



Vacancy Report

July 2023

Released 16 August 2023

Internet Vacancy Index Key Points

This month's report shows underlying labour market conditions continuing to stabilise, with online job advertisements increasing slightly at the national level and across many regions. Online recruitment grew in some regional areas and demand spiked for skilled trades, hospitality workers and some clerical workers. Nationally, vacancy numbers remain at relatively high levels.

- Online job advertisements at the national level increased in July 2023 (up by 2.1% or 6,000 job advertisements) to stand at 283,600.
 - Over the year to July 2023, online job advertisements decreased by 4.1% (or 12,000 job advertisements). Vacancy numbers, though, are at high levels historically with this decline coming from a near series peak recorded in May 2022.
- Recruitment activity increased in five states and territories over the month. The strongest increase was recorded in the Northern Territory (up by 4.0% or 130 job advertisements), followed by New South Wales (up by 3.9% or 3,300) and Queensland (up by 2.9% or 1,700).
- Over the month, advertisements increased across all Skill Level groups. While online job advertisements for Skill Level 1 and 5 occupations were largely stable (up by 0.1% and 0.3% respectively), recruitment activity for Skill Level 2 to 4 (commensurate with VET qualifications ranging from Certificate II to Advanced Diploma) increased by as much as 4.7% over the month.
- Recruitment activity increased across all major occupation groups, except Managers and Labourers, in July 2023. The strongest increases were observed for Community and Personal Service Workers (up by 5.6% or 1,700 job advertisements over the month) and Technicians and Trades Workers (up by 4.6% or 1,700).
- In three-month moving average terms, recruitment activity was concentrated in capital cities (72.1%) in July 2023. Over the last 12 months, job advertisement growth in regional areas continued (up by 2.8%), whereas a decrease was recorded for capital cities (down by 9.4%).
- Each month the IVI report provides a more detailed analysis of a particular labour market segment. This month's report spotlights demand for Bricklayers and Stonemasons.

283,600

Seasonally adjusted

▲ 2.1% Monthly change

▼ 4.1% Annual change

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Demand trends for Bricklayers and Stonemasons

Recent demand for Bricklayers and Stonemasons has been evident in IVI results, with internet vacancies for these occupations almost trebling since the lows recorded in April 2020. Despite the demand, these occupations have experienced ongoing skill shortages for over two decades. Increasing inclusivity in a traditionally male-dominated occupation may be one strategy deployed by businesses to adequately staff current and future projects.

- Bricklayers and Stonemasons and other specialised construction trades fill essential, though smaller, segments of the Construction industry alongside larger employing trades.¹
- Outside Construction, Bricklayers and Stonemasons contribute to numerous manufacturing sectors and other specialised services, including heritage restoration and remedial work.
- Recent IVI results indicate robust growth in recruitment activity has occurred since the COVID-19 shock, outpacing other specialised construction trades.
 - Since the lows observed in April 2020, online job advertisements for Bricklayers and Stonemasons have increased by 189% (or 90 job advertisements) across Australia by July 2023.
 - Since December 2022, online job advertisements for Bricklayers and Stonemasons have increased by 24.1% (or 20 job advertisements) across Australia by July 2023.
 - Growth in online job advertisements for these occupations since December 2022 has been concentrated in capital cities (up by 32.6%) compared with regional Australia where levels have been relatively stable (down by 1.1%).²
- These occupations have experienced long-running skill shortages and analysis indicates shortages have been apparent for most years over the last two decades.³
 - JSA undertakes a survey of employers who have recently advertised to inform its skill shortage research. In 2022-23, very few Bricklayer positions were filled (16%) and nearly all applicants were considered to be unsuitable (85%). Reasons why applicants were unsuitable included lack of qualifications, limited trade experience or applicants had poor professional references and work history.
 - Over the same period, surveyed employers filled fewer than 30% of advertised Stonemason vacancies. Reflecting the tight labour market, 45% of surveyed employers were willing to compromise and hire experienced but unqualified tradespeople for these roles.



1 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, June 2023.

