



SEASONAL RECRUITMENT IN REGIONAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA

Seasonal jobs are positions for which the timing and duration of employment is significantly influenced by factors such as the climatic cycle, holiday periods and/or agricultural harvests. There are no official estimates of seasonal employment in Australia, so to help fill this information gap, questions about seasonal recruitment were incorporated into the Department of Employment's *Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences* in regional and remote areas across Australia in 2016.

The analysis in this report is compiled from the responses from just under 8,000 employers. At the end of this report are profiles for each state broken down by Employment Region¹. These profiles are designed to help employment service providers and job seekers understand when most seasonal work is available.

KEY FINDINGS:

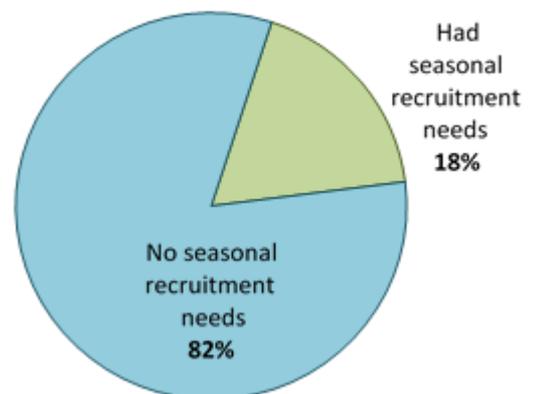
- Seasonal recruitment is a prominent feature of job markets across regional and remote Australia with 18 per cent of surveyed employers having seasonal recruitment needs in the past 12 months.
- Employers in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry (52 per cent) and Accommodation and Food Services industry (44 per cent) were more likely to require seasonal labour than other industries.
- The need for seasonal workers varies considerably between regional areas, while peak months for staffing also vary between industries and regions, but are most commonly concentrated over the Christmas/New Year holiday period in regional areas, and in the cooler winter months between May and September in remote areas.

Employers with seasonal recruitment needs

The 2016 survey results indicate that about 18 per cent of employers in regional and remote areas had seasonal recruitment needs in the past 12 months ([Graph 1](#)). A higher proportion of employers in remote areas (24 per cent) reported having seasonal recruitment needs compared with those in regional areas (17 per cent)².

These figures³ are not intended to estimate the overall impact of seasonality. For instance, anecdotal evidence suggests that many small businesses tend to increase the working hours of existing staff during peak periods, rather than hiring additional staff.

Graph 1: Proportion of employers with seasonal recruitment needs (regional and remote Australia)



¹ A geographical area identified and displayed on the Labour Market Information Portal (lmip.gov.au).

² Breakdown of responses by area (Regional and Remote), was done according to the ABS' *Remoteness Structure* found at www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/remoteness+structure. Postcodes were each assigned a 'Remoteness Area Class'. Very Remote and Remote were grouped into 'Remote', while Outer Regional and Inner Regional were grouped into 'Regional'.

³ This research focuses on whether or not the number of staff in a business are affected by seasonal factors.

Seasonal recruitment needs – by industry

Seasonal recruitment is influenced by an industry’s sensitivity to a range of factors, including seasonal weather conditions, tourism patterns, and consumer spending that occurs during holiday seasons.

Table 1 shows that the need for seasonal labour varies significantly between industries. Seasonal recruitment was found to be most prominent in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing⁴ (52 per cent of surveyed workplaces) and Accommodation and Food Services (44 per cent) industries.

More than one in five employers in the Retail Trade industry reported having seasonal recruitment needs. Within the industry, seasonal recruitment needs were relatively common in Supermarkets and Grocery Stores, Clothing, Footwear and Personal Accessories stores, Recreational Goods Retailing, and Specialised Food Retailing. Relatively few businesses in Motor Vehicle Retailing, Parts and Tyre Retailing, and Furniture, Floor Coverings, Houseware and Textile Goods Retailing required seasonal labour.

There was also high degree of variability in seasonal recruitment within the Manufacturing industry. While common in Food and Beverage Manufacturing, seasonal recruitment was rarely required in other sectors such as Fabricated Metal Product, and Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing.

Table 1: Proportion of employers with seasonal recruitment needs – selected industries

Industry	Regional	Remote	Total
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	52% n=172	52%* n=44	52% n=216
Accommodation and Food Services	40% n=700	56% n=198	44% n=898
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	21% n=291	40%* n=60	24% n=351
Retail Trade	19% n=899	27% n=321	21% n=1,220
Manufacturing	21% n=691	14%* n=79	21% n=770
All industries	17% n=6,502	24% n=1,385	18% n=7,887

*Results should be regarded as indicative due to the small number of responses collected in these industries in remote areas.

