Australian Government | Jobs and Skills Australia

REOS Recruitment Insights Report - March 2026

Jobs and Skills Australia surveys around 1000 employers each month through the Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey (REOS) to understand their recruitment experiences and staffing expectations.

Key Findings

Over the month to March 2026, a lower proportion of employers were recruiting. At the same time, a higher share reported having recruitment difficulty compared to both the previous month and the same time last year. This indicates that while fewer employers are actively recruiting, those that are actively recruiting are finding it harder to fill roles.

There was a fall in the proportion of employers expecting to increase their staff in the next three months, suggesting a more cautious approach to staffing expansion under the current conditions. Recruitment to fill 'staff turnover positions only' increased over the month and remained the primary reason for recruiting among surveyed employers.

In March 2026, the proportion of employers citing 'costs' as their single greatest business concern for the next three months increased by 9 percentage points, to 21% of all employers.

Recruitment activity

In March 2026, the recruitment rate was 48%. This was 3 percentage points lower than last month. Compared with a year earlier (March 2025), the recruitment rate decreased by 1 percentage point.

In Capital Cities, 47% of employers recruited in March 2026, compared with 51% in Rest of State areas. Over the month, the recruitment rate decreased by 1 percentage point in Capital Cities, and by 5 percentage points in Rest of State areas.

Compared to a year ago (March 2025), the recruitment rate declined by 1 percentage point in Capital Cities and by 2 percentage points in Rest of State areas.

Recruitment difficulty

The recruitment difficulty rate increased by 4 percentage points to 47% of recruiting employers in March 2026. Recruitment difficulty was 6 percentage points higher than a year ago and remained 28 percentage points below the record high of 75% in July 2022.

A lower proportion of recruiting employers experienced recruitment difficulty in Capital Cities (46%), compared with Rest of State areas (50%) in March 2026.

Over the month, recruitment difficulty increased by 5 percentage points in Capital Cities and was 5 percentage points higher than a year earlier (March 2025).

In Rest of State areas, recruitment difficulty increased by 3 percentage points over the month, 11 percentage points higher than in March 2025.

Staffing outlook: employers expecting to increase staff

Compared with a month ago, the proportion of employers expecting to increase their staffing numbers in the next three months decreased by 6 percentage points to 15% in March 2026. This was also 5 percentage points lower than a year earlier.

A lower proportion of employers in Capital Cities (14%) were expecting to increase their staffing levels in the next three months compared with Rest of State areas (16%).

Over the month, this proportion declined by 9 percentage points in Capital Cities and was 4 percentage points lower than a year ago. In Rest of State areas this figure fell by 1 percentage point over the month and was 8 percentage points lower than a year ago.

Reason for recruiting

Recruitment due to staff turnover only was the main reason employers recruited in March 2026, accounting for 61% of recruiting employers. Some 29% of recruiting employers aimed to fill new staff positions only, and the remaining 9% were recruiting to fill both new staff and staff turnover positions.

Staffing changes over the last month

Some 13% of employers increased their staff numbers in March 2026, compared with 18% at the same time last year. Meanwhile, around 11% of employers reported a decrease in their staff numbers over the month, compared with 12% of employers a year ago.

Employers unable to fill vacancies in a month

The proportion of recruiting employers who were unable to fill their vacancies within a month fell by 6 percentage points to 36% in March 2026, equal to its lowest level since the series started in May 2021. The March result was 1 percentage point lower than the 37% recorded in March 2025.

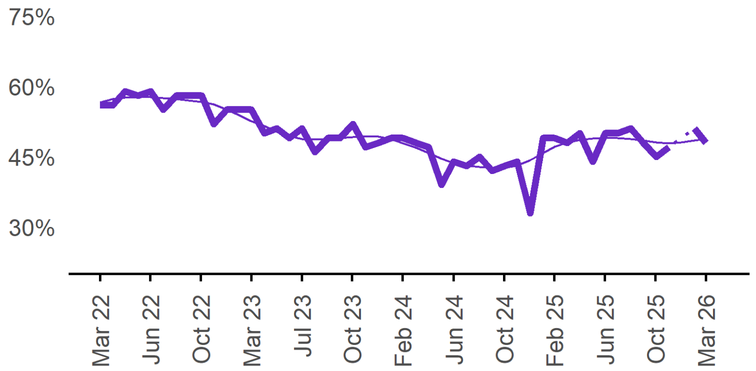
Single greatest concern

As part of the REOS, employers are asked about their current single greatest concern. Last month, 9% of employers cited costs as their single greatest concern and it ranked as the fifth highest concern. In March 2026, this proportion rose to 21%, making costs the highest-ranked concern, above the 19% recorded for recruitment and retention and the 17% recorded for lack of demand for their products or services.

