



Australian Government

Department of Jobs and Small Business

Appendix A

Disability care sector

The labour market for personal care workers

Australia, 2017



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The document must be attributed as the (The labour market for personal care workers, Disability care sector, Australia 2017)

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Executive Summary

Employer requirements

- Employers in both the aged and disability care sectors were seeking personal care workers with qualifications, experience and the right employability (personal, people and team) skills. However, employers in disability care were less likely to require qualifications and experience:
 - Some 46 per cent of employers always sought qualifications and experience when recruiting (74 per cent in aged care);
 - Some 41 per cent accepted applicants with no qualifications or only a Certificate I/II (16 per cent in aged care); and
 - Around 73 per cent sometimes or always considered applicants with no qualifications and little experience (28 per cent in aged care).
- When recruiting, 40 per cent said that employability and people skills were the most important factor (35 per cent in aged care).

Staffing characteristics

- The disability care sector had a higher proportion of casual personal care staff than in the aged care sector (43 per cent compared with 38 per cent) and 14 per cent worked full-time hours in disability care, compared with 21 per cent in aged care.
- On average, personal care workers in the disability care sector performed a greater number and range of tasks as part of their daily responsibilities than those in aged care. Disability care sector roles appear to be more varied compared with aged care, resulting in disability care employers having a broader range of skill requirements, depending on the role. This is not surprising given the need to tailor jobs to clients under the NDIS, and client needs vary, and some with very specific skill, experience and personal requirements.

Recruitment activity and outcomes

- Most employers in disability care had recruited in the six months prior to the survey, with 97 per cent recruiting to fill new positions and 89 per cent recruiting to replace staff who had left.
- Some 27 per cent of the advertised vacancies were not filled, with employers reporting a lack of suitable applicants as the main reason. Applicants were rated as unsuitable due to their inadequate communication skills, insufficient work experience, and inability to work the hours required.
- On average, employers attempted to fill 10.4 personal care vacancies per recruitment round.
 - Disability care vacancies attracted fewer applications per vacancy than those in aged care (4.0 per vacancy compared with 9.1 per vacancy).
 - Despite having fewer applicants, employers in disability care found a higher proportion suitable (35 per cent) for the role compared with those in aged care (23 per cent).
- Employers were concerned about staff retention and 62 per cent reported personal care workers changed jobs to improve their pay and conditions.
 - In addition, 54 per cent of disability care employers thought staff left for jobs outside the industry (compared with 18 per cent in aged care).

1. Background

Personal care workers provide care, support and services to the elderly or to those with disability, either in their own home, clinic, hospital, at a residential care facility, or in a community setting.

This survey was conducted in September-October 2017 and focused on the personal care workforce in the aged and disability care sector. Similar surveys were run between 2011 and 2014. While the results are not directly comparable with earlier surveys, some comparisons are made with the 2014 results.

The *Labour market for personal care workers* report provides findings from the survey and allows comparisons between the aged and disability care sectors. This report provides more detailed findings from the survey on the disability care sector (*Appendix B* focuses on the aged care sector).

2. Profile of respondents

- 142 providers of aged and disability care services responded to the survey
- 55 per cent of all respondents operated predominantly in the disability care sector
- 86 per cent of personal care staff in disability care worked part-time

2.1 Respondents

The Department received 142 survey responses from providers of aged and disability care in all states and territories, covering both metropolitan and regional areas.¹ Of these, 55 per cent operated predominantly in the disability care sector.² Some 96 per cent provided services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The remaining 4 per cent of respondents were from regional Queensland where the NDIS was still being rolled out.

Figure 1: Respondents by state/territory

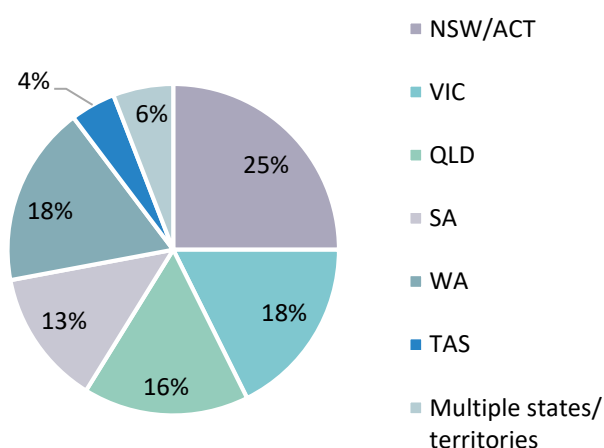
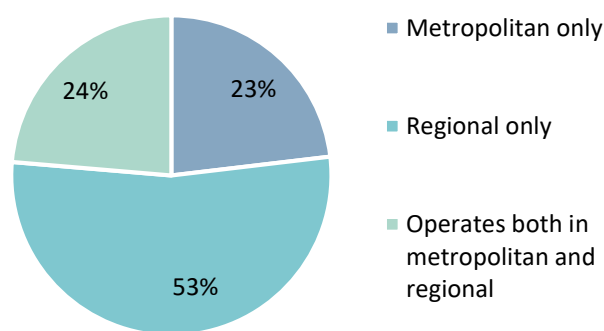


Figure 2: Respondents' location



¹ NSW and ACT responses have been combined. As there were no businesses operating solely in the Northern Territory, NT responses are included in the 'multiple states/territories' group.

² For those operating in both sectors, 90 per cent provided more than 70 per cent of their services in the disability care sector.

2.2 Sector and business characteristics

Around 78 per cent of the businesses in the disability care sector were a community/not-for-profit organisation while a further 21 per cent operated as a commercial/private business. Only 1 per cent were public providers.