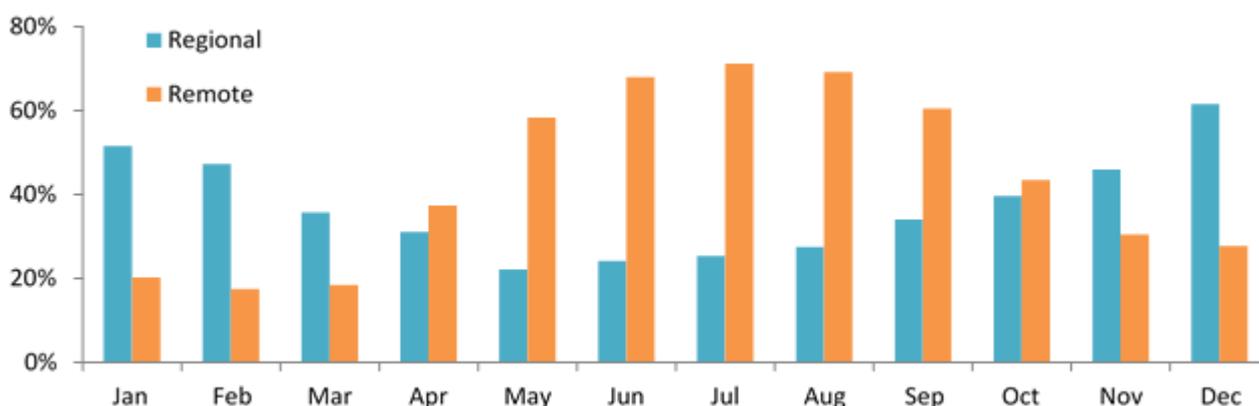
⁴ While survey responses are broadly representative for the majority of industries, the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry is under-represented in the survey. Employer contacts are under-represented in the available sample and the industry records lower rates of response relative to other industries. In 2016, there were 216 survey responses received for the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry.



Seasonal recruitment patterns

Seasonal staffing requirements for employers in remote areas most commonly peak in the winter months, reflecting the harvesting time for many crops and the tendency for tourists to visit remote areas in the cooler winter months. In regional areas, the peak months for staffing most commonly occur over the summer period. To a large extent, this result was due to increased staffing requirements in the Accommodation and Food Services and Retail Trade industries over the Christmas/New Year holiday period.

Graph 2: Peak months for staffing – proportion of employers with seasonal recruitment needs*

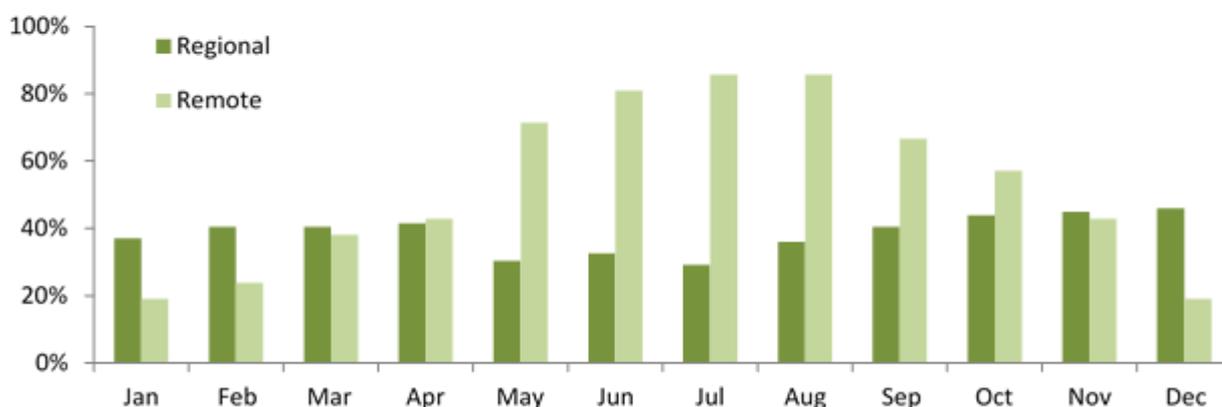


*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

Seasonal recruitment patterns – Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing

In remote areas, employers in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry most commonly reported that their peak months for staffing occur during the middle of the year, stretching from May to October, before quietening down at the end of the year (see [Graph 3](#)). In regional areas, recruitment patterns tend to be spread across the year, reflecting the greater variability in agricultural cycles across regional Australia.

Graph 3: Peak months for staffing in Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing – proportion of employers with seasonal recruitment needs*



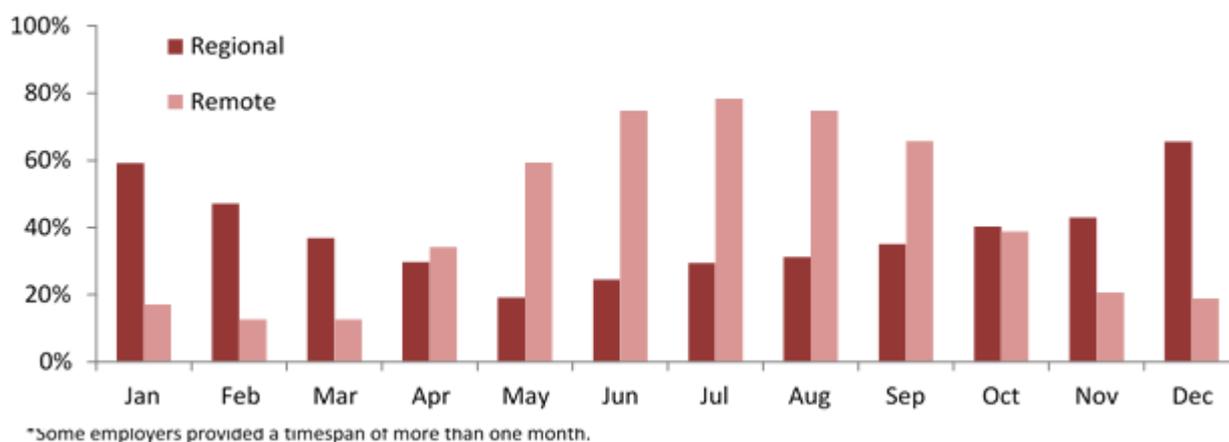
*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.



Seasonal recruitment patterns – Accommodation and Food Services

In regional areas, the peak months for staffing in the Accommodation and Food Services sector most commonly occur during the summer months, while employers in remote regions most frequently reported the peak period for staffing occurring in the middle of the year, from May to September (Graph 4).

