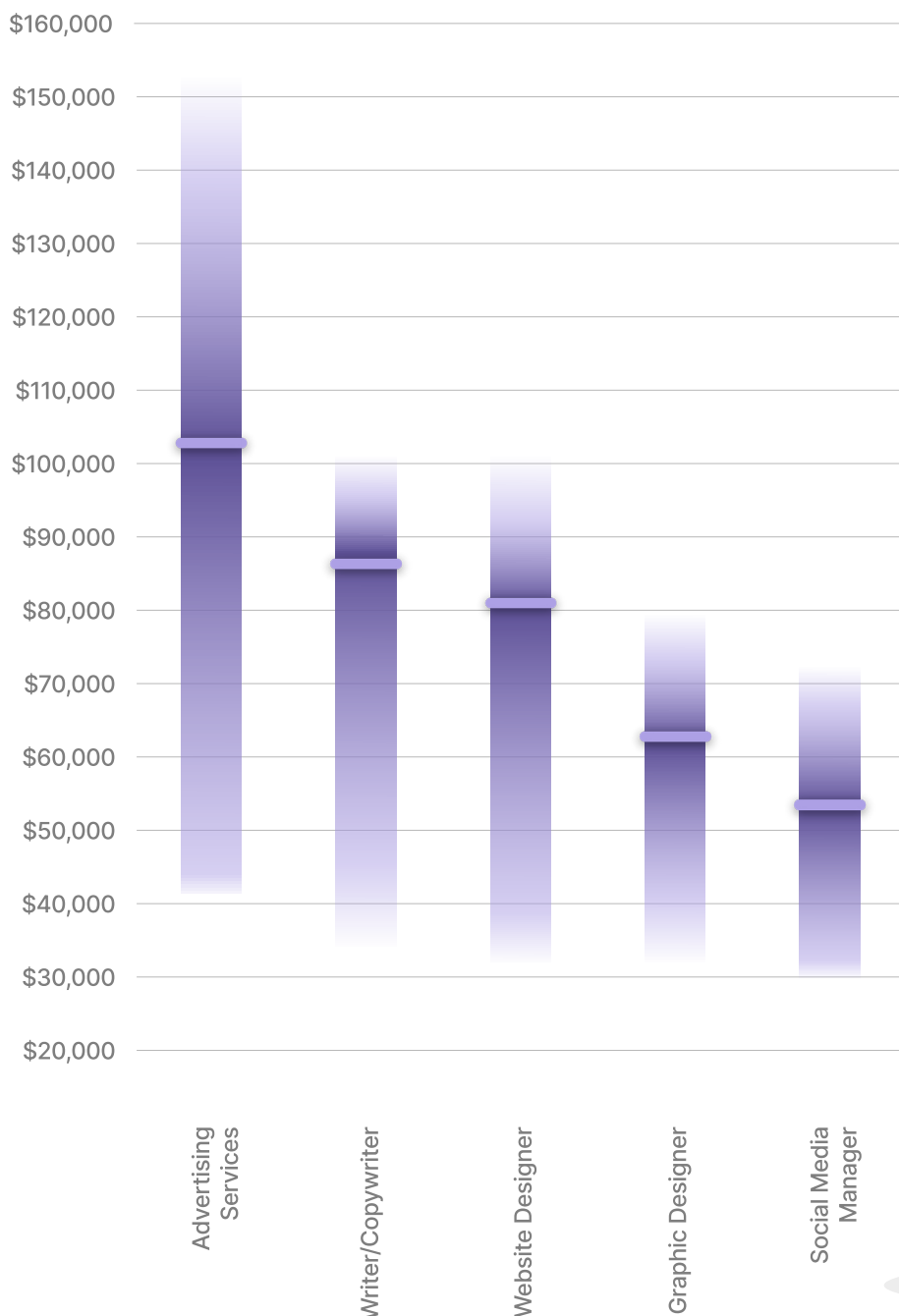
Hiring freelance experts is a great way to maximise efficiency – and because these specialists aren't always tied to one production company or location, they can move where they're needed most.



Marketing

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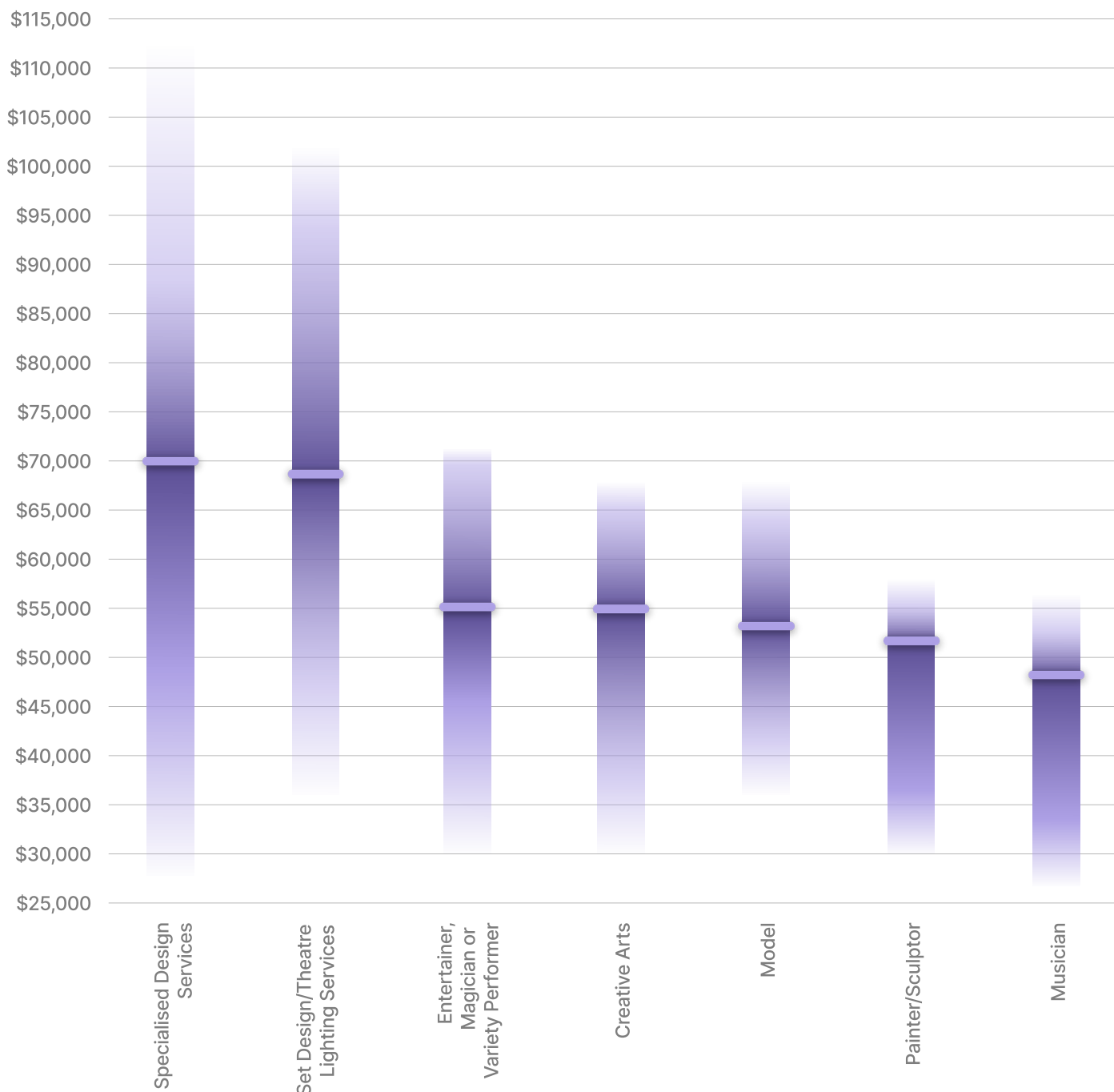
While in-house marketers only work for one company, and marketing agencies dictate the brands their teams work with, freelance marketers have the freedom to chase the projects, services, and niches that excite them most.



Arts

For those in the arts, working freelance means being able to pursue incredible opportunities (think once-in-a-lifetime!) whenever they come up.

