



# Recruitment Spotlight: Employers' unrealised vacancies

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Jobs and Skills Australia's [Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey](#) (REOS) contacts employers across Australia each month to learn about their recruitment experiences and activity. While the core REOS questionnaire remains largely unchanged, from time-to-time short question modules on topics of interest are added.

This module which focused on 'unrealised vacancies' was conducted between 27 March 2023 and 20 July 2023. Unrealised vacancies are defined as vacancies which employers were not actively trying to fill at the time of being surveyed. Around 4,000 employers responded to this module over the period.

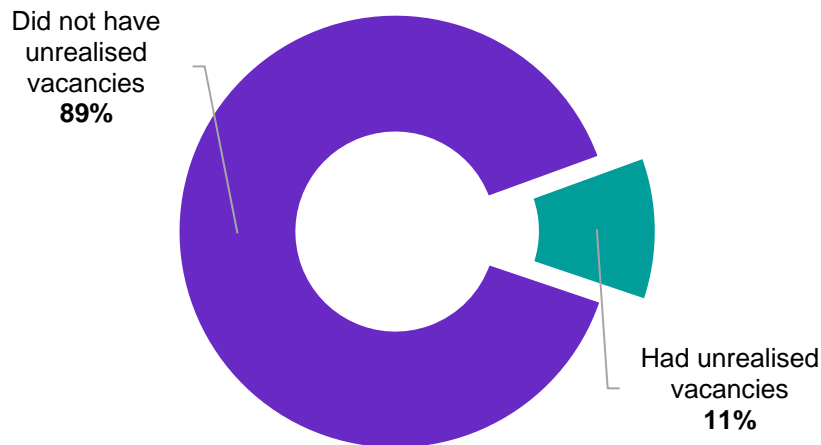
The module was conducted during a period of high recruitment activity, with skill shortage pressures prevalent across the economy and employers reporting high levels of recruitment difficulty. The timing of the inclusion of the module in the survey was deliberate, both to gain an understanding of the level of 'hidden vacancies' we were hearing about anecdotally from our team of survey interviewers, and to gain employers' additional perspectives on the challenges of sourcing labour for their businesses. The key finding from the module was that 11% of survey respondents had vacancies they were not actively trying to fill, largely because they felt they would not receive enough applicants or suitable applicants, or because they simply perceived it would be too difficult to recruit.

The core REOS still collected and reported on employer recruitment difficulty. Perhaps unsurprisingly, employers who tend to report high recruitment difficulty, such as those in regional areas or those recruiting for higher skill level positions were also the employers who had given up or delayed their recruitment activity.

## Headline results

Around one in ten employers (11%) reported having unrealised vacancies. For context, over this same period, 50% of employers had recruited in the past month, or were currently recruiting (for other vacancies).

**Figure 1: Proportion of employers with unrealised vacancies, 27 March 2023 to 20 July 2023**

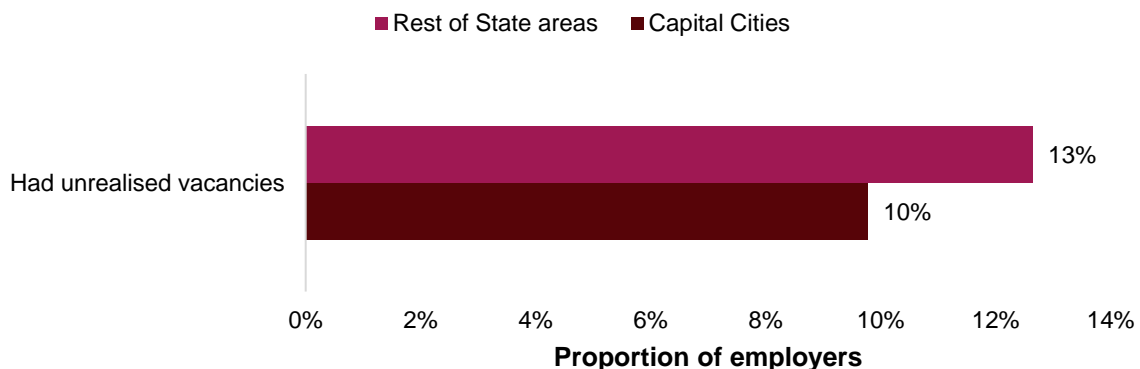


Source: Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey, July 2023.

## Unrealised vacancies by region type

A slightly higher proportion of employers in Rest of State areas had unrealised vacancies (13%) compared with employers in Capital Cities (10%). The difference was starker however when looking more remotely, with an even higher proportion of employers in Remote and Very Remote areas having unrealised vacancies (21%).