REOS national indicators [1]

Recruitment rate

Proportion of employers currently recruiting or who recruited in the previous month.

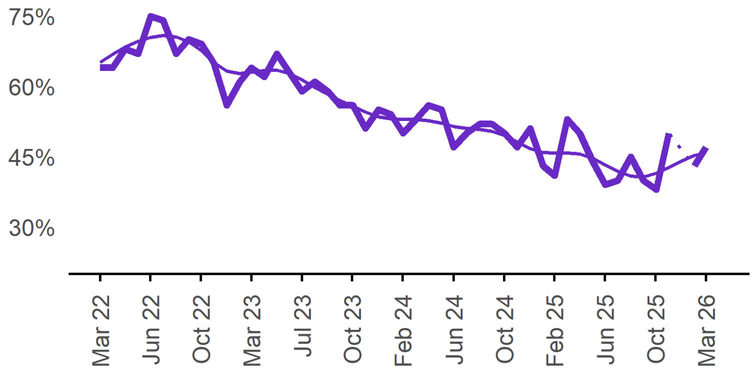


48%

Monthly change:
▼ 3%pts
Annual change:
▼ 1%pt

Recruitment difficulty rate

Proportion of recruiting employers who stated they had difficulty hiring staff.

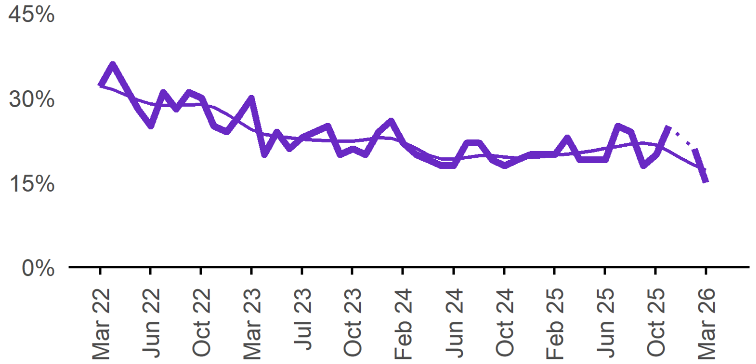


47%

Monthly change:
▲ 4%pts
Annual change:
▲ 6%pts

Expecting to increase staff

Proportion of employers who expected to increase staffing numbers over the next three months.



15%

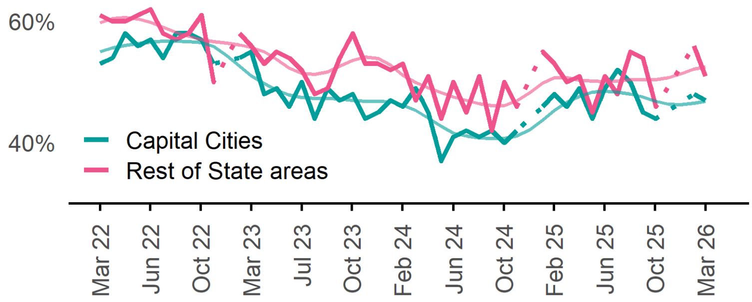
Monthly change:
▼ 6%pts
Annual change:
▼ 5%pts

[1] A Henderson smoothed line has been included in the charts to reduce month to month volatility and illustrate long term patterns. See the explanatory note for more information.

Capital City/Rest of State areas[2]

Recruitment rate

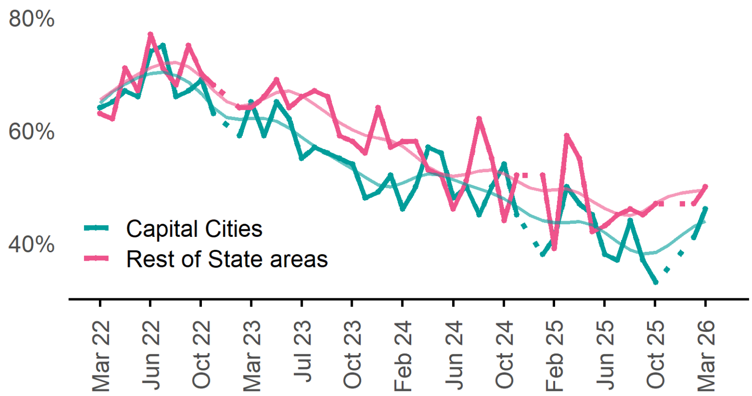
Proportion of employers currently recruiting or who recruited in the previous month.