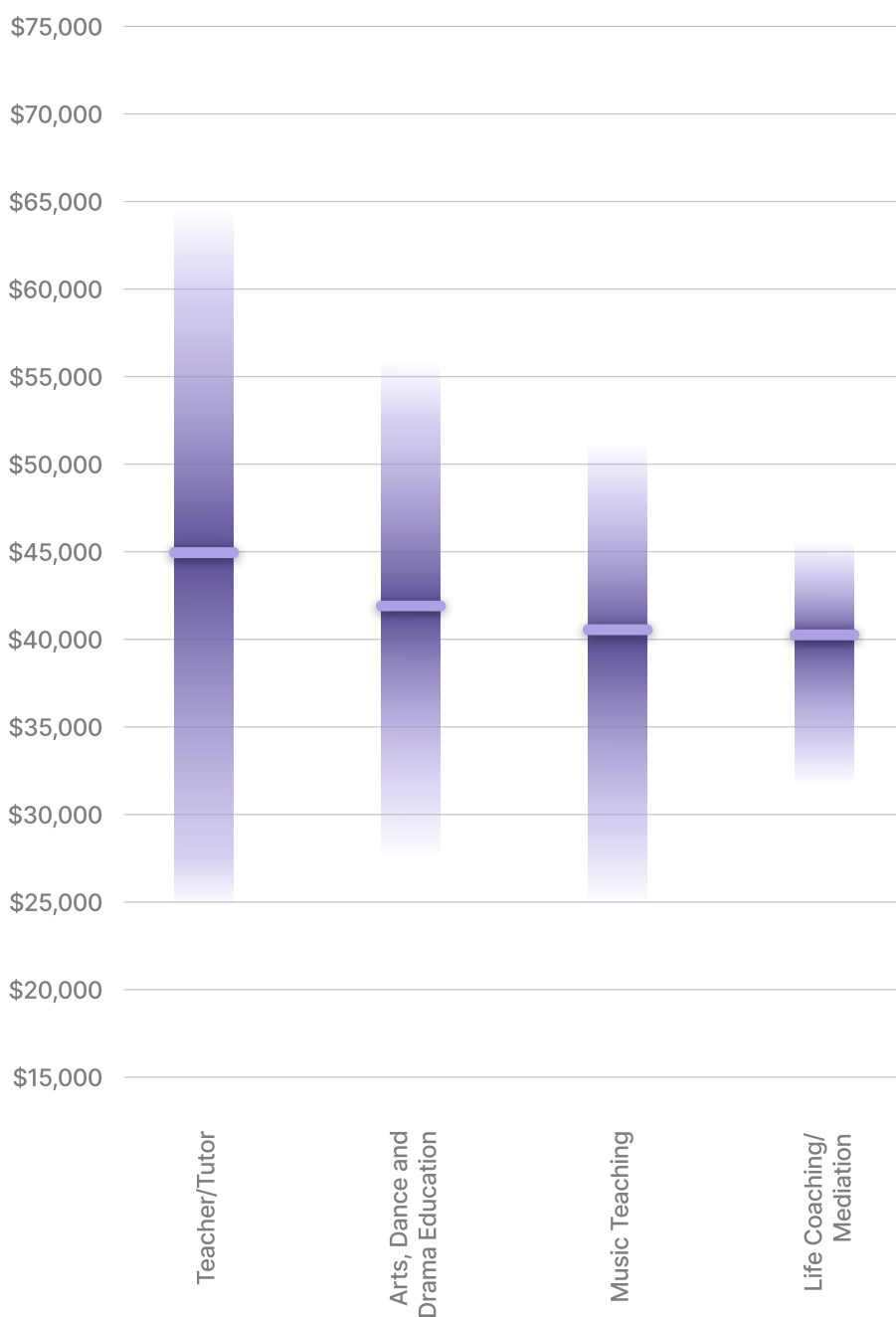
Some of these work types (Set Designers, and Theatre Lighting Operators) might opt for a few big projects a year, or work across multiple smaller projects. Others (Models, Performers, Musicians) benefit from having a more flexible schedule, meaning they can attend auditions or project meetings as needed.



Education

Freelance Educators can choose their own hours, design their own curriculum, and change things up at short notice – for example, offering a one-off weekend workshop before a big recital.

For Teachers and Tutors, being a freelancer means being able to work where you're most needed. It's a good way to experience variety day to day, while still contributing meaningfully to the lives of students.



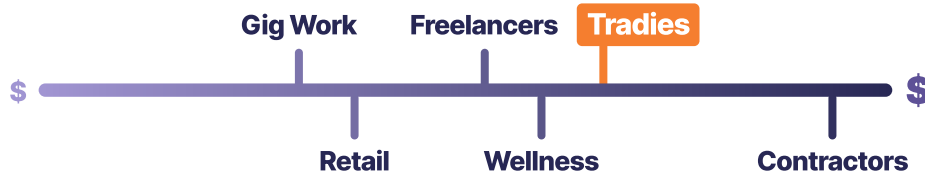


Tradies



Average earnings

\$78,800



Typical clients

- Construction companies
- Property management companies
- Individual homeowners/renters



Find work via

- Digital and print ads
- Business websites
- Word-of-mouth referrals



Industries

- Building and construction
- Repairs and maintenance



Tradies

Tradies are among the highest-earning and most stable sole trader business owners in the country.

For young people looking for a vocation, going into the trades is an attractive option: they can receive government support through regional and federal apprenticeship schemes, avoid a hefty student loan and the burden of ongoing repayments, and earn while they learn. Even if their salary is initially lower, over time, many go on to match or exceed the earnings of university graduates.

Unlike some other sole trader work types, demand for the services tradies provide remains relatively constant. From niche specialisations, to general construction roles, tradies are generally easily able to find work across the country, throughout the year.

On top of all this, the physical nature of the trades means tradies are less likely to have to compete with AI in the near future. Although investment in robotics is growing, current rates of development suggest that physical labour will be augmented by automation, rather than out-and-out replaced. Job security for tradies is more certain than for knowledge workers who are yet to see how AI will impact their industries.



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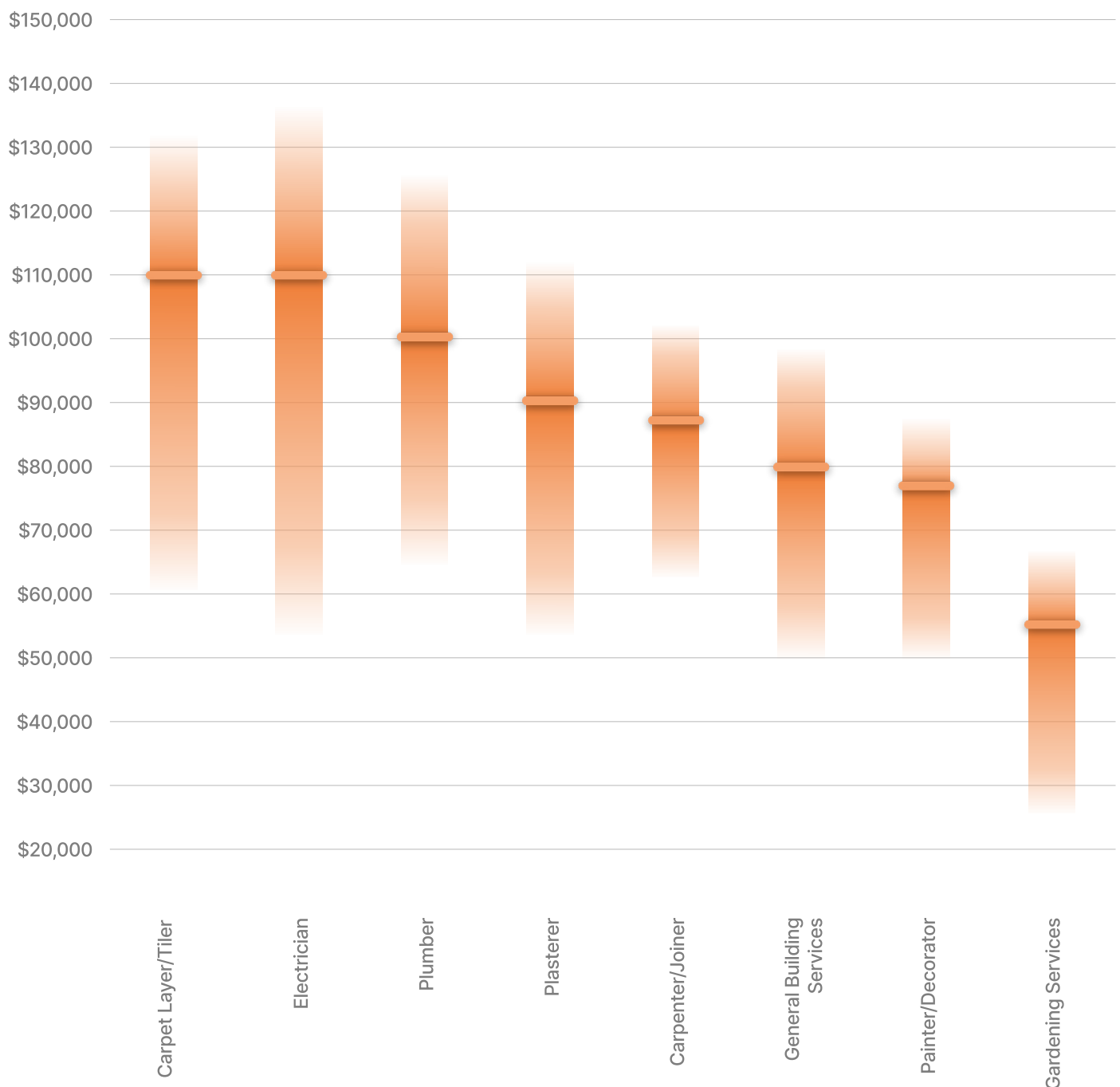
That's not to say that tradies aren't facing challenges. The recent rising fuel costs have hit this cohort especially hard, due to their generally higher levels of petrol consumption. Unlike other sole traders who can often choose to work from home (for example, some contractors and freelancers), tradies have no choice but to travel to and from job sites. Inflation has consistently eaten into their margins, meaning they've had to raise their rates in order to sustain profit margins.

