Victorian Employer Skills Survey 2021 Central Highlands Region

The Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) asked businesses about their skills, recruitment and training needs for the Victorian Employer Skills Survey 2021.

Findings from the survey will help the Victorian government identify areas of skills demand, drive innovation across the VET sector and better plan for Victoria’s future training needs.

The VSA conducted the survey between August and December 2021. It approached 70,000 businesses and achieved a response rate of 20.5%, with coverage across all industries, business sizes and regions in the state.

*The statistics below reflect the experience of employers across the five key survey domains:*

#### Business climate | Skills | Recruitment | Training | Apprentices, trainees and work placements

## Business climate

#### **Despite the global pandemic, many Central Highlands employers adapted to maintain or grow their workforce. Employers had a mostly positive outlook for the year ahead.**Workforce

More employers reported growing their workforce over the past 12 months (compared to the state average

**Grew**

Central Highlands Region 23%

Vic Avg 19%

**Contracted**

Central Highlands Region 12%

Vic Avg 19%

**Remained the same**

Central Highlands Region 64%

Vic Avg 61%

**Don’t know**

Central Highlands Region 1%

#### Outlook

Employers in Central Highlands are optimistic about their future growth, with the majority expecting to remain similar or grow in the next 12 months.

**Predict growth**

Central Highlands Region 33%

Vic Avg 33%

**Remain about the same**

Central Highlands Region 57%

Vic Avg 56%

**Predict contraction**

Central Highlands Region 6%

Vic Avg 5%

#### Impacts of COVID-19

COVID-19 skills-related challenges experienced by employers in Central Highlands was lower than the state average.

**Skills-related challenges**

Central Highlands Region 55%

Vic Avg 57%

**Adopted new ways of working related to COVID-19**

Central Highlands Region 44%

Vic Avg 45%

**Staff retention challenges**

Central Highlands Region 24%

Vic Avg 26%

## Skills

COVID-19 presented the most common skills challenge in the past year. More employers are expecting skill shortages in 2022 than in 2021.

#### Skills shortages

Over one in five employers in Central Highlands expect to face skills shortages in 2022. This was higher than the state average.

**Last 12 months**

Central Highlands Region 16%

Vic Avg 16%

**Next 12 months**

Central Highlands Region 22%

Vic Avg 21%

#### Skills challenges

The top skills challenges reported by employers were the same across all regions. They were:

**Finding candidates with the right skills**

Central Highlands Region 48%

Vic Avg 47%

**Adapting to the new ways of working due to COVID-19**

Central Highlands Region 44%

Vic Avg 45%

**Finding job-ready candidates**

Central Highlands Region 39%

Vic Avg 37%

#### Skills needs

More employers reported needing job-specific skills and fewer needed workers with the right attitude or job-ready skills compared to the state average.

**Technical/job-specific skills**

Central Highlands Region 79%

Vic Avg 73%

**The right attitude/mindset**

Central Highlands Region 43%

Vic Avg 50%

**Job-ready skills**

Central Highlands Region 41%

Vic Avg 47%

## Recruitment

Most Central Highlands employers had undertaken some recruitment activity over the past year and the majority reported experiencing challenges.

Recruitment need

More employers in the region undertook some form of recruitment over the past 12 months, compared to the state average.

Central Highlands Region 65%

Vic Avg 62%

Recruitment challenges

Seven in ten employers reported having difficulties recruiting for particular roles. This was the lowest rate across the state.

Central Highlands Region 70%

Vic Avg 76%

Type of challenge

The most common challenges faced by employers were related to the number, experience and job-specific skills of candidates.

**Few applicants**

Central Highlands Region 68%

Vic Avg 63%

**Candidates lacked relevant experience**

Central Highlands Region 45%

Vic Avg 50%

**Candidates lacked relevant technical/job-specific skills**

Central Highlands Region 46%

Vic Avg 47%

## Training

Three in five employers in Central Highlands engaged in some form of training.

**Engagement in training**

More employers used external training compared to the state average. Use of both internal and external training (37%) was the same as the state average (37%)
 **Internal training**

Central Highlands Region 17%

Vic Avg 17%

**External training**

Central Highlands Region 46%

Vic Avg 45%

**Satisfaction with training**

Levels of satisfaction with training was higher than the state average for quality, but lower for industry knowledge and improving staff performance.

**Helped staff do their job better**

Central Highlands Region 79%

Vic Avg 81%

**Trainers had good industry knowledge**

Central Highlands Region 77%

Vic Avg 80%

**Training was high quality**

Central Highlands Region 78%

Vic Avg 76%

**Training was reasonably priced**

Central Highlands Region 71%

Vic Avg 71%

 **Skillsets**

Over half of employers said they would consider a skillset (microcredential or part qualification) rather than a full qualification to upskill their staff.

Central Highlands Region 57%

Vic Avg 61%

## Apprentices, trainees and work placements

Central Highlands employers continue to make use of apprentices, trainees, and work placements to assist them in filling the skills pipeline.

**Apprentices and trainees**

Uptake of apprentices over the past 12 months was higher than the state average, whilst uptake of trainees was lower.
 **Apprenticeship**

Central Highlands Region 35%

Vic Avg 24%

**Traineeship**

Central Highlands Region 17%

Vic Avg 18%

**Challenges**

Employers cited lack of suitable applicants, cost and need for apprentices and trainees as the most common barriers.

**Lack of suitable applicants/people**

Central Highlands Region 23%

Vic Avg 20%

**There are no barriers/challenges**

Central Highlands Region 25%

Vic Avg 17%

**Cost of taking on apprentice(s)/trainee(s)**

Central Highlands Region 16%

Vic Avg 14%

**Work placement students**

More employers in the region took on work placement students (23% compared to the state average 21%). The most common type of work placement students were:

**University student**

Central Highlands Region 30%

Vic Avg 49%

**Secondary school student as part of work experience**

Central Highlands Region 58%

Vic Avg 41%

**Secondary school student as part of a VET qualification**

Central Highlands Region 27%

Vic Avg 22%

**A VET student**

Central Highlands Region 18%

Vic Avg 19%

**View the complete report here or visit** [Victorian employer skills survey | Victorian Government (www.vic.gov.au)](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-employer-skills-survey)