



# Black Country Business and Labour Market Intelligence September 2021



## Contents

Introduction.....	2
Summary of September 2021 Findings.....	3
1) Bi-Monthly Economic Context .....	3
2) Black Country Business Intelligence Summary.....	6
3) Black Country Labour Market Information .....	11

## Introduction

Welcome to the September 2021 edition of the Black Country Business and Labour Market Intelligence report, produced by Black Country Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU). Using a mix of qualitative and quantitative insight, the analysis summarises key recent challenges and opportunities for Black Country businesses, while depicting the current status of local labour markets across sectors.

The production of this report reflects a collaborative local approach on business intelligence and engagement in the local area. Insight has been collated through multiple channels, including direct Growth Hub business engagement and through conversations with business groups and trade bodies. The Labour Market Information aspect uses data downloaded through the EMSI platform, providing live job vacancy data locally.

The intelligence provided is intended to influence policy and decision-making across relevant Black Country forums and those at the regional and national level. By utilising real time business insight and labour market data, we can more easily navigate key challenges and opportunities without the problem of data lags. This is particularly important in the context of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the UK's exit from the EU, but also as the business world continues to recover out of these massive economic shocks.

This September edition provides a comprehensive live picture reflective of both qualitative business insight and relevant quantitative data. There are three key sections:

- 1) Bi-Monthly Economic Context** – providing an overview of the current economic environment locally, as Covid-19 restrictions ended providing a summer boost to business and the public.
- 2) Black Country Business Intelligence Summary** – collating the challenges, issues, opportunities and trends arising from engagement with Black Country businesses in the last 2 months. Insight is collated from direct feedback from Black Country Growth Hub and in conjunction with other business group / trade body partners.
- 3) Black Country Labour Market Information** – summarises job vacancy data across the economy and within sectors, utilising the EMSI data platform. This provides a live picture of what roles Black Country businesses are looking for and the skills they require.

We are aiming to continue building on the content within this report so that it covers a wider set of data and insight collection. The Business and Labour Market Intelligence Report is a bi-monthly publication.

## Summary of September 2021 Findings

### ● Economic Context

- The summer brought an end to Covid restrictions in the UK, providing some resemblance of normality in society and stability in the economy. Key macroeconomic indicators demonstrate this, with the regional economy performing steadily.
- The Black Country and wider West Midlands' economic recovery continues steadily as businesses strive to adapt. A greater rise in business activity and confidence is restricted by staff and raw material shortage, affecting some sectors more severely than others.
- The number of claimants, youth claimants and people furloughed in the Black Country continues to fall.
- Recently produced productivity data shows that Black Country GVA increased from £27.48 in 2018 to £27.78 in 2019. This is a slightly higher rate of increase compared to the UK as a whole, but there remains a £7.37 shortfall between the Black Country and the national average.

### ● Business Intelligence

- The relative economic stability and normality is clearly having a positive impact on the local business environment – which is much more buoyant than at most times in the last 18 months. However, the positivity exists within a period of sustained uncertainty, with external issues surrounding the legacy of Covid and EU Exit causing businesses many issues.
- Price rises and product shortages remain a cause for concern, particularly for the construction and manufacturing sectors. In some instances, this is requiring businesses to halt production lines or unable to operate at capacity.
- Many firms are still facing financial hardship and will require additional support from government as they look to get their operations off the ground after nearly 16 months of forced closure.
- The number of firms reporting hiring challenges has increased significantly in recent weeks, reflecting a skills & jobs crisis.
- The labour shortages problem is, according to some businesses' experiences, caused and exacerbated by the UK's exit from the EU. Businesses are struggling to recruit people for less desirable roles, such as HGV drivers, cleaners and care staff, due to the return of EU nationals to the EU, and reduction in flow of EU migration to the UK.
- More widely, a new study by West Midlands Chambers reveals nearly half of West Midlands firms have experienced difficulty importing goods from the EU since 1 Jan.
- The Growth Hub is dealing with more business-as-usual requests and growth support, while partners such as LEPs continue to develop and facilitate programme delivery / forums for local businesses.

### ● Labour Market Intelligence

- There were a total of 249,819 job postings in July-August 2021, of which 44,014 were unique.
- These numbers give us a Posting Intensity of 6-to-1, meaning that for every 6 postings there is 1 unique job posting.
- The average salary was £27,000, this is down 1.9% in the past 6 months.
- Postings are now 38.4% above levels seen this time last year.
- Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the pandemic there was significant growth in demand for health and the public sector roles in the lead up to the lockdown; particularly around nursing, care workers, social workers and teaching professionals.
- Analysis of locale shows that demand is highest (by volume) in Sandwell, followed by Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall.

## 1) Bi-Monthly Economic Context

The summer brought an end to Covid restrictions in the UK, providing some resemblance of normality in society and stability in the economy. Key macroeconomic indicators demonstrate this, with the regional economy performing steadily.

