



Australian Government



Jobs and Skills Australia

Occupation Shortage Report

September quarter 2024

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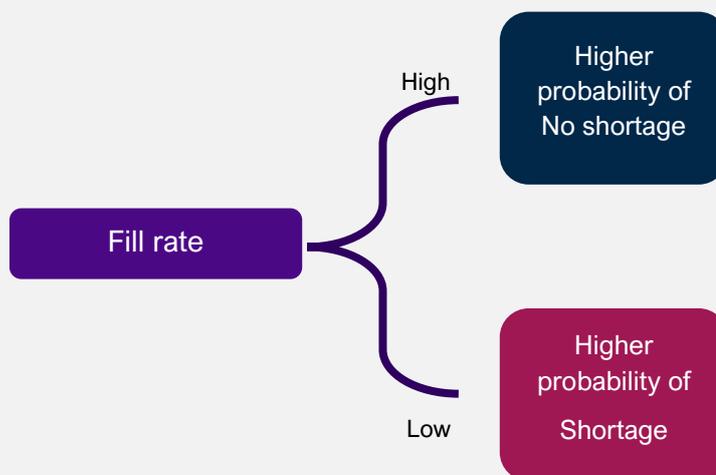
Introduction

The Occupation Shortage Report offers analysis on potential shortage pressures of occupations. The insights are based on data from the Jobs and Skills Australia Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised (SERA). The key metric reported on is the percentage of advertised vacancies filled by occupation (fill rate). Some background on the fill rate and other metrics covered in the report and their definitions are provided in the [Explanatory Notes](#) section.

Box 1: Jobs and Skills Australia's occupation shortage definition

An occupation is in shortage when employers are unable to fill or have considerable difficulty filling vacancies for an occupation or cannot meet significant specialised skill needs within that occupation at current levels of remuneration and conditions of employment, and in reasonably accessible locations.

Based on this definition, the fill rate is the key proxy measure of shortages. This metric has a simple intuition: if the fill rate is high, the likelihood of an occupation being in shortage or having high shortage pressures is low. In contrast, if the fill rate is low, the opposite is likely to be true.



National results

Fill rates continue their gradual rise

Table 1: National snapshot

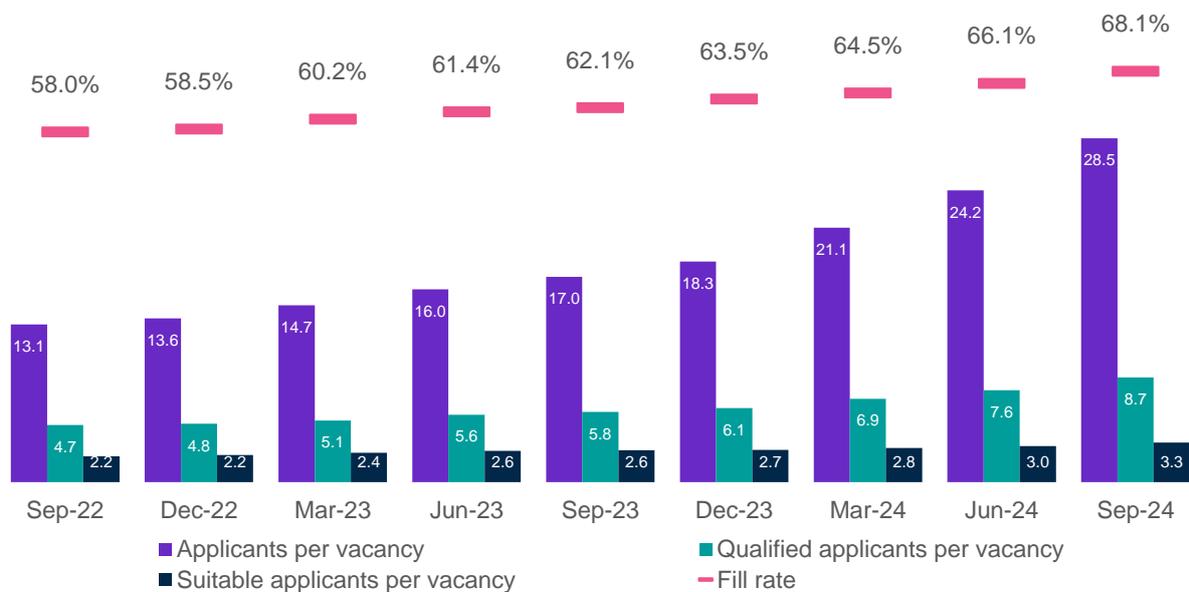
	September quarter 2024	Change over the quarter	Change over 12 months
Vacancy fill rate (%)	68.1%	↑2.0% pts	↑6.0% pts
Applicants per vacancy (no.)	28.5	↑4.3	↑11.5
Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	8.7	↑1.1	↑2.9
Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	3.3	↑0.3	↑0.6
Suitability gap (%)	62.3%	↑1.4% pts	↑7.5% pts

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA.

Note: The change from previous quarter refers to the change from June quarter 2024 to September quarter 2024. The change from the previous year refers to the change from September quarter 2023 to September quarter 2024.

The fill rate across all occupations increased by 2.0 percentage points to 68.1% over the September quarter 2024 (Table 1 and Figure 1).¹ It increased by 6.0 percentage points over the last 12 months to the September quarter 2024. The increase in the fill rate over the quarter and past 12 months is supported by increases in the total number of applicants, qualified applicants, and suitable applicants per vacancy over the current quarter and the past 12 months.