Capital Cities: **47%**
Monthly change:
▼ 1%pt
Annual change:
▼ 1%pt
Rest of State: **51%**
Monthly change:
▼ 5%pts
Annual change:
▼ 2%pts

Recruitment difficulty rate

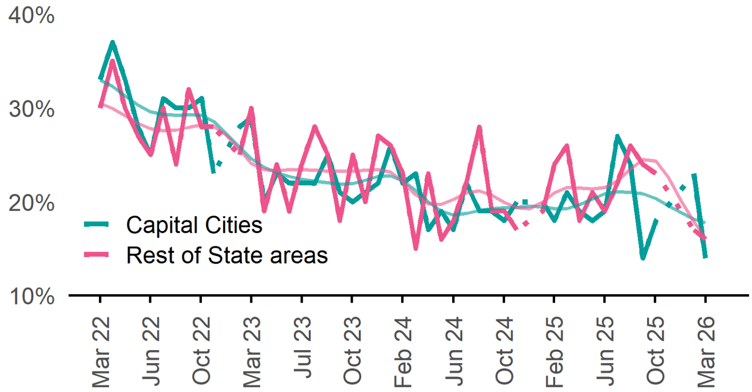
Proportion of recruiting employers who stated they had difficulty hiring staff.



Capital Cities: **46%**
Monthly change:
▲ 5%pts
Annual change:
▲ 5%pts
Rest of State: **50%**
Monthly change:
▲ 3%pts
Annual change:
▲ 11%pts

Staffing outlook – Expecting to increase staff

Proportion of employers who expected to increase staffing numbers over the next three months.



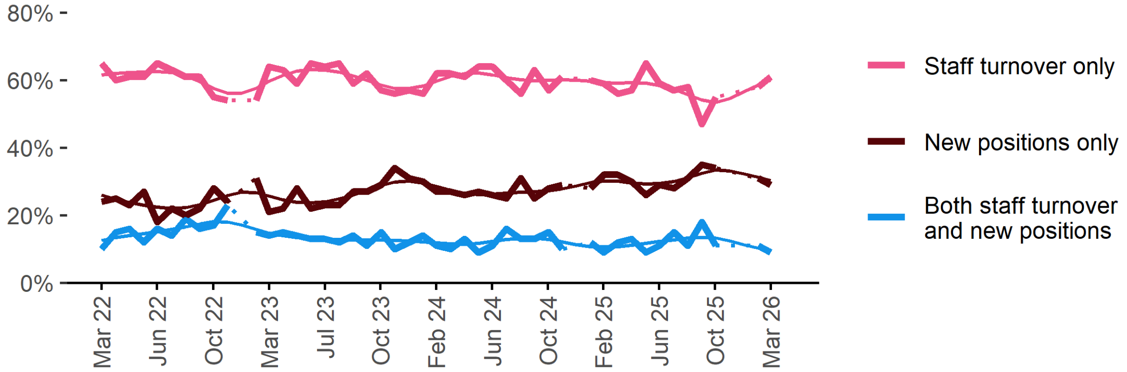
Capital Cities: **14%**
Monthly change:
▼ 9%pts
Annual change:
▼ 4%pts
Rest of State: **16%**
Monthly change:
▼ 1%pt
Annual change:
▼ 8%pts

[2] Data are not available for January in some years. Data points have been joined by a dotted line between December and February to reflect this. 'Rest of State' refers to areas outside the capital cities.

