



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.

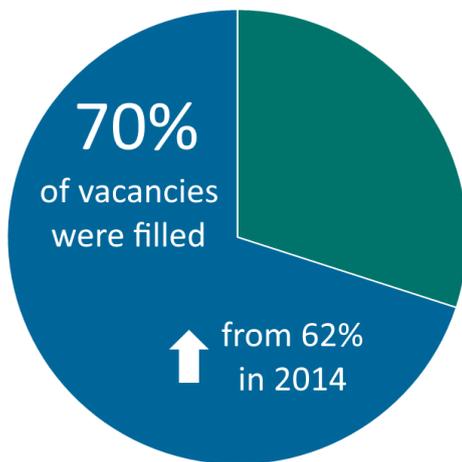
About this report

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

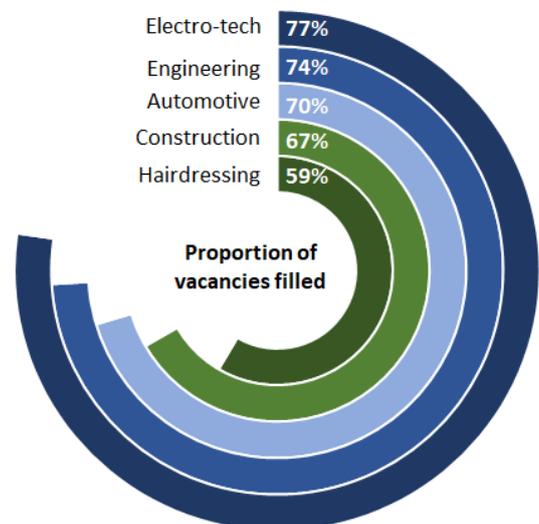
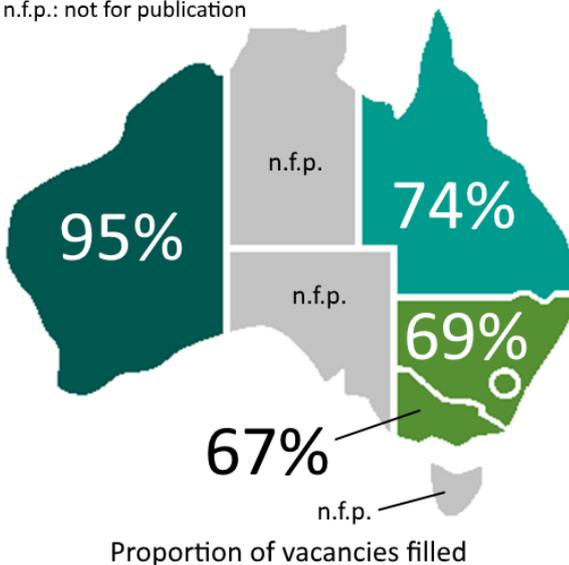
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per vacancy were suitable

