

Clinical Psychologist		South Australia
ASCO Code: 2514-11	May 2008	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

According to the ABS Census, the number of employed clinical psychologists increased by over 27 per cent in the five years to 2006 to 577 persons. The Psychological Practices Act 1973 requires mandatory registration of psychologists with the South Australian Psychological Board. Data from the Board indicates there were 948 employed registered psychologists (specific data on clinical psychologists are unavailable) resident in South Australia as at June 2007. This represented an increase of 4.2 per cent compared to a year earlier.

Demand for psychological services is largely determined by government funding of social welfare and health care services. Over 80 per cent of clinical psychologists are employed in the health and community services industry with a further 15 per cent in government administration and defence. In the year to June 2007, the number of psychologist employed by the State Government increased by 3.6 per cent to 261. ABS Labour Force Survey data also recorded an increase in employment of psychologists in the year to February 2008. Skilled Vacancies Index data recorded no significant change in the number of newspaper advertised vacancies in 2007 compared with 2006.

In November 2006, the Australian Government introduced new Medicare items which enables people with diagnosed mental disorders to access services provided by psychologists. As at April 2008, there were 251 South Australian psychologist Medicare providers.

Occupational supply

The major source of supply is successful completion of a bachelor degree in psychology followed by a two-year masters degree in clinical psychology. In the five years to 2006, there has been an average of 30 course completions per annum among the three universities. Preliminary data indicate there may have been a modest reduction in completions in 2007. The GCCA Graduate Destination Survey reported that 78 per cent of South Australian psychology graduates seeking full-time employment were successfully employed in 2007 compared with 74 per cent in 2006 (68 per cent in 2005). The data do not show in which occupations they were employed.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for clinical psychologists in a metropolitan newspaper revealed that 40 per cent of positions were filled within six weeks. On average, employers attracted around three applicants per vacancy but many were deemed to be unsuitable due to lack of relevant experience, qualifications or registration. Some employers who advertised on the internet received a large number of unsuitable applications both locally and from overseas. After removal of unsuitable applications, there was an average of 0.8 suitable applicants per vacancy. Therefore, most employers experienced difficulty filling their positions, particularly those in the public sector. In addition to earning more money in the private practice, employers reported an increasing trend towards self-employment. This is confirmed by Census data which show that between 2001 and 2006, the proportion of self-employed psychologists increased from 37 per cent to 40 per cent. There also appears to be high staff turnover in this occupation.

Labour market outlook

For a number of years, demand for clinical psychologists has steadily increased, while the number of university graduates with masters degrees has remained stable. It appears this has contributed to the emerging shortage of clinical psychologists. Since demand is likely to continue to grow in the future, the shortage is anticipated to continue over the next 12 months.