Australian Government
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

BUREAU OF COMMUNICATIONS, ARTS AND REGIONAL RESEARCH

At a glance: International Trade in Australian Cultural and Creative Goods and Services, 2015–16 to 2024–25 (Experimental Estimates)

November 2026



Australia's cultural and creative trade expanded strongly, but import growth widened the deficit

Australia's international trade in cultural and creative goods and services expanded strongly over the decade to 2024–25:

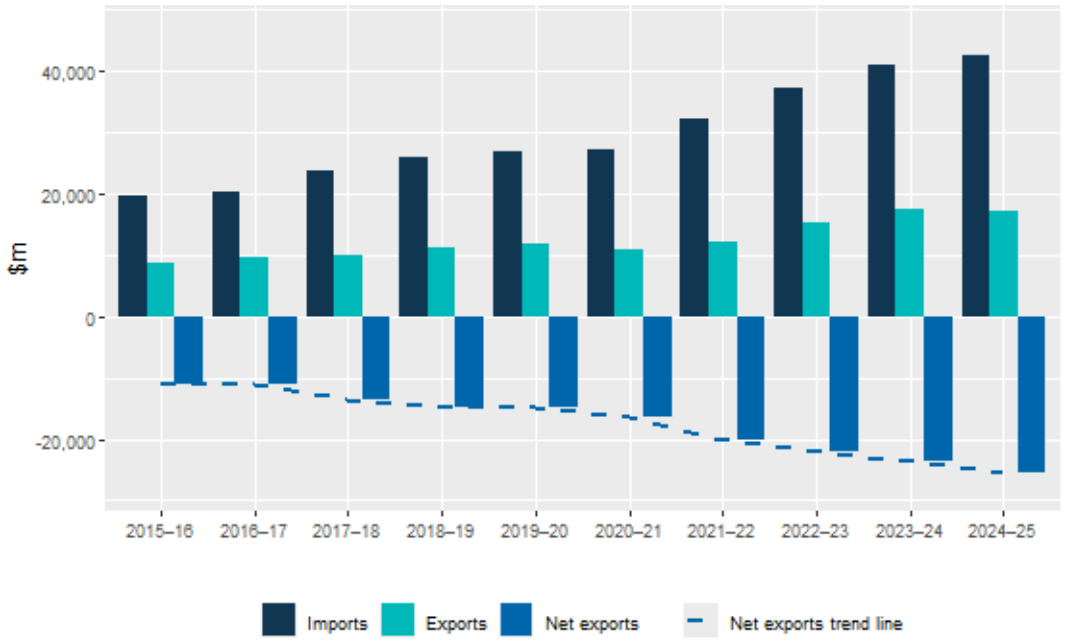
- Imports more than doubled, rising from $19.8 billion in 2015–16 to $42.7 billion in 2024–25
- Exports also grew strongly, from $8.8 billion to $17.1 billion over the same period
- As a result, the trade deficit widened from $11.0 billion to $25.5 billion—a widening of $14.5 billion.

Australia remained a net importer of cultural and creative goods and services throughout the decade. The gap widened most sharply from 2021–22, driven by surging imports of software publishing, advertising, and internet publishing services.

Key changes

Australia's cultural and creative trade deficit widened by $14.5 billion between 2015–16 and 2024–25, as imports grew faster than exports. The widening was most pronounced from 2021–22, coinciding with rapid growth in global digital consumption after the pandemic.

Figure 1. Cultural and creative international trade, 2015–16 to 2024–25



Source: ABS Australian System of National Accounts, Australian National Accounts: Input-Output Tables (Product Details); Australian National Accounts: Supply Use Tables; International trade in services statistics; BCARR calculations.