**Figure 2: Proportion of employers with unrealised vacancies, 27 March 2023 to 20 July 2023 – by region type**

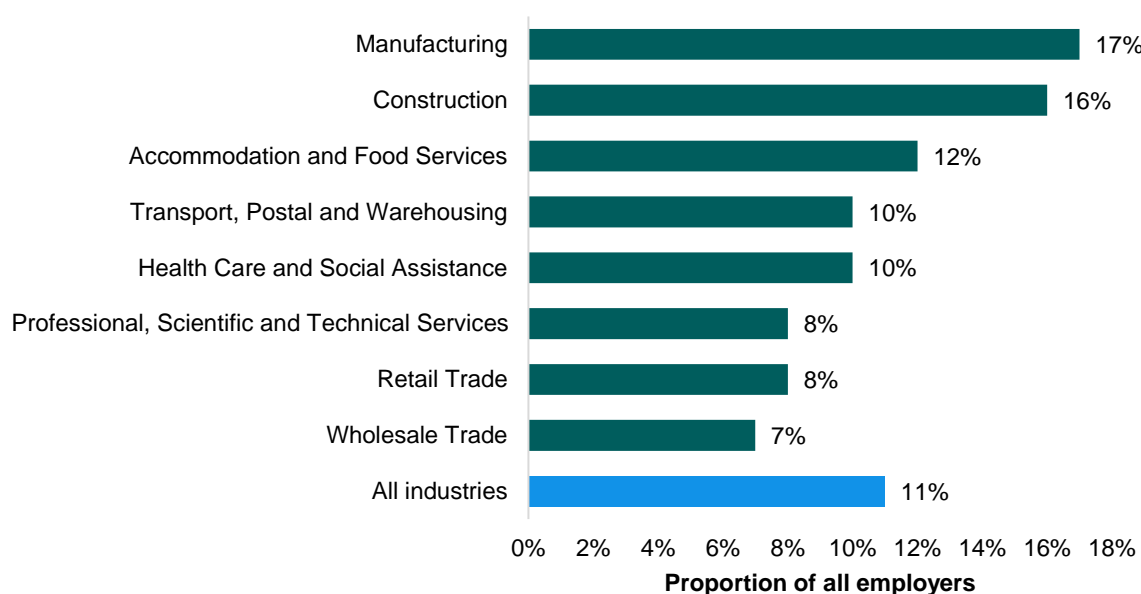


Source: Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey, July 2023

## Unrealised vacancies by industry

Manufacturing, Construction, and Accommodation and Food Services were the three industries with the highest proportion of employers with unrealised vacancies (17%, 16% and 12% respectively). By contrast, the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (8%), Retail Trade (8%) and Wholesale Trade (7%) industries had the lowest proportion of employers with unrealised vacancies.

**Figure 3: Proportion of employers with unrealised vacancies, 27 March 2023 to 20 July 2023 – by selected industries**



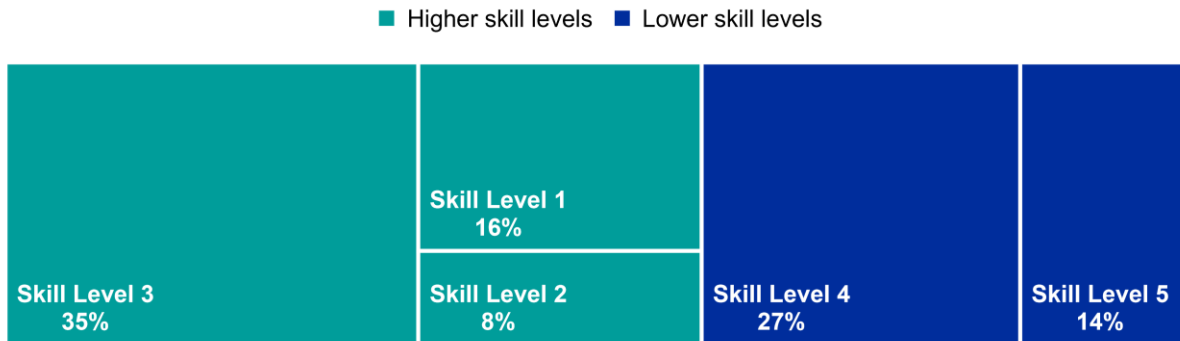
Source: Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey, July 2023.

## Occupation and skill level breakdown

Of employers with unrealised vacancies, the majority were for higher skill level occupations (59%). By comparison, 49% of employers looking for new staff were recruiting for higher skill level occupations over the same period.

Skill Level 3 occupations comprised 35% of all reported employers with unrealised vacancies, while more than one in four (27%) were for Skill Level 4 occupations, which made up the majority of lower skill level occupations (Figure 4).