Respondents in disability care employed more than 12,600 personal care workers. Businesses surveyed employed an average of 185 staff, but the individual size of the businesses varied significantly, from two to more than 1,000 personal care workers.

A reported 54 per cent of these workers were employed as a permanent/ongoing staff member (Figure 3), and 86 per cent worked part-time hours³ (Figure 4). Around 43 per cent of personal care workers were in casual employment, which is in line with the findings of the *Australian Disability Workforce Report* that estimated 41 per cent of all disability support workers were in casual employment.⁴

Disability care staff worked an average of 21.7 hours per week. Almost half (48 per cent) of part-time staff worked between 16 and 20 hours and another 21 per cent worked between 21 and 25 hours (Figure 5). Permanent/ongoing personal care workers worked an average of 25.2 hours per week; casuals 18.6 hours; contract staff 20.4 hours; and labour hire company staff worked 16 hours per week, on average.

Figure 3: Employment type

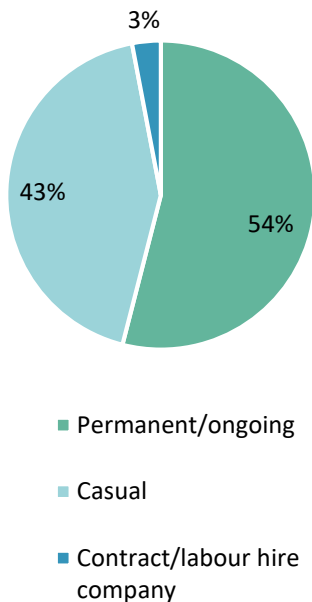


Figure 4: Employed full-time or part-time

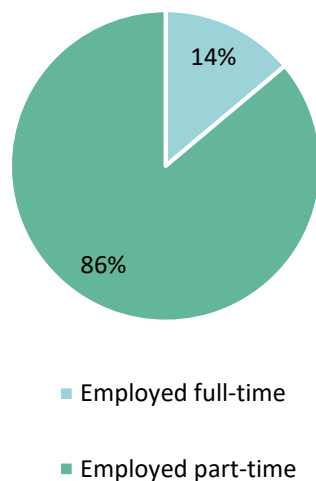
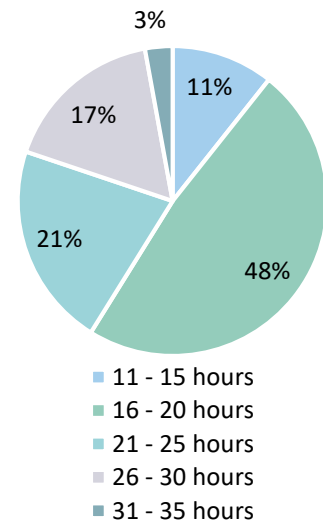


Figure 5: Average weekly hours worked by part-time workers



³ Part-time is defined as working less than 35 hours per week.

⁴ NDS, *Australian Disability Workforce Report*, July 2017.

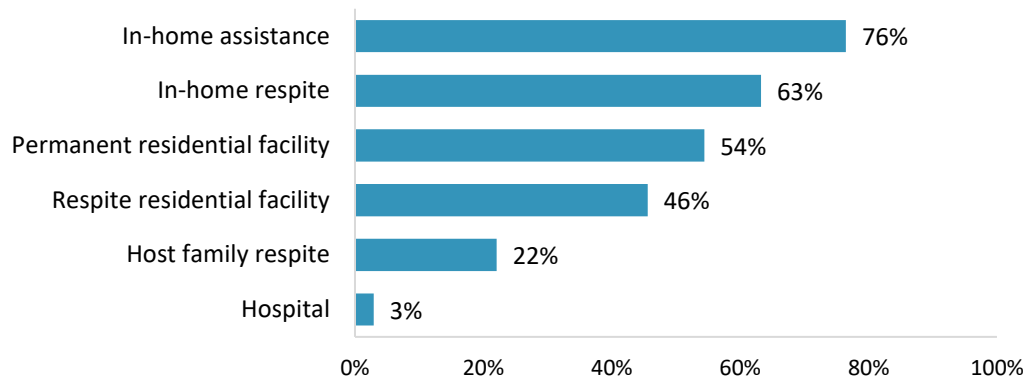
2.3 Service Delivery

There were two core delivery settings:

Accommodation support: Almost all respondents (97 per cent) provided some form of accommodation support.

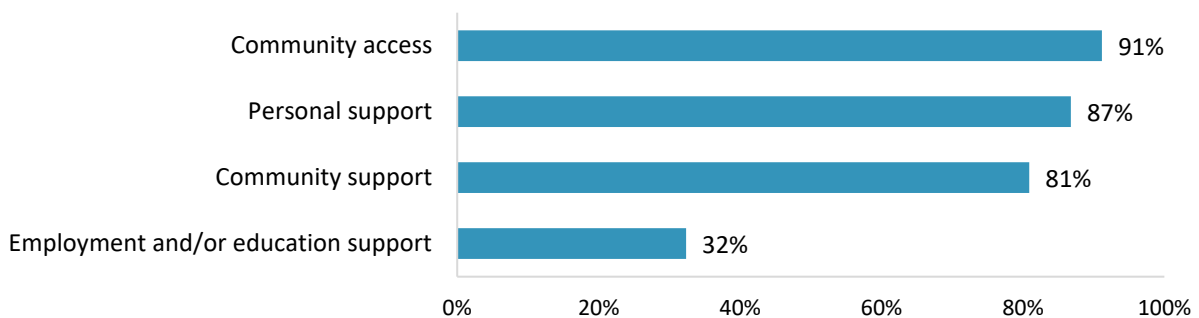
The most common of these in the disability care sector was in-home assistance, which supported clients to continue living in their home (delivered by 76 per cent of respondents) (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Accommodation support provided



Client support: Some 93 per cent of the employers operating in the disability care sector provided client support.