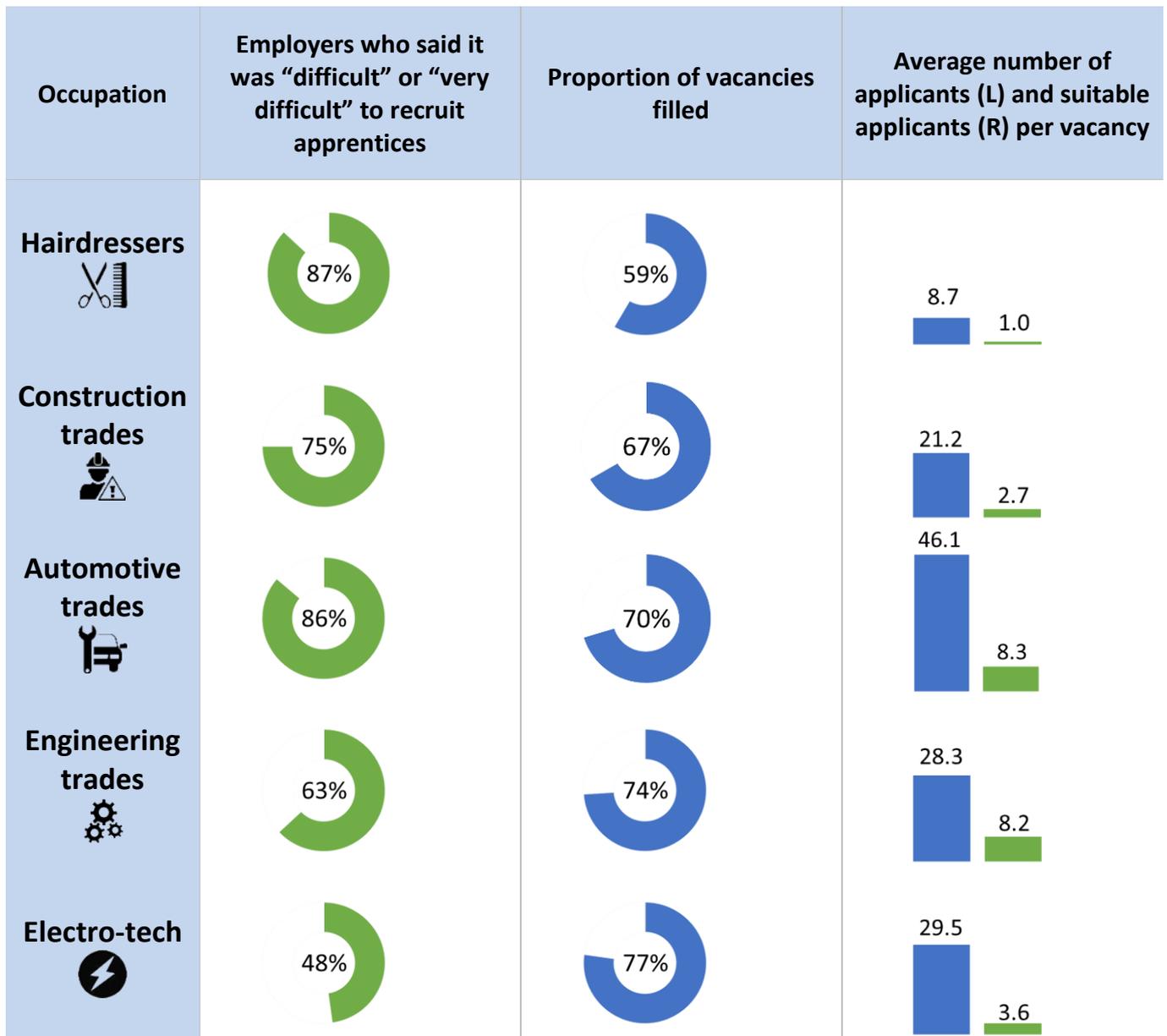


The **broader labour market** for trades workers shows significant variation across **trade groups** and **locations**, which is also reflected in the labour market for apprentices.

n.f.p.: not for publication



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.¹ 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).²

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

² 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

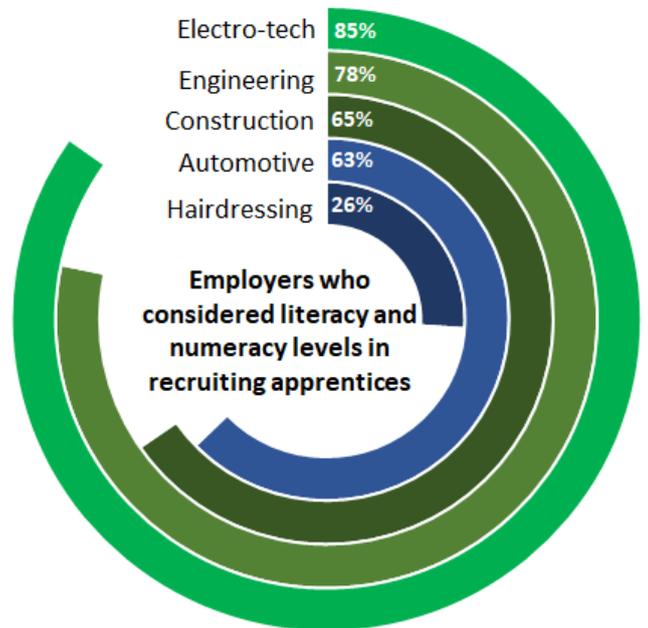
- Genuine interest in the trade
- Strong work ethic
- Positive attitude

...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.³
- 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
lmip.gov.au
jobs.gov.au/australian-jobs-publication
joboutlook.gov.au

³ National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Apprentices and Trainees*, June 2017