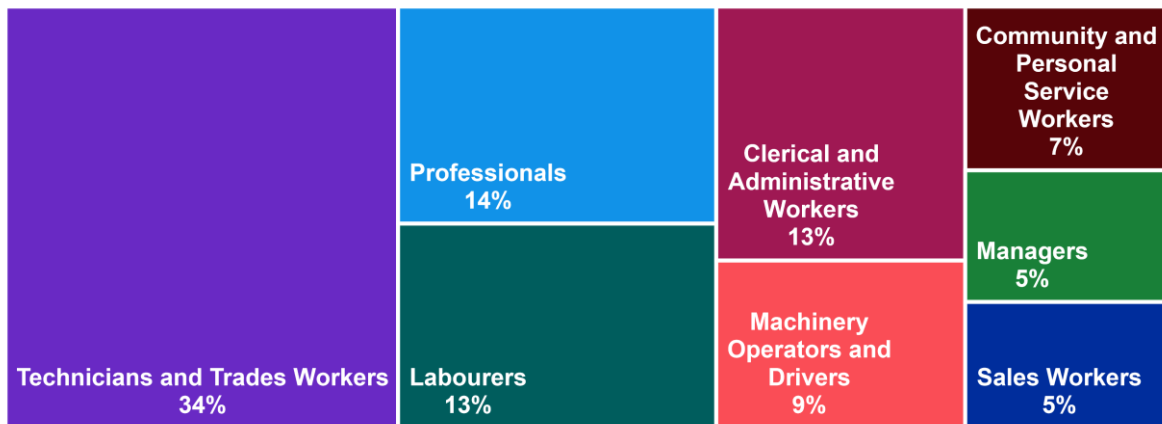
**Figure 4: Breakdown of employers with unrealised vacancies, 27 March 2023 to 20 July 2023 – by skill level of occupation of the vacancy**



Source: Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey, July 2023.

Of employers who had unrealised vacancies, Technician and Trades Worker occupations were the most common (34%), followed by Professionals (14%) and Labourers (13%). Technicians and Trades Workers were over-represented in unrealised vacancies compared to general recruitment over the period, as only one in four employers recruited for these occupations in their most recent recruitment rounds. This is perhaps not surprising as most employers have trouble filling these vacancies (when recruiting), and over half of employers reported perceived difficulty as the reason when having unrealised vacancies for Technician and Trades Worker occupations. Very few employers had unrealised vacancies for Managers and Sales Workers occupations (both 5%) (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Breakdown of employers with unrealised vacancies, 27 March 2023 to 20 July 2023 – by main occupation group of the vacancy**



Source: Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey, July 2023.

Despite employers over the last few years reporting generally above average difficulty when recruiting for Community and Personal Service Worker occupations, their reporting of unrealised vacancies was quite low, at 7%. Noting that this group includes Health and Welfare Support Workers, as well as Child Carers, Education Aides and Aged and Disabled Carers, one possible reason for this difference is that due to the frontline-nature of these jobs and easing difficulty over 2023, employers in this group are increasingly inclined to recruit for these vacancies. This is supported by data from JSAs Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) which shows consistently high volumes of vacancies advertised on the internet for these positions.

## Reasons for unrealised vacancies

Employers that had unrealised vacancies were asked why they were not actively trying to fill them. The top three responses were lack of suitable applicants; lack of applicants (overall); and the more general perception that the vacancy was too difficult to fill (Figure 6). Close to half (46%) of employers with unrealised vacancies noted at least one of these reasons, indicating that there was a large subset of employers who were generally discouraged from recruiting.