Figure 7: Client support provided

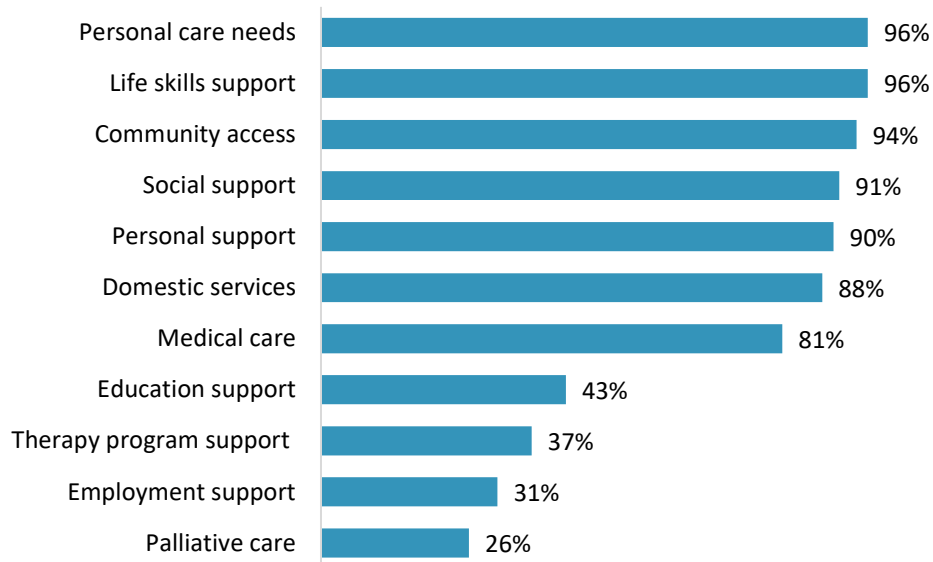


The most common service provided was *Community access*, including access to life-skill development and recreation and holiday programs, provided by 91 per cent of respondents. This was followed by *Personal support*, encompassing assistance with physical care needs and other support to arrange and attend appointments and assistance with financial matters, provided by 87 per cent of respondents. *Community support*, including providing assistance with, and access to, activities like therapy and counselling, was provided by 81 per cent of respondents (Figure 7).

2.4 Tasks performed by personal care workers

Personal care workers carry out a broad range of tasks in order to undertake their job. In the disability care sector, employers identified an average of 7.8 tasks per worker, compared with 6.4 in the aged care sector. Assisting with *Personal care needs* and *Life skills support* was provided by 96 per cent of personal care staff in the disability sector (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Tasks performed by personal care workers



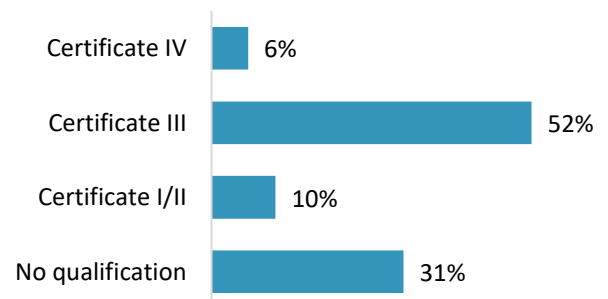
3. When recruiting, what are employers looking for?

- 58% of employers required a minimum qualification of Certificate III or higher
- Personal skills and qualities, such as a good work ethic and communication skills, are essential in the disability care sector and were often seen as more important than qualifications and experience

3.1 Qualifications and experience

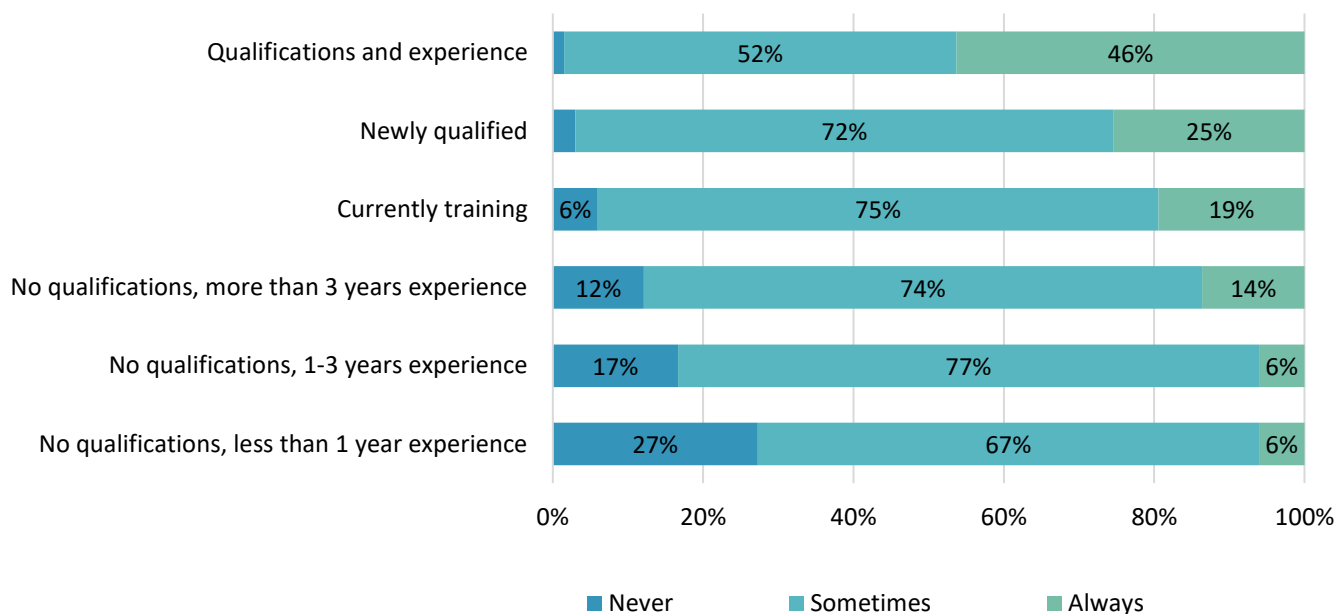
When recruiting for personal care workers, 58 per cent of employers in the disability care sector required a minimum qualification of Certificate III or higher (84 per cent in aged care). Of the respondents, 31 per cent had no minimum qualification requirements when recruiting. This was much higher than the 9 per cent of employers in the aged care sector who would consider an applicant with no qualifications.