But tradies are a resilient lot – as reflected in their strong earning potential as a group. The future, whatever it brings, looks bright.

Building Services

Some tradies prefer smaller service jobs – like painting a single room or responding to water pipe emergencies. They can do this as a one-person show, or by working as a subcontractor for a company or another sole trader.

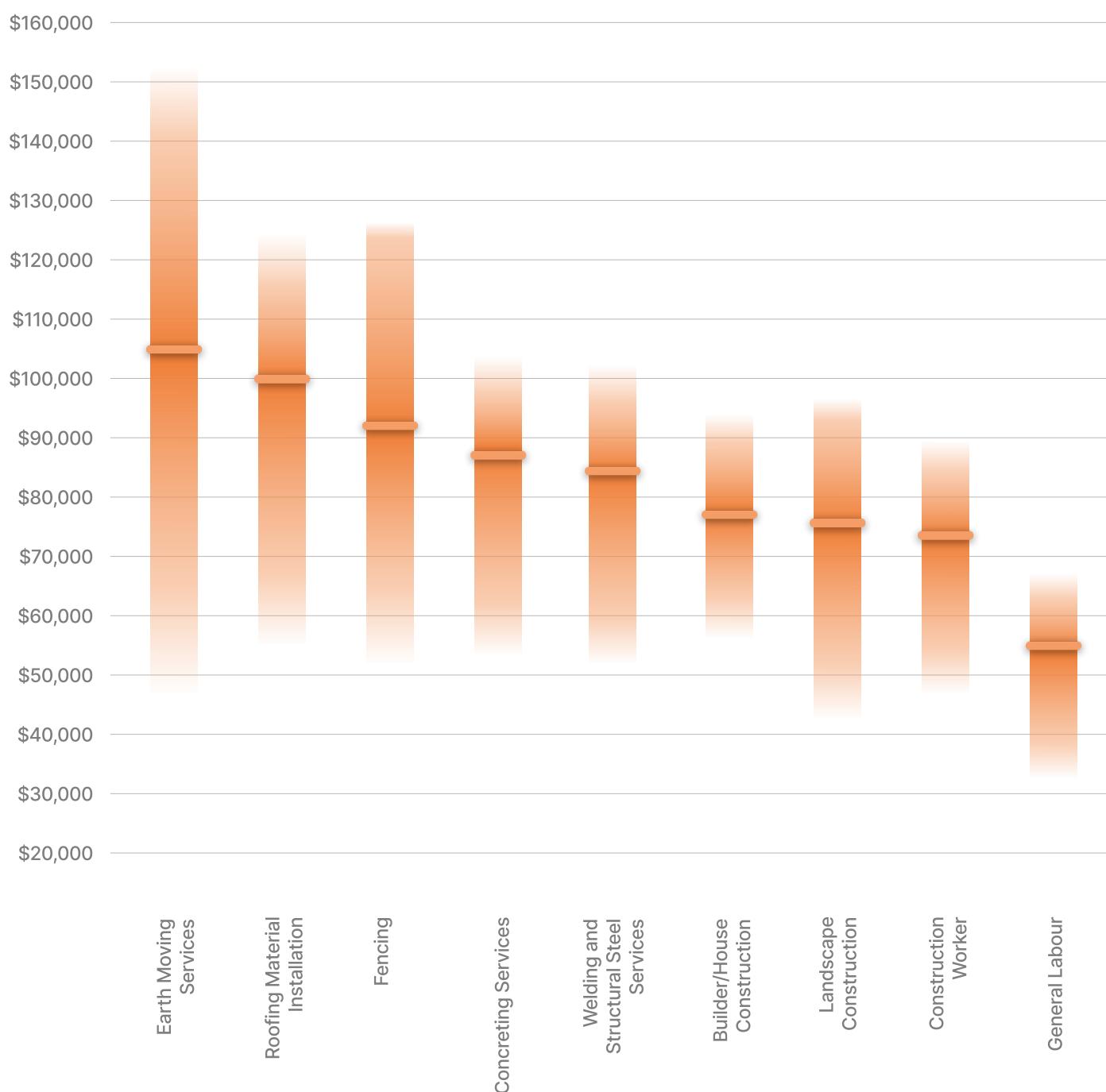
But most tradies seek out larger projects that can occupy them for weeks - or even months - and for the really ambitious ones, they may need to hire subcontractors in order to complete jobs in a timely manner.



Construction

Construction workers have generally strong wages due to recent labour shortages, and minimum base rates for construction employees set by the Fair Work Commission.

