



Vacancy Report

October 2023

Released 15 November 2023

Internet Vacancy Index Key Points

This month's report shows underlying labour market conditions weakening, with online job advertisements decreasing at the national level and across most regions. While online recruitment grew in some regional areas, declines were recorded for all Major Occupation and Skill Level groups. October saw the largest single month decrease in job advertisements during 2023 and at the national level, job advertisements were at their lowest since December 2021.

- Online job advertisements at the national level decreased in October 2023 (down by 3.8% or 10,400 job advertisements) to stand at 261,200.
 - Over the year to October 2023, online job advertisements decreased by 9.1% (or 26,200 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 declined in four states and territories over the month, with Victoria recording the strongest decrease (down by 7.1% or 4,900).
 - Increases were recorded in the Northern Territory (up by 3.2% or 110 job advertisements), Western Australia (1.4% or 450) and South Australia (0.9% or 130).
- Over the month, advertisements decreased across all Skill Level groups, with smaller declines evident for higher Skill Level occupations. Online job advertisements for Skill Level 5 (commensurate with certificate I or secondary education) occupations recorded the strongest decrease (down by 8.6% or 2,500 job advertisements), followed by Skill Level 4 (commensurate with certificate II or III) occupations (4.7% or 3,200) and Skill Level 3 (commensurate with certificate IV or III) occupations (3.6% or 1,500).
- Recruitment activity decreased across all Major Occupation groups in October 2023. The strongest declines were among Labourers (down by 7.7% or 1,300 job advertisements) followed by Community and Personal Service Workers (7.3% or 2,200) and Sales Workers (6.0% or 1,200).
- Recruitment activity was concentrated in metropolitan Australia, with 71.5% of job advertisements in October 2023 found in Australia's capital cities. Over the last 12 months, job advertisements have decreased slightly in regional areas (down by 1.8%), whereas a larger decrease was recorded for capital cities (10.1%).
- Each month the IVI report provides a more detailed analysis of a particular labour market segment. This month's report spotlights demand for Hairdressers.

261,200

Seasonally adjusted

▼ **3.8%** Monthly change

▼ **9.1%** Annual change

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Too much off the top? Online jobs advertisements for hairdressers are declining

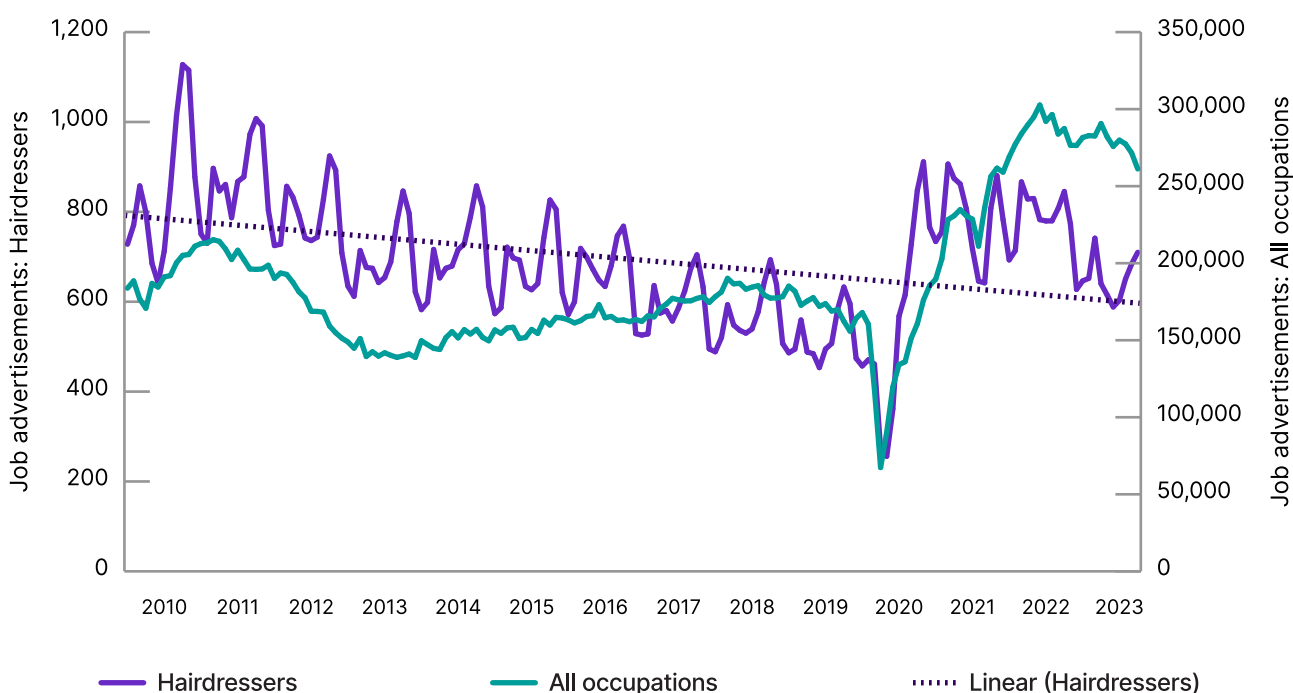
While hairdressing job advertisements rocketed immediately post COVID-19, Internet Vacancy Index results indicate the downward trend in online job advertisements for Hairdressers, observed in the decade preceding the pandemic, is returning. Growing rates of self-employment among Hairdressers and the ineffectiveness of typical advertising methods may go some way to explaining this trend. Stakeholder feedback also indicates challenges exist in securing suitable and qualified staff. Encouragingly, recent vocational education and training data shows increasing apprenticeship commencements and completions.