2 Jobs and Skills Australia, unpublished Internet Vacancy Index data, 3-month average data June 2023.

3 Jobs and Skills Australia, *Skills Priority List*, 2022.

- National Centre for Vocational Education Research data on Bricklayer and Stonemason apprenticeships suggest that while apprenticeship completions were at historic lows, commencements were up in 2022.⁴
 - Completions were at their lowest level in 18 years, with 380 recorded in 2022.
 - Stakeholder feedback collated in the process of compiling JSA's Skills Priority List indicates that apprenticeship shortfalls are not due to a lack of available places, with a surplus of apprenticeship positions through much of 2022-23. This trend is unfortunately not limited to Bricklayers and Stonemasons, but is evident across many Technicians and Trades Worker occupations.
 - There were around 1,200 commencements recorded in 2022, with this being the largest new cohort since 2016.
 - It is important to note this cohort will not make an immediate impact on shortages in this labour market, with these apprentices not due to complete their training until 2025 and 2026.
- There is also considerable demand for Stonemasons given their unique skills and abilities in undertaking heritage restoration projects. Some examples include:
 - The restoration of World Heritage listed Fremantle Prison in Western Australia and various projects funded under the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's Australian Heritage Grants, such as the Abbotsford Covent preservation works in Victoria.
- Considering the indications of demand for workers in these occupations, whether in recent IVI results, employers' signalling of recruitment difficulties, or state and federal budget allocations to heritage restoration projects, new attraction strategies may be the defining characteristic of businesses that will navigate shortages most successfully.
 - Female participation in Bricklayer and Stonemason apprenticeships is increasing, up from 0.9% to 1.4% over five years to 2022.⁵ This suggests strategies such as female trade ambassadors are affecting change albeit at a slow rate.
 - Policy makers in this area should be aware of structural issues employers face that may be hampering the recruitment of female workers. These include lack of separate toilet and changing facilities, need to purchase female uniforms, the availability and location of training facilities, and development of specific HR policies and guidelines needed in a gender balanced workplace.

⁴ National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Apprentices and trainees 2022: December quarter, 2023.

⁵ Ibid.

The Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) is a monthly data series measuring online job advertisements, compiled by Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA). The IVI counts job advertisements newly lodged on the SEEK, CareerOne and Workforce Australia online job boards. Commencing in 2006, the IVI is the longest continuous time series for vacancy data in Australia. JSA research indicates the proportion of all vacancies covered by IVI has increased from 38% in 2016 to 60% in 2022. More detail on the IVI is available at jobsandskills.gov.au/work/internet-vacancy-index.

Internet Vacancy Index Summary Sheet - July 2023

	Number of job ads (no.)	Monthly change (no.)	Monthly change (%)	Annual change (no.)	Annual change (%)
Australia	283,600	6,000	▲ 2.1%	-12,000	▼ -4.1%
New South Wales	87,100	3,300	▲ 3.9%	-7,200	▼ -7.6%
Victoria	72,100	210	▲ 0.3%	-4,900	▼ -6.4%
Queensland	60,900	1,700	▲ 2.9%	1,300	▲ 2.2%
South Australia	15,100	-310	▼ -2.0%	-620	▼ -4.0%
Western Australia	32,200	-340	▼ -1.0%	-780	▼ -2.4%
Tasmania	4,100	-50	▼ -1.2%	30	▲ 0.6%
Northern Territory	3,400	130	▲ 4.0%	530	▲ 18.6%
Australian Capital Territory	7,800	60	▲ 0.8%	100	▲ 1.3%
Managers	31,300	-130	▼ -0.4%	120	▲ 0.4%
Professionals	83,900	510	▲ 0.6%	4,900	▲ 6.2%
Technicians and Trades Workers	39,200	1,700	▲ 4.6%	170	▲ 0.4%
Community and Personal Service Workers	32,300	1,700	▲ 5.6%	-2,000	▼ -5.8%
Clerical and Administrative Workers	42,600	870	▲ 2.1%	-3,400	▼ -7.4%
Sales Workers	20,800	420	▲ 2.1%	-3,400	▼ -14.1%
Machinery Operators and Drivers	15,000	80	▲ 0.5%	-1,300	▼ -8.0%
Labourers	17,700	-90	▼ -0.5%	-6,900	▼ -28.0%
Skill Level 1 - Bachelor degree or higher	105,200	100	▲ 0.1%	4,900	▲ 4.9%
Skill Level 2 - Advanced Diploma or Diploma	30,500	840	▲ 2.8%	-620	▼ -2.0%
Skill Level 3 - Certificate IV or III* (Skilled VET)	42,900	1,900	▲ 4.7%	580	▲ 1.4%
Skill Level 4 - Certificate II or III	74,100	2,300	▲ 3.2%	-6,600	▼ -8.2%
Skill Level 5 - Certificate I or secondary education	30,200	90	▲ 0.3%	-10,300	▼ -25.5%

*Includes at least two years of on-the-job training.

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, *Internet Vacancy Index*, July 2023, seasonally adjusted data.

The next IVI release is scheduled for 13 September 2023. The IVI is published on the JSA website at jobsandskills.gov.au/work/internet-vacancy-index.