



# Vacancy Report

## August 2023

Released 13 September 2023

### Internet Vacancy Index Key Points

This month's report shows underlying labour market conditions holding relatively steady, with online job advertisements decreasing slightly at the national level and across some regions. Online recruitment grew in some regional areas and mixed results were recorded for Major Occupation and Skill Level groups. Nationally, vacancy numbers remain at relatively high levels.

- Online job advertisements at the national level decreased in August 2023 (down by 0.4% or 1,300 job advertisements) to stand at 282,400.
  - Over the year to August 2023, online job advertisements decreased by 6.0% (or 18,100 job advertisements). Vacancy numbers, though, are at high levels historically, with this decline coming from a near series peak recorded in June 2022.
- Recruitment activity increased in four states and territories over the month. The strongest increase was recorded in the Australian Capital Territory (up by 4.5% or 350 job advertisements), followed by Victoria (up by 1.8% or 1,300) and the Northern Territory (up by 1.0% or 30).
- Over the month, advertisements increased across three Skill Level groups. While online job advertisements for Skill Level 1 (commensurate with Bachelor degree or higher) occupations saw a comparatively large increase (up by 1.6% or 1,700 job advertisements), Skill Level 3 and 4 (commensurate with VET qualifications ranging from Certificate II to IV) occupations decreased (down by 1.5% and 1.8% respectively). Recruitment activity for Skill Level 2 and 5 occupations rose slightly over the month (up by 0.3% and 0.7% respectively).
- Recruitment activity increased across four Major Occupation groups in August 2023. The strongest increases were observed for Sales Workers (up by 4.6% or 970 job advertisements over the month) and Managers (up by 2.1% or 650).
- In three-month moving average terms, recruitment activity was concentrated in capital cities (71.9%) in August 2023. Over the last 12 months, job advertisements have decreased slightly in regional areas (down by 0.3%), whereas a larger decrease was recorded for capital cities (down by 10.4%).
- Each month the IVI report provides a more detailed analysis of a particular labour market segment. This month's report spotlights changing demand for Retail Managers.

**282,400**

Seasonally adjusted

▼ **0.4%** Monthly change

▼ **6.0%** Annual change

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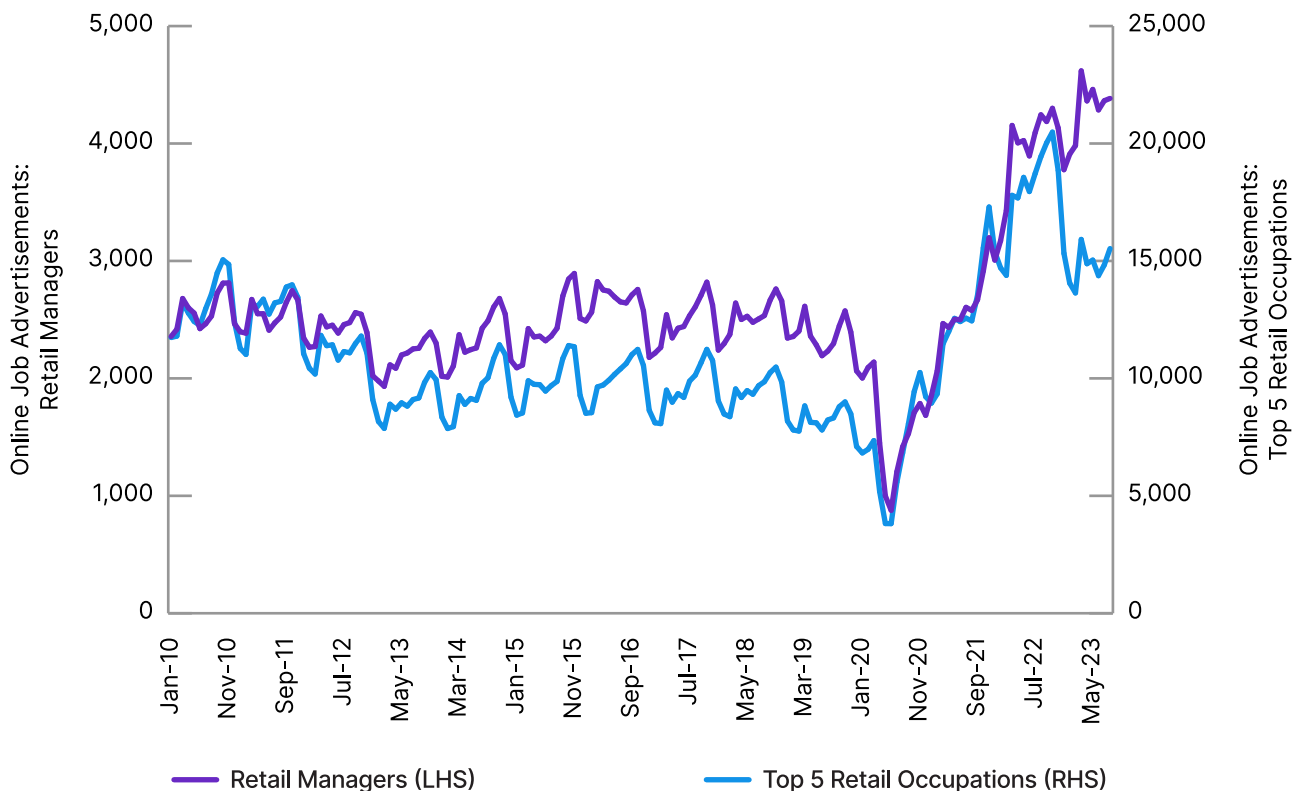
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## Changing Demand for Retail Managers