- The West Midlands Business Activity Index decreased from 64.0 in June 2021 to 58.3 in July 2021.<sup>1</sup> With the Business Activity Index still above the 50-mark, this shows a **slower but still a sharp rate of increase**.
- The West Midlands Future Activity Index decreased from 77.1 in June 2021 to 74.4 in July 2021 – despite this falling to a seven-month low, **firms still had a strong degree of optimism**.

### West Midlands Business Activity Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month



- The latest [Business Barometer from Lloyds Bank](#) Commercial Banking found confidence in the region fell three points during August to 27 per cent but remained **above the year-to-date average of 23 per cent**.
- The FSB's most recent [Small Business Index](#) shows that West Midlands firms have experienced strong growth and hiring aspirations.
  - Half of the region's small business owners (50%) predicted that their business performance will improve in the next three months.
  - In addition, confidence for the next 3 months was positive in Q2 2021 (at 23%) despite showing a decline from Q1 2021 (at 39%).
- **According to [MakeUK's](#) latest survey, the West Midlands has been the top performer at maintaining manufacturing output levels** on average in the second half of the pandemic, posting a positive balance of 12%.

So, without performing spectacularly, the Black Country and wider West Midlands' economic recovery **continues steadily as businesses strive to adapt**. A greater rise in business activity and confidence is restricted by **staff and raw material shortages**, affecting some sectors more severely than others.

Looking more long-term, newly released data shows that Black Country GVA per hour worked – a key measure of productivity – increased from £27.48 in 2018 to £27.78 in 2019.<sup>2</sup> This is a slightly higher rate of increase compared to the UK as a whole, but there **remains a £7.37 shortfall between the Black Country and the national average**. This reflects the productivity shortfall the sub-region and wider region has, with differences existing across the four local authorities.

<sup>1</sup> IHS Markit, Natwest PMI, August 2021

<sup>2</sup> [ONS GVA per Hour Worked: 2019](#)

**Smoothed and Unsmoothed GVA per Hour Worked in the Black Country and the UK:**

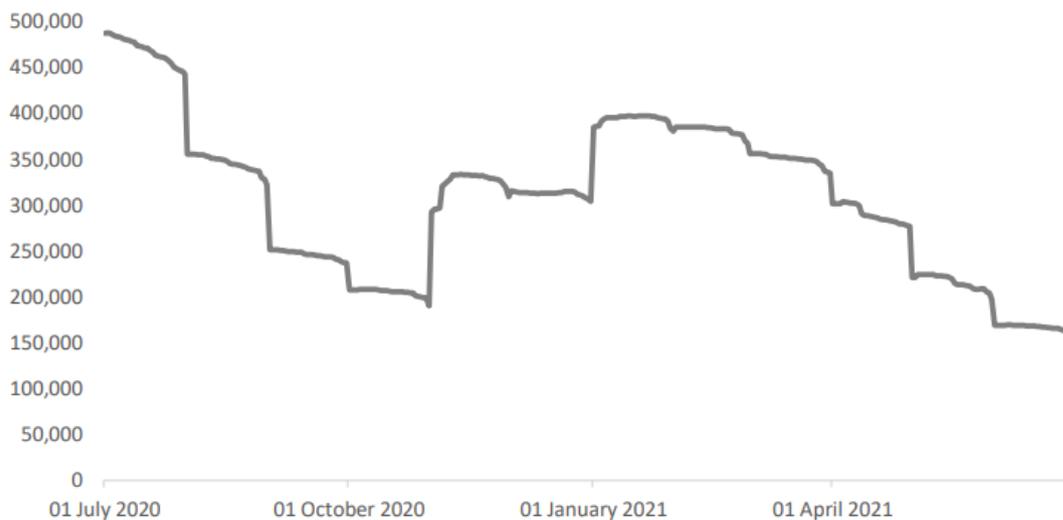
	Smoothed				Unsmoothed			
	2018	2019	Change	% Change	2018	2019	Change	% Change
Dudley	£26.40	£26.60	£0.20	0.8%	£26.52	£26.83	£0.31	1.2%
Sandwell	£29.66	£30.41	£0.75	2.5%	£30.98	£30.82	-£0.16	-0.5%
Walsall	£25.91	£25.92	£0.01	0.0%	£25.68	£26.28	£0.60	2.3%
Wolverhampton	£27.68	£27.86	£0.18	0.7%	£27.35	£28.14	£0.79	2.9%
<b>Black Country LEP</b>	<b>£27.48</b>	<b>£27.78</b>	<b>£0.30</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>£27.74</b>	<b>£28.11</b>	<b>£0.37</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
UK (less Extra-Regio)	£34.79	£35.15	£0.36	1.0%	£35.00	£35.78	£0.78	2.2%

- Sandwell has the highest GVA per hour (smoothed) of the 4 Black Country local authorities, £30.41 in 2019, including the fastest rise since 2018 (2.5% growth).
- Walsall’s GVA per hour (smoothed) is reportedly the lowest in the Black Country - £25.92 in 2019 – while flat growth has been experienced between 2018 and 2019.

