



# Labour Market for Apprentices

# 2017

In Australia, apprenticeships provide a **key training pathway** for technicians and trades workers.

While there is generally **robust competition** for apprenticeship vacancies, employers regard many applicants as unsuitable and there are opportunities for **strong candidates** to stand out.

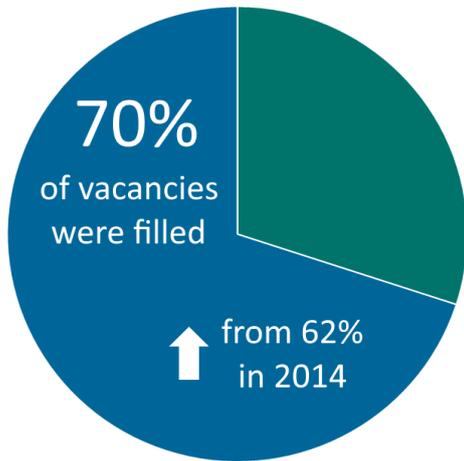
## About this report

More than **200 employers** across **five trade groups** who advertised for an apprentice were surveyed.

They were asked a range of questions about their **recruitment experiences** and what they sought in an apprentice.

Employers are **generally successful** in their attempts to recruit an apprentice...

...and they usually have a **choice of suitable candidates**.



Employers received an average of

# 29.0

applicants per vacancy

of whom

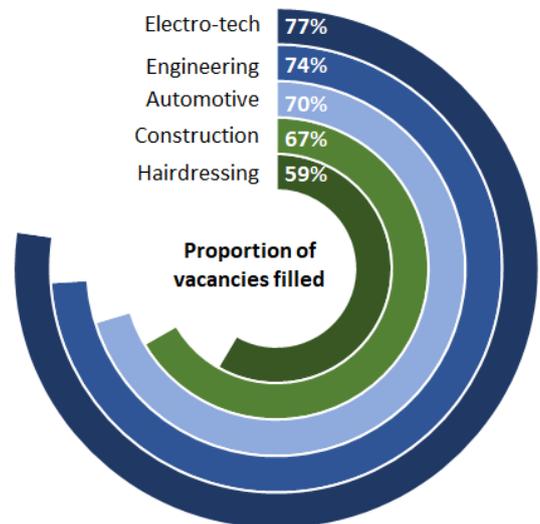
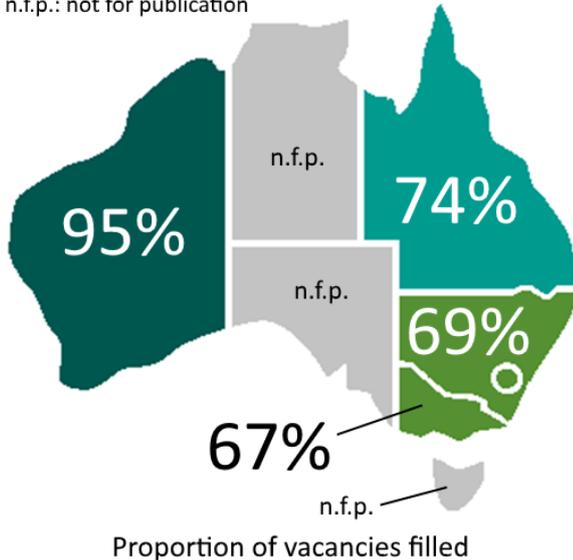
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per vacancy were suitable