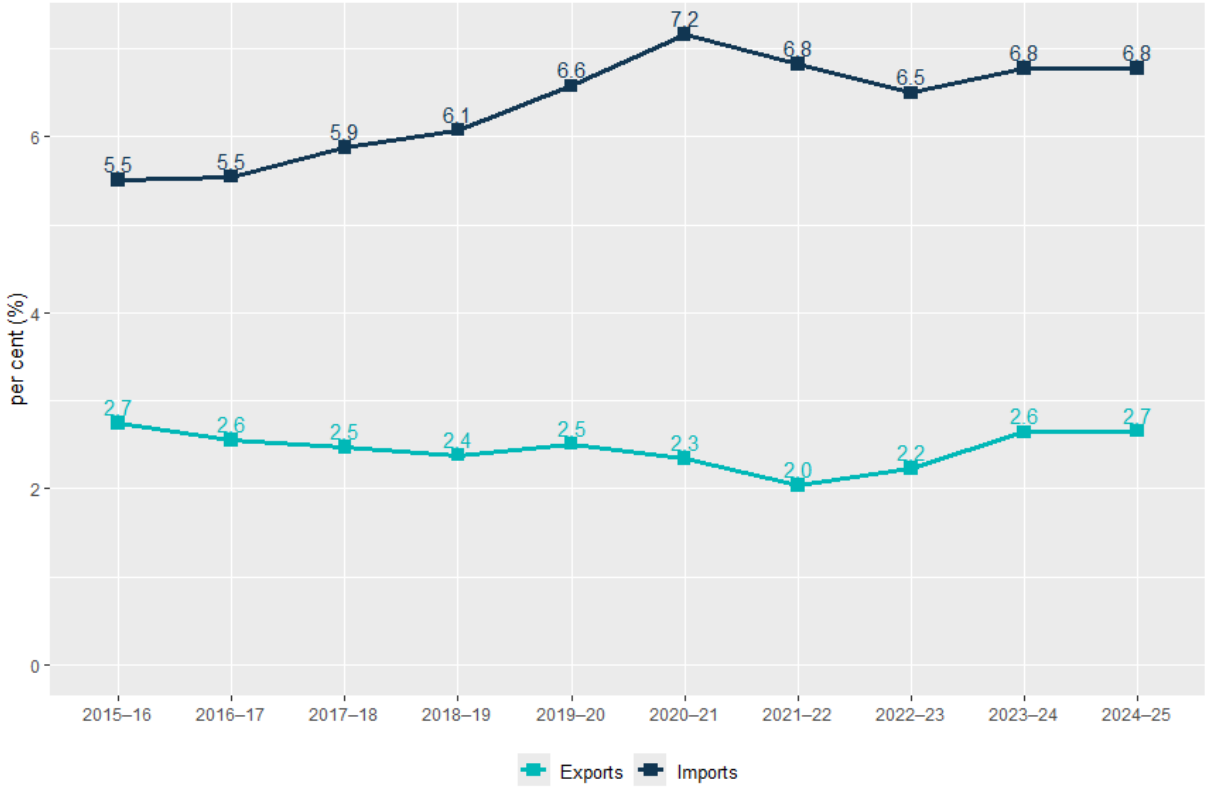
Comparison with Australia's total trade

Cultural and creative imports rose as a share of Australia's total imports, from 5.5% in 2015–16 to 6.8% in 2024–25, indicating that cultural and creative trade grew faster than Australia's aggregate imports over the decade.

By contrast, cultural and creative exports remained broadly stable as a share of Australia's total exports, at around 2.7% across the decade. The share temporarily dipped to 2.0% in 2021–22, when total exports surged.

Note: apparent spikes in the cultural and creative share of imports during 2020–21 reflect the sharp contraction in Australia's overall services trade during the pandemic, rather than growth in cultural and creative trade itself.

Figure 2. Cultural and creative imports and exports as a share of Australian totals, 2015–16 to 2024–25



Source: ABS Australian System of National Accounts, Australian National Accounts: Input-Output Tables (Product Details); Australian National Accounts: Supply Use Tables; International trade in services statistics; BCARR calculations.