As for the labour market, the **number of people unemployed across the region continues to fall.**

- For the West Midlands where 2.79m were working and 146,000 were unemployed, the unemployment rate in the three months to June was five per cent with the employment rate rising to 74.5 per cent.
- The **Black Country had 59,520 claimants in July 2021, a decrease of 410 claimants (-0.7%)** from June. Overall though, the Black Country still has a **notably higher rate of claimants compared to the UK overall: 6.3% compared to 4.2% for UK.**<sup>3</sup>
- In July 2021, there were 11,705 youth claimants in the Black Country, a **decrease of 290 (-2.4%) from June 2021, while for the UK there was a decrease of 3.9%.** Overall, for the Black Country the number of claimants as percentage of residents aged 16 – 24 years old is 9.6% compared to 5.8% for the UK in July 2021.
- **Furlough continues to decrease in the Black Country**, now at 33,100 as of 30<sup>th</sup> June. This reflects a 6.9% take-up of eligible employments for the scheme, compared to UK-wide of 6.5%.<sup>4</sup> As depicted in the graph below, furlough is clearly falling, and yet the end to the scheme is still a concern for many given that thousands of people remain on furlough.

**The following chart shows for the West Midlands region the number of employments furloughed per day between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021:**



<sup>3</sup> [Black Country Claimant Count, July 2021](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Black Country CJRS Statistics, July 2021](#)

## 2) Black Country Business Intelligence Summary

Local, front-line business issues, challenges and opportunities are best understood by engaging directly with businesses in tandem with background data. The below sections summarise recent challenges and priorities raised by Black Country businesses or through representative bodies or local and national research.

### Outlook

The data and business surveys cited in Section 1 reflect a regional business environment with many complex and intertwining issues, some Covid related and others more generic. Overall, **many firms are still under financial strain** due to Covid, with some remaining anxious over their [ability to survive as a business](#) if there were to be another lockdown / more restrictions or even just **once government support schemes come to an end**. On the latter, [experts](#) suggest that, business owners that have survived due to government loans, furlough and temporary insolvencies measures, **may be caught out once these schemes end this Autumn**.

And yet many business surveys point to **positivity, high confidence and decent economic performance**. For example, in the wider Midlands, a [study by Azets](#) found that 61 per cent of SMEs expect their turnover to increase over the next year, the **most optimistic of all regions in the UK**. While [Companies House data](#) shows that **business start-up rates in parts of the Black Country is relatively high**:

- **Wolverhampton saw the sharpest increase in new business creation in the West Midlands in the first six months of this year**. 1,931 businesses were registered in Wolverhampton between January and June – an increase of 119 per cent from 882 in the same period in 2019.
- Sandwell's increase was 67 per cent from 1,031 to 1,720 with Walsall at 50 per cent (814 to 1,221) and Dudley at 29 per cent (1,130 to 1,458).

The relative economic stability and normality is clearly having a positive impact on the local business environment – which is **much more buoyant than at most times in the last 18 months**. However, the positivity exists within a period of sustained uncertainty, with external issues surrounding the legacy of Covid and EU Exit causing businesses many issues:

**Price rises and product shortages** remain a cause for concern, particularly for the construction and manufacturing sectors. In some instances, this is **requiring businesses to halt production lines and making them unavailable to operate at full capacity**. Costs have doubled in some sub-sectors, for example for specific metals and materials, and are being passed to the end customer.

- Construction businesses continue to express a critical concern with the **availability and cost for materials such as cement and plaster**.
- This has increased enquiries through local construction businesses, as **firms tackle inflated pricing and loss of business**.
- This is causing some businesses unable to deliver projects and putting others in financial vulnerability. **Material costs, which have risen by more than 10% in the past year, has been blamed for the collapse of Midlands-based contractor [AM Griffiths](#)**.

Many firms are still facing **financial hardship** and will require additional support from government as they look to get their operations off the ground after nearly 16 months of forced closure. The pandemic has not impacted all businesses equally and some firms now find themselves burdened with substantial debts for the first time. The Government is being urged to take this into **consideration as it looks to wind down existing support schemes over the coming months** so as not to undo the good work that has been done to support businesses over the past year.

The number of firms reporting **hiring challenges** has increased significantly in recent weeks, reflecting a skills & jobs crisis. This has multiple facets:

