



Vacancy Report August 2024

Released 18 September 2024

Internet Vacancy Index Key Points

This month's report shows a spike in online job advertisements, with the strongest monthly increase in almost three years recorded in August 2024. This strong increase diverges from the consistent pattern of declines recorded over the last 12 months. Vacancy numbers continue at elevated levels, with around 35% more advertisements in the labour market presently compared with the monthly average for 2019.

- Online job advertisements at the national level increased in August 2024 (up by 4.8% or 10,600 job advertisements) to stand at 231,200.
 - Over the year to August 2024, online job advertisements decreased by 16.9% (or 47,100 job advertisements). Vacancy numbers, though, are at high levels historically.
 - This downward trend is present in other demand indicators, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics' [Job Vacancies, Australia](#) series showing a 17.7% decrease in vacancies over the year to May 2024.¹
- Recruitment activity increased across seven states and territories over the month. The strongest increases were recorded in Victoria (up by 8.4% or 4,200 job advertisements) followed by South Australia (up by 6.9% or 900). The Northern Territory recorded the only decrease (down by 3.6% or 120).
- Over the month, advertisements increased across all Skill Level groups. The strongest increases were recorded for Skill Level 1 (commensurate with Bachelor degree or higher) occupations (up by 8.0% or 6,300 job advertisements) followed by Skill Level 5 (commensurate with Certificate I or secondary education) occupations (up by 4.8% or 1,100).
- Advertisements increased across all Major Occupation groups over the month. The strongest increases were recorded for Professionals (up by 7.6% or 4,700 job advertisements) followed by Managers (up by 6.8% or 1,800).
- Recruitment activity was concentrated in metropolitan Australia, with 72.0% of job advertisements in August 2024 found in Australia's capital cities. Over the last 12 months, job advertisements have decreased in regional areas (down by 19.8%); and capital cities (down by 19.7%).
- Each month the Vacancy Report provides a more detailed analysis of a particular labour market segment. This month's report spotlights Chefs, Cooks and Kitchenhands.

231,200

Seasonally adjusted



4.8%

Monthly change



16.9%

Annual change

Online job advertisements increased by 4.8% (or 10,600 job advertisements) in August 2024 to stand at 231,200.

Over the year to August 2024, online job advertisements decreased by 16.9% (or 47,100 job advertisements).

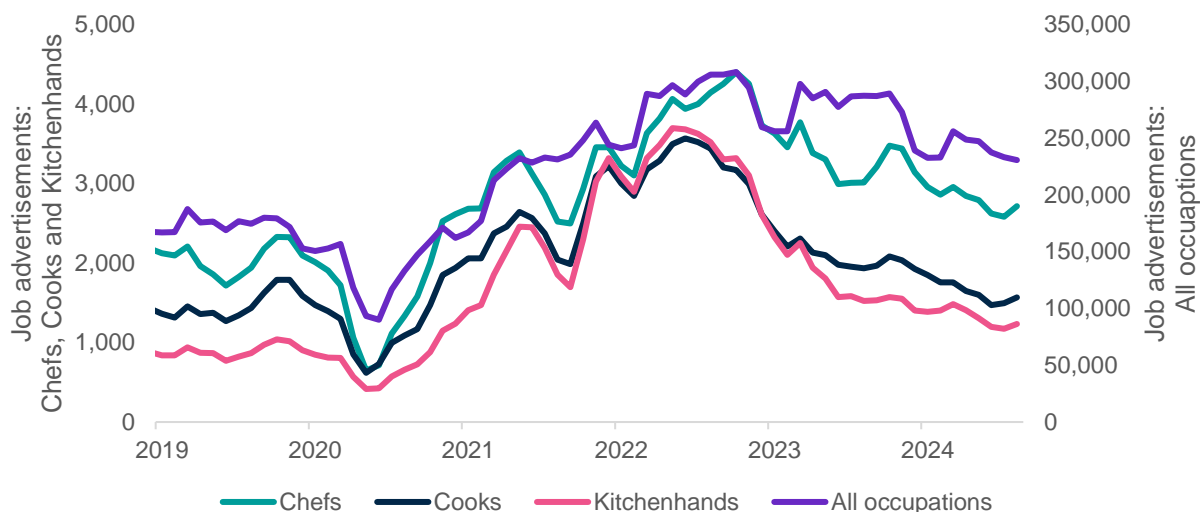
¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Job Vacancies, Australia](#), seasonally adjusted, May 2024.