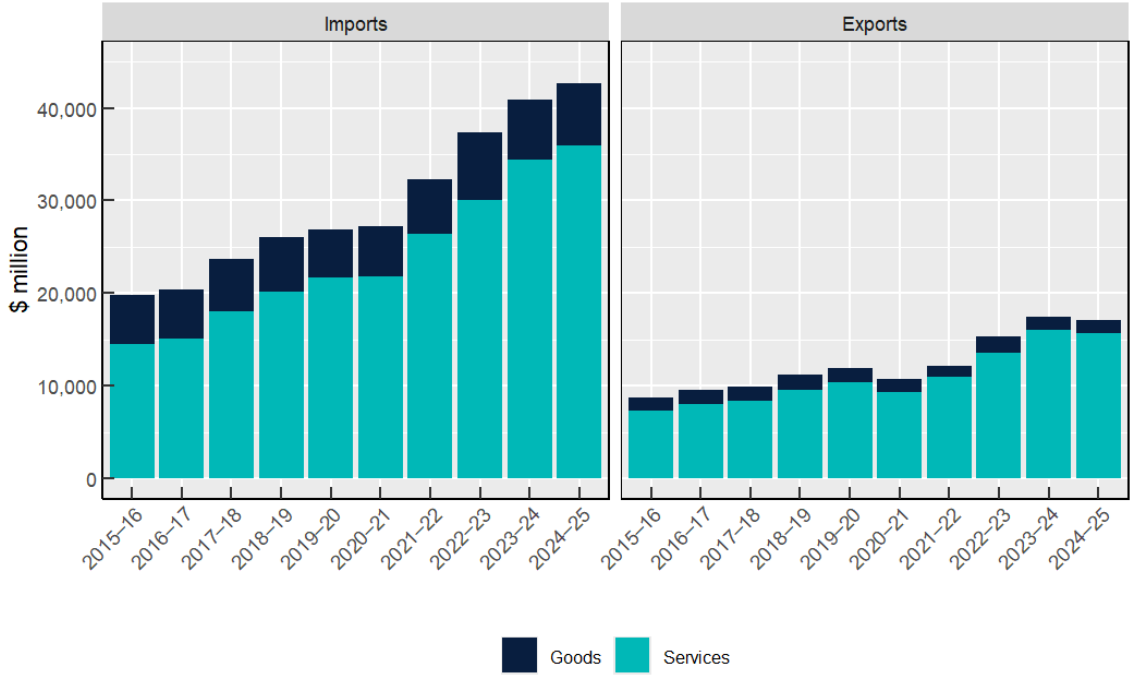
The sector is overwhelmingly services-led

Services dominate Australia's cultural and creative trade. Across the decade, services accounted for 74–84% of cultural and creative imports, and 84–92% of these exports.

Goods trade is comparatively small, concentrated almost entirely in visual arts and crafts—principally jewellery and leather goods—which make up over 90% of all trade in cultural and creative goods.

Several domains—including film and television activities, digital games development, design and fashion, architecture services, and advertising and promotion—record no goods trade, reflecting the sector's increasingly intangible and digitally delivered character.

Figure 3. Cultural and creative trade by goods and services, 2015–16 to 2024–25



Source: ABS Australian System of National Accounts, Australian National Accounts: Input-Output Tables (Product Details); Australian National Accounts: Supply Use Tables; International trade in services statistics; BCARR calculations.

