

Dentist		Western Australia
ANZSCO Code: 2523-12	June 2009	
Labour market rating:	Shortage	
Comment :		

Occupational demand

According to the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health (ARCPOH) demand for dentists is determined by the size and age of the population. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates that the population in WA has increased by three per cent for the year ending in December 2008. ABS data also indicate the number of people who are aged 60 years and over living in WA has increased. According to the 2006 ABS census, the majority (over 96 per cent) of dentists in WA work in the major industry division of Health Care and Social Assistance and the number of dentists in WA has increased by 10 per cent between 2001 and 2006, to 836.

To practice as a dentist in WA, registration with the Dental Board of WA is required. There were 1371 registered dentists at June 2008, 1266 at June 2007, 1206 at June 2006 and 1142 at June 2005. This is an average increase of six per cent per year over this period. The Dental Board of WA has indicated that the majority of dentists are self-employed.

Occupational supply

The University of Western Australia (UWA) is the only local training institution for dentists offering a five year full time Bachelor of Dental Science. The graduate numbers of domestic students of this course in recent years have been 10 in 2007 and 14 in 2006. Overseas migration to WA has provided a net gain of 63 dentists in 2007-08, which was an increase from 55 in 2006-07.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for dentists found that 57 per cent of vacancies were filled within six weeks following advertising. There were approximately seven applicants per vacancy of whom less than three per vacancy were considered by employers to be suitable. The data was skewed by one employer receiving a large number of applications for one position and deeming all applicants to be suitable. This contrasted with the experiences of most employers who indicated difficulties in recruitment.

Employers indicated the main reason advertised vacancies were not filled was that applicants lacked experience. Surveyed employers from private practices in metropolitan areas who advertised for part-time workers (two-three days per week) reported that they had no problem with recruitment. They said that most of the candidates were experienced and were either working part time for another practice and were looking for extra hours or were returning to the work force and only wanted part time work.

Employers in regional and remote areas reported difficulty in attracting applicants. Some employers in regional areas also indicated their services were fully booked for months ahead and reported shortages of dentists. Large employers in private practice who were looking for full time workers also reported shortages in metropolitan and regional areas. They said that even though they employed recent graduates they could not attract enough people to fill their requirements. Some employers said that they looked to recruit from the United Kingdom which has reciprocal registration requirements with Australia. A spokesperson for the WA Health Department indicated there was a shortage of dentists in WA especially in regional and remote areas. He added that they mainly recruit through the "Public Sector Dental Workforce Scheme" which encourages dentists from overseas to work in remote and regional areas.

Labour market outlook

Labour market information indicates a shortage of dentists in the medium to long term with shortages most evident in regional and remote areas.