- **Candidate Availability** - Ongoing concerns and uncertainty, stemming from the pandemic, over job security contributing to a severe drop in candidate availability. Add to this a large increase in counter offers from existing employers to retain staff, some of whom have successfully interviewed for, and subsequently turning down, positions with competitors. This has led to a general increase in hourly rates, salaries and the introduction of attractive up front financial incentives to candidates.
- **Risks to Inward Investment Opportunities** – Example of one regional company delaying investment plans because they are struggling to recruit the 70 outstanding roles required. Risk of this organisation changing their plans and looking elsewhere.
- **Growing Sector Roles** – A distinct increase in demand for staff in the Marketing & Sales sector as companies continue to diversify and also look to start to try to win new business in new areas/sectors.
- **Less Desirable Jobs** – Businesses that offer lower paid, physical, undesirable and jobs with unsociable hours are struggling the most to recruit staff. Often unskilled roles that pay the standard rates of pay cannot compete with businesses that are naturally able to offer better working conditions and equal or slightly better pay. This includes the care sector, HGV drivers and hospitality positions.
- **Permanent Positions** - Strong demand for staff, and the further rollback of pandemic restrictions, leading to a sharp increase in the number of people placed into permanent job roles in August as businesses look to retain staff in an employee's market.
- According to BDO's latest [Rethinking the Economy survey](#) of 500 mid-sized companies, **staff shortages may curb the growth of Midlands businesses.**

However, recent **changes to isolation rules have been described as a “sensible step”** by business leaders. Industries, including car manufacturers and food distributors in particular, have welcomed the news as they faced major disruption due to the number of staff having to self-isolate after being ‘pinged’ by the NHS app last month. Business leaders are urging the Government to go further by **constantly reviewing the list of key workers that are exempt** from having to isolate and reintroducing **free testing for businesses** in order to minimise disruption and stem the flow of the virus.

The **combination of skills and labour shortages and price rises** is creating a supply chain crisis in some areas. This, according to the [British Chambers of Commerce](#), could threaten the economy's bounceback.

## UK / EU Relationship

The labour shortages problem is, according to some businesses' experiences, **caused and exacerbated by the UK's exit from the EU**. Businesses are struggling to recruit people for less desirable roles, such as HGV drivers, cleaners and care staff, due to the return of EU nationals to the EU, and reduction in flow of EU migration to the UK. As widely reported in recent weeks, the [Road Haulage Association \(RHA\)](#) estimates there is a **nationwide shortage of around 100,000 HGV drivers, having hugely damaging effects on the flow of goods across key industries and services.**

Some businesses in the region still also report that Brexit has caused **ongoing disruption at borders**. Reliability of carriers is a problem, timeliness, losing shipments, delays of incoming goods stuck at the border. Also, **price increases imposed from suppliers** across the EU due to transport costs and

burdensome paperwork. For some manufacturers, the imposition of 25% of tariffs because of steel import quotas exacerbates the issues. In addition:

- Freight Forwarders are reporting that there is **no let up to the challenges of cross border trade with the EU.**
- Companies are continuing to work their way through the changes resulting from EU Exit, whilst some have reached an equilibrium and established new ways of working others continue to come up against new requirements. This is frequently the case where **destination countries customs bodies are interpreting the UK/EU trade deal in different ways.**
- Local businesses have suggested it **would be helpful to have advisors available to audit export procedures** to avoid problems with EU trading.

A new study exploring the impact of Brexit on business reveals **nearly half of West Midlands firms have experienced difficulty importing goods** from the EU since 1 January.

And 34 per cent have found it more difficult exporting goods to the EU since the end of the transition period. The report – '[Post Brexit Transition Period – An impact analysis on businesses based in the West Midlands Combined Authority area](#)' – has been released by the Greater Birmingham, Coventry & Warwickshire and Black Country Chambers of Commerce.

The report reveals:

- 47 per cent of local businesses have found it more difficult importing goods from the EU since 1st January
- 34 per cent of local businesses have found it more difficult exporting goods to the EU since 1st January
- 40 per cent of respondents had experienced increased costs and 28% have experienced border delays as a result of the UK's departure from the EU
- 35 per cent of small and micro sized businesses lack the capacity to deal with the additional documentation requirements for trading with the EU

This is more frequently reported in national trade statistics; for example **food and drink exports to the EU are [down significantly](#) in the first half of this year**, with food producers in the region blaming in part the UK government's **failure to sign-up to the EU's sanitary and phytosanitary certification regime.**

**Key recommendations of the Chambers' report for the Government include:**

- Introducing a modified form of the SME Brexit Support Fund to support those smaller firms struggling with additional upfront costs
- Supporting those operating in the cultural sector that fall outside the parameters of the Global Talent Visa in order to travel and work in the European Union
- Agreeing mutual recognition arrangements for Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures in order to minimise the additional administrative burdens that firms are facing
- Using the extension of the easement period for CE Markings to tackle ongoing issues such as automotive businesses facing additional costs as a result of having to duplicate markings on certain components
- Seeking further labour flexibility through additional agreements on services access and ability of workers to take up roles in both markets - particularly seen in terms of haulage and hospitality

## Enquiries

More companies continue to seek more **business as usual and growth support from the Growth Hub**. In particular, these enquiries are commonly related to:

- **Grants** – A strong appetite for investment continues as businesses push ahead with postponed, pre-COVID, growth plans and post-COVID recovery strategies. A continued positive outlook and increase in confidence as companies continue to look to seek grant funding to support capital purchases, IT infrastructure upgrades, premises fit outs and upgrade projects.
- **B2B Trade and Networking** – A positive and continued appetite to procure locally or within UK borders continues.
- **Planning Queries** – Increase in businesses looking for planning guidance where they are reconfiguring unused office or factory space to maximise productivity.
- **Skills/Staff Development** – Linked to efforts to retain staff, many businesses looking for support for the upskilling and personal development of staff. In some instances, this has formed part of longer term succession plan, particularly with family owned businesses.
- Businesses in the region have suggested **search for sites of significant size and affordability is a real issue** when looking to grow and expand operations.
- **General Marketing Support** – general sales and marketing advice and guidance as businesses are looking at all options to improve their chances of successful COVID recovery strategies.
- **Start Up Guidance** – new enquiries from start-up businesses continue.