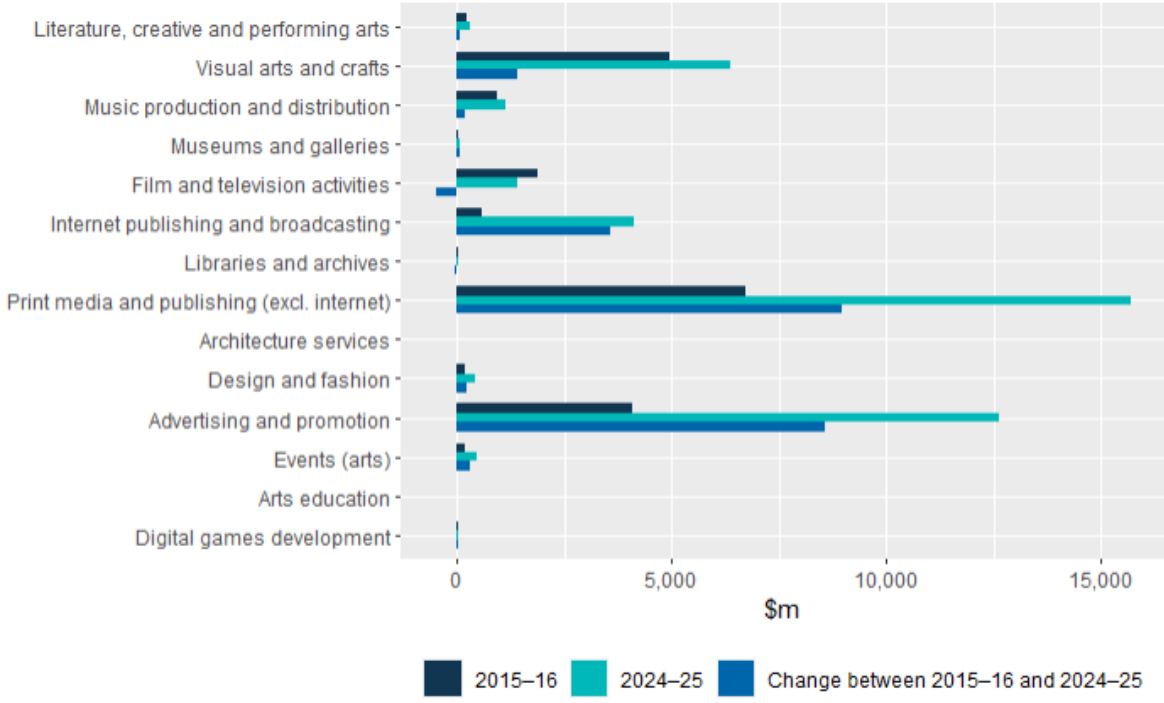
Cultural and creative imports by domain

In 2024–25, the leading cultural and creative import domains were print media and publishing (excl. internet) ($15.7 billion), advertising and promotion ($12.6 billion), and visual arts and crafts ($6.4 billion).

Print media and publishing (excl. internet) recorded the strongest import growth over the decade, rising by $9.0 billion (133.8%), driven by software publishing services. Advertising and promotion increased by $8.6 billion, while internet publishing and broadcasting rose by $3.6 billion.

By contrast, film and television activities recorded the largest decline in imports, down $488 million (25.7%) over the period.

Figure 4. Cultural and creative imports between 2015–16 and 2024–25



Source: ABS Australian System of National Accounts, Australian National Accounts: Input-Output Tables (Product Details); Australian National Accounts: Supply Use Tables; International trade in services statistics; BCARR calculations.