Figure 9: Minimum qualification required



While almost all disability care providers preferred staff with qualifications and experience, 46 per cent *always* sought these qualities when recruiting. Compared with their aged care counterparts, disability care providers were more willing to consider people with lower levels of qualifications or experience, including those currently in training or without any qualifications.

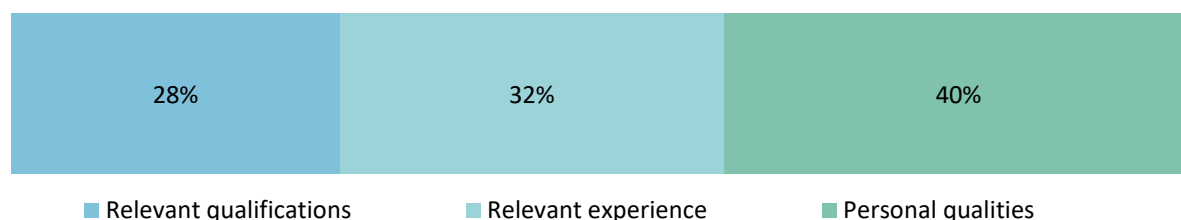
Figure 10: Qualifications and experience required for advertised positions



3.2 The importance of personal skills and qualities

In the disability care sector, the need for good employability, personal and people skills was evident and 40 per cent of employers thought these skills were more important than experience (32 per cent) or qualifications (28 per cent). As one employer in the disability care sector commented, “the personality and attitude and fit of the person is more important than qualifications and experience” and they were “willing to put someone on without training and send them to do the training (Certificate III in Disability) while on the job”.⁵

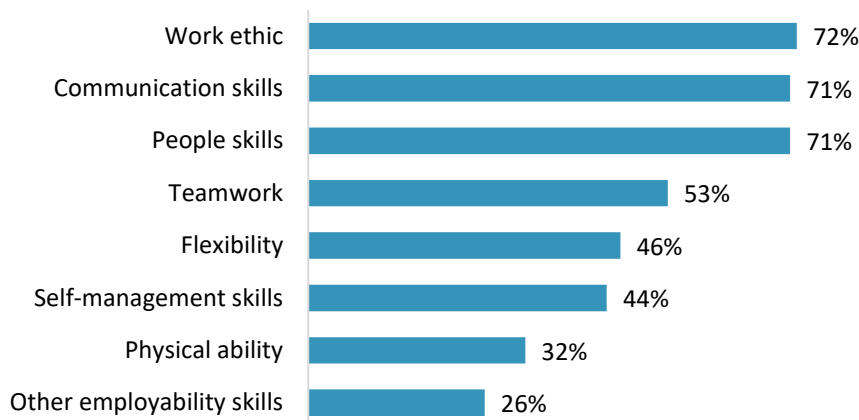
Figure 11: Most important characteristic for employers when recruiting



⁵ Comment by employer, Department of Jobs and Small Business, *Personal Care Workers Survey*, 2017, Australia.

The personal qualities most sought after by employers were a good work ethic, communication skills and people skills (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Personal and employability skills rated as very important by employers



4. Recruitment activities

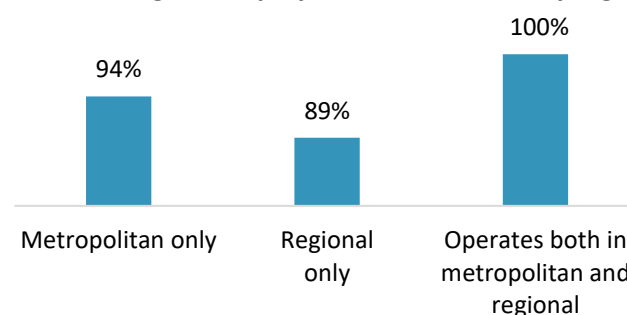
- 91 per cent of employers undertook recruitment in the previous six months
- 97 per cent of employers were recruiting to fill new positions, while 89 per cent were replacing staff
- More than half of the businesses surveyed had recruited staff by 'word of mouth' or after being approached by the applicant

4.1 Recruitment in previous six months

In the six months prior to the survey, 91 per cent of employers in the disability care sector had attempted to recruit personal care workers. This recruitment rate was much higher than the Australian average of 72 per cent.⁶

A reported 94 per cent of metropolitan employers in disability care had attempted to recruit but those in regional areas also had a high recruitment rate, of 89 per cent (Figure 13). By comparison, only 63 per cent of aged care providers operating in regional areas had attempted to recruit in the previous six months.