From Sizzle to Fizzle? Changing demand patterns for kitchen staff in the post-pandemic period

Diners' elated return to favourite restaurants, pubs and cafes after pandemic lockdown restrictions were lifted provided relief to uncertain business owners and prompted a boom in recruitment activity in the hospitality sector. More recently, inflationary and cost-of-living pressures have squeezed segments of the sector from both ends. On one hand, increasing costs have narrowed or eliminated typically tight profit margins.² And on the other, tightening of households' discretionary spending has seen regular or occasional dining out among the most commonly jettisoned expenditures.³ Business owners are reportedly hesitant to increase prices, in line with increasing costs, for fear of potential unintended consequences.⁴ The August Vacancy Report considers how the dynamic conditions of this part of the economy have been expressed in the demand for Chefs, Cooks and Kitchenhands.

Online job advertisement growth for these occupations exceeded even the unprecedented aggregate demand growth recorded during the recovery from the COVID-19 downturn (Figure 1).⁵ More recently, however, online job advertisements for these occupations have declined faster than the all-occupation average. With the 2019 average as a base, recruitment activity for Chefs and Cooks more than doubled by mid-2022 while an almost four-fold increase was recorded for Kitchenhands (compared with a 77.9% increase for all occupations). Since the peak, online job advertisements have decreased most sharply for Kitchenhands and Cooks (down by 66.7% and 56.1% respectively) with a more moderate decline recorded for Chefs (down by 38.3%). A 25.2% decrease was recorded across all occupations.

Figure 1: Online job advertisements for Chefs, Cooks and Kitchenhands, January 2019 to August 2024



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), Internet Vacancy Index, three-month average data, August 2024.

Jobs and Skills Australia's '[Labour Force Trending](#)' data shows growth in employment has been strong over the last decade also, with the trended number of employed persons increasing by 53.3% for Chefs and by 17.6% for Kitchenhands by May 2024.⁶ The number of Cooks remained stable at around 40,000. In the past year however (to May 2024), growth has slowed for Kitchenhands (up by 1.2% to stand at 149,000) but continues at pace for Chefs (up by 5.1% to 126,000).

Despite instances of shared workplaces and overlaps in tasks performed, these occupations differ in Skill Level.⁷ Chefs (Skill Level 2) typically require a higher educational attainment than Cooks (Skill Level 3), whereas Kitchenhands (Skill Level 5) typically do not require post school qualifications and can be trained for a short period on-the-job. The occupational profiles differ also, with only 20% of Kitchenhands, an occupation with a 'young' workforce age profile, being employed full-time.⁸ Roughly 50% of Cooks on the other hand are part-time employed and the majority (80%) of Chefs are employed full-time. Further, the median weekly earnings (full-time) for Cooks are the lowest with the earnings for Chefs being the highest.

² A Taylor, '[There is trepidation: Why business owners like Jared are worried about their future](#)', *The Age*, 11 May 2024.

³ National Australia Bank, '[NAB Consumer Sentiment Survey Q2-2024](#)', 2024.

⁴ K Ainsworth and D Chau, '[Hospitality industry feeling the heat as cost-of-living pressures hit customers and suppliers](#)', *ABC News*, 11 August 2023.

⁵ Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), '[Internet Vacancy Index](#)', three-month average data, August 2024.

⁶ JSA, '[Labour Force Trending](#)', 2024.

