

Sonographer		Australia
ANZSCO Code: 2512-14	May 2009	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational Demand

Demand for sonographers has increased steadily in recent years, with ABS census data indicating around 2130 sonographers were employed in 2006, an increase of 49 per cent from 2001. This employment growth is reflected in an 8.5 per cent increase in the provision of diagnostic imaging services (of which sonographers for a part) in the first quarter of 2009, compared with the same period in 2008. The ageing of the Australian population and increased technology and equipment available for diagnoses appear to have contributed to strong demand for imaging services.

Occupational Supply

Entry to this occupation is generally by completion of a bachelor degree in general radiography combined with on-the-job training or specific post graduate qualifications in sonography. Employer comments suggest entry to the sonographer occupation may also be through other health professions such as nursing with additional training in sonography. ABS census data show that 29 per cent of sonographers hold a bachelor degree while a further 41 per cent hold post-graduate qualifications. DEEWR higher education data indicate completions of post graduate sonography courses increased by 23 per cent in the period 2003 to 2007, with an average of around 110 per year.

Department of Immigration and Citizenship data show migration makes a minimal contribution to occupational supply for medical imaging professionals, of which sonographers form a part. The net gain from migration has fluctuated over recent year, but has averaged 63 sonographers per year in the five years to 2007-08.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for sonographers found that 32 per cent of vacancies were filled within six weeks of advertising, similar to the fill rate when last assessed in 2008. On average, there were 2.4 applicants per vacancy, with 0.4 applicants per vacancy considered suitable by employers. The main reasons employers considered applicants were unsuitable were a lack of formal qualifications and inadequate experience for senior positions. Employers had difficulty filling vacancies in both regional and urban areas.

A number of employers commented that the occupation is female dominated and that a large number of sonographers work part-time. This was not just because of family commitments but also to reduce the risk of workplace injury. Some employers stated they have been reducing services due to unfilled vacancies, resulting in longer waiting lists for non-urgent procedures. Some employers reported resorting to the use of locums to cover unfilled positions.

Labour market outlook

There is no evidence to suggest the labour market for sonographers will change significantly over the next six months.