Figure 1: Fill rate (%) and total, qualified, and suitable applicants per vacancy (no.), national level



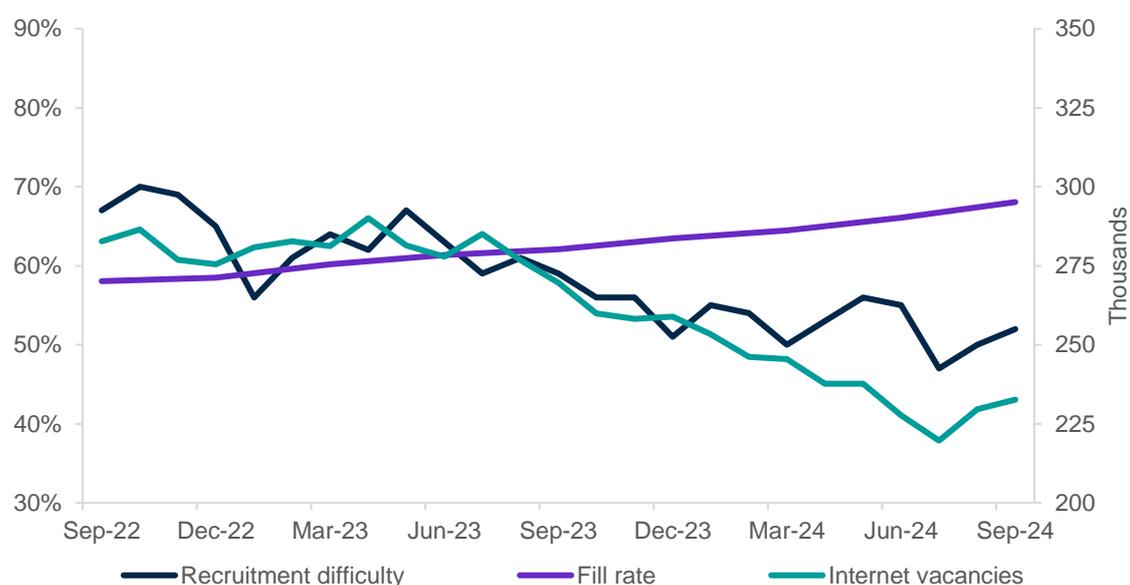
Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA.

¹ The fill rate and other metrics in the table are based on using 12 months of data leading to the latest quarter. Using a rolling annual period, as opposed to the latest quarter itself, removes the impact of data volatility attributable to SERA sampling, whereby concentrations of sampling with respect to different occupational major groups can occur at different times of a year.

Rising fill rates potentially indicate easing employer difficulty in filling vacancies, and is consistent with movement in labour market indicators, signalling easing labour market conditions.

The recent September month Labour Force survey data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that the unemployment rate has increased by 0.5 percentage points to 4.1% over the 12 months to September 2024. The number of internet vacancies, as measured by Jobs and Skills Australia’s Internet Vacancy Index, and the recruitment difficulty rate, from Jobs and Skills Australia’s Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey, have been trending down since mid-2023, generally. Further, they are both lower than September 2023 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Fill rate (%) and monthly recruitment difficulty rate (%) (left axis), and monthly internet vacancy index (right axis), national level



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia: SERA; Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey; and Internet Vacancy Index (seasonally adjusted).

In September quarter 2024, the suitability gap increased by 1.4 percentage points to 62.3%. The gap also increased by 7.5 percentage points over the past 12 months to the current quarter. The suitability gap captures the percentage of applicants who have the required qualifications but are deemed unsuitable by employers for the job advertised, leading to a gap between the number of qualified applicants and suitable applicants.

The increase in suitability gap is consistent with the softening of the labour market conditions which has started since late 2023. With easing labour market conditions, employers may be able to exercise greater scrutiny of candidates at recruitment. More analysis of suitability gaps is discussed in the spotlight analysis section.