Figure 13: Percentage of employers who recruited, by region



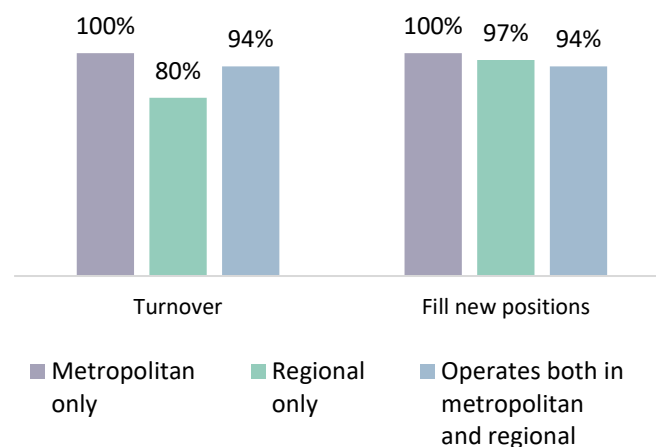
⁶ Department of Jobs and Small Business, *Surveys of Employers' Recruitment Experiences (SERE)*, 2017. The SERE is a quantitative telephone survey (opposed to this survey which was a paper survey) that contacted employers and asked about their recent recruitment experiences.

4.2 Reasons for recruitment

In the disability care sector, 89 per cent of employers had recruited in the last six months to replace staff, a slight increase from 87 per cent in 2014. All metropolitan businesses had attempted to recruit due to turnover, as did 80 per cent of regional employers (Figure 14).

Recruitment to fill new positions has increased significantly in recent years, rising from 84 per cent at the time of the 2014 survey, to 97 per cent in 2017. In fact, all providers in metropolitan areas had attempted to recruit to fill new positions, as had 97 per cent of those in regional areas.

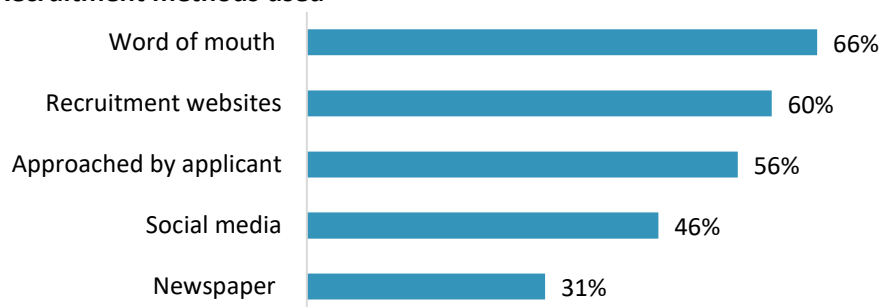
Figure 14: Reasons for recruitment



4.3 Recruitment Methods

When undertaking recruitment, employers in the disability sector used, on average, four different recruitment methods. Around 66 per cent of respondents relied on 'word of mouth' to fill their vacancies, such as asking current employees if they knew of anyone that would be suitable for the role, and 56 per cent relied on applicants approaching the business directly (Figure 15). In fact, all businesses had used at least one of these forms of recruitment.

Figure 15: Recruitment methods used



Recruitment websites were also popular, with 60 per cent of employers using this method. Increasingly, businesses in this sector have recruitment pages incorporated into their websites, listing all current vacancies and allowing individuals to lodge their résumés online.

Interestingly, social media (46 per cent) was utilised by a larger proportion of employers than newspapers (31 per cent) when recruiting. In the Department's *Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences*, some 10 per cent of employers nationally across all industries used social media as a method of recruitment.⁷

⁷ Department of Jobs and Small Business, *Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences*, 2017.

5. Recruitment experiences

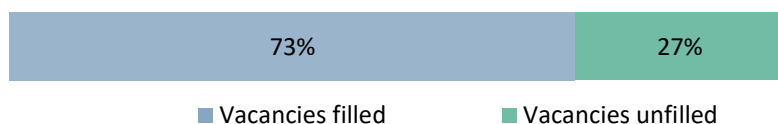
- With an average of 4.0 applicants per vacancy and around 73% of all vacancies filled, employers were generally able to find suitable applicants for their positions
- Employers stated that a lack of suitable applicants was the main reason vacancies were not filled

5.1 Vacancies and recruitment

Around 93 per cent of employers in disability care advertised multiple vacancies at a time, and on average, each employer advertised 10.4 personal care worker positions in their last recruitment round. Within the sector, 73 per cent of all vacancies had been filled at the time of the survey (Figure 16). Other research by the department based on a sample of a range of skilled occupations shows that, on average, employers filled 60 per cent of their vacancies.⁸

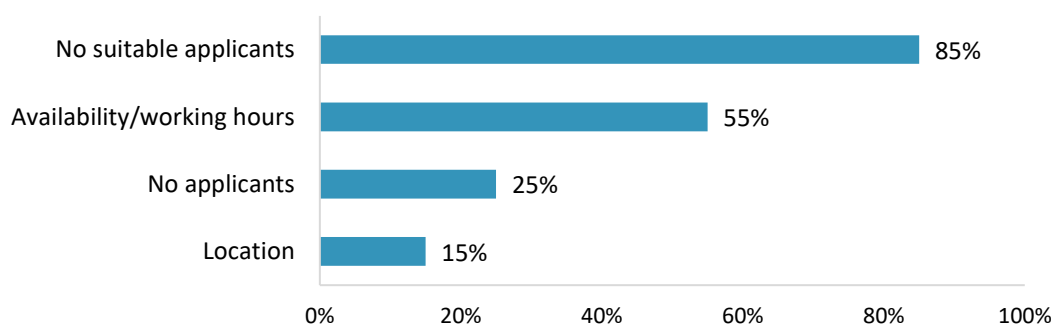
At 27 per cent, the proportion of unfilled vacancies has increased since the 23 per cent recorded in 2014, indicating the labour market has tightened slightly for these workers in the disability sector.

