



Australian Government



Jobs and Skills Australia

# Vacancy Report Spotlight

## December 2023

Released 17 January 2024

### Year in review

Internet Vacancy Index results during 2023 typified the unexpected resilience of the Australian labour market following the robust recovery from the COVID-19 downturn. The post-pandemic labour market saw the unemployment rate hit lows not recorded for decades and online job advertisements reached levels last recorded prior to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. While recruitment activity has declined from the mid-2022 peaks, the persistence of elevated demand is the hallmark result in 2023. Recent months, though, potentially signal a weakening of labour demand. It remains unclear to what extent the unexpected resilience in aggregate labour demand will continue through 2024.

In this month's spotlight, Jobs and Skills Australia is reviewing some of the most popular topics covered in the Vacancy Report over 2023 to provide updated and revised analysis.

### Recruitment activity trends in capital cities and regional Australia

The June Vacancy Report examined why advertisements in regional Australia have remained more buoyant than their capital city counterparts. Jobs and Skills Australia analysis indicated this was caused by an increase in vacancies for Professionals across regional Australia (particularly in the healthcare sector), while vacancies for some large employing corporate and ICT occupations continued to decline in capital cities. These trends continued throughout 2023.

Over the five years to December 2023, internet vacancies in capital cities increased by 24.3% (or 32,000) compared with a staggering 93.6% (or 32,400) in regional Australia. A stronger contraction in demand in capital cities since the 2022 peak accounts for some of this differential.<sup>1</sup>

- A 26.4% decline from the 2022 peak was recorded in capital cities by December 2023 compared with a 17.3% decline in regional Australia.

The occupational composition of demand showed strong declines for certain large employing corporate and ICT Professional occupations masked growth in demand for Healthcare and Education Professionals evident in both capital cities and regional Australia. This pattern has continued through the second half of 2023.<sup>2</sup>

- Comparing this month's results to October 2022, when internet vacancies for occupations in the Professionals group peaked, online job advertisements for Professionals have decreased by 20.3% (or 12,800) in capital cities, but only decreased by 2.9% (or 550) in regional Australia. This represents the smallest decline among all Major Occupation groups over this period.

Demand for various Healthcare Professionals increased from October 2022 in both capital cities and regional Australia. This included Occupational Therapists (up by 19.5% and 14.7% respectively), General Practitioners and Resident

<sup>1</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', three-month averaged data, December 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', three-month averaged data, December 2023.

Medical Officers (up by 3.0% and 6.2%) and Audiologists and Speech Pathologists/Therapists (up by 22.4% and 36.0%).<sup>3</sup>

- Notably, growth in internet vacancies over this period for Registered Nurses continued to lead demand for Health Professionals in regional Australia by frequency (up by 7.6% or 320 job advertisements) but were below the October 2022 level in capital cities (down by 2.1% or 270).

Similarly, demand increased for Education Professionals over this period in both capital cities and regional Australia. For example, Secondary School Teachers (up by 24.9% and 26.2% respectively) and Primary School Teachers (up by 32.2% and 56.0%).<sup>4</sup>

## Strong labour demand for entry-level occupations and youth employment in the COVID-19 recovery period

The September Vacancy Report considered how the rapid acceleration in labour demand during the recovery from the COVID-19 downturn manifested in recruitment for entry-level jobs. The report suggested that the robust pace of youth employment growth observed through the peak demand periods of 2022 has eased considerably throughout 2023.

For this analysis, four entry-level occupations were assessed: Sales Assistant (General), Café Workers, Kitchenhands, and Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers.

- These occupations have typically been available for part-time work, to those with limited experience, qualifications or references and have relatively young age profiles.

Internet Vacancy Index results show that recruitment activity for these occupations continues at well above pre-pandemic levels.<sup>5</sup>

- Over the five years to December 2023, online job advertisements increased for Sales Assistants (up by 46.4% or 3,100 job advertisements), Kitchenhands (up by 59.1% or 520), Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers (up by 293.2% or 140), and Café Workers (up by 28.7% or 80).

Despite the continuation of recruitment activity well above pre-pandemic levels, demand contracted during 2023.<sup>6</sup>

- Over the year to December 2023, online job advertisements decreased for Sales Assistants (down by 16.1% or 1,900 job advertisements), Kitchenhands (down by 46.2% or 1,200), Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers (down by 50.5% or 200), and Café Workers (down by 38.0% or 230).