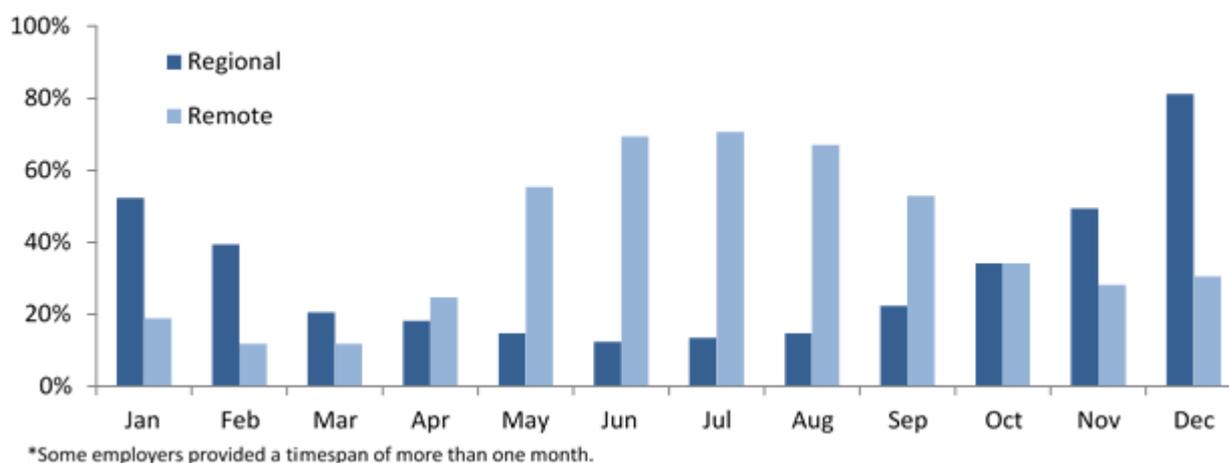
Graph 4: Peak months for staffing in Accommodation and Food Services – proportion of employers with seasonal recruitment needs*



Seasonal recruitment patterns – Retail Trade

In regional areas, the Christmas/New Year holiday period is the busiest time of the year for many retailers (Graph 5). Employers in remote areas more commonly have their peak months for staffing during the middle of the year, coinciding with higher tourist numbers and inflows of seasonal workers travelling to the region to take temporary positions in other sectors (such as Agriculture).

Graph 5: Peak months for staffing in Retail Trade – proportion of employers with seasonal recruitment needs*



Seasonal recruitment in regional New South Wales

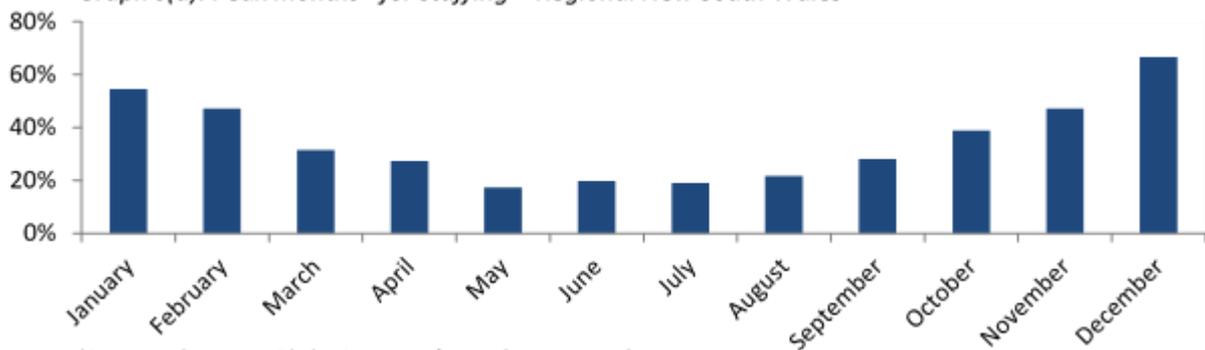
Across regional New South Wales⁵ 18 per cent of surveyed employers reported that their staffing levels were affected by seasonal factors in the past 12 months. There was variability in the seasonal recruitment needs across the State, ranging from one in five employers in the Illawarra South Coast Employment Region, to 12 per cent in the Mid North Coast Employment Region.

Employment Regions	Employers with seasonal recruitment needs
North Coast (n=285)	13%
Mid North Coast (n=289)	12%
New England and North West (n=300)	17%
Central West (n=298)	15%
Murray Riverina (n=253)	16%
Illawarra South Coast (n=148)	20%
Hunter (n=70)*	17%
Total Regional New South Wales (n=1,643)	18%