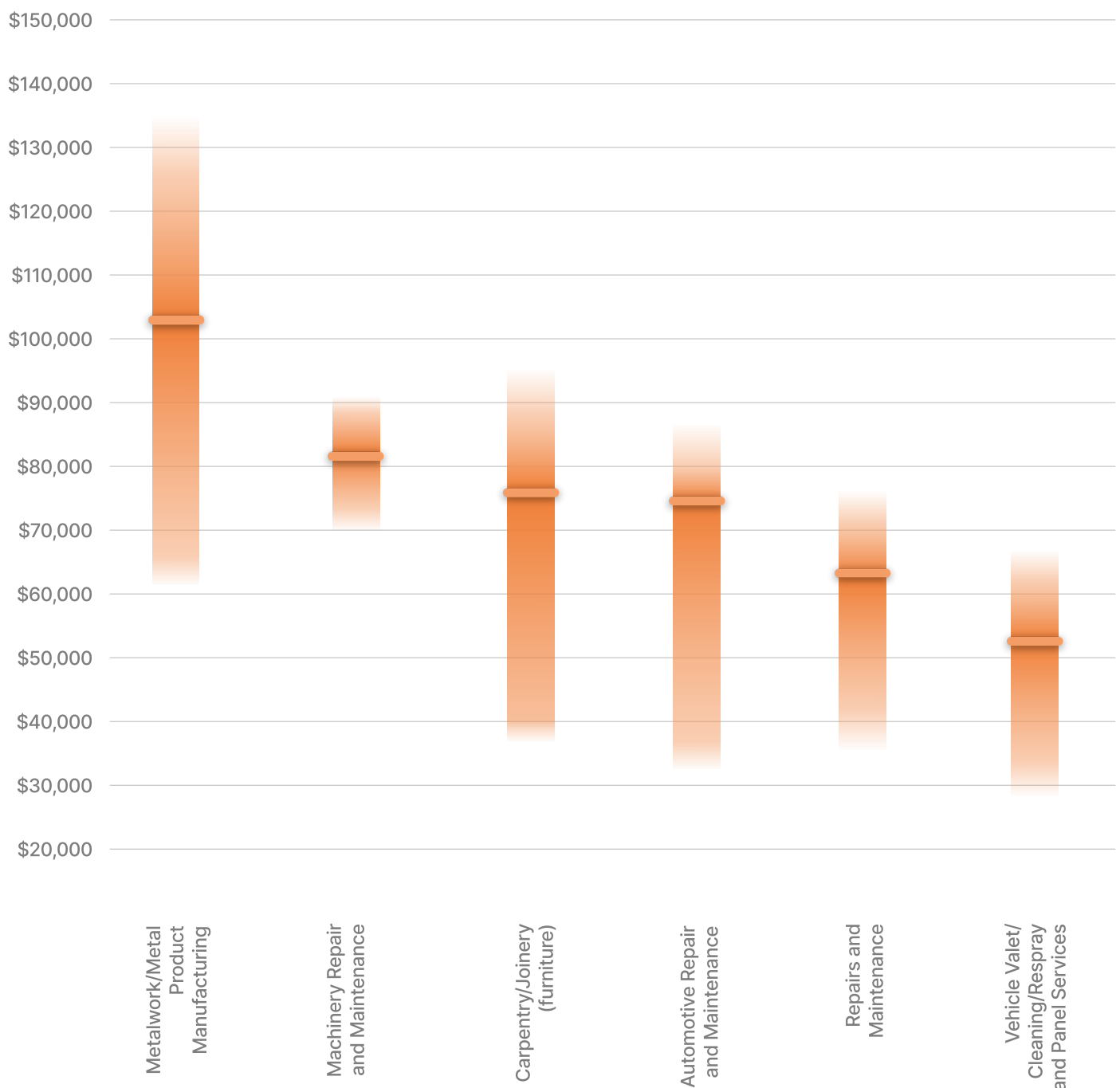
Although these base rates don't apply to sole traders, they can influence market rates – especially as skilled construction workers are in high demand.



Manufacturing, Repair, and Maintenance

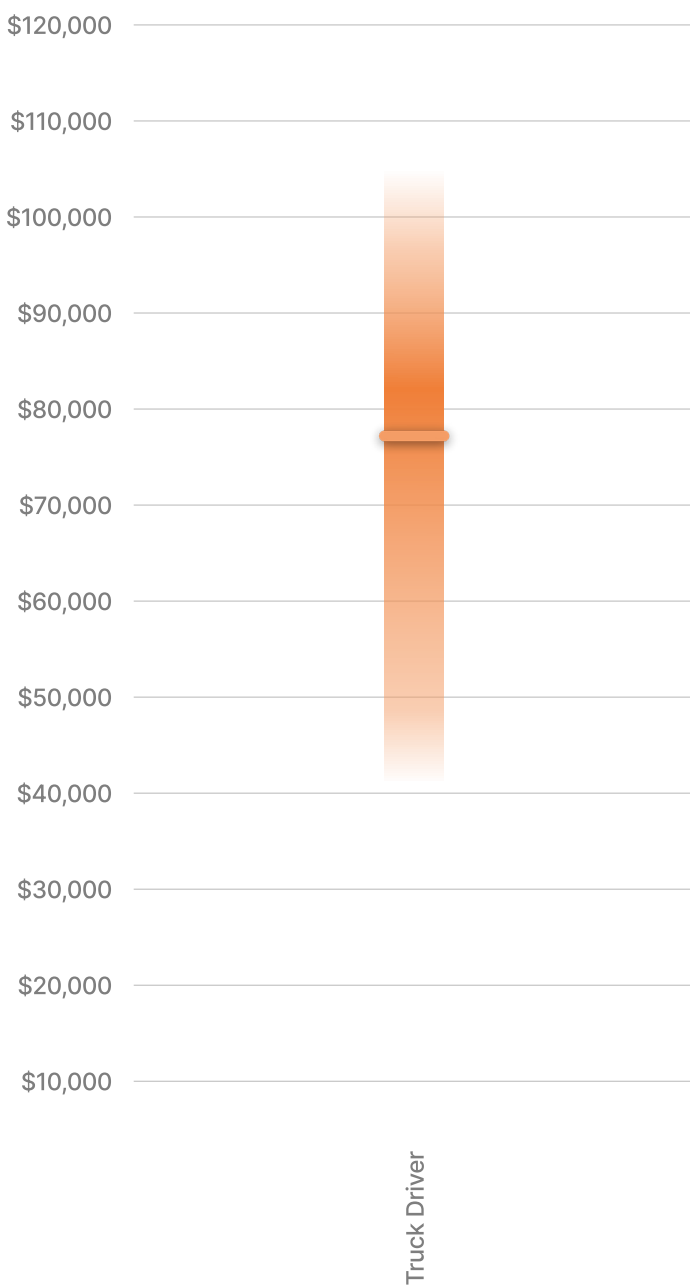
Manufacturing, repair, and maintenance jobs can range from quick fixes for private individuals, to ongoing contracts for larger corporations.

In both cases, operating as a sole trader makes a lot of sense – they can contract with individuals as a one-man show, or subcontract to a company for bigger, more predictable work packages.



Transport Services

Sole trader Truck Drivers own and operate their own truck, but contract their services to freight companies. They're responsible for the running and maintenance of their equipment, and may need to load and unload their consignments, depending on their contract.



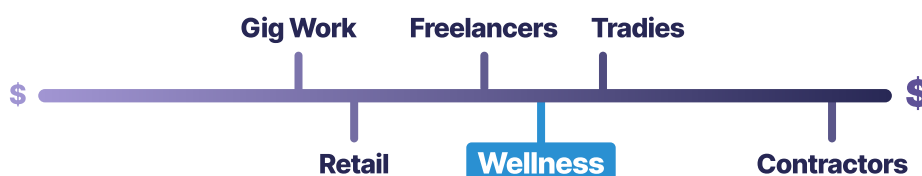


Health and Wellness



Average earnings

\$70,100



Typical clients

- Private individuals
- Hospitals and clinics



Find work via

- Online directories



Industries

- Medical
- Support work
- Psychology and counselling
- Holistic therapy



Health and Wellness

Health and Wellness sole traders are a diverse group, ranging from Midwives and Counsellors to Locum Doctors and Allied Health Professionals. While earnings vary across this group, a relatively high proportion of top earners means this cohort has a strong overall average.

This isn't surprising, given the medical and therapeutic fields generally boast higher salaries. But these professionals aren't always associated with sole trader roles – they're often expected to work in hospitals or clinics, or run their own practices.

So why choose to be a sole trader? For many, it's not about stepping away from healthcare – it's about finding a more sustainable way to stay in it. Becoming a sole trader practitioner is one way for medical practitioners to meaningfully contribute to an overburdened healthcare system without working long hours or facing the same risk of burnout. It allows them to provide support where it's most needed, whether this is through locum work at a general hospital or doula services for a local community, helping take the pressure off an overburdened system.