## Programmes and Support

- **Black Country Social Enterprise Taskforce:** The Black Country LEP’s Social Enterprise Taskforce had its first meeting on September 15<sup>th</sup>. The role of the Taskforce is to act as the leading strategic support body to the LEP, providing a forum for the engagement of employers, community groups, charities, education providers and liaison with public sector partners to develop, formulate and co-ordinate policies and proposals relating to the Black Country’s social enterprise sector.
- **West Midlands Metals & Materials Forum:** The LEP-led forum has now met twice, steering the development and delivery of sector actions. It is an industry-led forum, with a private-sector chair and the majority of representation from the private sector. Through the group, the LEP has already supported businesses respond to the government exemption schemes on energy costs, while lobbying the government on the need of reform on the steel safeguards (quotas) system. The forum is also considering skills, circular economy, innovation amongst other topics.

Additionally, from a policy and programme support perspective:

- **Kickstart** – mixed reviews and experiences. Whilst an attractive proposition, there have been complaints at the length of time taken to process applications.
- **Bounce Back Loans:** More SMEs are looking to postpone repayment of loans leading to concerns this is merely delaying a problem.
- According to [CBI](#), an **immediate and comprehensive reform of the UK’s ‘outdated and uncompetitive’ business rates system** is essential if the Midlands is to achieve its long-term ambitions.
- The Midlands Engine has published phase 1 of a series of reports related to manufacturing in the region. The first report – [“Midlands Engine Makes”](#) – showcases the unique strengths of manufacturing across the Midlands, with the second phase focusing on **“What Could be Made in the Midlands in Future”**. The latter is to be published imminently.