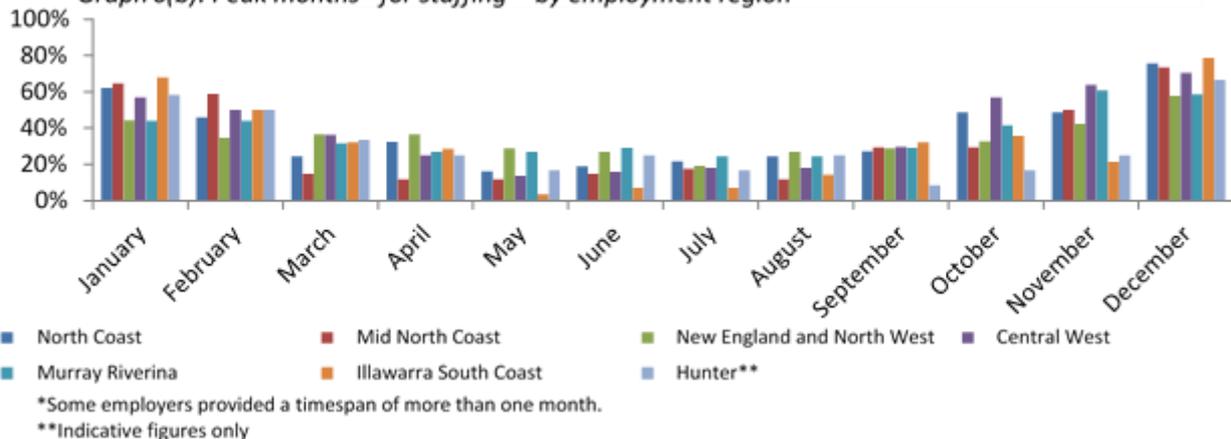
*Result should be regarded as indicative. Small sample is due to businesses from the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie area not being analysed. Newcastle and Lake Macquarie classified as a 'Major City of Australia' using ABS' Remoteness Structure. Major Cities of Australia were not analysed in this report.

Graph 6(a) shows that the peak months for staffing most commonly occurred over the summer period. To a large extent this result reflects the seasonal recruitment patterns of Tourism and Retail related businesses across the State. Graph 6(b) shows that peak months for Employment Regions across the State are broadly in line with those for regional New South Wales.

Graph 6(a): Peak months* for staffing – Regional New South Wales



Graph 6(b): Peak months* for staffing – by employment region



⁵ Detailed results were unavailable for the Far West Orana, and Capital Region Employment Regions

Seasonal recruitment in regional Victoria

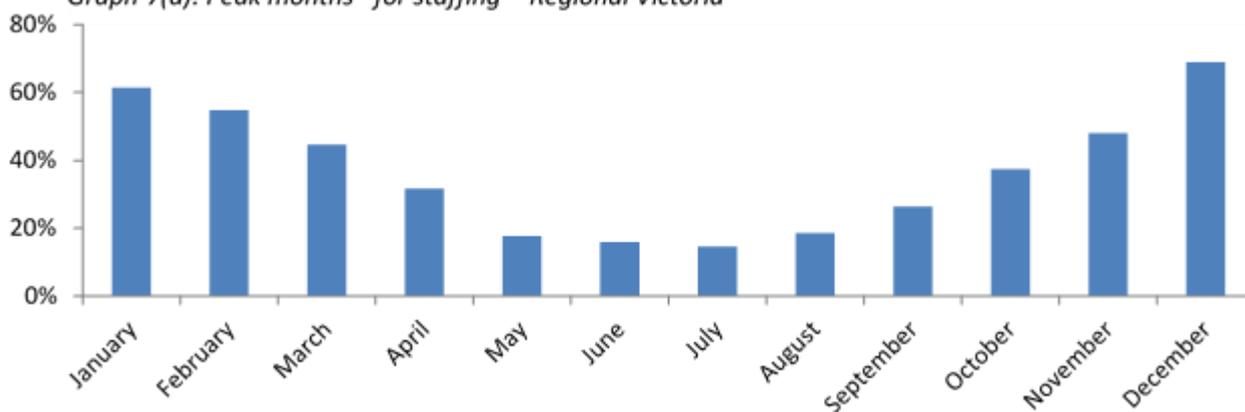
Almost one in five employers in Victoria reported that their staffing levels at their workplace are affected by seasonal factors. There was some variability in seasonal recruitment needs across the State, ranging from 23 per cent of employers in Wimmera Mallee Employment region, to 14 per cent in the Gippsland Employment Region⁶.

Employment Regions	Employers with seasonal recruitment needs
Wimmera Mallee (n=293)	23%
South Coast of Victoria (n=301)	20%
Barwon (n=69)*	28%
Ballarat (n=272)	20%
Bendigo (n=267)	16%
Goulburn/Murray (n=326)	19%
Gippsland (n=294)	14%
Total Regional Victoria (n=1,822)	19%

*Result should be regarded as indicative. Small sample is due to business from the Geelong area not being analysed. Geelong classified as a 'Major City of Australia' using ABS' Remoteness Structure. Major Cities of Australia were not analysed in this report.

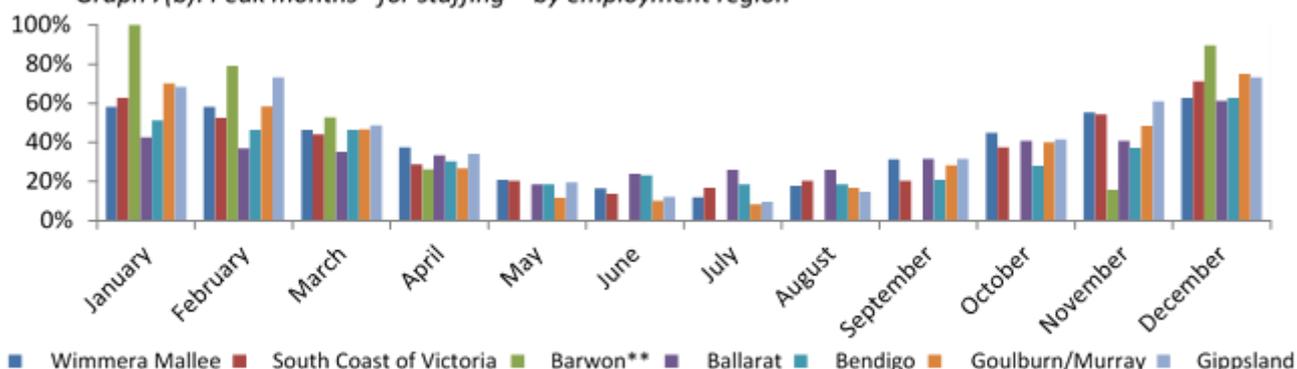
Graph 7(a) shows that seasonal recruitment needs across regional Victoria most commonly peak through the summer months (December - February). Peak months for each Employment Region are broadly in line with the overall pattern for regional Victoria (see Graph 7(b)).