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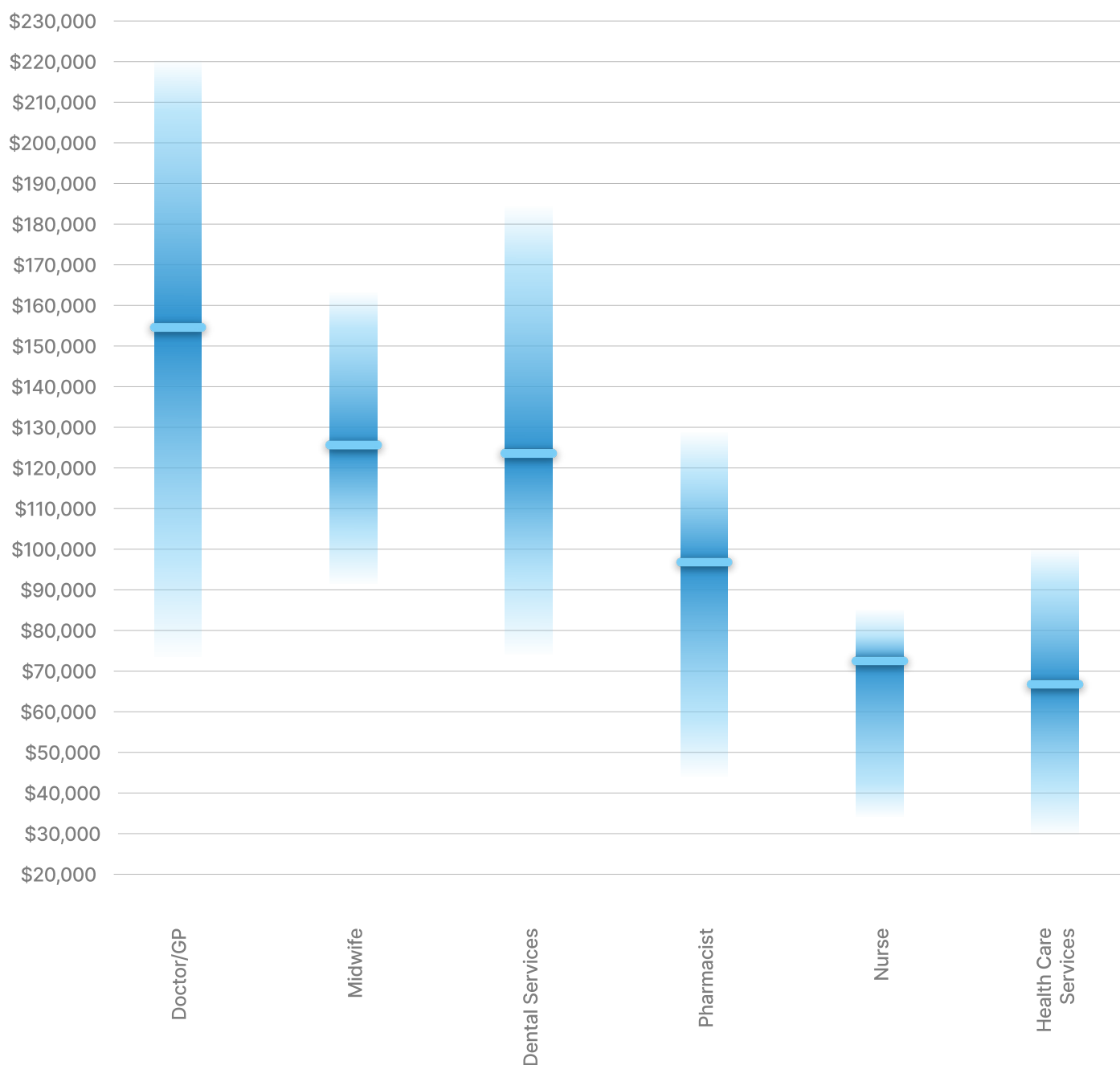
Importantly, it also gives these workers breathing room to manage their own capacity and needs. Medical work comes with a high level of responsibility, and work-life balance is especially important for workers who may not always put themselves first.

Wellness workers outside of medicine also stand to gain from this level of flexibility. Support work can be both physically and emotionally demanding; being a sole trader gives them control over their working hours, locations, and the clients they work with. It's a good way to build an impactful career on their own terms.

Medical

In the medical locum market, many practitioners are engaged via recruitment agencies or hospital systems that structure work through PAYG or managed contracts. This makes operating as a sole trader less common.

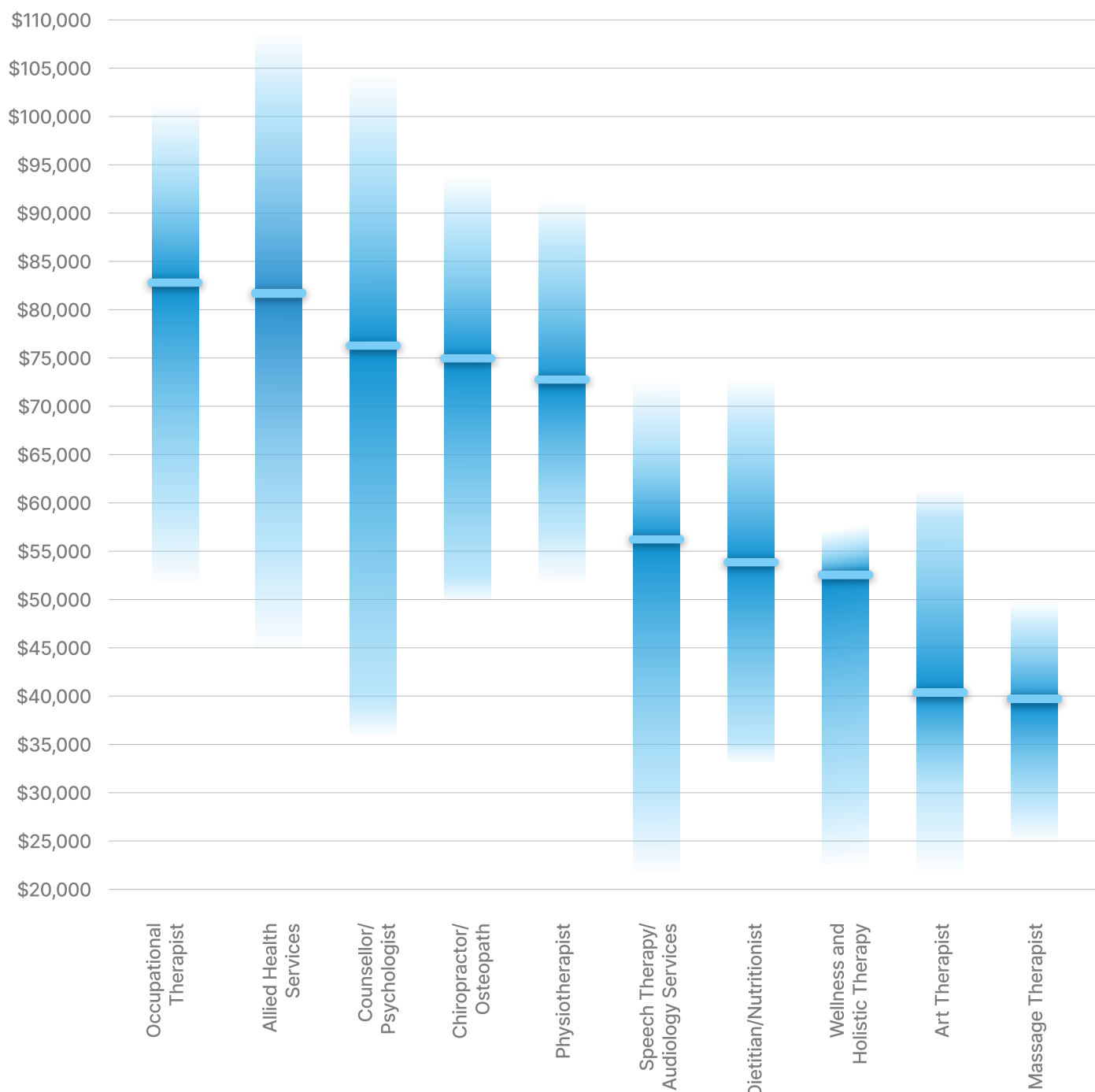
But for those who do, being a sole trader means less overall admin, control over working hours, and more autonomy. It's an attractive proposition for professions where long, hard hours are the norm.