Results by region

Metropolitan area

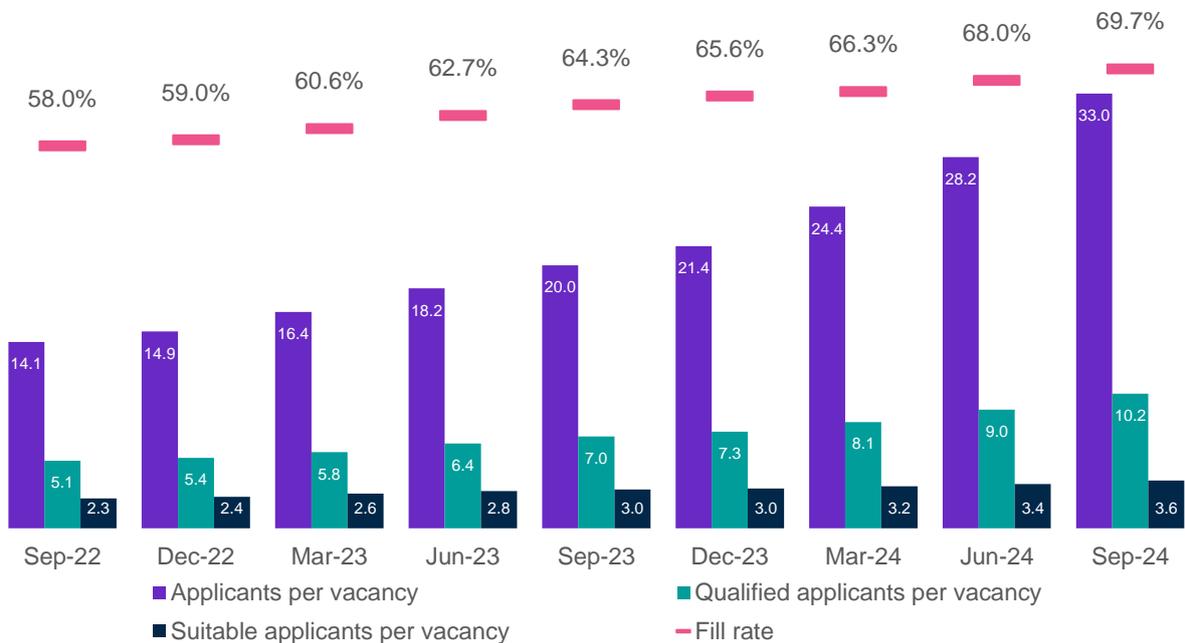
Table 2: Metropolitan snapshot

	September quarter 2024	Change over the quarter	Change over 12 months
Vacancy fill rate (%)	69.7%	↑1.8% pts	↑5.5% pts
Applicants per vacancy (no.)	33.0	↑4.8	↑13.0
Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	10.2	↑1.2	↑3.3
Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	3.6	↑0.3	↑0.7
Suitability gap (%)	64.4%	↑1.8% pts	↑6.9% pts

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA.

The national metropolitan (metro) area fill rate increased by 1.8 percentage points to 69.7% over the September quarter 2024, and by 5.5 percentage points from the September quarter 2023 (Table 2). This is supported by the increases in the total number of applicants, qualified applicants, and suitable applicants per vacancy, over the quarter and in the last 12 months (Figure 3). In the current quarter, the suitability gap increased to 64.4%.

Figure 3: Fill rate (%) and total applicants, qualified, and suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA.

Regional area

Table 3: Regional Snapshot

	September quarter 2024	Change over the quarter	Change over 12 months
Vacancy fill rate (%)	62.9%	↑1.7% pts	↑4.8% pts
Applicants per vacancy (no.)	17.4	↑2.7	↑7.1
Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	5.3	↑0.7	↑2.0
Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	2.4	↑0.3	↑0.4
Suitability gap (%)	55.3%	↑0.4% pts	↑13.3% pts

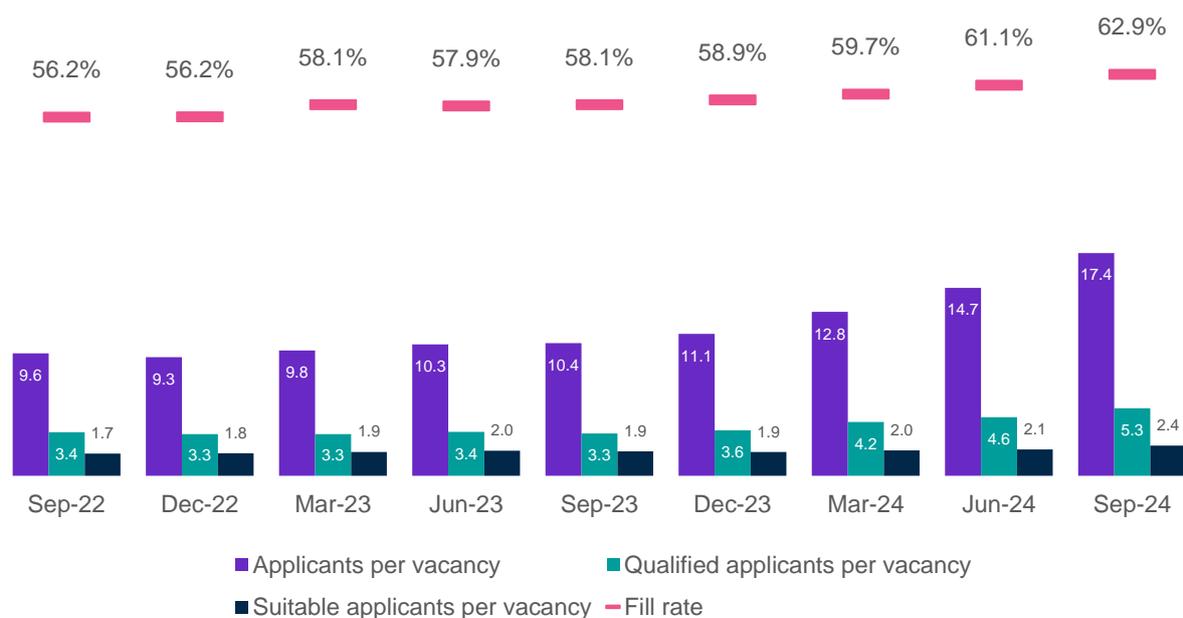
Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA.

The national regional fill rate increased by 1.7 percentage points to 62.9% in September quarter 2024 and by 4.8 percentage points over the past 12 months (Table 3 and Figure 4).

However, in regional areas, the fill rates remained well below those of metro areas. The average difference in fill rates between the two areas has widened over time from 1.9 percentage points in September quarter 2022 to 6.8 percentage points in September quarter 2024, indicating shortage pressures in metro areas are easing faster. This is supported by the much greater pool of total applicants, qualified applicants and suitable applicants in metro areas compared to regional areas.

Total applicants, qualified applicants and suitable applicants have also increased in regional areas. In the September quarter 2024, the suitability gap also increased to 55.3%.

Figure 4: Fill rate (%) and total applicants, qualified, and suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA.

Results by Skill Level

In both the September quarter 2024 and over the past 12 months to the current quarter, fill rates improved across all Skill Level 1 to 4 occupations. This is supported by increases in the total number of applicants, qualified applicants, and suitable applicants per vacancy for these skill level occupation groups (Figure 5).