Trends in Hairdresser job advertisements

Across the decade preceding the pandemic, online job advertisements for Hairdressers showed a downward trend. Following the COVID-19 shock, though, demand for Hairdressers increased notably (at a rate exceeding the all-occupation average). While vacancy numbers peaked in March 2021, the downward trend resumed. These trends are illustrated in Figure 1.¹

- Over the decade to January 2020, online job advertisements for Hairdressers decreased by 37.2% (or 270 job advertisements) across Australia. Job advertisements for all occupations declined by 1.0% at the national level over this period.
- Over a six-month window between May and November 2020, Hairdresser vacancies increased by 256.0% (or 660 job advertisements). It took more than two years for the all occupations average to increase by a similar percentage (with total vacancy numbers rising by 242.1% from June 2020 to October 2022).
- Despite the rapid growth of demand, it has not been sustained. Over the five years to October 2023, online job advertisements for Hairdressers increased by 2.4% (or 20 job advertisements). In comparison, vacancies for all occupations increased by 49.1% over this period.

Figure 1: All occupations and hairdresser job advertisements, January 2010 to October 2023



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, 'Internet Vacancy Index', three-month averaged and seasonally adjusted data, October 2023.

1. Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', three-month averaged data, October 2023.

Notable differences are evident in the distribution of vacancies between capital cities and regional Australia across states and territories.² The concentration of online job advertisements for Hairdressers in capital cities (73.5%) marginally exceeded the all-occupation average (71.5%) in October 2023.

- On average across 2023, vacancies for Hairdressers were predominately in capital cities. Advertisements for Hairdressers were most concentrated in Adelaide (96.4% of all hairdressing advertisements in South Australia were in its capital city), followed by Perth (91.1%) and Melbourne (84.3%). However, the distribution of online job advertisements was less centralised in the other states, in Queensland only 57.7% were in Brisbane; 66.2% in Hobart; and in New South Wales, 67.4% of job advertisements were in Sydney.

Hairdressers are in short supply

Jobs and Skills Australia's Skills Priority List 2023 highlights the persistent skills shortage for Hairdressers.³ This research suggest most Hairdresser applicants lack suitable qualifications or experience, with employers turning to alternative methods to fill vacancies and even declining available work.

Jobs and Skills Australia undertakes a survey of employers who have recently advertised to inform its skill shortage research. In 2022-23, fewer than half of surveyed Hairdresser vacancies were filled (44.8%) and most applicants were considered unsuitable (84.7%). Around two-thirds of qualified applicants were considered unsuitable.

- The most frequently reported reasons candidates were deemed unsuitable were the lack of experience (69.0%) or qualifications (64.3%), and factors related to either poor presentation or performance during the application or interview process (42.9%).
- Employers with unfilled vacancies mostly planned to readvertise. Either rerunning the same advertisement (84.6%) or seeking candidates through alternative means such as word-of-mouth (50.0%).
- Around one in ten employers intended to cancel or turn down work due to unfilled vacancies.

This is complemented by another survey run by Jobs and Skills Australia, the Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey, which indicates that recruitment difficulty is more prevalent when recruiting for Hairdressers compared with the average of all occupations.⁴

The pipeline looks (somewhat) positive

National Centre for Vocational Education Research data shows both Hairdresser apprenticeship and traineeship commencements and completions are increasing. Over the five years to March 2023, the number of Hairdresser apprentices commencing increased by 19.0% to 4,110 and completions by 8.3% to 1,960.⁵

However, the rate of withdrawal from Hairdresser apprenticeships signals an area with potential to expand the supply of qualified and experienced early career Hairdressers.