## New Investment Deals and Opportunities

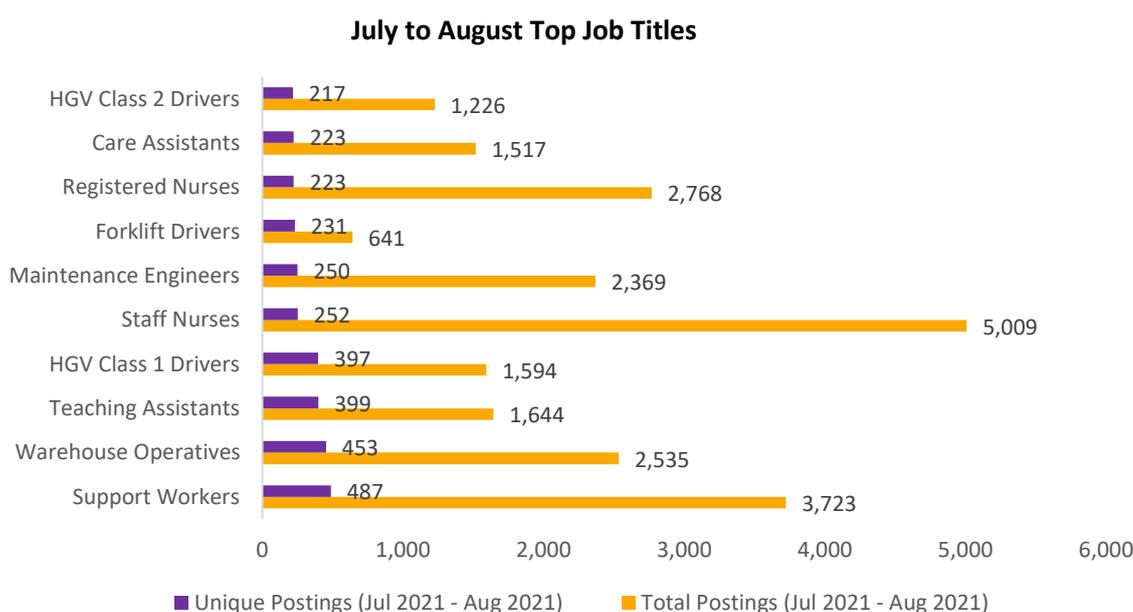
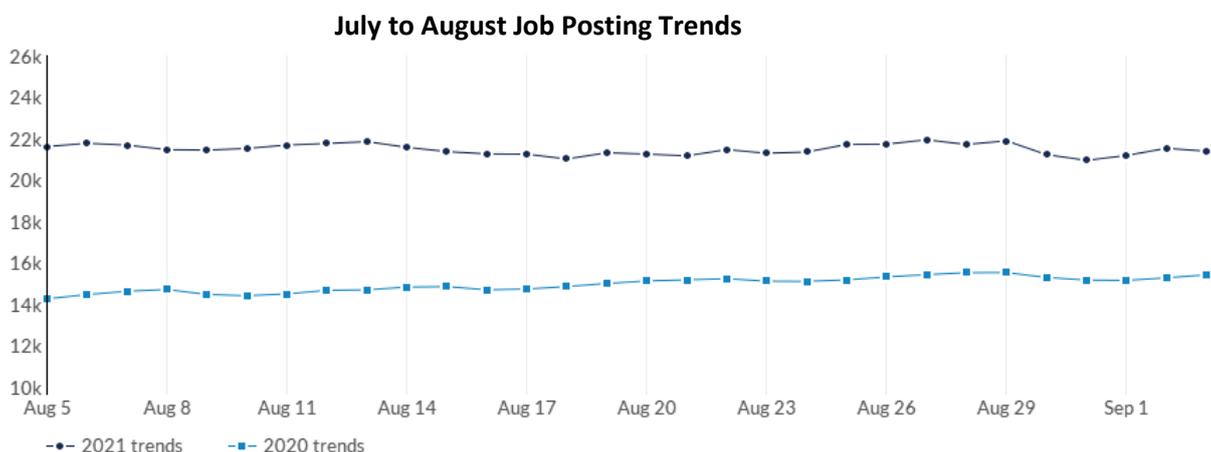
NEW INVESTMENT, DEALS AND OPPORTUNITIES			
COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	DETAIL & SOURCE
<a href="#">Professional Polishing services</a>	Smethwick	Manufacturing	A Black Country manufacturer that puts the finish on boutique hotels, nuclear reactors and life-saving medical equipment has just completed its latest investment drive. Professional Polishing Services (PPS), which has increased its workforce by 25% since lockdown eased, has just installed a new dull polishing line to help it boost capacity and achieve its target of £2m sales by the end of 2022. The company has spent more than £250,000 on the latest purchase.
<a href="#">MG / Summit Garage</a>	Dudley	Car Sales	A Black Country car dealership has expanded its showroom to meet growing demand after securing a new funding deal. Summit Garage in Dudley has used the £150,000 loan from Lloyds Bank to double the capacity of its outlet in Himley Road which will enable the MG franchise to increase the number of cars on display.
<a href="#">Marston's PLC</a>	Wolverhampton	Hospitality	Pubs and restaurants group Marston's is to move its headquarters across Wolverhampton. St John's House in St John's Square is to be refurbished – starting in January – and 250 Marston's staff will be based there.
<a href="#">Sandvik</a>	Halesowen	Manufacturing	Work has started on the development of Swedish engineering company Sandvik Coromant's new UK headquarters in Halesowen. The headquarters will provide a net internal area of 18,015 sq ft and will replace an existing warehouse building. The new development will create a new high-tech innovation hub for metal cutting in the West Midlands.
<a href="#">All</a>	Featherstone, near Wolverhampton	Industrial	Thousands of new jobs could be created after plans to redevelop a former munitions factory next to the M54 were given the green light. Eight units are proposed for the former Royal Ordnance Factory land at Featherstone, just north of Wolverhampton, which will provide a range of business uses including industrial, storage and distribution. The 128-acre site, which is one mile away from the i54 business park which is home to a Jaguar Land Rover engine plant, will include a hub for food and drink and have the capacity to employ 2,800 people.

### 3) Black Country Labour Market Information

Using the EMSI data platform, this section summarises job vacancy data across the whole economy and within sectors. This provides a live picture of what roles Black Country businesses are looking for and the skills they require.