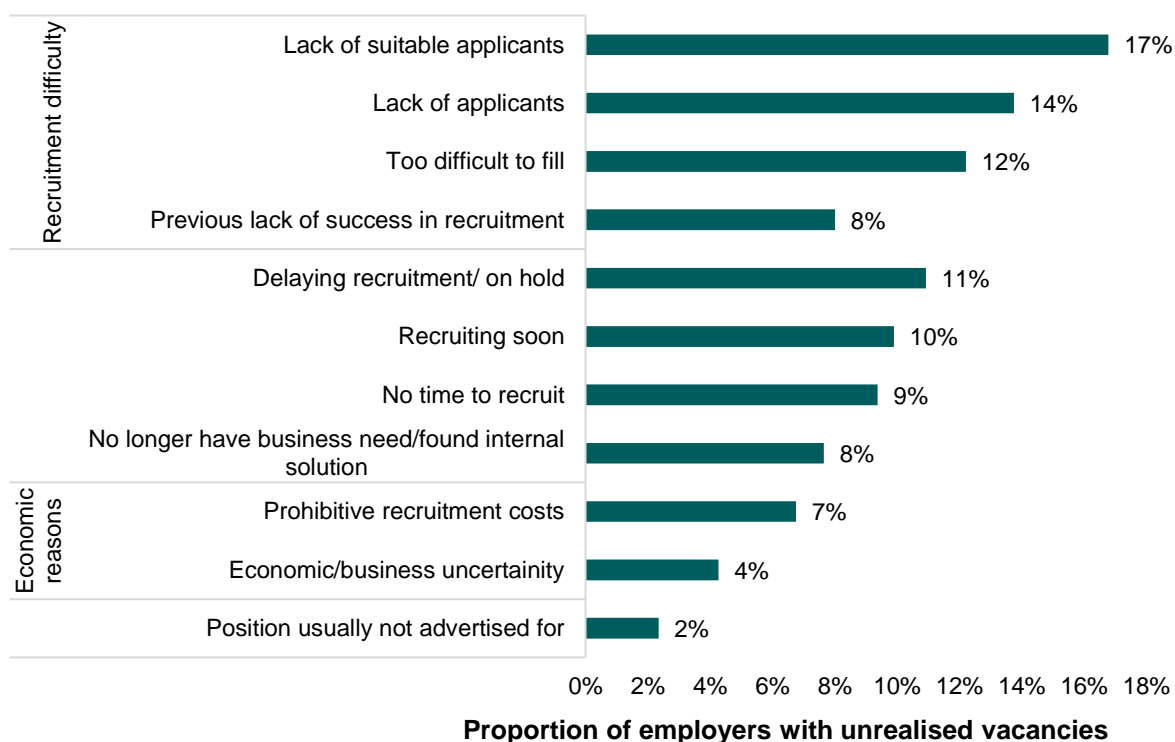
One in ten employers with unrealised vacancies noted that they would in fact be recruiting for the positions soon. A further one in ten (11%) employers said that they were delaying recruitment or had put things on hold — due to uncertainty around the position, or waiting for their seasonal busy time to begin, or other factors.

Economic reasons were noted by around 11% of employers — a mix of recruitment costs being too high and uncertainty surrounding the economic climate and their business.

Employers with unrealised vacancies for higher skill level occupations were more likely to report recruitment difficulty as a reason they were not trying to fill the vacancies; one example being an employer who had a vacancy for a plumber but was not actively trying to fill it due to a previous lack of success in advertising for the position.

Encouragingly, despite employers noting a variety of reasons for why they were not actively trying to fill these vacancies at the time of being surveyed, further evidence suggests that the majority of employers would try to recruit for these vacancies at *some point* in the future.

**Figure 6: Reasons employers had unrealised vacancies, 27 March 2023 to 20 July 2023**



Note: Some employer responses fall into more than one category.  
Source: Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey, July 2023.

## Technical notes

The *Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey* (REOS) is a telephone administered survey with the business owner or other person in the business responsible for recruitment.

All figures presented in this report have been weighted by location and workplace size, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics [Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits](#) (June 2018 to June 2022) publication. The weighted figures are intended to create nationally representative results by correcting for the oversampling of smaller regions compared with larger regions.

Data collected in the survey have been coded and reported according to the following ABS classifications:

- Industry is defined by the [Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification \(ANZSIC\)](#), 2006, Version 2.0.
- Occupation is defined by the [Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations \(ANZSCO\)](#), 2013, Version 1.3.
- 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.

## Background

Information in this report is based on the *Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey* (REOS), which is an ongoing survey of employers across Australia. Approximately 1,000 employers are surveyed each month, with data published on the Jobs and Skills Australia website ([jobsandskills.gov.au](https://jobsandskills.gov.au)). While the data are indicative of recruitment activity, they may be subject to seasonal factors and other volatility and should therefore be used with caution. The survey is targeted towards employers with five or more employees and excludes many government organisations. Further information is available at: [jobsandskills.gov.au/work/reos-survey-methodology](https://jobsandskills.gov.au/work/reos-survey-methodology)

REOS results may not reflect the full impact that outbreaks of COVID-19 and associated restrictions have had on employers and their recruitment experiences since the survey is unable to gather data from employers who have closed (even temporarily), and response rates can vary significantly by industry in areas that were under lockdown restrictions at the time of survey. The survey was paused and adapted, particularly during 2020, to reflect changing labour market conditions due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Note that data collection paused over the Christmas and New Year periods as follows:

- 21 December 2020 until 8 January 2021,
- 18 December 2021 to 7 January 2022 and
- 17 December 2022 to 9 January 2023.

Data in this release should be referenced as: *Jobs and Skills Australia, Recruitment Spotlight: Employers' unrealised vacancies, 4 September 2023.*

For additional information email: [REOS@jobsandskills.gov.au](mailto:REOS@jobsandskills.gov.au)