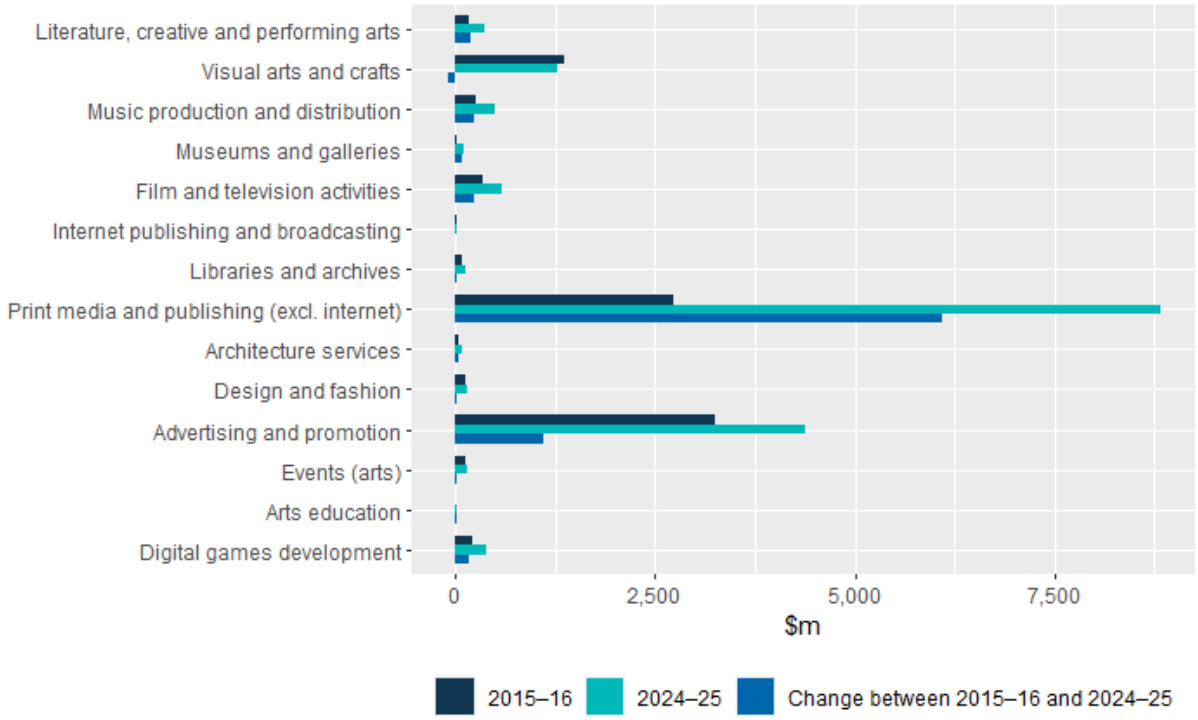
Cultural and creative exports by domain

Consistent with imports, the top three exports domains in 2024–25 were print media and publishing (excl. internet) ($8.8 billion), advertising and promotion ($4.4 billion), and visual arts and crafts ($1.3 billion).

Print media and publishing (excl. internet) recorded the strongest export growth over the decade, increasing by $6.1 billion to more than triple its 2015–16 value of $2.7 billion, driven by software publishing services. Advertising and promotion increased by $1.1 billion (34.2%), while film and television activities recorded the third-largest increase, rising by $239 million (71.5%) to reach $574 million.

By contrast, visual arts and crafts recorded the largest export decline, down $91 million (6.6%) over the period.

Figure 5. Cultural and creative exports between 2015–16 and 2024–25



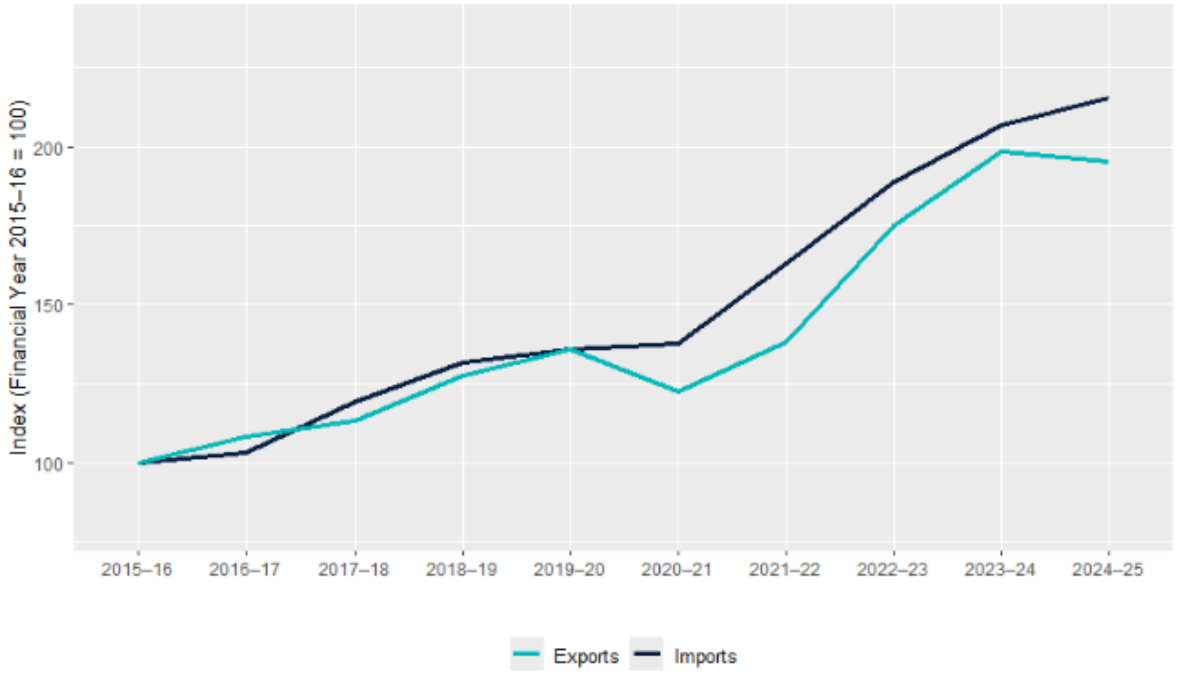
Source: ABS Australian System of National Accounts, Australian National Accounts: Input-Output Tables (Product Details); Australian National Accounts: Supply Use Tables; International trade in services statistics; BCARR calculations.

COVID-19 caused a temporary contraction in trade, but digital trade accelerated post-pandemic

Cultural and creative exports fell in 2020–21 as international activity contracted sharply, while imports of cultural and creative services proved more resilient, declining only modestly compared with the steep fall in total Australian service imports.