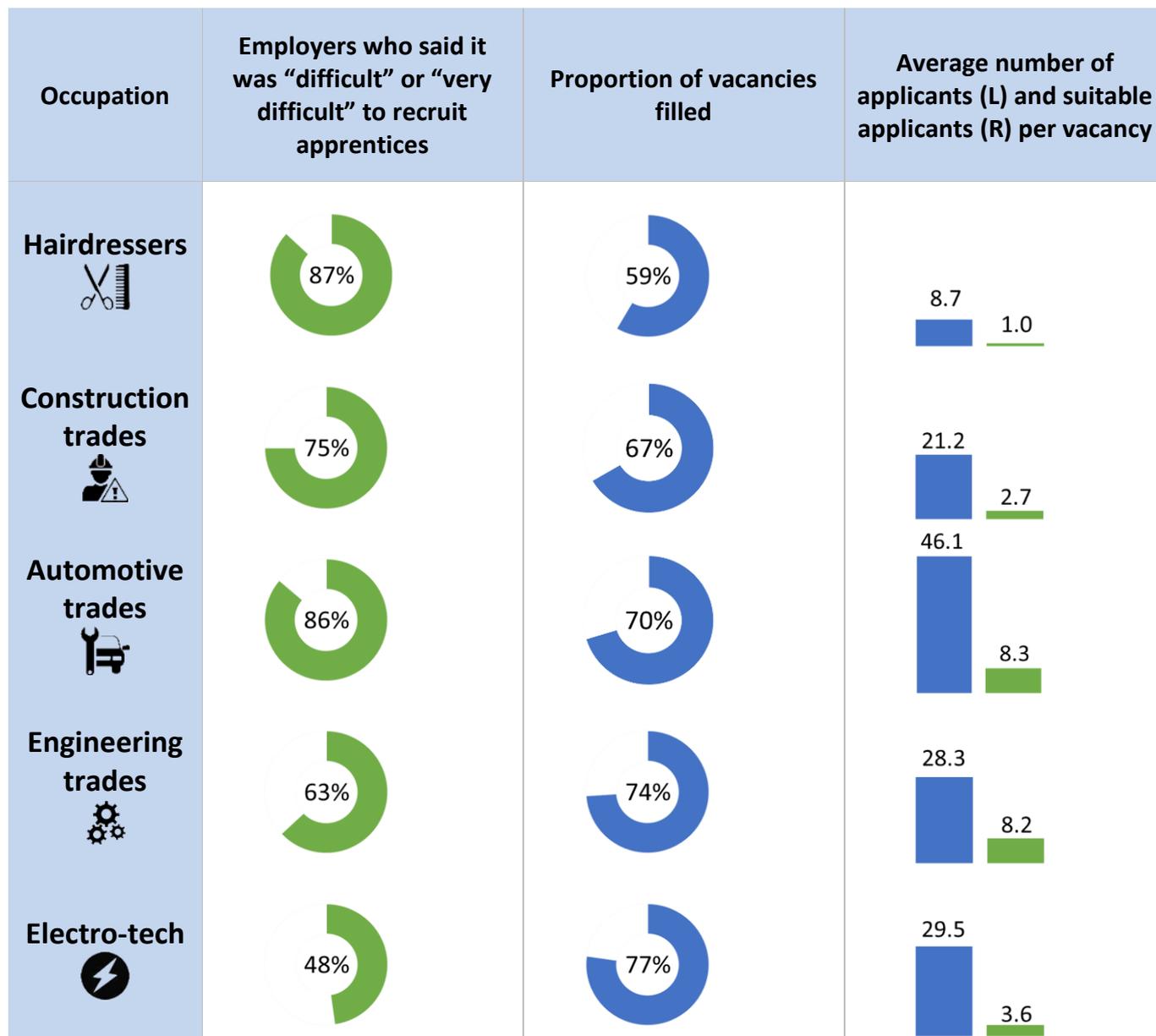


The **broader labour market** for trades workers shows significant variation across **trade groups** and **locations**, which is also reflected in the labour market for apprentices.

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## Employer Experiences



- While employers were able to fill apprentice vacancies more readily than those for skilled workers, differences across trade groups and locations were similar to those in the broader labour market.<sup>1</sup> In 2017:
  - employers seeking technicians and trades workers filled 53 per cent of their advertised vacancies (WA: 72 per cent; NSW: 47 per cent)
  - recruitment was more difficult for hairdressers (40 per cent of vacancies were filled) than for electro-tech workers (65 per cent).
- Apprentice recruitment has eased in the construction and automotive trades over the past three years.
  - The number of applicants and suitable applicants for these trades was around twice that in 2014, and employers filled a significantly greater proportion of vacancies (2014 construction: 51 per cent; 2014 automotive: 53 per cent).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Jobs and Small Business, *Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised*, 2017

<sup>2</sup> Department of Employment, *Labour Market for Apprentices*, 2014–15

## Employer Expectations

Employers are looking for many of the same characteristics as employers seeking skilled workers more generally...