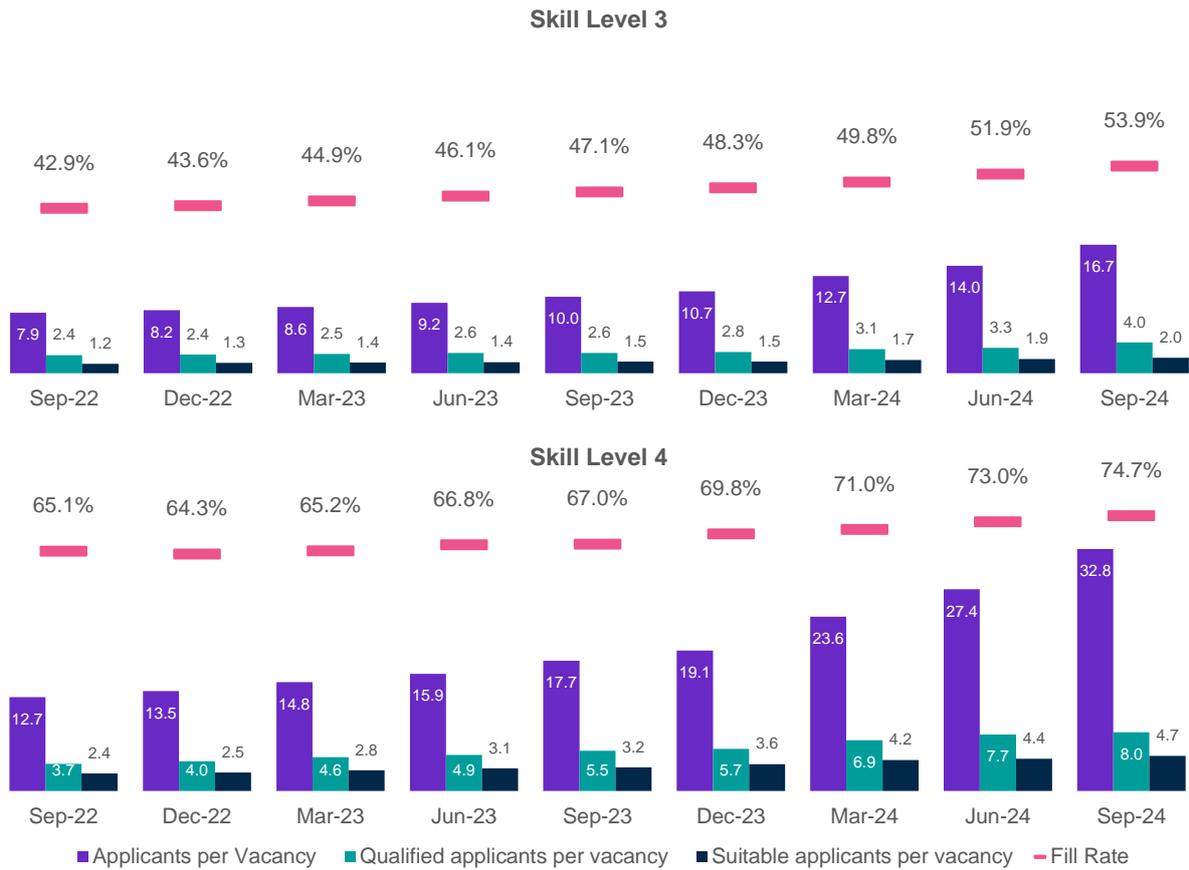
Despite the increase in fill rates for Skill Level 3 occupations, over the quarter and past 12 months, the fill rate remains very low at 53.9% and is significantly lower than the fill rates of other skill level occupation groups. These occupations typically require a Certificate III/IV and Vocational Education and Training provides the primary pathway to the labour market.

In addition, the suitability gap (not shown in Figure 5) for Skill Level 3 occupations has the highest recent increases compared to other Skill Levels. It increased by 5.7 percentage points over the quarter and 13.5 percentage points over the past 12 months. Increases in the suitability gap and improvements in fill rates may both be attributable to softening labour market conditions.

Figure 5: Fill rate (%), total applicants, qualified and suitable applicants per vacancy (no.), by Skill Level



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA.



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA.

Results by major group

Table 4: ANZSCO² Major group snapshot

Major group		June quarter 2024	Change over the quarter	Change over 12 months
Managers	Vacancy fill rate (%)	82.6%	↑0.8% pts	↑5.0% pts
	Applicants per vacancy (no.)	36.9	↑4.4	↑12.0
	Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	11.8	↑1.3	↑2.9
	Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	4.3	↑0.4	↑0.8
	Suitability gap (%)	63.4%	↑0.3% pts	↑3.1% pts

² Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations

Major group		June quarter 2024	Change over the quarter	Change over 12 months
Professionals	Vacancy fill rate (%)	67.7%	↑2.9% pts	↑5.8% pts
	Applicants per vacancy (no.)	28.9	↑3.9	↑11.3
	Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	10.7	↑1.2	↑3.6
	Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	3.1	↑0.3	↑0.5
	Suitability gap (%)	71.0%	↑0.2% pts	↑7.1% pts
Technicians and Trades Workers	Vacancy fill rate (%)	54.3%	↑2.5% pts	↑5.9% pts
	Applicants per vacancy (no.)	20.6	↑3.3	↑7.7
	Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	5.8	↑1.1	↑2.1
	Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	2.2	↑0.3	↑0.5
	Suitability gap (%)	61.0%	↑3.2% pts	↑10.1% pts
Community and Personal Service Workers	Vacancy fill rate (%)	74.5%	↑2.2% pts	↑8.9% pts
	Applicants per vacancy (no.)	24.0	↑5.0	↑12.0
	Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	6.8	↑1.1	↑2.9
	Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	3.1	↑0.2	↑0.6
	Suitability gap (%)	53.8%	↑5.5% pts	↑18.5% pts
Clerical and Administrative Workers	Vacancy fill rate (%)	81.5%	↑0.6% pts	↑3.8% pts
	Applicants per vacancy (no.)	52.5	↑0.4	↑19.5
	Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	9.2	↑0.4	↑1.0
	Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	6.1	↑0.2	↑1.2
	Suitability gap (%)	34.3%	↑0.1% pts	↓-6.8% pts
Sales Workers	Vacancy fill rate (%)	71.7%	↑1.6% pts	↓-2.3% pts
	Applicants per vacancy (no.)	26.4	↑4.9	↑9.2
	Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	4.9	↑1.2	↑1.8
	Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	3.1	↑0.3	↑0.8
	Suitability gap (%)	35.9%	↑11.7% pts	↑11.0% pts
Machinery Operators and Drivers	Vacancy fill rate (%)	70.4%	↑0.3% pts	↑7.6% pts
	Applicants per vacancy (no.)	30.1	↑5.4	↑15.2
	Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	9.6	↑0.1	↑3.3
	Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	3.7	↑0.3	↑0.8
	Suitability gap (%)	61.6%	↓-2.3% pts	↑6.9% pts

Major group		June quarter 2024	Change over the quarter	Change over 12 months
Labourers	Vacancy fill rate (%)	58.7%	↑1.5% pts	↑0.9% pts
	Applicants per vacancy (no.)	13.6	↑2.9	↑6.9
	Qualified applicants per vacancy (no.)	4.2	↑1.1	↑1.6
	Suitable applicants per vacancy (no.)	2.2	↑0.2	↑0.6
	Suitability gap (%)	48.1%	↑11.9% pts	↑9.6% pts

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA.

In the September quarter 2024 and over the past 12 months, the fill rates and the total, qualified and suitable applicants per vacancies improved for almost all major group occupations (Table 4). Consistent with analysis reported in previous sections of the report, the improvements align with easing labour market conditions.

However, for Sales Workers, the fill rate fell by around 2.3 percentage points over the past 12 months, despite increasing by 1.6 percentage points over the current quarter.

For Clerical and Administrative Workers, the suitability gap fell 6.8 percentage points over the past 12 months, with only a marginal increase in the current quarter. The opposite occurred for Machinery Operators and Drivers, where the suitability gap fell in the current quarter but increased over the past 12 months.

Spotlight analysis: suitability gap

The analysis examines the suitability gap and its relationship with various labour market indicators, such as fill rates, the relationship between levels of job vacancies and persons unemployed, average work experience and qualification requirements, and business sizes.

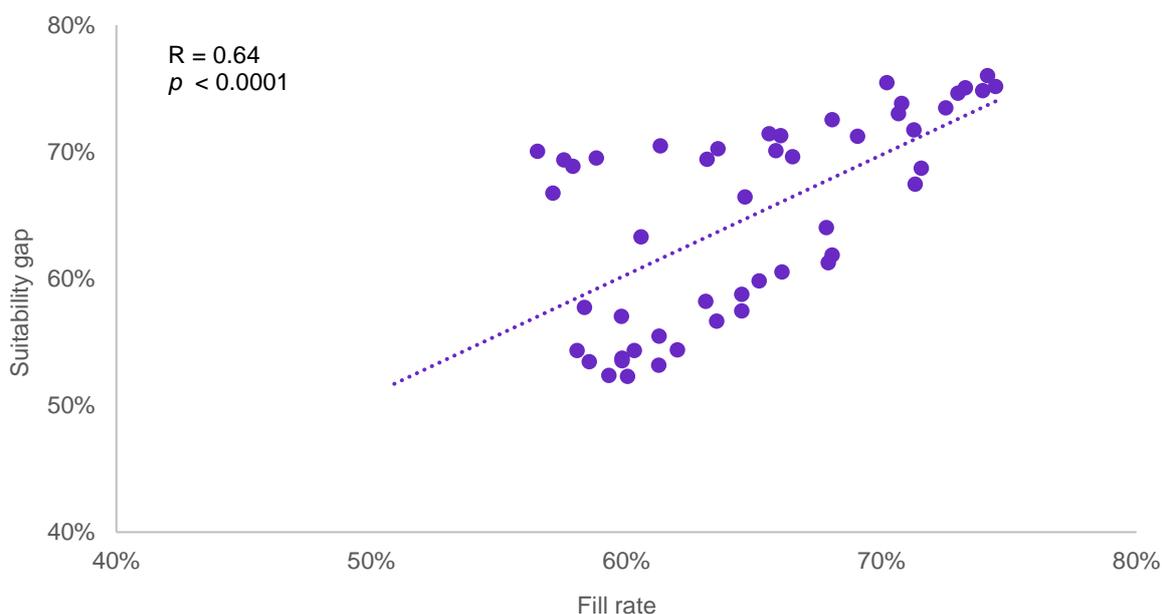
Suitability gap and labour market indicators

Suitability gap is defined as the difference between the number of qualified and suitable applicants per vacancy as a percentage of the number of qualified applicants per vacancy. It captures the percentage of applicants who have the required qualifications but are deemed unsuitable for the job advertised. A widening suitability gap may indicate either or both:

- higher expectation from employers on applicants' employability skills (such as communication skills and people skills) and/or work experience
- softer labour market conditions which allow employers to be more scrutinising when recruiting.