Graph 7(a): Peak months* for staffing – Regional Victoria



*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

Graph 7(b): Peak months* for staffing – by employment region



*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

**Indicative figures only

⁶ Smaller than expected proportion due to low number of businesses in the Agriculture industry being surveyed

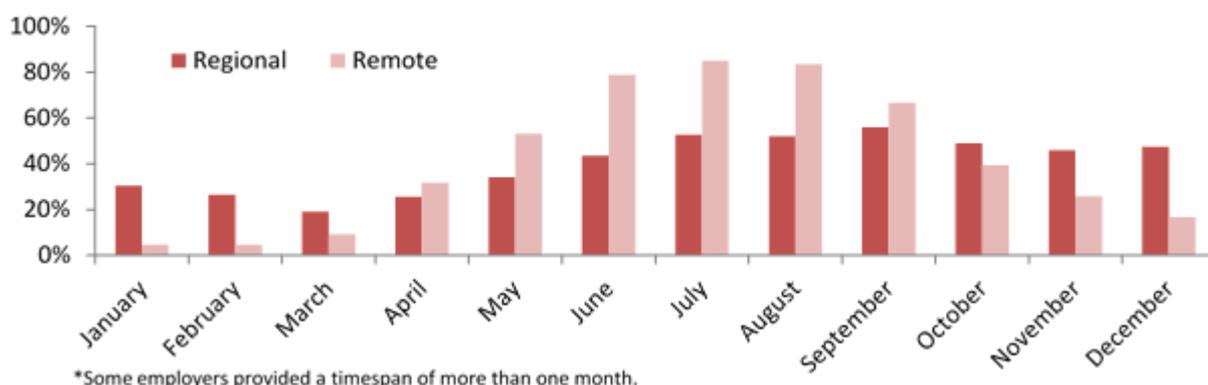
Seasonal recruitment in regional and remote Queensland

Across regional Queensland⁷ 15 per cent of surveyed employers reported that their staffing levels were affected by seasonal factors, compared with 23 per cent in remote Queensland. There was a high degree of variability in seasonal recruitment needs across regional Queensland, ranging from a low of 8 per cent in the Fitzroy Employment Region, to 25 per cent in the Cairns Employment Region.

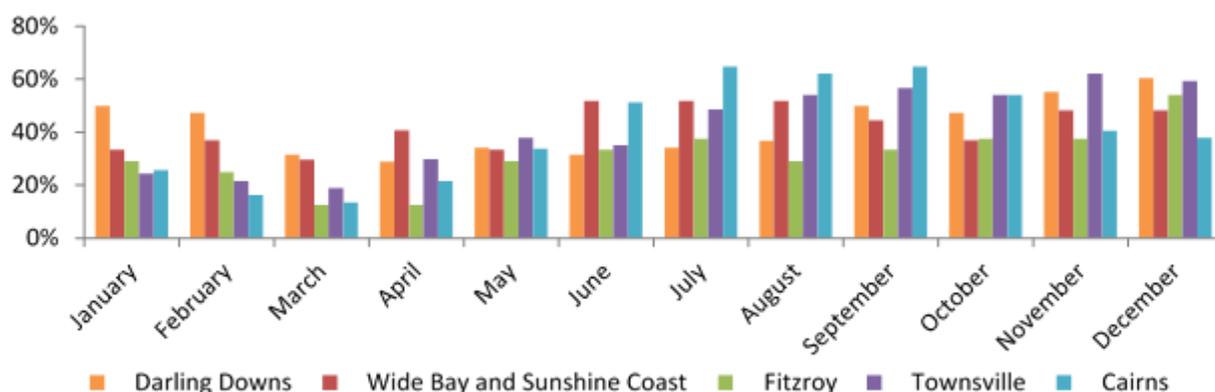
Employment Regions	Employers with seasonal recruitment needs
Darling Downs (n=320)	13%
Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast (n=235)	11%
Fitzroy (n=293)	8%
Townsville (n=219)	17%
Cairns (n=297)	25%
Total Regional Queensland (n=1,364)	15%
Remote Queensland (n=294)	23%

Graph 8(a) shows that in remote Queensland, peak months for staffing most commonly coincide with the traditional dry season, beginning around May, and extending through to October. In regional Queensland peak months also commence in May, but are more likely to extend beyond October through to the end of the year. Graph 8(b) shows the variability of peak months between Employment Regions across the State.

Graph 8(a): Peak months for staffing – Queensland*



Graph 8(b): Peak months for staffing –by employment region***



⁷ Detailed results were unavailable for the Gold Coast and Mackay Employment Regions

Seasonal recruitment in regional and remote South Australia

Across regional⁸ and remote South Australia, 17 per cent of surveyed employers reported that their staffing levels were affected by seasonal factors in the past 12 months. There was some variability in seasonal recruitment needs across regional South Australia, ranging from one in ten employers in the North West Country SA Employment Region, to around one in five employers in the Mid North SA Employment Region.