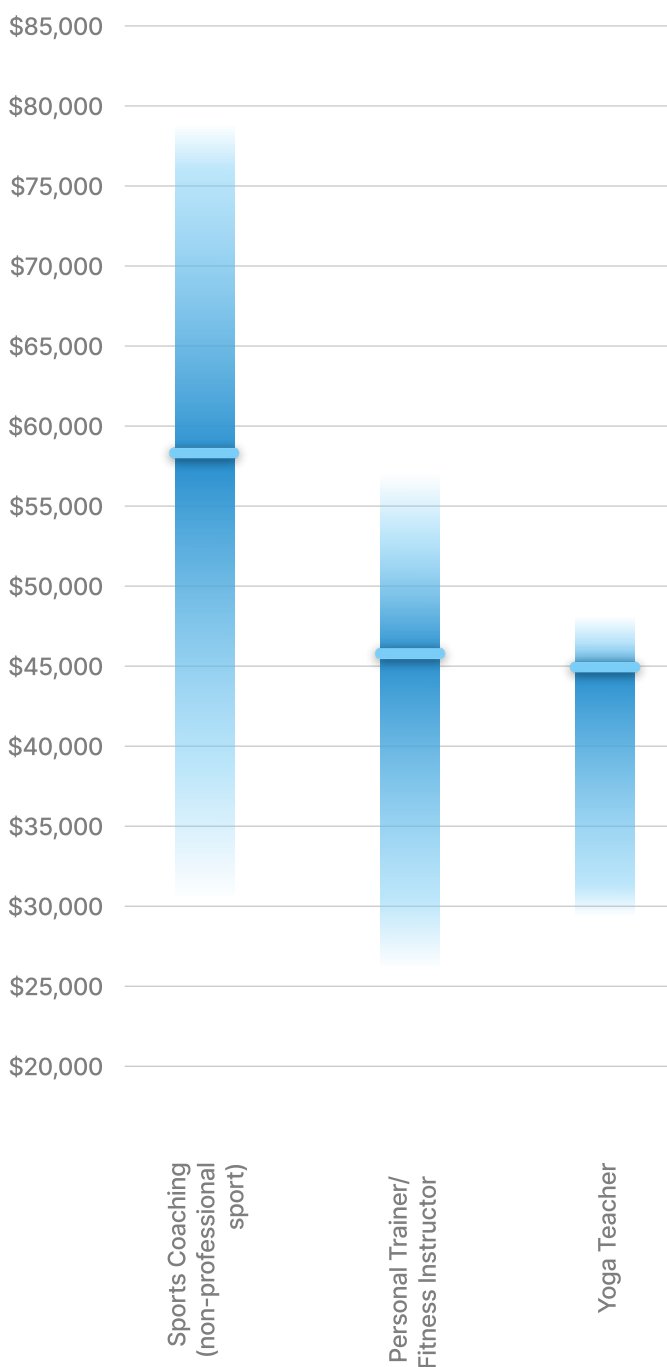
Counselling, Therapy, and Other Health Services

Many health professionals – from Counsellors and Therapists to other allied health providers – operate as one-person practices.

Setting up as a sole trader offers one of the simplest and lowest-cost ways to start a business, with the option to incorporate a company later as the business grows.

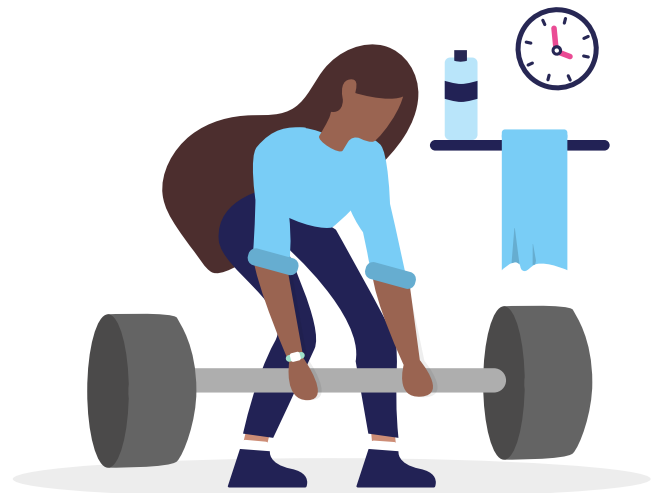


Physical Education



No surprise that Fitness Educators often work as sole traders – it's a cost-effective way to start and grow a fitness business, while also building a client base and a personal brand.

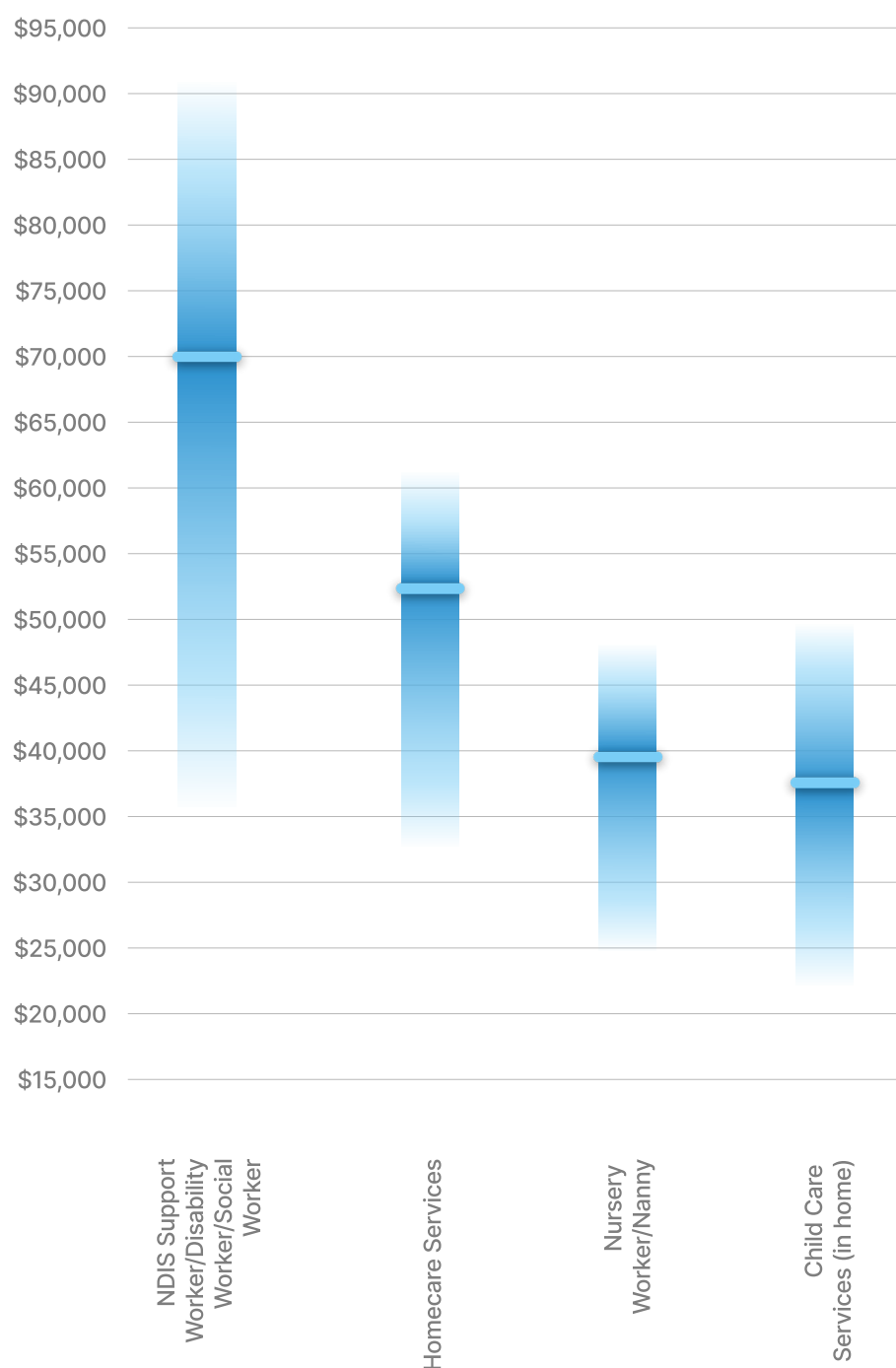
While it is possible to work out of a home gym, many Personal Trainers opt to rent space from their local gym (generally tax deductible!). Similarly, Yoga Teachers/Sports Coaches can rent community spaces, or (weather permitting) teach outdoor classes at their local park, to keep startup costs down.



In-home Support Services

NDIS Workers are unsurprisingly the biggest cohort in this group, providing all manner of domestic support for their clients. These workers may work for a single client, or provide specific services to multiple clients, depending on their specialisation.

Similarly, In-home Child Care Workers and Nannies can opt to work with multiple families, or just one – they design their ideal working environment.