While demand remains elevated for these entry-level roles, employment data provides indicative evidence that while younger workers (15 to 24-year-olds) found employment more readily during 2022, the strength of labour market activity for young people has clearly softened. The following makes use of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Labour Force Survey* data.<sup>7</sup>

- Over the year to November 2022, the change in employment for all occupations increased by 12.3% for younger workers but only by 4.7% for all age groups.
- Over the year to November 2023, employment numbers across all occupations for younger workers increased by 1.6% compared with a 3.2% increase for all age groups.<sup>8</sup>

The recent release of Australian Jobs 2023 provides up-to-date information, guidance and practical tips for job seekers that may be particularly beneficial for those competing for entry-level positions.<sup>9</sup>

## Changing demand for Retail Managers

The August Vacancy report considered a divergence in levels of demand for Retail Managers compared with other large employing occupations in the Retail Trade industry. Recruitment activity for these occupations accelerated rapidly during the recovery from the COVID-19 downturn. Where the later months of 2022 saw a sharp decline in vacancies for many large employing occupations in Retail Trade with notable declines also recorded over 2023, demand for Retail Managers has decreased by a far narrower margin through 2023, with vacancy numbers almost unchanged from 12 months ago.

<sup>3</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', unpublished three-month averaged data, December 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', unpublished three-month averaged data, December 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', three-month averaged data, December 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', three-month averaged data, December 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia calculations using Australian Bureau of Statistics, '[Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#)', November 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia calculations using Australian Bureau of Statistics, '[Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#)', November 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia & National Careers Institute, '[Australian Jobs 2023](#)', 2023.

After a decade of relatively stable recruitment activity preceding the pandemic, growth in online job advertisements for Retail Managers outstripped that of the next top five employing occupations in the Retail Trade industry.<sup>10</sup>

- Over the five years to December 2023, online job advertisements for Retail Managers increased by 59.2%, compared with a 52.6% increase for the top five retail occupations.

While recruitment activity for occupations prominent in the Retail Trade industry increased through the recovery from the COVID-19 downturn, demand for Retail Managers has been more persistent.<sup>11</sup>

- Over the year to December 2023, vacancies for Sales Assistants (General), the largest employing occupation in Retail Trade, declined by 16.1%.
- 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 50.5%), Shelf Fillers (down by 31.6%), Storepersons (down by 16.5%) and Pharmacy Sales Assistants (down by 53.2%).
- In contrast, demand for Retail Managers was more resilient, only decreasing by 1.2% over this period.

The growth in recruitment activity for Retail Managers was notably stronger in regional Australia, reflecting the regional skill shortage for this occupation identified in Jobs and Skills Australia's 2023 Skills Priority List.<sup>12</sup>

- Over five years to December 2023, online job advertisements increased by 131.0% in regional Australia compared with 36.4% in capital cities.
- The employment trend for Retail Managers has generally paralleled vacancy numbers. Over the ten years preceding the pandemic, employment within this occupation increased by 1.2%. Since February 2020, employment has increased by 6.2%, including growth of 2.3% in the year from November 2022 to November 2023.<sup>13</sup> In this context, the increase in employment since the COVID-19 shock represents notable growth that mirrors the five-fold increase in online job advertisements observed in Internet Vacancy Index results from lows recorded in 2020.
- The recent employment and internet vacancy figures continue to support the August Vacancy Report's proposition, informed by recent Australian research, that the expansion of role demands for customer-facing workers is encouraging employers to seek a larger proportion of high-skill workers for these roles.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Census 2021, the five largest employing occupations in Retail Trade (when excluding Retail Managers, the second largest employing occupation in this industry) are Sales Assistants, Checkout Operators and Cashiers, Shelf Fillers, Storepersons and Pharmacy Sales Assistants; Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', three-month averaged data, December 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', three-month averaged data, December 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, '[2023 Skills Priority List](#)', 2023; Jobs and Skills Australia, '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', unpublished three-month averaged data, December 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Jobs and Skills Australia trend data. November 2023.

<sup>14</sup> 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

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).