Internet Vacancy Index results suggest demand for Retail Managers underwent a shift through the COVID-19 recovery. Occupations in the Retail Trade industry experienced unprecedented growth in job advertisements during the recovery from the COVID-19 shock. However, unlike other large employing occupations in this industry, demand for Retail Managers has been sustained at a historically elevated level through the first half of 2023. The increase in online job advertisements may indicate employers are seeking to attract a larger proportion of high-skill workers for customer-facing roles in response to industry level structural changes accelerated by the pandemic.

- Over the 10 years to February 2020, monthly job advertisement counts for Retail Managers exhibited a flat trend while following the seasonal demand fluctuations for retail workers. Vacancy numbers were at their lowest around February and March and would peak in November with businesses hiring at the commencement of the Christmas shopping season.
- During the COVID-19 shock, recruitment activity for Retail Managers reached a series low of 880 job advertisements in June 2020.
- Vacancies seeking Retail Managers broke out of the historical bounds through the COVID-19 recovery period, increasing more than five-fold to reach a series high in March 2023 before declining slightly (by 5.1%) to 4,400 job advertisements in August 2023. These trends are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Online job advertisements for Retail Managers and the other top five employing occupations in Retail Trade<sup>1</sup>



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, *Internet Vacancy Index*, August 2023, 3-month average data.

<sup>1</sup> According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Census 2021, the top five occupations in Retail Trade includes Sales Assistants, Checkout Operators and Cashiers, Shelf Fillers, Storepersons and Pharmacy Sales Assistants (when excluding Retail Managers, the second largest employing occupation in this industry).

- The recent demand shift appears particularly pronounced in regional Australia. While online recruitment activity mirrored the stability observed in the national picture over the decade preceding the pandemic, recent growth outstripped that recorded in capital cities.
  - Over five years to August 2023, online job advertisements increased by 158.0% in regional Australia compared with 46.1% in capital cities.
- Other large employing occupations in Retail Trade recorded similar growth in vacancies following the COVID-19 shock. However, few have maintained the level of demand.
  - Over the year to August 2023, vacancies for Sales Assistants (General), the largest employing occupation in Retail Trade<sup>2</sup>, declined by 17.6%.
  - Declines in online job advertisements over this period were recorded for other major occupations in Retail Trade including Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers (down by 40.7%), Shelf Fillers (-48.6%), Storepersons (-18.2%) and Pharmacy Sales Assistants (-57.1%).
  - Online job advertisements for Retail Managers, in contrast, increased by 3.3% over this period.
- The employment trend for Retail Managers has generally paralleled vacancy numbers. Over the ten years preceding the pandemic, employment within this occupation increased by 1.5%. Since February 2020, employment has increased by 5.3%, including growth of 2.6% in the year from May 2022 to May 2023 (which is the most recent available data).<sup>3</sup> In this context, the increase in employment since the COVID-19 shock represents notable growth that neatly mirrors the five-fold increase in online job advertisements observed in IVI results.
- The Skills Priority List (SPL), a yearly publication produced by Jobs and Skills Australia, outlines occupations that are currently in shortage as well as their expected future demand. Retail Managers were listed as in national shortage with moderate future demand in the 2022 SPL.
  - Data used to underpin the 2022 SPL results showed employers for Retail Managers generally attracted a relatively small pool of suitable candidates and filled a low proportion of their advertised vacancies. That said, the equivalent results for 2023 have shown an improvement in the likelihood of filling vacancies, which is consistent with the strong growth in employment levels over the past year.
- Long-forecasted structural changes to the Retail Trade, potentially accelerated by the COVID-19 shock, create expanding role demands for customer-facing workers.<sup>4</sup> This may offer a plausible explanation for the increased demand for Retail Managers.
  - Retailers are increasingly using big data to manage their businesses, with Retail Managers expected to use data analytics to better understand and shape pre-purchasing decisions, build post-purchase loyalty and to make data-driven decisions about how best to allocate resources and staffing.
  - Increasing expectations of the 'retail experience' requiring a value-add for customers now more accustomed to the convenience of online shopping, amplifying emotional labour demands.
  - Managers are required to navigate the digital transformation of the retail workplace, with increased automation requiring strategic leadership to develop systems of reskilling and upskilling of the workforce.
- Retail Managers can be employed in a range of settings, such as Betting Agency Managers and Hair Salon Managers. However, the occupation Retail Manager (General) constitutes approximately 85% of employment in this unit group.<sup>5</sup>