This section explores the correlations between suitability gaps and fill rates. The suitability gap is positively correlated with fill rates (Figure 6). The correlation is statistically significant. This indicates that when fill rates are high, and when labour market conditions are soft, the suitability gap is high.

Figure 6: Correlation of suitability gap with fill rate at national level, 2012-24



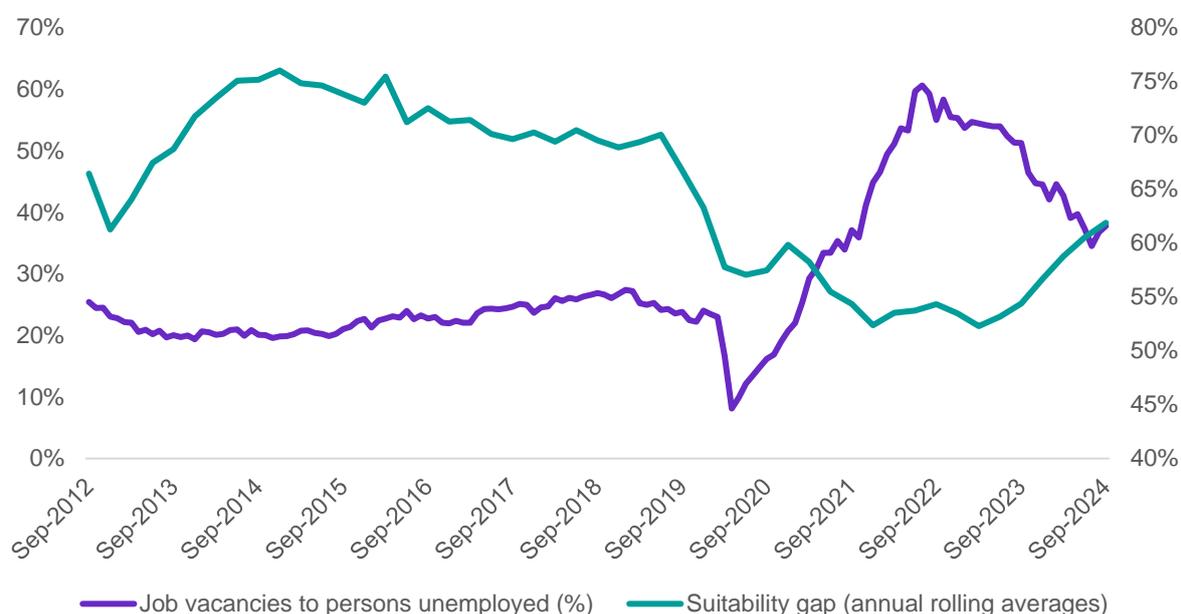
Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA, 2012-24; ABS, Labour Force, Australia, August 2024.

During soft labour market conditions, there are also more unemployed people for each job vacancy. A time series of suitability gap and ratio of job vacancies (using the Internet Vacancy Index) and the number of persons unemployed (Figure 7) shows that between 2012 and 2020, after the Global Financial Crisis and before the onset of the COVID pandemic, the Australian labour market was relatively soft with a relatively lower ratio of job vacancies to persons unemployed, and relatively higher suitability gap.

Post COVID pandemic, the labour market tightened, with a sharp rise in the ratio of job vacancies to persons unemployed (which peaked in August 2022), while the suitability gap

declined significantly over the same period. During this period, employers may have been less scrutinising when filling vacancies during very tight labour market conditions.

Figure 7: Job vacancies to persons unemployed (left axis, %), suitability gap (right axis, %), 2012-24



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA, 2012-24, Internet Vacancy Index, 2012-24; ABS, Labour Force, Australia, September 2024.

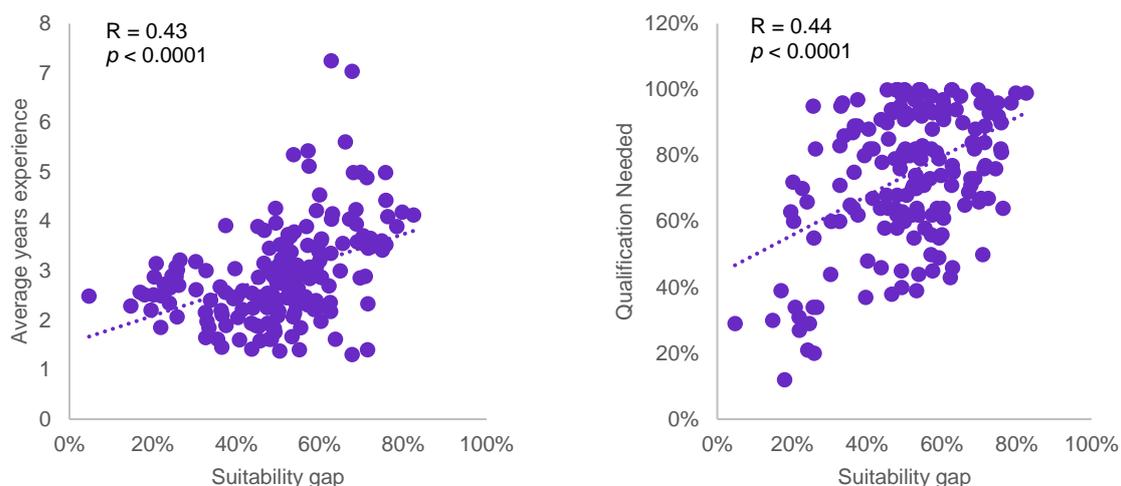
Suitability gap, work experience, and qualification requirements

Higher suitability gaps are associated with occupations where employers require a relatively high number of years of work experience, or employers that require mandatory qualifications.