Figure 16: Vacancies filled in the last recruitment round



In their most recent recruitment round, it took an average of 3.6 weeks to fill the vacancies (faster than in 2014 when it took 4.1 weeks), but slightly longer than in the aged care sector, in which it took an average 3.4 weeks to fill a vacancy. According to employers, the main reason for their unfilled vacancies was a lack of suitable applicants (85 per cent) while a further 25 per cent of employers had no applicants for their vacancies. Some 55 per cent of employers received applications from people who were not available to work the hours needed for the position (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Employers' reasons vacancies were not filled



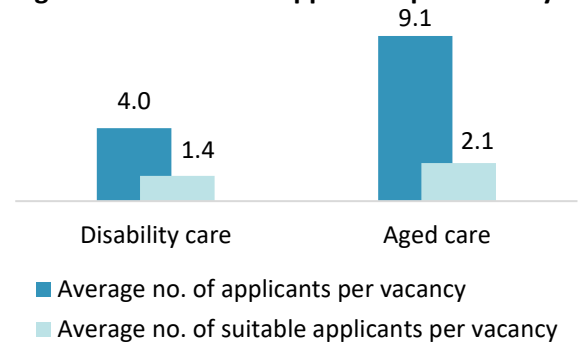
⁸ Department of Jobs and Small Business, *Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised (SERA), 2017–18*. There are methodological differences between the SERA and this survey: the SERA is a telephone survey conducted by interviewers that follows up employers who have recently advertised in selected occupations, while this survey was a self-completion paper based survey of a sample of employers in the aged and disability care sectors.

5.2 Suitability of applicants

Employers found 35 per cent of applicants for their positions in the disability care sector to be suitable.

On average, there were 4.0 applicants for every position, of which 1.4 (or 35 per cent) were considered suitable (Figure 18). This compares with other departmental research for a range of skilled occupations, which found there were 9.3 applicants for each vacancy, with 1.5 found suitable, on average.⁹

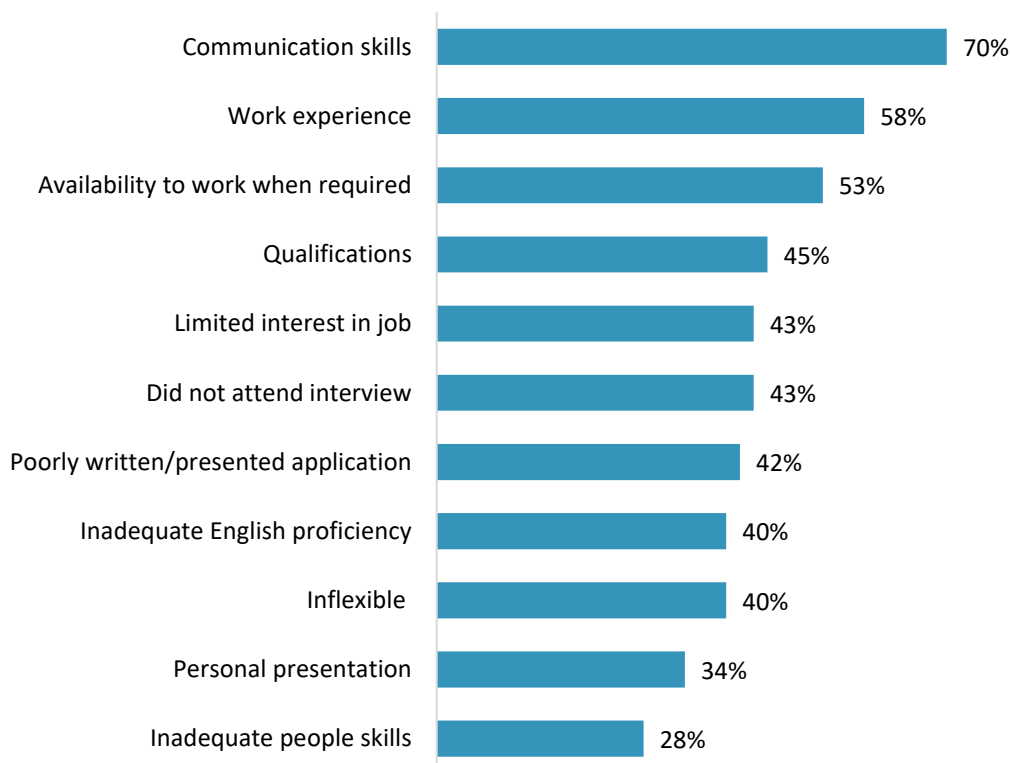
Figure 18: Number of applicants per vacancy



With an average 9.1 applicants per vacancy, there were considerably more applicants for each position in the aged care sector. However, only 2.1 applicants found suitable (or 23 per cent).

Of those employers who had attempted to recruit and found applicants unsuitable, 70 per cent indicated poor communication skills were a reason for rating applicants as unsuitable, followed closely by insufficient work experience (58 per cent) and applicants' availability to work when required (53 per cent). Insufficient qualifications (45 per cent), limited interest in the job and not attending the interview (both 43 per cent) were also concerns for employers (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Reasons applicants were rated unsuitable (multiple responses allowed)



⁹ Department of Jobs and Small Business, *Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised, 2017–18*.