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2021.

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Jobs and Skills Australia trend data. May 2023

4. Lipton, B., Vromen, A., Rutledge-Prior, S., Good, L., Cooper, R., & Foley, M. (2022) Technology and skills in the future of retail work: Summary of findings, University of Sydney Business School and Australian National University. doi: 10.25910/87xj-bx49

5. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2021.

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](https://jobsandskills.gov.au/work/internet-vacancy-index).

# Internet Vacancy Index Summary Sheet - August 2023

	Number of job ads (no.)	Monthly change (no.)	Monthly change (%)	Annual change (no.)	Annual change (%)
<b>Australia</b>	<b>282,400</b>	<b>-1,300</b>	<b>▼ -0.4%</b>	<b>-18,100</b>	<b>▼ -6.0%</b>
New South Wales	87,500	40	● 0.0%	-7,300	▼ -7.7%
Victoria	73,400	1,300	▲ 1.8%	-8,300	▼ -10.2%
Queensland	59,900	-780	▼ -1.3%	-340	▼ -0.6%
South Australia	14,500	-500	▼ -3.3%	-1,100	▼ -7.1%
Western Australia	32,000	-190	▼ -0.6%	-1,300	▼ -3.9%
Tasmania	3,900	-170	▼ -4.1%	-540	▼ -12.1%
Northern Territory	3,500	30	▲ 1.0%	330	▲ 10.6%
Australian Capital Territory	8,200	350	▲ 4.5%	350	▲ 4.4%
Managers	32,100	650	▲ 2.1%	-990	▼ -3.0%
Professionals	85,300	1,200	▲ 1.5%	3,800	▲ 4.7%
Technicians and Trades Workers	38,600	-470	▼ -1.2%	-1,600	▼ -4.1%
Community and Personal Service Workers	30,500	-1,600	▼ -4.9%	-4,900	▼ -13.9%
Clerical and Administrative Workers	43,400	730	▲ 1.7%	-3,900	▼ -8.2%
Sales Workers	22,100	970	▲ 4.6%	-2,000	▼ -8.5%
Machinery Operators and Drivers	14,500	-440	▼ -2.9%	-1,800	▼ -11.1%
Labourers	17,100	-560	▼ -3.2%	-7,300	▼ -29.8%
Skill Level 1 - Bachelor degree or higher	107,300	1,700	▲ 1.6%	3,200	▲ 3.1%
Skill Level 2 - Advanced Diploma or Diploma	30,600	90	▲ 0.3%	-1,300	▼ -4.1%
Skill Level 3 - Certificate IV or III* (Skilled VET)	42,000	-660	▼ -1.5%	-1,300	▼ -2.9%
Skill Level 4 - Certificate II or III	72,500	-1,300	▼ -1.8%	-9,700	▼ -11.7%
Skill Level 5 - Certificate I or secondary education	30,600	230	▲ 0.7%	-9,300	▼ -23.3%

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

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

The next IVI release is scheduled for 18 October 2023. The IVI is published on the JSA website at [jobsandskills.gov.au/work/internet-vacancy-index](https://jobsandskills.gov.au/work/internet-vacancy-index).