- Over the year to March 2023, there were 3,900 cancellations or withdraws from Hairdresser apprenticeships or traineeships.⁶

Many factors can induce apprentices to withdraw from training. That said, the Fair Work Ombudsman's Hairdressing Apprentice Initiative identified issues related to pay rates, weekend, public holiday and overtime pay, break and leave entitlements, and unpaid work as the common workplace issues in their review of workplace law challenges.⁷

2. Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', unpublished three-month averaged data, October 2023.

3. Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Skills Priority List](#)', 2023.

4. Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey](#)', unpublished data, September 2023.

5. National Centre for Vocational Education Research, '[Apprentices and trainees 2023: March quarter](#)', 2023.

6. National Centre for Vocational Education Research, '[Apprentices and trainees 2023: March quarter](#)', 2023.

7. Fair Work Ombudsman, '[Hairdressing Apprentice Initiative](#)', 2023.

Furthermore, Hairdressing is a skilled occupation in which technical skills represent but one aspect of role demands, with recent Australian research highlighting “the complex significance of the salons for different people”.⁸ Equipping apprentices with skills beyond the technical may also represent an avenue to retention.

- A recent Australian pilot study found an extraneous benefit of lightening the burden of clients’ routine personal disclosures of such training, building on other international evidence.⁹ The recent deployment of a micro-skill course in partnership with an industry association, private sector firms, a research foundation, and promoted by a hairstylists union suggests appetite exists for wider content being included in courses requisite for occupational certification.¹⁰

If hairdressers are in shortage, why are job advertisements falling?

As noted above, IVI results only represent part of the picture of demand for Hairdressers. Part of the reason we see fewer advertisements could be that the nature of hairdressing work is changing.

Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data shows a large and increasing proportion of working Hairdressers are self-employed.¹¹

- In the 2021 Census, 53.5% of Hairdressers were employees (down from 57% in the 2016 Census).
- The remainder were owner managers, most commonly without employees (31.2%).

While the IVI shows vacancy numbers are declining, employment for Hairdressers has remained stable. In August 2023, there were around 62,500 Hairdressers employed across Australia with this number remaining relatively unchanged over the past five years.¹²

The fall in IVI numbers might also reflect employers not using traditional methods of recruitment. Survey data from Jobs and Skills Australia showed around two-thirds of the employers recruiting Hairdressers were doing so via word-of-mouth or through social media.¹³ Both of these methods are not captured within the IVI data.

These sources go some way to explain the decrease in online job advertisements for Hairdressers despite being in persistent shortage. Given the significant role Hairdressers play within the Australia labour market, further research and investigation is required.

8. H McCann, ‘[No salon, no sanctuary: beauty under ‘lockdown’ in Australia in 2020](#)’, Gender, Place & Culture, 14 February 2023, p 15, DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2023.2178391.

9. H McCann and K Myers, ‘[Addressing the silence: Utilising salon workers to respond to family violence](#)’, 2023 Journal of Sociology, 59(1), DOI: 10.1177/14407833211031005.

10. TAFE NSW, ‘[Spot a spot? See something, say something](#)’, 2023.

11. Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘[Hairdresser Employment \(OCCP\) by Status in Employment \(SIEMP\) 2016 and 2021](#)’ [Census TableBuilder], 2021.

12. Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Labour Force Survey, Detailed’, August 2023, trend data by Jobs and Skills Australia.

13. Jobs and Skills Australia, ‘[Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey](#)’, unpublished data, September 2023.