Employment Regions	Employers with seasonal recruitment needs
North West Country SA (n=156)	10%
Mid North SA (n=264)	21%
Total Regional South Australia (n=420)	17%
Remote South Australia (n=219)	17%

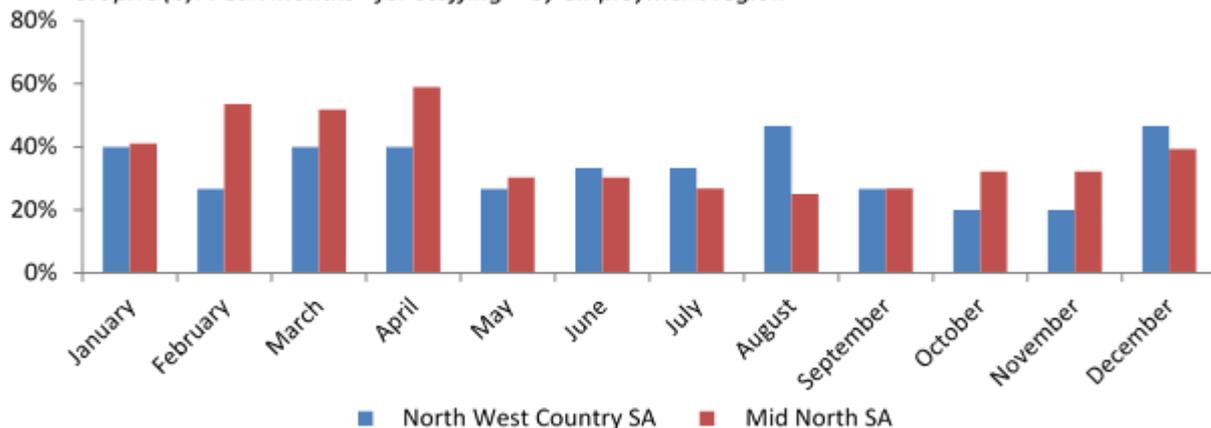
Graph 9(a) shows that peak months for staffing were more evenly dispersed across the year than in other States. In regional areas, February to April was the most commonly reported peak period for staffing, while in remote areas, the period was most commonly from December to February. Graph 9(b) shows the peak months for each Employment Region, and highlights the broad distribution of seasonal staffing peak months.

Graph 9(a): Peak months for staffing – South Australia*



*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

Graph 9(b): Peak months for staffing – by employment region***



*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

**Does not include remote businesses with seasonal recruitment

⁸ Detailed results were unavailable for the Murray and South East Employment Region



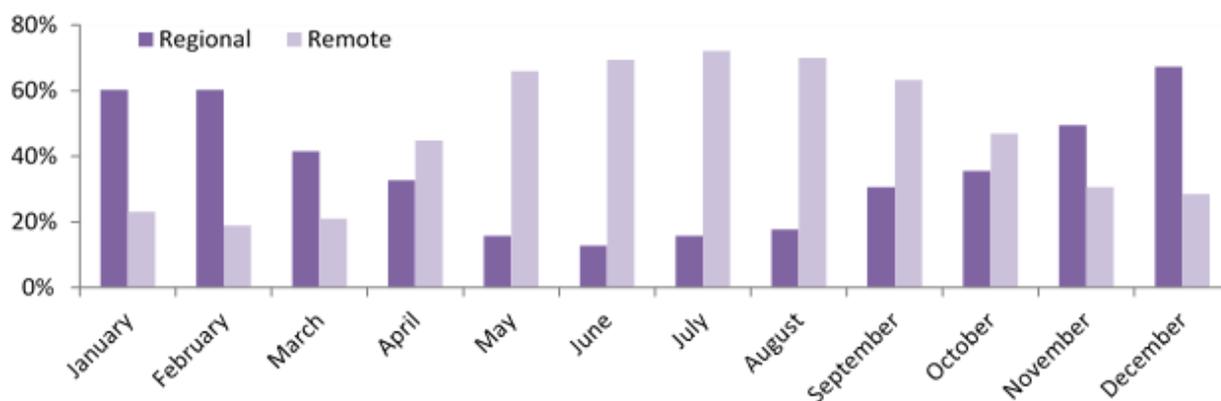
Seasonal recruitment in regional and remote Western Australia

Across regional Western Australia⁹ 13 per cent of surveyed employers reported that they needed to undertake seasonal recruitment, compared with 26 per cent in remote areas. There was significant variability in seasonal recruitment needs across regional Western Australia, ranging from only 5 per cent in the Kalgoorlie Employment Region (which is a heavily mining oriented region all year round), to one in five employers in the South West WA Employment Region.

Employment Regions	Employers with seasonal recruitment needs
South West WA (n=299)	21%
Geraldton (n=268)	8%
Kalgoorlie (n=164)	5%
Total Regional Western Australia (n=731)	13%
Remote Western Australia (n=560)	26%