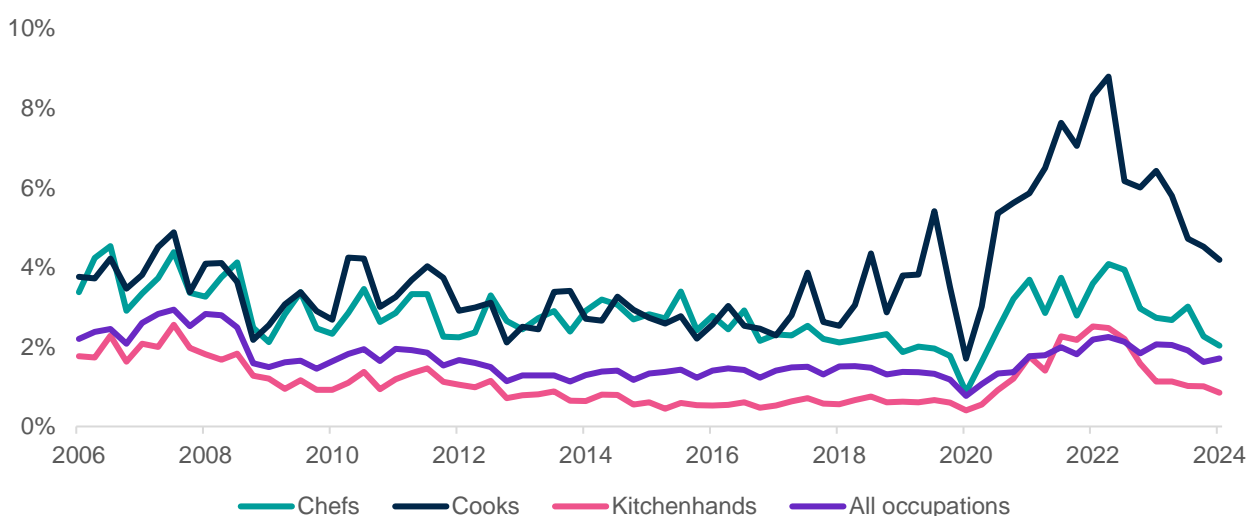
⁷ ABS, '[Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations](#)', 2022.

⁸ JSA, '[Occupation and Industry Profiles](#)', 2024.

The labour market trends suggest considerable opportunities for Chefs continue to exist despite challenging business conditions. However, as conditions continue to tighten, fewer Kitchenhands and Cooks are being deployed to support Chefs who then likely experience expanding role demands. Requiring fewer qualifications, vacancies for Kitchenhands and to some extent Cooks are generally considered easier to fill when the need returns.⁹ By contrast, vacancies for Chefs are more difficult to recruit, due both to their strategic role and the persistent skill shortage identified for this occupation.¹⁰ On the whole, recruitment difficulty for hospitality workers was severe during the post-pandemic period. Jobs and Skills Australia's '[Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey](#)' found that employers experienced lengthy periods with unfilled vacancies and an unusually stark absence of applicants which had impacts on existing staff.¹¹ More recent data suggests recruitment difficulty has eased.¹²

Vacancy rates (the number of online job advertisements as a proportion of employment) suggest relative demand for Cooks and Chefs has been strong over the last two decades (Figure 2).¹³ This may be related to the high rate of turnover for hospitality workers.¹⁴ Since 2017 the vacancy rate for Cooks and Chefs has diverged, perhaps due to Cooks being employed in a more diverse range of industries. For example, 17% of Cooks are deployed in the Health Care and Social Assistance industry compared to only 6% of Chefs.¹⁵

Figure 2: Vacancy rates for Chefs, Cooks and Kitchenhands, May 2006 to May 2024.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, original data, May 2024; JSA, Internet Vacancy Index, three-month average data, August 2024.