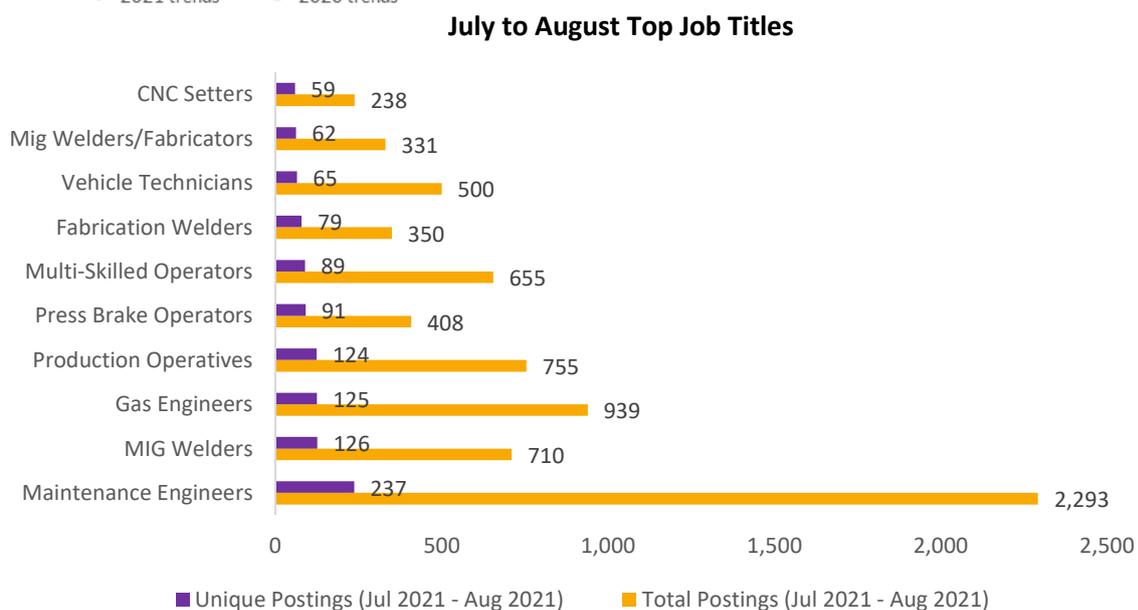
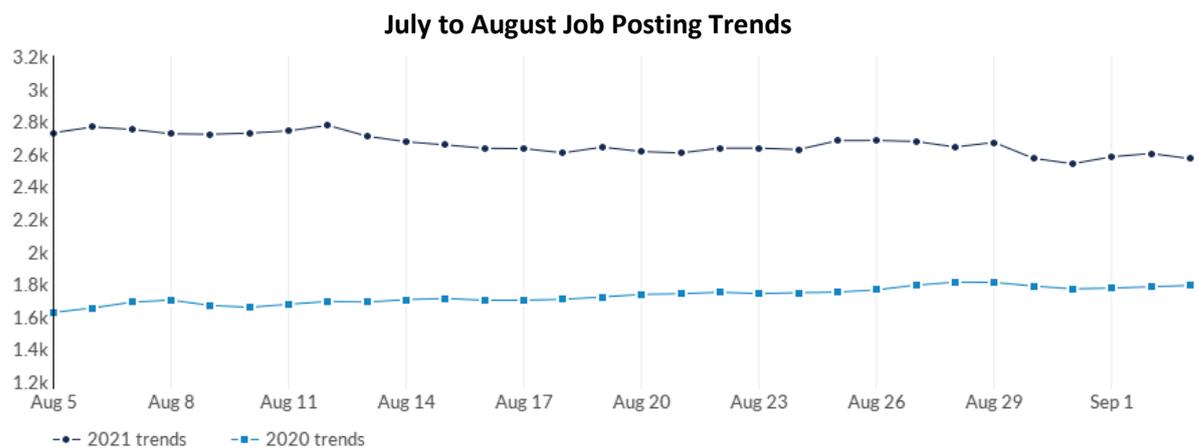
#### Sector Demand (July 2021 – August 2021)

- There were a total of 249,819 job postings, of which 44,014 were unique.
- These numbers give us a Posting Intensity of 6-to-1, meaning that for every 6 postings there is 1 unique job posting.
- The average salary was £27,000, this is down 1.9% in the past 6 months.
- Postings are now 38.4% above levels seen this time last year.
- Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the pandemic there was significant growth in demand for health and the public sector roles in the lead up to the lockdown; particularly around nursing, care workers, social workers and teaching professionals.
- Analysis of locale shows that demand is highest (by volume) in Sandwell, followed by Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall.