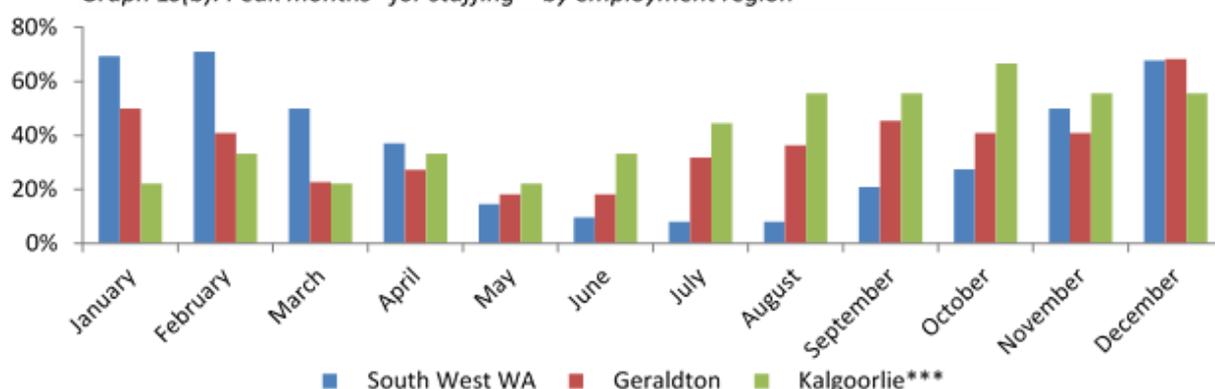
Graph 10(a) shows that peak months for staffing in regional Western Australia were most commonly reported between December and February, while in remote Western Australia they were most common between May and September. Graph 10(b) highlights the peak months for each Employment Region.

Graph 10(a): Peak months* for staffing – Western Australia



*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

Graph 10(b): Peak months* for staffing – by employment region**



*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

**Does not include remote businesses with seasonal recruitment

***Indicative figures only

⁹ Detailed results were unavailable for the Great Southern – Wheatbelt, Esperance, and Broome Employment Regions

Seasonal recruitment in regional Tasmania

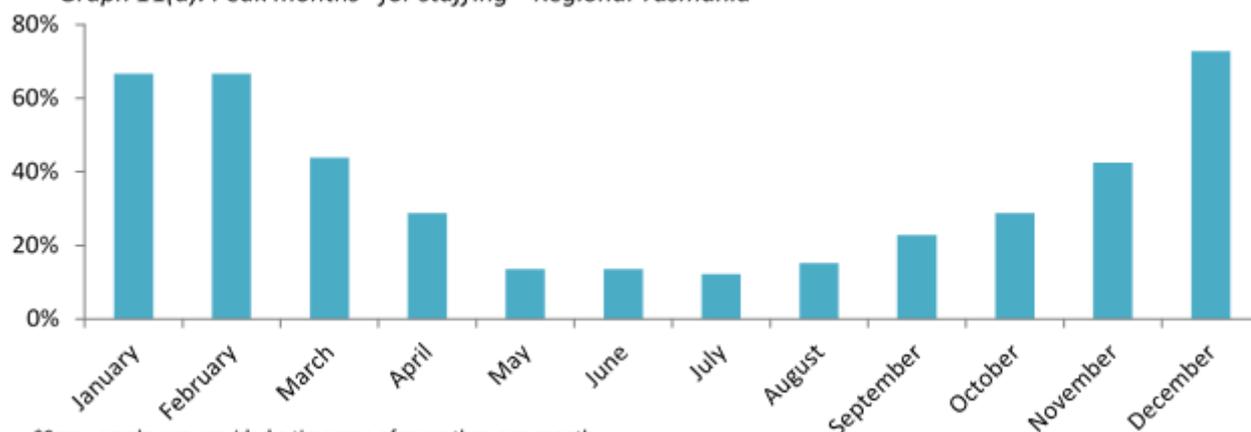
Almost one in five surveyed employers across regional Tasmania reported that they undertook seasonal recruitment in the past 12 months. Indicative results suggest that a higher proportion of employers need to undertake seasonal recruitment in Southern Tasmania⁶ than is the case in the North and North Western Tasmania Employment Region.

Employment Regions	Employers with seasonal recruitment needs
Southern Tasmania (n=58) ¹⁰	36%*
North and North Western Tasmania (n=288)	15%
Total Regional Tasmania (n=346)	19%

*Result should be regarded as indicative.

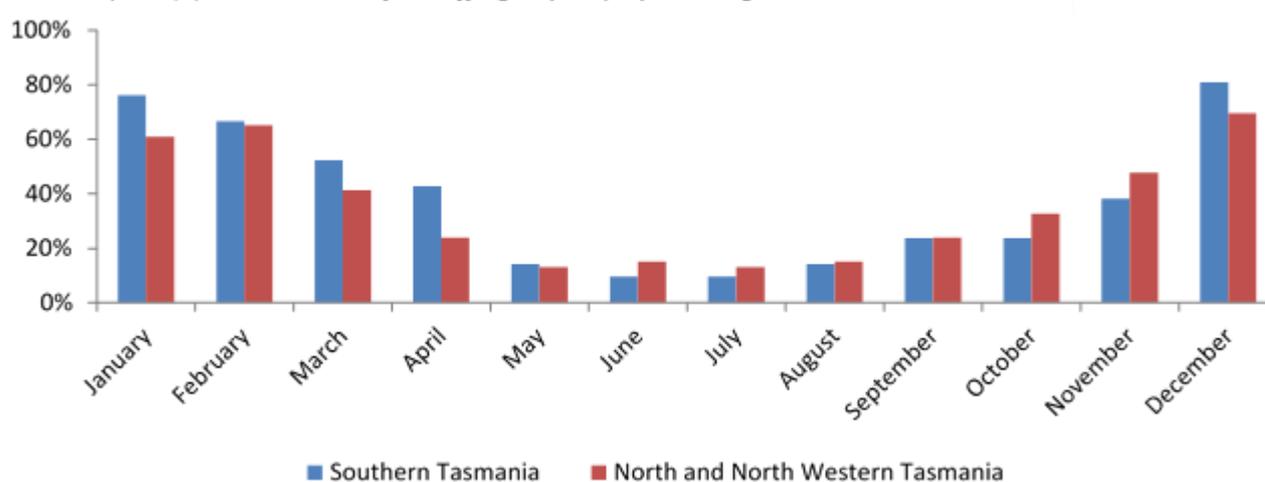
Graph 11(a) shows that peak months for staffing in regional Tasmania typically occur over the summer period, December through February, overlapping with the main tourist season, while Graph 11(b) highlights the similarity of peak months between the two survey regions.