From 2021–22, imports of digital cultural and creative services accelerated strongly. Internet publishing and broadcasting, print media and publishing (excl. internet), and advertising and promotion all recorded step changes in growth, reflecting Australia's deepening integration into global digital content markets.

Figure 6. Cultural and creative imports and exports growth index, 2015–16 to 2024–25



Source: ABS Australian System of National Accounts, Australian National Accounts: Input-Output Tables (Product Details); Australian National Accounts: Supply Use Tables; International trade in services statistics; BCARR calculations.

Cultural and creative domains differ widely in their export performance

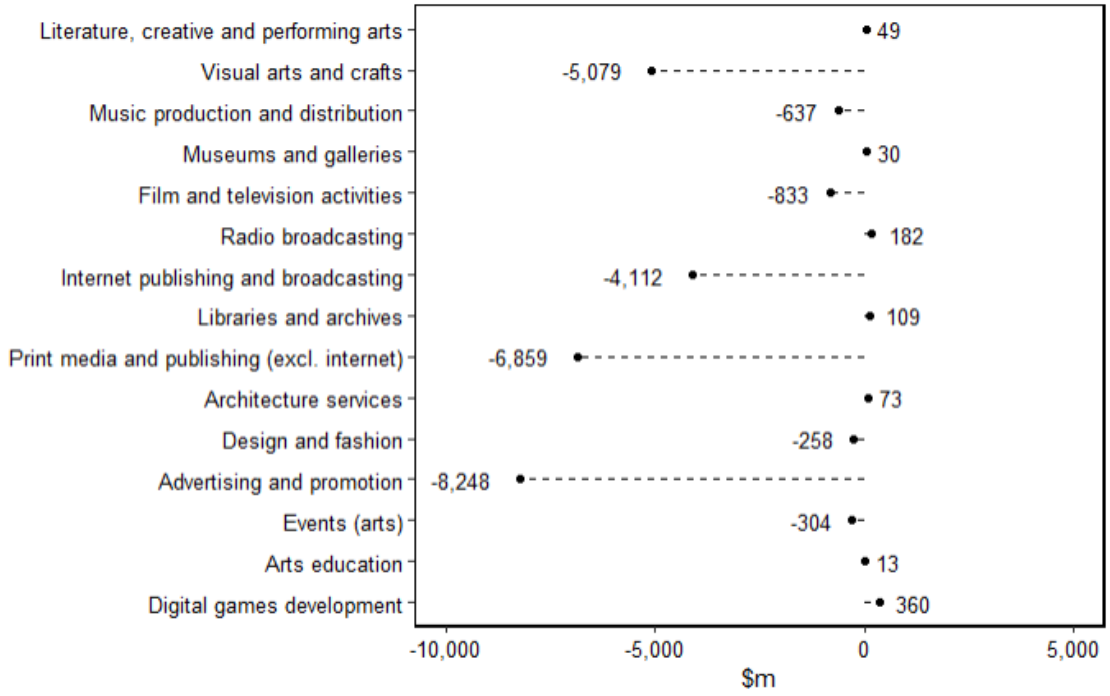
Print media and publishing (excl. internet), film and television activities, music production and distribution, and digital games development recorded strong and growing exports.

Literature, creative and performing arts, and museums and galleries shifted from a trade deficit to surplus in recent years.

Radio broadcasting, libraries and archives, architecture services and arts education recorded trade surpluses throughout, or for most of the period analysed, but remain relatively small niche sectors in exports.

By contrast, imports of internet publishing and broadcasting, advertising and promotion, visual arts and crafts, design and fashion, and events (arts) substantially exceeded exports for most or all of the period analysed.

Figure 7. Cultural and creative net exports (exports less imports) by domain, 2024–25



Source: ABS Australian System of National Accounts, Australian National Accounts: Input-Output Tables (Product Details); Australian National Accounts: Supply Use Tables; BCARR calculations.

About this document

This document summarises key findings from BCARR's statistical working paper, *International Trade in Australian Cultural and Creative Goods and Services, 2015–16 to 2024–25 (Experimental Estimates)*, and should be read with the accompanying *Frequently Asked Questions*. Further information on the methods used in this research can be found in BCARR's working paper.