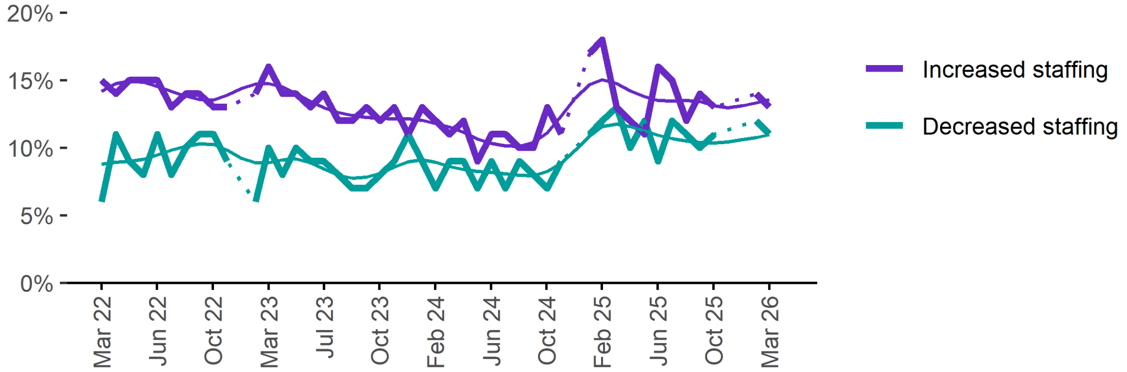
Other recruitment indicators

Reason for recruiting

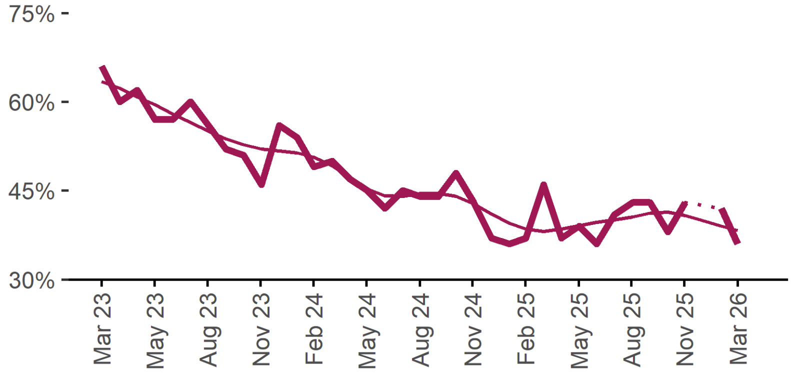
Proportion of employers currently recruiting or who recruited in the previous month.



Proportion of employers who said they increased or decreased staffing compared to the previous month.



Proportion of recruiting employers who were unable to fill their vacancies within a month.*



36%

Monthly change:
▼ 6%pts
Annual change:
▼ 1%pt

* Excludes employers who have been recruiting for less than a month.

Background

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) conducts the Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey (REOS), a telephone administered survey with the business owner or other person in the business responsible for recruitment. Around 1000 employers are surveyed each month, with data published on the JSA website. While the data are indicative of recruitment activity, they may be subject to seasonal factors and other volatility and should therefore be used with a degree of caution. In addition, the survey is targeted towards employers with 5 or more employees and excludes many government organisations. Details of the survey methodology can be accessed from the JSA website.

Smoothed series in charts

Charts include Henderson-smoothed lines in addition to original data for most of our recruitment indicators. As the timeseries is not yet long enough for seasonal adjustment, a Henderson smoothed moving average with a 13-term filter (equating to 13 months) has been directly applied to the original series. This provides an indication of the general movement in each recruitment indicator relative to previous months. Due to using 13 months in the moving average, results for the most recent six months will be revised each month.

How to reference data from this report

Jobs and Skills Australia, Recruitment Insights Report, March 2026.

Contact us

For additional information, email REOS@jobsandskills.gov.au

Also available from the REOS

Data file with monthly and quarterly recruitment indicators

A REOS data file is available on the JSA website. Breakdowns by Capital City/Rest of State area, Business size, and ANZSCO Skill Level are included in the monthly results. Quarterly recruitment indicators provide detail by state, ARIA (ABS' Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia) as well as selected industry and occupation groups.

Next Recruitment Insights Report release:

- April 2026 Recruitment Insights Report – May 2026

Stay up to date

JSA also releases semi-regular reports including spotlight articles, detailing aspects of the REOS that cannot be included in our monthly Recruitment Insights Report. Sign up and get the Recruitment Insights Report notifications sent straight to your inbox.

Upcoming spotlight:

- Recruitment experiences and outlook survey – March quarter 2026 results - April 2026

Recent spotlights:

- Employer attitudes toward disability inclusion in the Australian workforce – March 2026