The vacancy rate trend is not explained by Cooks leaving the profession. Jobs and Skills Australia's '[Data on Occupation Mobility](#)' shows that over the decade from 2010-11 the proportion of Cooks remaining in the occupation in a given year increased from roughly 60% to 80%.¹⁶ Proportionally fewer Cooks transitioned into the Chef occupation over the decade too, with the roughly 12% of workers making the change in the 2011 halving to around 6% on average after 2015-16. The elevated relative demand for Cooks appears at odds with both the stable employment figures and decreasing rate of transitions out of the occupation, perhaps indicating a specific workforce strategy underlies this recruitment activity.

Balancing business realities in tight and uncertain conditions against the twin needs to maintain workforce capacity and wellbeing alongside customer satisfaction engenders unenviable trade-offs. With forecasts for continuing softening of economic conditions in the near-term, businesses' capacity to strike this balance optimally will have far-reaching consequences. If employers are seeking to replace some higher Skill Level, typically full-time roles (Chefs) with lower cost, part-time workers (Cooks) this could facilitate greater capacity for dynamic workforce adjustment to respond to changing business conditions. However, the stable employment numbers for Cooks, compared to growing employment numbers for Chefs, suggest workforce composition is not yet shifting. Depletion of the rich diversity and excellence of the Australian hospitality sector would not only be felt by its business owners and workers. There are clear implications for the wider tourism sector and even more widely still through the social and cultural enhancements these businesses provide across Australia.

⁹ JSA, '[Labour Market Update](#)', March 2024.

¹⁰ JSA, '[2023 Skills Priority List: Key findings report](#)', 2023.

¹¹ JSA, '[Recruitment Difficulty for Hospitality Workers – February 2023 \[PDF 238.4KB\]](#)', 2023.

¹² JSA, '[Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey: June quarter 2024](#)', 2024.

¹³ ABS, '[Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#)', original data, May 2024; JSA, 'Internet Vacancy Index'.

¹⁴ JSA, '[Recruitment Difficulty for Hospitality Workers – February 2023](#)'.

¹⁵ ABS, '[Cooks \(OCCP\) by Industry \(INDP\) 2021](#)' [Census of Population and Housing, TableBuilder], 2021.

¹⁶ JSA, '[Data on Occupation Mobility](#)', 2023.

Internet Vacancy Index Summary Sheet - August 2024

	Number of job ads (no.)	Monthly change (no.)	Monthly change (%)	Annual change (no.)	Annual change (%)
Australia	231,200	10,600	▲ 4.8%	-47,100	▼ -16.9%
New South Wales	68,000	3,500	▲ 5.5%	-17,400	▼ -20.3%
Victoria	54,000	4,200	▲ 8.4%	-17,400	▼ -24.3%
Queensland	54,400	1,700	▲ 3.3%	-5,000	▼ -8.4%
South Australia	13,900	900	▲ 6.9%	-700	▼ -4.8%
Western Australia	27,600	280	▲ 1.0%	-4,600	▼ -14.3%
Tasmania	3,900	180	▲ 4.8%	-150	▼ -3.8%
Northern Territory	3,100	-120	▼ -3.6%	-330	▼ -9.7%
Australian Capital Territory	6,100	360	▲ 6.2%	-1,900	▼ -23.9%