In Figure 8, there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between suitability gap and average years of experience (left panel), and with the percentage of employers requiring qualifications for the vacancies advertised (right panel).

Figure 8 also indicates that suitability gaps are typically more sensitive to needing formal qualifications than they are to the average years of experience required. This may suggest that employers with mandatory qualification requirements are more scrutinising and/or have higher expectations when filling vacancies.

Figure 8: Correlation of suitability gap with average years of experience and percentage of qualification needed by employers, ANZSCO 3-digit minor groups, 2021-22 to 2023-24



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA, 2021-24.

Table 5 and Table 6 list the top and bottom 10 occupations, ranked by their suitability gaps in the 2023-24.

Among the top 10 occupations with the highest suitability gaps, the average years of experience required was 1.3 years higher than the national average of 2.9 years. The percentage of employers requiring qualifications was 15 percentage points higher than the national average of 73%. These occupations include very high skilled occupations related to finance, science roles, design, engineering, and ICT.

In contrast, the bottom 10 occupations with the lowest suitability gaps had an average years of experience requirement below the national average. The percentage of employers requiring qualifications was 30 percentage points lower than the national average. These occupations include managers in the retail and hospitality sector, while the other occupations were typically of lower skill levels compared to the top 10 list.

Within this bottom 10 list, Retail Manager (General) and Customer Service Manager had low suitability gaps but also very low percentage of employers requiring workers to have qualifications. This may mean that for these occupations, employers place more emphasis on the applicants' experience and potentially soft skills and other traits than qualifications.

Table 5: Top 10 occupations with the highest suitability gaps, 2023-24

ANZSCO title	Suitability gap (%)	Average experience (years)	Percentage qualification needed (%)
Finance Manager	83%	5.8	97%
Environmental Research Scientist	82%	3.9	94%
Graphic Designer	80%	2.6	71%
Architect	80%	4.6	96%
Interior Designer	78%	4.1	93%
Engineering Manager	78%	7.1	97%
Production or Plant Engineer	75%	3.7	93%
Occupational Health and Safety Adviser	75%	3.0	88%
Civil Engineering Draftsperson	75%	3.5	89%
Web Developer	75%	3.5	62%
National average	61%	2.9	73%

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA, 2023-24

Table 6: Bottom 10 occupations with the lowest suitability gaps, 2023-24

ANZSCO title	Suitability gap (%)	Average experience (years)	Percentage qualification needed (%)
Retail Manager (General)	10%	2.4	21%
Customer Service Manager	12%	3.3	12%
Sports Turf Trades Worker	14%	2.5	65%
Program or Project Administrator	14%	2.8	29%
Glazier	16%	2.6	84%
Landscape Gardener	16%	2.6	50%
Fire Protection Equipment Technician	18%	2.2	57%
Dental Assistant	18%	1.5	62%
Liaison Officer	20%	2.0	19%
Hotel or Motel Manager	20%	3.1	32%
National average	61%	2.9	73%

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA, 2023-24

Suitability gaps and business size

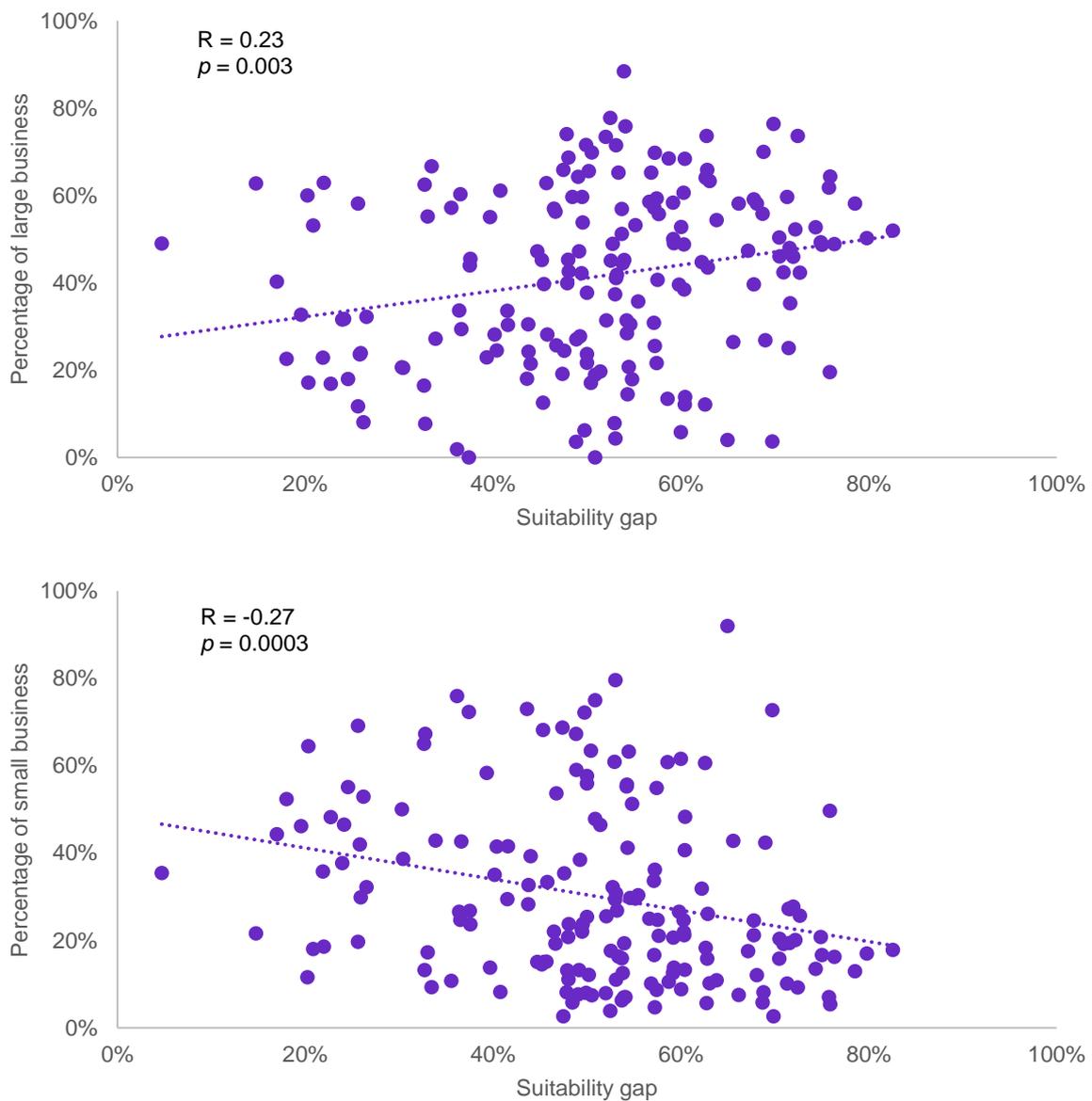
Figure 9 illustrates the correlation between suitability gaps and the percentage of employers of occupations that are small or large businesses. This was conducted for ANZSCO 3-digit minor groups from the 2021-22 to 2023-24.