### Top attributes sought by employers

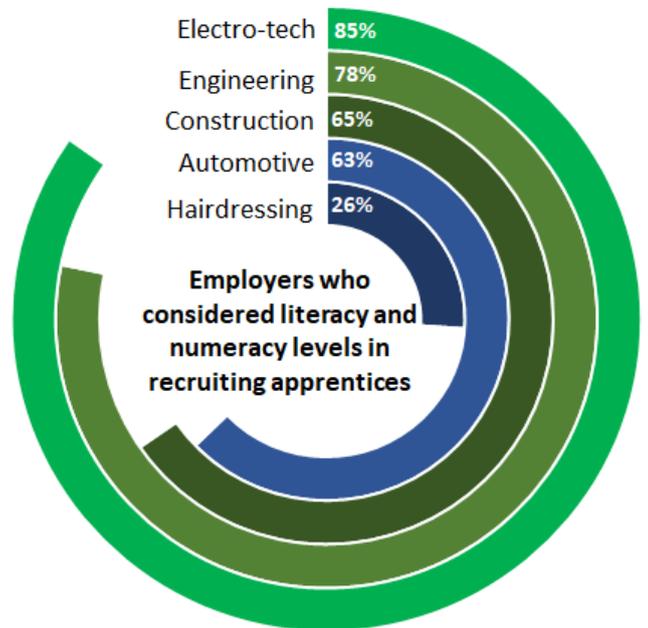
- Genuine interest in the trade
- Strong work ethic
- Positive attitude

...but there are differences in employer expectations across trade groups.



Overall, one in two employers required applicants to have a **driver's licence**, but only one in eight hairdressers had this requirement.

Most employers considered **literacy and numeracy levels** in recruiting, but this was less important for hairdressers.



Prior work experience or relevant training is always helpful, but there are opportunities for those without these as well.



Employers recruiting electro-tech and construction apprentices often sought applicants with a **white card and relevant work experience**. Completion of a Year 10 or Year 12 school certificate, relevant subjects at high school or a pre-apprenticeship were also valued.

Fewer employers in the hairdressing, engineering and automotive trades required prior training or experience, suggesting **entry-level opportunities** may be more readily available in these trades.



## Recruitment Methods

Employers seeking apprentices do more than just advertise online.

### Proportion of employers who...



...sought an apprentice by approaching a TAFE or school **32%**



...had successfully recruited an apprentice by word-of-mouth in the past **20%**



...had been approached directly by someone seeking an apprenticeship in the past year **54%**

## Barriers and Opportunities

Despite filling most vacancies, many employers say it is difficult to recruit apprentices.

- Employers expend substantial effort dealing with **non-genuine** or otherwise unsuitable applicants, such as shortlisted candidates who do not show up for interviews.
- Around 10 per cent of employers said they **compromised** on some of their expectations in order to fill their vacancies.
- While almost half the surveyed employers received more than 20 applications, **most candidates were regarded as unsuitable**.

Employers often regarded candidates as unsuitable because they:

- did not have a genuine interest in the trade
- lacked formal work experience
- were not reliable.



There are ways for candidates to stand out.

- Candidates need to ensure their cover letter or introduction makes a **good first impression** by being tailored to the employer and free of errors.
- Candidates can take opportunities to show their **reliability** by responding to employers promptly and attending interviews on time.



**Genuine interest** can be demonstrated by:

- researching and understanding the trade
- knowing what an apprenticeship entails
- having experience in related activities.



## Apprentice Demographics

Apprenticeships in most occupations are currently **dominated by a single gender**.

- Most apprentices and trainees are male (all occupations: 74 per cent; technicians and trades: 90 per cent). There are exceptions in some occupations such as hairdressers, where around 89 per cent of apprentices are female.<sup>3</sup>
- Despite a quarter of employers in the engineering and automotive trades reporting applicant fields with an equal number of male and female applicants, less than 5 per cent of current apprentices in these trades are female.

Around half the surveyed employers expressed a **preference for younger apprentices**, often citing wage factors, a desire to train staff from the ground up, or to teach “the right way”.

Other employers noted the advantages mature-age (25 years and over) apprentices have in demonstrating more work experience and reliability.

**One in eight employers** in the electro-tech and construction trades preferred to hire **mature age workers**.

Around 24 per cent of apprentices in these trades are aged 25 years or over.

### Other resources from the Department of Jobs and Small Business

Skill shortage research program  
Australian labour market information  
*Australian Jobs* publication  
Guide to Australian careers

[jobs.gov.au/skill-shortages](http://jobs.gov.au/skill-shortages)  
[lmip.gov.au](http://lmip.gov.au)  
[jobs.gov.au/australian-jobs-publication](http://jobs.gov.au/australian-jobs-publication)  
[joboutlook.gov.au](http://joboutlook.gov.au)

<sup>3</sup> National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Apprentices and Trainees*, June 2017