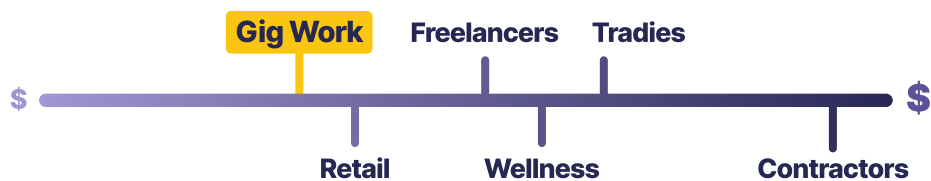


Gig Workers



Average earnings

\$36,000



Typical clients

- Private individuals



Find work via

- Online platforms
- Local groups/communities
- Social media



Industries

- Rideshare
- Transportation
- Courier and delivery

Gig Workers

The term “Gig Economy” was coined by Daily Beast editor-in-chief Tina Brown, in the wake of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. It described the rise of knowledge workers cobbling together a career of “free-floating projects, consultancies, and part-time bits and pieces” through a “digital marketplace”, due to a lack of full-time roles.

Fast forward almost two decades, and Gig Work has taken on a life of its own. It’s a fantastic way to convert spare time, and assets already owned, into cash. With the rise of platforms Uber, Fiverr, Upwork, and Airtasker, it’s become easier than ever to find short-term work and build a side hustle to support your main income.

But for many people, Gig Work isn’t just a gig – it’s a full-time job. The comparatively low barriers of entry, combined with almost guaranteed work, make it an attractive proposition for people between jobs, or who have recently moved to Australia.

The problem is that it’s difficult to earn a living wage purely through gig platforms. Jobs are competitive, rates are low, and Rideshare and Delivery Drivers are especially exposed to rising fuel costs, or changes in regulations.

While it can intuitively feel like the income is worth the effort, true earnings are difficult to assess due to the obscure associated costs. For example, Uber drivers use their own assets on the job, meaning any accurate cost-benefit calculation will need to include the depreciation of their vehicle.



While it can intuitively feel like the income is worth the effort, true earnings are difficult to assess due to the obscure associated costs.

Similarly, Uber doesn’t sort taxes for their drivers – drivers will need to calculate and pay their taxes, and potentially invest in accounting support to do so. Rideshare fares generally don’t account for these added costs.

All this can make it harder for full-time gig workers to earn a fair wage. Gig Workers need to ensure they’re charging enough to cover not just their time, but their taxes, expenses, and their own cost of living.

Gig Work

Many of these work types are all well suited to side-hustles – bits and pieces you can pick up after regular working hours.

But for full-time workers, limited earning potential and high business costs mean some of these roles aren't sustainable long term.



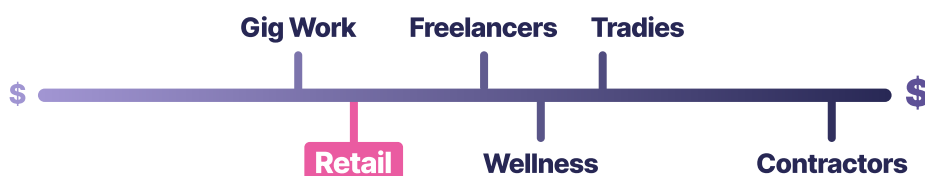


Retail



Average earnings

\$43,700



Typical clients

- Individual customers
- Chain stores and stockists



Find work via

- Social media ads
- Digital and print ads
- Word-of-mouth referrals



Industries

- Physical stores
- Ecommerce



Retail

Retail has always been a popular way to build a business, whether that's at the Roman forum thousands of years ago, or a farmer's market last weekend.

Now, thanks to the internet, it's never been more accessible. The rise of online marketplaces has made it simple to run a retail business from start to finish, including marketing, finding buyers, shipping your wares, and following up.

Starting as a sole trader is the fastest way to get a product to market. Not only is there no need for a full-scale setup, but you can test ideas quickly and efficiently, or even leverage an existing space or studio to increase your reach. As a sole trader, you can generally choose your own hours, and operate in a way that works for you – from home, at a set location, or even going from local market to local market each weekend.

That said, the average earnings in the retail space are lower because it's a difficult industry in which to establish yourself. Many retail businesses fail in the first two years, but those that succeed can go on to have significant growth and earnings potential.

There's also no single path or expected progression – a sole trader retail business is whatever the owner makes of it. They can scale up or down, stay solo, or hire staff. And unlike many other types of work, a retail business can be sold, meaning what they build today could become a valuable asset in the future. In any case, for retail sole traders, success is determined by their own metrics.



A sole trader retail business is whatever the owner makes of it.

A sole trader business can be just as much about sustainable income, creative control, and lifestyle flexibility, as it is about scaling, acquisitions, and exits.

Hair, Beauty, and Tattoo

Sole traders in the hair and beauty industry have the option to work on their own, or join a salon, or even rent a space in an existing establishment (and the rent could be tax deductible!).

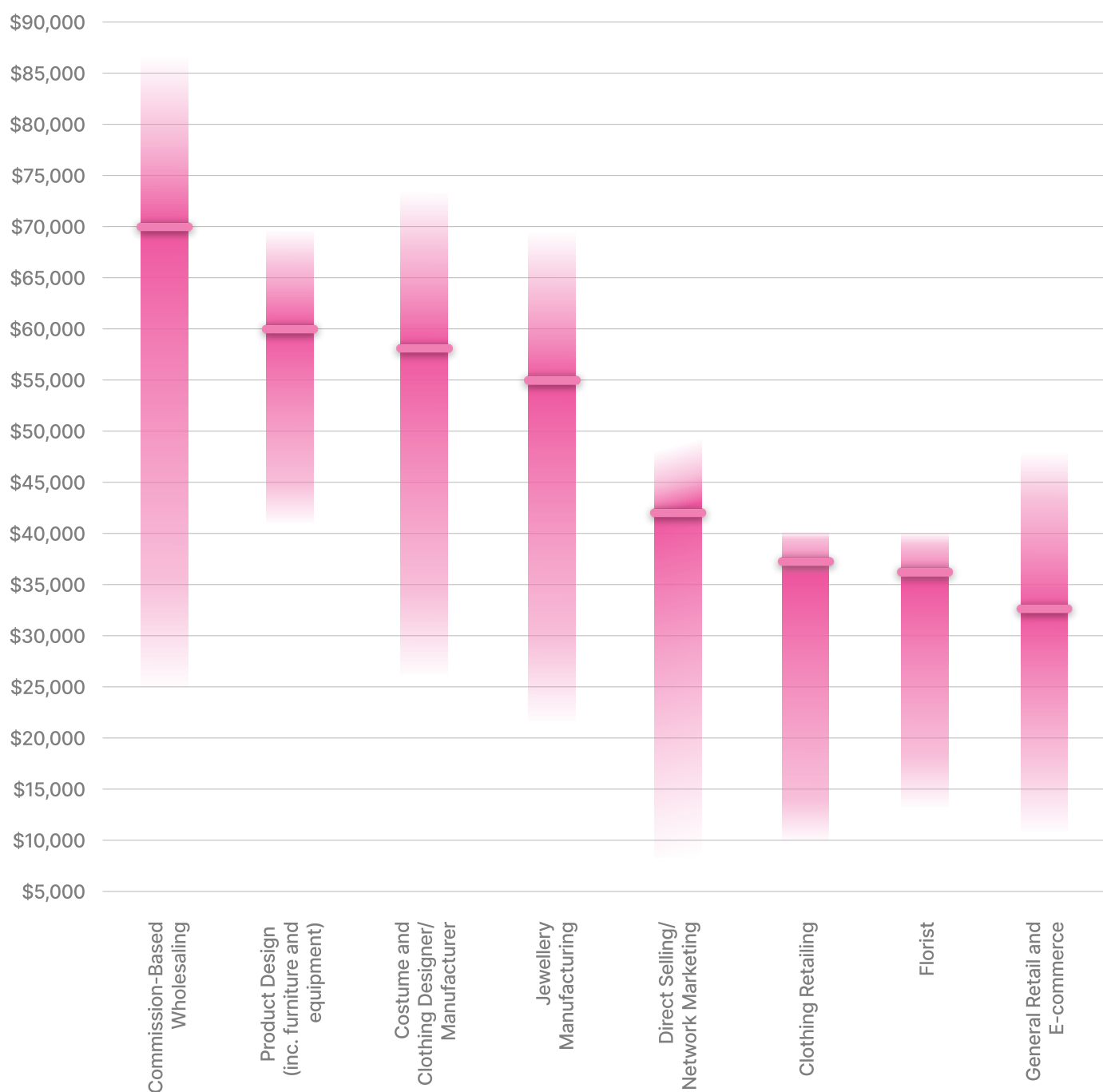
They can still build a loyal customer base and build their business, without all the admin that comes with running a full-on studio.