The data shows that suitability gaps are positively correlated with minor groups in large businesses with 100 or more employees (top panel), and negatively correlated with minor

groups in small businesses with fewer than 20 employees (bottom panel). Both correlations are statistically significant.

This aligns with the observation that large businesses typically have higher expectations for work experience and employability skills compared to small businesses. Minor groups within larger businesses attract more total, qualified, and suitable applicants per vacancy. Consequently, larger businesses can be more selective, leading to higher suitability gaps. Conversely, small businesses attract fewer applicants on average and have lower expectations for work experience, resulting in smaller suitability gaps.

Figure 9: Correlation of suitability gap with the percentage of small and large businesses, ANZSCO 3-digit minor groups, 2021-22 to 2023-24³



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA, 2021-24

³ In this analysis, small businesses are defined as businesses with under 20 staff members but excluding sole traders, while large businesses are those with more than 100 staff members. This definition of business size is different from the ABS definitions and are used due to limitations in SERA data.

Explanatory Notes

The SERA is designed for the specific purpose of assessing occupational shortages for skilled occupations and provides a direct measure of the employer experience when recruiting. The survey receives around 2,000 responses each quarter from employers who have advertised vacancies online. Only those occupations with a sufficient quarterly sample size are included for analysis in this report to ensure data changes are more reflective of labour market developments.

The survey covers occupations, as defined by [Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations](#), generally requiring a university degree, trade apprenticeship or Certificate III or Certificate IV. As a result, the survey outcomes are reflective of occupations requiring post-school education and training.

The fill rate is used as a proxy for identifying occupations that may be in shortage: lower fill rates generally imply greater employer difficulties filling vacant positions. In contrast, higher fill rates suggest fewer challenges and in general, imply a lower likelihood of shortage.

Additional metrics collected in SERA include applicants on a per vacancy basis; the average number of total applicants; qualified applicants; suitable applicants; and the average years of labour market experience sought by employers (for definitions, refer to the following section). Movements in these variables add context to changes in fill rates over time.

Data found in Occupation Shortage Quarterly is not an indicator of occupations appearing on the 2024 Occupation Shortage List (OSL).

Caution should be exercised when interpreting data for Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory given lower sample sizes.

Definitions of metrics

The fill rate is the percentage of vacancies employers advertised that were filled. The metric is calculated by dividing the number of filled vacancies by total advertised vacancies.

The average number of applicants per vacancy is calculated as the sum of the number of applicants divided by the sum of advertised vacancies.

The average number of qualified applicants per vacancy is calculated as the sum of the number of qualified applicants divided by the sum of advertised vacancies. Qualified applicants are the applicants who are assessed by employers as meeting the required qualification criteria of an advertised vacancy.

The average number of suitable applicants per vacancy is calculated as the sum of the number of suitable applicants divided by the sum of advertised vacancies. Suitable applicants are those who are deemed by employers to be suitable for the job advertised.

The average years of labour market experience sought by employer is the average number of years that employers require applicants to have spent in relevant occupations and is calculated as the mean of the years required per employer.

Metropolitan area refers to Capital City, while **Regional area** refers to Rest of State locations. Capital City and Rest of State areas are defined by the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\): Volume 1 – Main Structure and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas](#), July 2016.

Suitability gap is the difference between the average number of qualified applicants per vacancy and the average number of suitable applicants per vacancy. A suitability gap

greater than zero would mean that there are fewer suitable applicants than qualified applicants. The formula for calculating the suitability is:

$$\text{Suitability gap} = \left(1 - \frac{\frac{\text{Number of Suitable applicants}}{\text{Number of vacancy}}}{\frac{\text{Number of Qualified applicants}}{\text{Number of vacancy Qualified applicants known}}} \right) * 100\%$$

For more information, contact OccupationShortageList@jobsandskills.gov.au.

Please refer to [Occupation Shortage Analysis | Jobs and Skills Australia](#) for more information on the 2024 OSL.