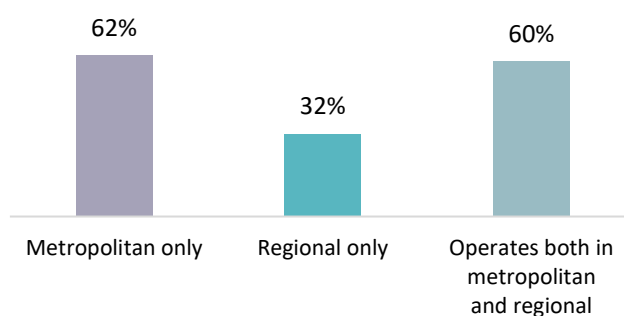
5.3 Additional training requirements of new staff

Of the successful applicants, almost half (46 per cent) required some form of training besides company induction training. The need for training was greatest in metropolitan areas with 62 per cent of all successful applicants requiring some form of additional training, compared with 32 per cent in regional locations (Figure 20).

Additional training employers needed to give their new starters included:

- Manual handling
- Administration of medicines
- First aid
- Behaviour management
- Food handling.

Figure 20: Successful applicants who needed training



6. Recruitment expectations

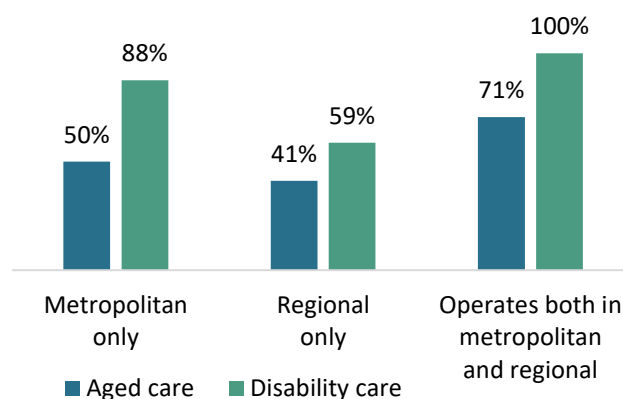
- Three quarters of employers had vacancies at the time of the survey
- 95 per cent of employers were expecting to recruit in the next six months

6.1 Current vacancies

Seventy-five per cent of disability care sector respondents had current vacancies at the time of the survey (compared with 54 per cent in aged care). Respondents in metropolitan regions had more vacancies than regional respondents (88 per cent and 59 per cent, respectively) but disability service providers in all locations had a higher rate than those in the aged care sector (Figure 21).

On average, there were 10.4 vacancies per respondent in the disability care sector, compared with 8.6 vacancies in the aged care sector.

Figure 21: Proportion of employers with vacancies for personal care workers



6.2 Expectations of future recruitment

Most disability care employers (95 per cent) were expecting to need to recruit in the six months following the survey. Of these, only 2 per cent thought recruitment would be easier while 59 per cent thought it would be about the same. A significant proportion of respondents thought recruitment was going to be more difficult in the future (39 per cent).

7. Turnover and the retention of personal care workers

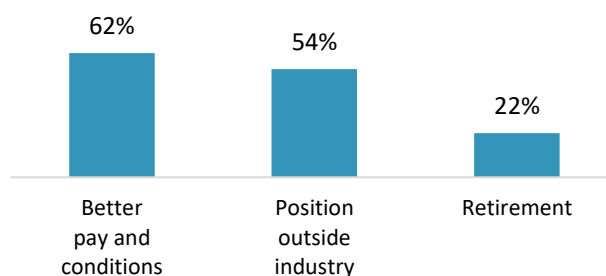
- Employers thought staff left mainly to seek better pay and conditions
- Employers provided flexible working hours and training and development as a strategy to retain staff

7.1 Retention difficulties

The retention of staff is important to a business as turnover costs can be expensive, especially if there is continuous turnover. In the disability care sector, 58 per cent of employers thought the retention of staff was difficult, higher than in the aged care sector (43 per cent).

Employers in the disability care sector reported that personal care workers left their job predominantly to seek better pay and conditions (62 per cent). Additionally, 54 per cent of respondents believed workers left their job for positions outside of the disability care sector altogether (Figure 22).

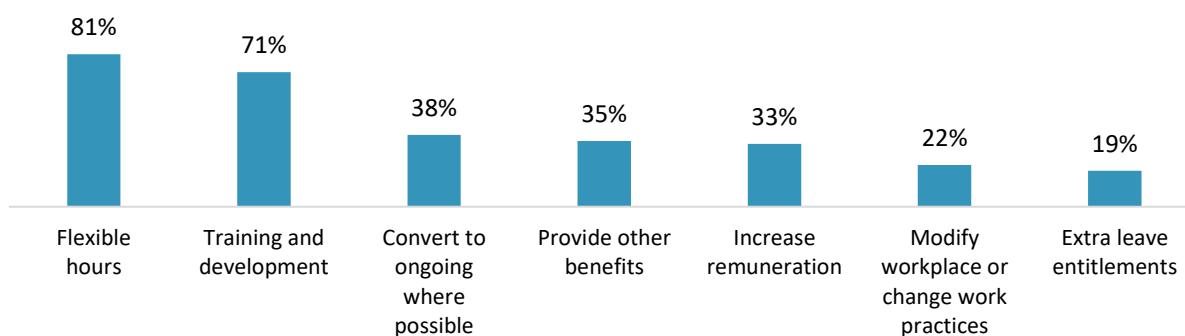
Figure 22: Reasons for turnover



7.2 Strategies to help improve retention

Many employers were willing to provide flexible hours for their workers (81 per cent) and used this as a strategy to encourage staff to stay. Additionally, 71 per cent of employers provided training and development in an attempt to retain staff (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Strategies to help retain staff



Employers in the disability care sector were significantly less likely than employers in aged care to convert workers employed on a casual or contract basis to a permanent basis (38 per cent compared with 63 per cent). This may have implications for how disability care sector jobs are viewed by potential workers and may influence their preferences when applying for jobs.