Internet Vacancy Index Summary Sheet

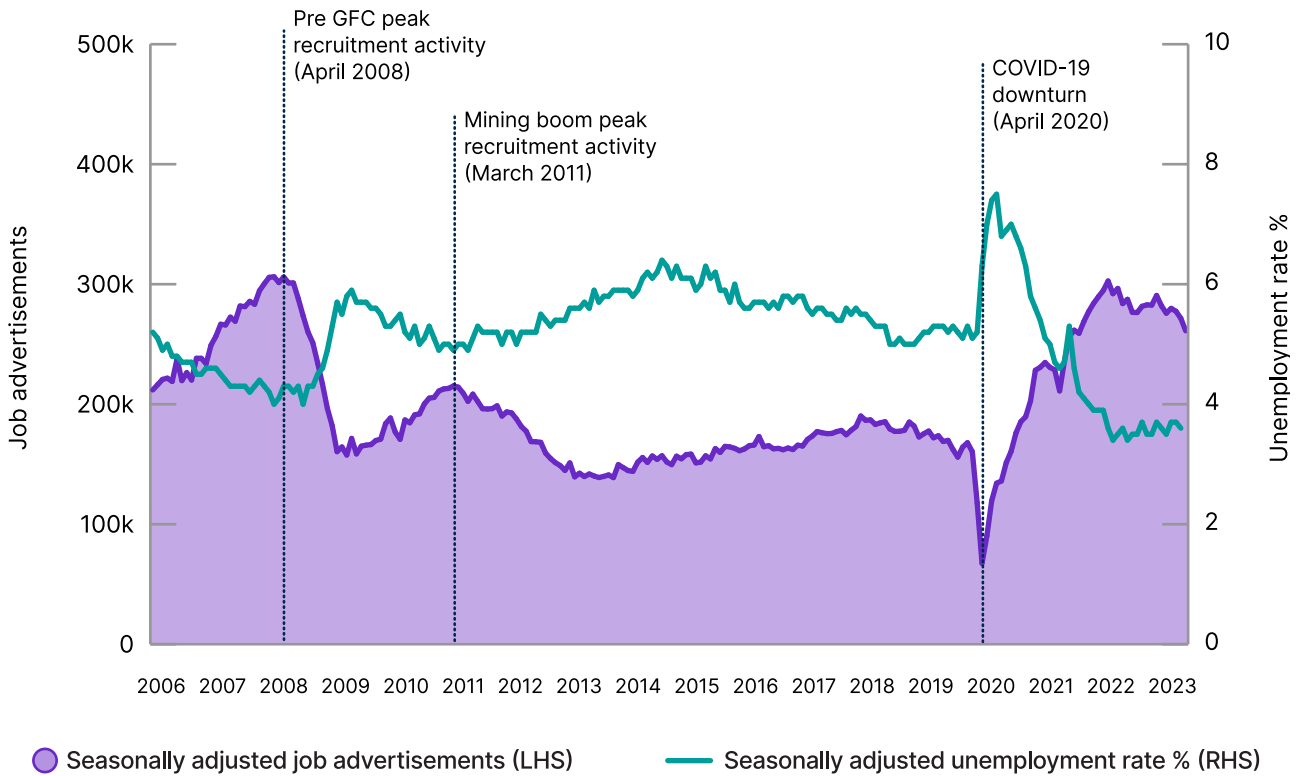
- October 2023

	Number of job ads (no.)	Monthly change (no.)	Monthly change (%)	Annual change (no.)	Annual change (%)
Australia	261,200	-10,400	▼ -3.8%	-26,200	▼ -9.1%
New South Wales	79,700	-2,800	▼ -3.4%	-10,400	▼ -11.5%
Victoria	64,300	-4,900	▼ -7.1%	-12,000	▼ -15.7%
Queensland	57,300	-460	▼ -0.8%	-4,100	▼ -6.6%
South Australia	14,600	130	▲ 0.9%	-280	▼ -1.9%
Western Australia	32,200	450	▲ 1.4%	330	▲ 1.0%
Tasmania	4,000	0	▼ -0.1%	230	▲ 6.1%
Northern Territory	3,500	110	▲ 3.2%	490	▲ 16.7%
Australian Capital Territory	7,500	-160	▼ -2.0%	-840	▼ -10.1%
Managers	30,400	-200	▼ -0.6%	-1,300	▼ -4.1%
Professionals	79,900	-1,900	▼ -2.4%	-1,100	▼ -1.4%
Technicians and Trades Workers	35,800	-1,500	▼ -3.9%	-1,100	▼ -3.0%
Community and Personal Service Workers	27,900	-2,200	▼ -7.3%	-4,500	▼ -14.0%
Clerical and Administrative Workers	39,400	-1,100	▼ -2.6%	-5,900	▼ -12.9%
Sales Workers	19,100	-1,200	▼ -6.0%	-3,700	▼ -16.2%
Machinery Operators and Drivers	13,800	-460	▼ -3.2%	-1,500	▼ -9.8%
Labourers	15,200	-1,300	▼ -7.7%	-6,600	▼ -30.3%
Skill Level 1 - Bachelor degree or higher	100,800	-1,900	▼ -1.9%	-2,100	▼ -2.1%
Skill Level 2 - Advanced Diploma or Diploma	28,600	-730	▼ -2.5%	-1,600	▼ -5.4%
Skill Level 3 - Certificate IV or III* (Skilled VET)	39,300	-1,500	▼ -3.6%	-1,200	▼ -2.9%
Skill Level 4 - Certificate II or III	66,600	-3,200	▼ -4.7%	-10,900	▼ -14.1%
Skill Level 5 - Certificate I or secondary education	26,400	-2,500	▼ -8.6%	-9,600	▼ -26.7%

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

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

Figure 2: Job advertisements and unemployment rate, January 2006 to October 2023



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

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.



Australian Government



Jobs and Skills Australia