General Retail

These sole traders span the spectrum from traditional brick-and-mortar stores and boutique Etsy sellers all the way to well-established e-commerce stores.

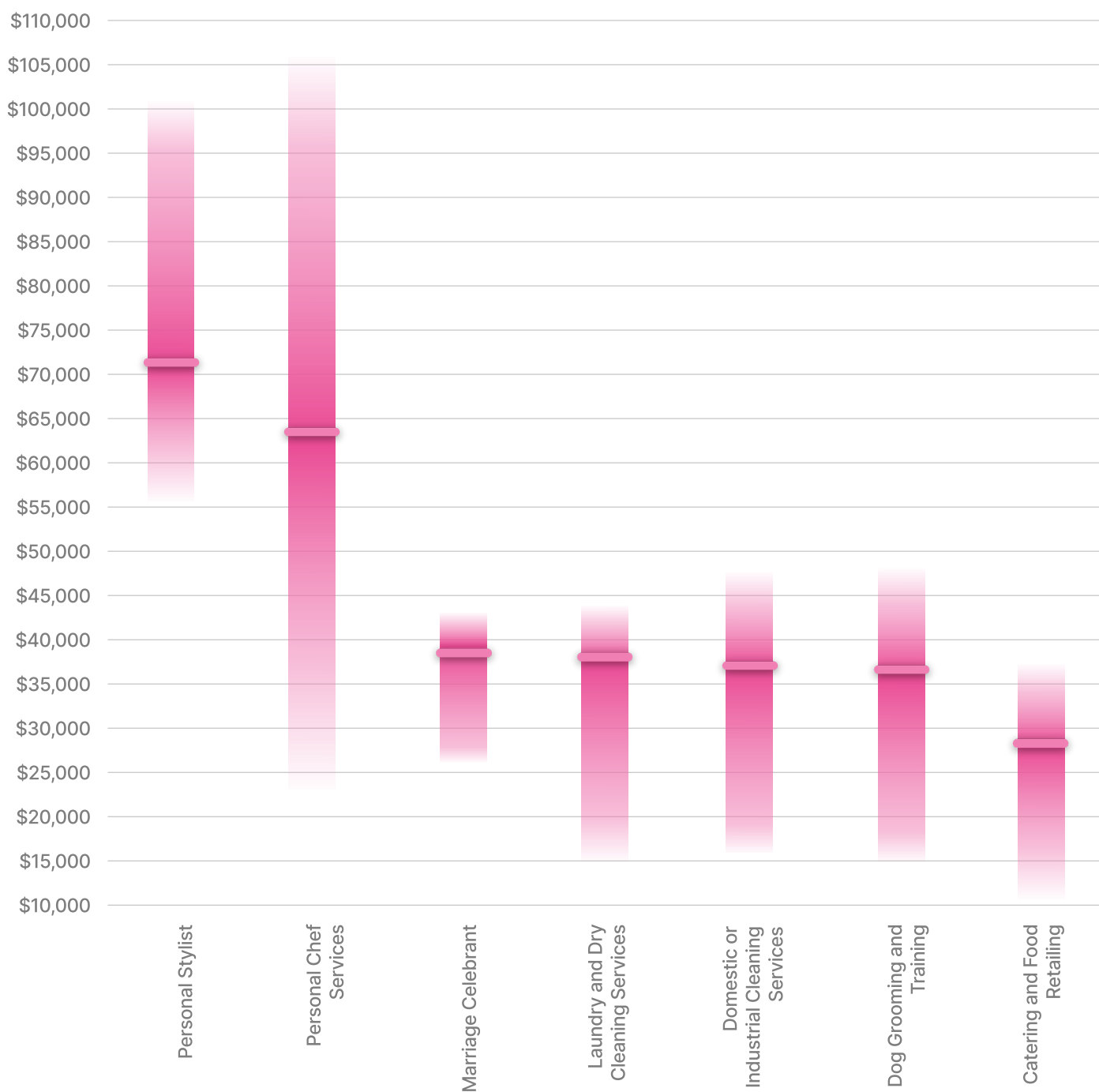
They can do much of what incorporated companies can do – like hiring employees, or claiming tax deductions – with less of the admin.



Hospitality and Domestic Services

One of the benefits of operating as a sole trader is being able to work flexibly. For Personal Chefs, for example, it's easier to build a full roster of clients as a sole trader than when you're locked in as an employee.

Similarly, Personal Stylists can offer a single service to multiple clients, or multiple services to a smaller client base – it's up to them how they slice it!



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B

Beauty Therapist	34
Builder/House Construction	20
Business Analyst	07
Business Mentor/Coach	07

D

Data Analyst	07
Dental Services	25
Dietitian/Nutritionist	26
Digital Content Creator/Influencer	13
Direct Selling/Network Marketing	35
Director/Producer	13
Doctor/GP	25
Dog Grooming and Training	36
Dog Walking	31
Domestic or Industrial Cleaning Services	36

C

Carpenter/Joiner	19
Carpentry/Joinery (furniture)	21
Carpet Layer/Tiler	19
Catering and Food Retailing	36
Change Management Consultant	07
Chiropractor/Osteopath	26
Child Care Service (in home)	28
Clothing Retailing	35
Commission-Based Wholesaling	35



E	Earth Moving Services	20
	Editing, Transcription and Document Preparation	10
	Electrician	19
	Engineering Services	09
	Entertainer, Magician, or Variety Performer	15
	Event Management Services	10

F	Fencing	20
	Film and TV Crew	13
	Film or Video Post-Production Services	13
	Film Production, Videography and Visual Effects	13
	Florist	35

G	Gardening Services	19
	General Building Services	19
	General Labour	20
	General Retail and E-commerce	35
	Graphic Designer	14

H	Hairdresser/ Makeup Artist/Barber	34
	Health Care Services	25
	Homecare Services	28
	HR Consultant	07

I	IT Helpdesk/Support Agent	08
	IT Software Consultant	08
	IT Software Developer	08

J	Jewellery Manufacturing	35
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L	Landscape Construction	20
	Laundry and Dry Cleaning Services	36
	Legal Services	09
	Life Coaching/Mediation	16

	Machinery Repair and Maintenance	21
	Management Consultant	07
	Marriage Celebrant	36
	Marketing/Brand Consulting	07
	Massage Therapist	26
	Metalwork/Metal Product Manufacturing	21
	Midwife	25
	Model	15
	Music Teaching	16
	Musician	15

N	NDIS Support Worker/Disability Worker/Social Worker	28
	Nurse	25
	Nursery Worker/Nanny	28

O	Occupational Therapist	26
	Office Admin/Management Services	10

P	Painter/Decorator	19
	Painter/Sculptor	15
	Personal Chef Services	36
	Personal Stylist	36

Personal Trainer/ Fitness Instructor	27
Pharmacist	25
Photographer	13
Physiotherapist	26
Pick-Up and Delivery Services	31
Plasterer	19
Plumber	19
Product Design (inc. furniture and equipment)	35
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	09
Project Manager	07

R	Repairs and Maintenance	21
	Roofing Material Installation	20

	Set Design/Theatre	
	Lighting Services	15
	Social Media Manager	14
	Sound Recording/Engineering	13
	Specialised Design Services	15
	Speech Therapy/ Audiology Services	26
	Sports Coaching (non-professional sport)	27



Tattooing and Piercing Services	34
Taxi/Uber/ Private Hire Driving Services	31
Teacher/Tutor	16
Truck Driver	22



Yoga Teacher	27
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User Interface Designer	08
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Vehicle Valet/Cleaning/ Respray and Panel Services	21
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Website Designer	14
Welding and Structural Steel Services	20
Wellness and Holistic Therapy	26
Writer/Copywriter	14





For sole traders.