Graph 11(a): Peak months for staffing – Regional Tasmania*



*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

Graph 11(b): Peak months for staffing – by employment region*



*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

¹⁰ Employment Region is officially known as Hobart and Southern Tasmania. No data was collected in Hobart.

Seasonal recruitment in Northern Territory (excluding Darwin)

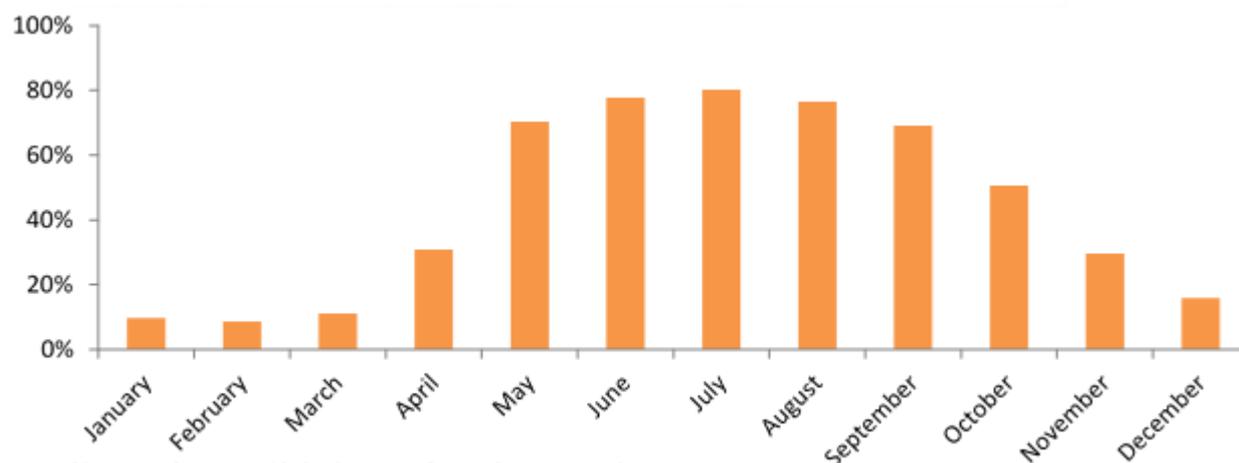
Close to one third of surveyed employers across the Northern Territory (excluding Darwin) reported that their staffing levels were affected by seasonal factors in the past 12 months. A quarter of employers in Alice Springs reported that they had seasonal recruitment needs, compared with 35 per cent across the rest of the Northern Territory (excluding Darwin).

Regions	Employers with seasonal recruitment needs
Alice Springs (n=93)*	24%
Rest of North Territory (n=170)	35%
Total Northern Territory excl. Darwin (n=263)	31%

*Alice Springs is part of the Darwin Employment Region – however, no data was collected for Darwin

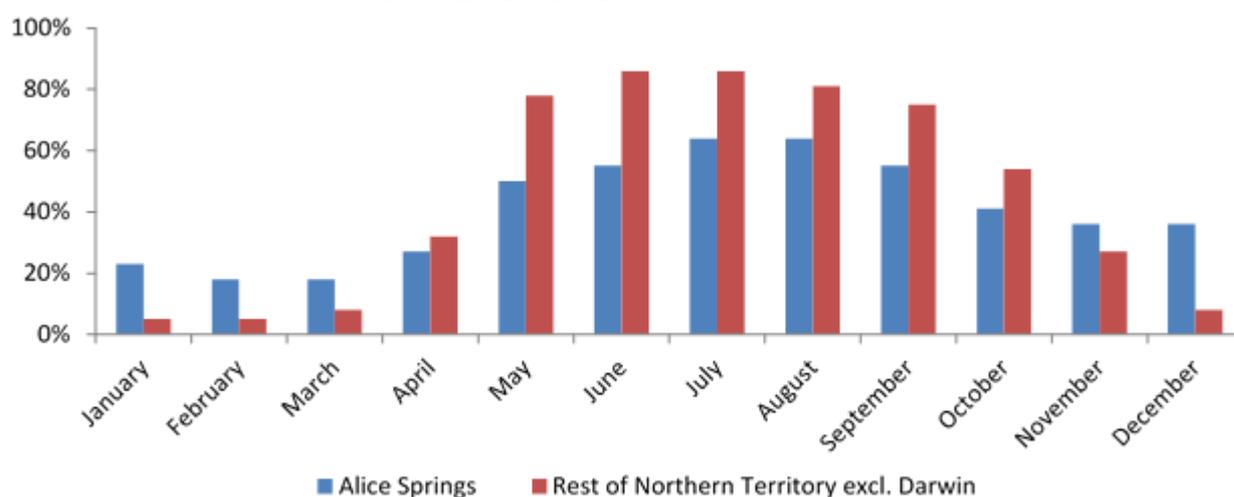
Graph 12(a) shows that peak months for staffing across the Northern Territory (excluding Darwin) occurred through the second and third quarters of the year, while Graph 12(b) shows the similarity of peak months for staffing between the Alice Springs region, and the rest of the Northern Territory.

Graph 12(a): Peak months* for staffing –Northern Territory excl. Darwin



*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

Graph 12(b): Peak months* for staffing – by region



*Some employers provided a timespan of more than one month.