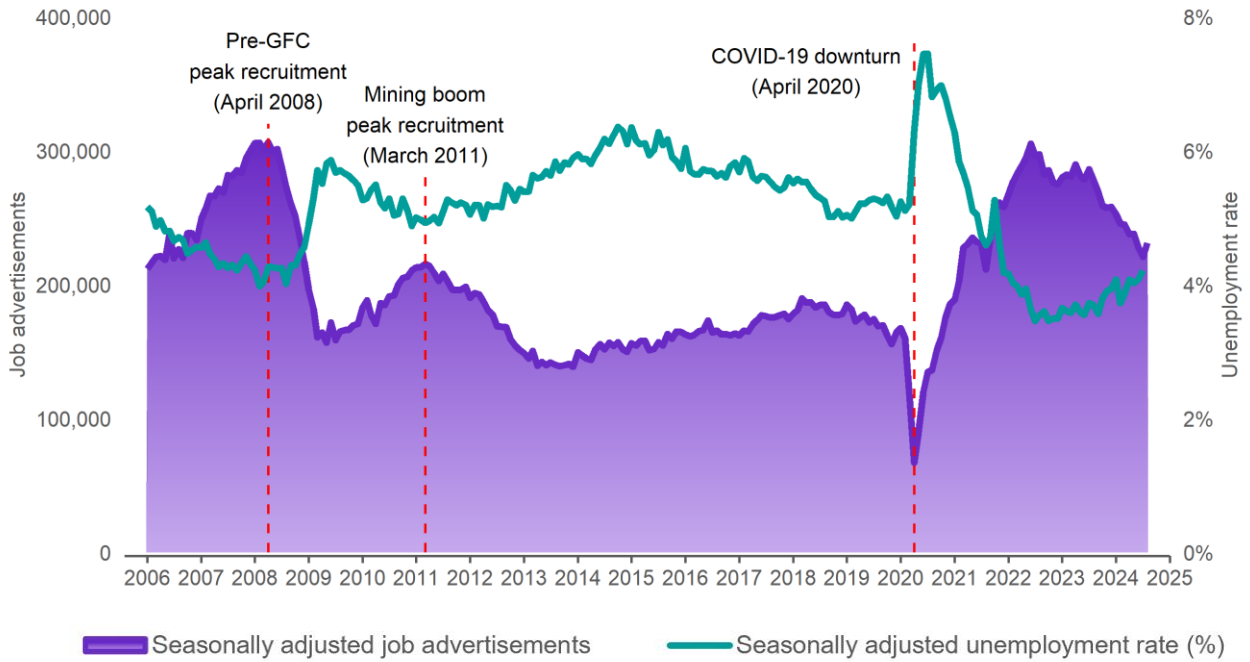
Managers	27,900	1,800	▲ 6.8%	-3,500	▼ -11.2%
Professionals	66,000	4,700	▲ 7.6%	-18,300	▼ -21.7%
Technicians and Trades Workers	32,300	810	▲ 2.6%	-5,600	▼ -14.8%
Community and Personal Service Workers	24,600	400	▲ 1.7%	-5,800	▼ -19.1%
Clerical and Administrative Workers	35,400	2,000	▲ 5.9%	-7,000	▼ -16.5%
Sales Workers	18,200	1,000	▲ 5.9%	-3,200	▼ -14.8%
Machinery Operators and Drivers	12,200	150	▲ 1.3%	-2,200	▼ -15.0%
Labourers	14,400	430	▲ 3.1%	-2,400	▼ -14.2%

Skill Level 1 - Bachelor degree or higher	84,900	6,300	▲ 8.0%	-20,900	▼ -19.7%
Skill Level 2 - Advanced Diploma or Diploma	26,100	1,100	▲ 4.5%	-4,100	▼ -13.6%
Skill Level 3 - Certificate IV or III* (Skilled VET)	36,200	890	▲ 2.5%	-5,100	▼ -12.4%
Skill Level 4 - Certificate II or III	59,000	2,300	▲ 4.1%	-12,600	▼ -17.6%
Skill Level 5 - Certificate I or secondary education	25,000	1,100	▲ 4.8%	-4,900	▼ -16.4%

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

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, Internet Vacancy Index, August 2024, seasonally adjusted data.

Figure 3: Job advertisements and unemployment rate, January 2006 to August 2024



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, July 2024, seasonally adjusted data; Jobs and Skills Australia, Internet Vacancy Index, August 2024, seasonally adjusted data.



The next IVI release is scheduled for 16 October 2024. The IVI is published on the JSA website at jobsandskills.gov.au/data/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 2023. More detail on the IVI is available at jobsandskills.gov.au/data/internet-vacancy-index.



Australian Government



Jobs and Skills Australia