8. Supply and demand trends

8.1 Demand for personal care services

The demand for personal care services is driven by the number of people requiring such services. The *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers* indicates 4.3 million Australians reported having disability in 2015, most of whom had a limitation or restriction that impacted upon core activities of self-care, mobility or communication.¹⁰

At 30 June 2018, there were 183,965 people with disability receiving support under the NDIS, an increase of 24,000 participants (or 13 per cent) since March 2018, including around 54,800 participants that had not previously received disability support.¹¹

In line with the increase in the number of participants receiving disability support under the NDIS, the number of disability support providers funded by the Commonwealth Government in Australia also increased, by 17 per cent from March 2018, to around 16,755 in 30 June 2018. This growth is expected to continue as the NDIS aims to support an estimated 460,000 clients by July 2020.¹¹

8.2 Future growth

Demand for personal care services in disability care is expected to increase in the future. Prior to the commencement of the NDIS rollout in 2013, the disability workforce was estimated to be around 73,000 full-time equivalent workers. The Department of Social Services estimates this to increase to around 162,000 full-time equivalent workers once fully implemented in 2019-20.¹²

The Productivity Commission estimates that the NDIS will increase funding in the sector from about \$8 billion per year to \$22 billion in 2019-20. The Commission reported that the NDIS workforce would need to more than double from 2014-15 to 2019-20 and the scale, scope and capacity of providers would also need to expand substantially, with most regions requiring between a 50 per cent and 150 per cent increase in the workforce, regardless of the current number of employees.¹³

¹⁰ ABS, *Disability, Ageing and Carers*, 2015.

¹¹ NDIS, COAG Disability Reform Council Quarterly Report, 30 June 2018.

¹² Department of Social Services, *Guaranteeing the National Disability Insurance Scheme*, 2017 Budget.

¹³ Productivity Commission, *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Costs*, Report Overview, October 2017.

9. Australian Disability Workforce Reports¹⁴

The National Disability Services (NDS) *The Australian Disability Workforce Report, February 2018*, reviewed nine quarters of workforce data, covering between 35,000 and 38,000 people each quarter. Information is entered into an online system by disability organisations and covers support workers and allied health professionals. The report also uses information from *carecareers*, the NDS' jobs board allowing employers to advertise for disability sector and aged care positions.

As the scope and methodology of the NDS *Australian Disability Workforce Report* is different to this research, only limited direct comparisons are possible. However, results that can be compared are broadly consistent.

The report found that support worker growth in the sector was 11.1% over the last year, compared with 1.6 per cent in the workforce as a whole, largely driven by growth in casual employment. Other findings from the NDS report include:

Workforce characteristics and stability

- Disability organisations are seeking flexible employment options. Some 42 per cent of the total workforce was employed on a casual basis with this share increasing over the previous 18 months, a trend observed particularly in small and medium sized organisations.
 - However, NDS *carecareers* data show that job applicants had a clear preference for permanent work, rather than casual roles.
- The incidence of part-time work also rose, across business of all sizes, but in large organisations they were more likely to be permanent part-time.
 - NDS *carecareers* data show that a large proportion of job applicants preferred part-time rather than full-time work.
 - There was a downward trend in the average hours worked per week, and at 22.6 hours per week, this was below the national average for part-time workers (26 hours per week).
- While the permanent workforce was considered relatively stable, there was a high turnover rate of casual workers, 1.6 times the rate of permanent workers and equivalent to 35 per cent per annum.

Recruitment (July 2017 report)

The July 2017 report included a special topic on recruitment. Key findings include:

- Of the 192 organisations in the sample, 76 per cent had advertised a direct support worker role in March 2017 and of these, 65 per cent were able to fill all their positions.
- While 35 per cent reported having at least one position unfilled, there were approximately eleven times as many positions filled as unfilled (i.e. 1,768 positions were filled and 155 unfilled).
- The most common reason given for difficulty filling positions was the lack of suitable or qualified candidates. Other reasons included candidates being unable or unwilling to meet specific job requirements, poor employment conditions and/or job prospects, and geographical factors.

¹⁴ National Disability Services (NDS), *The Australian Disability Workforce Report, February 2018 and July 2017*.

Specificity of job requirements

The 2017 report noted that a common difficulty observed by employers was the increasing specificity of job requirements for disability support positions, as jobs are tailored to clients under the NDIS. Around 22 per cent of responses mentioned that the advertised role required one or more of the following:

- Specific job skills (i.e. experience in community access support; gardening and horticulture; and cleaning).
- Demographic characteristics (e.g. young male, Indigenous or another cultural background).
- Personality attributes (as assessed in a psychometric test, or suitability to care for clients with challenging behaviours).

Comparing the disability sector and aged care workforces

The 2017 report provided comparisons between the 2016 National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey with NDS workforce information and found the disability and aged care workforces are similar in many regards, including high female participation, short working hours and the nature of the work (interactive care work, often involving personal and one-to-one support with significant emotional content).

However, the report also highlighted some differences between the two workforces. In relation to the March 2017 quarter:

- More disability support workers were on casual contracts (47 per cent) compared with 10 per cent in aged care residential and 14 per cent in aged community care.
- Some 30 per cent of disability support workers were men compared with 10 per cent in aged care.
- Around 11 per cent of disability support workers were aged 16 to 24 years, compared with 3 per cent for aged community care and just over 6 per cent in aged residential care.

The report also explored, to some degree, whether the two sectors are sharing their workforce by examining workers' second jobs. The report found that of aged care workers with a second job, only a small proportion were working in disability with most having a second job in the aged care sector.