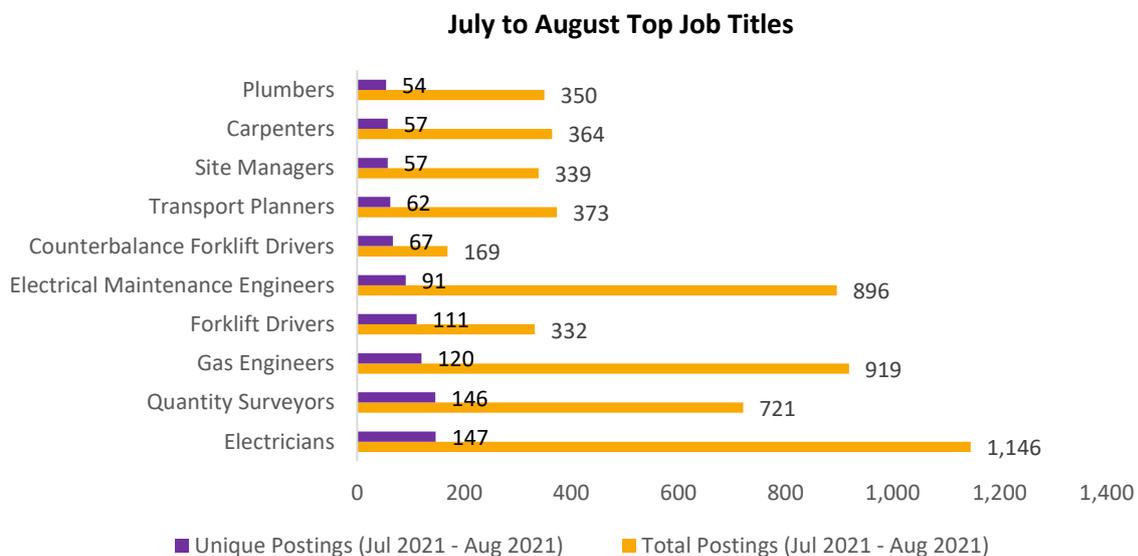
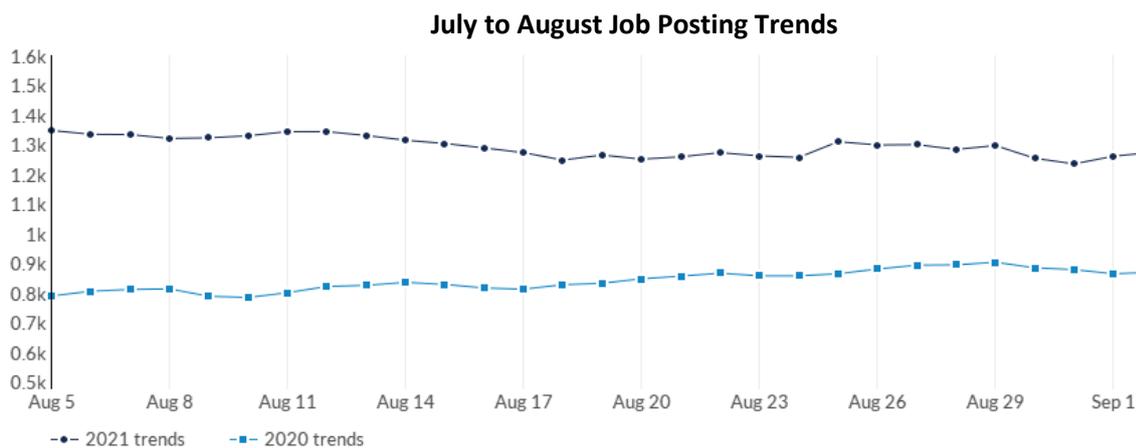
## Advanced Manufacturing:

- In July to August 2021 there were 32,224 total job postings and 5,677 unique job postings in the Advanced Manufacturing sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 6-to-1, matching the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in average towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 33 days compared to a regional average of 31 days.
- The average salary was £28,992.
- Job postings are now 43.5% above levels seen this time last year as the sector had rebounded well since the first lockdown last year.
- Demand via job postings was highest for metal working production and maintenance fitters' occupations at 8,190 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 7-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for design and development engineers at 1,347 postings but a posting intensity of 7-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for maintenance engineers with 2,293 total postings and a posting intensity of 10-to-1.
- Machinery, mechanical engineering, engineering drawings and metal inert gas welding were the top hard skills requested, with machinery having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 11% of all postings but not in any workforce profiles.
- Communications, management and operations were the 3 top common skills requested.



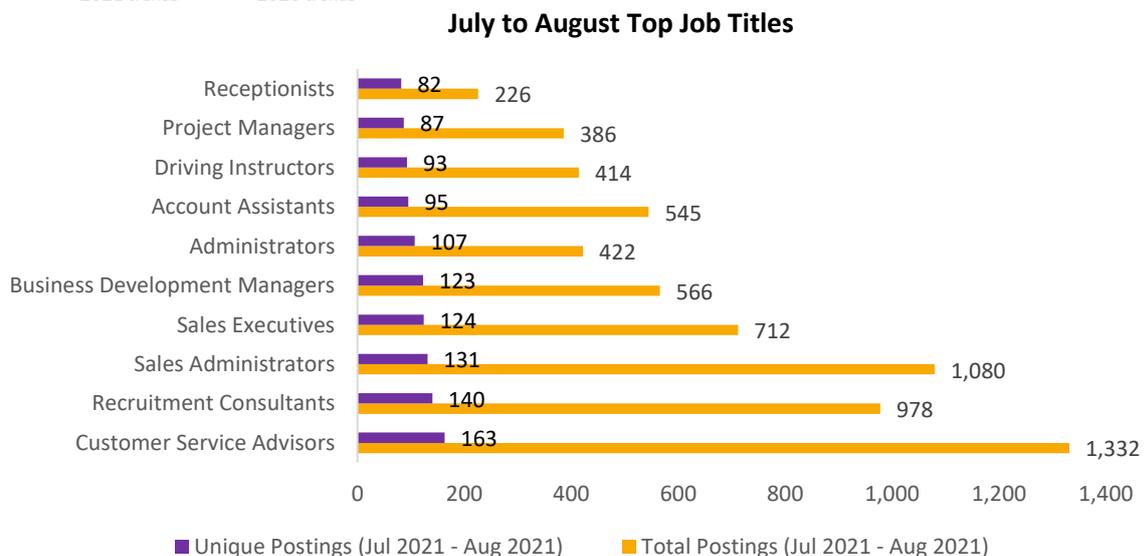
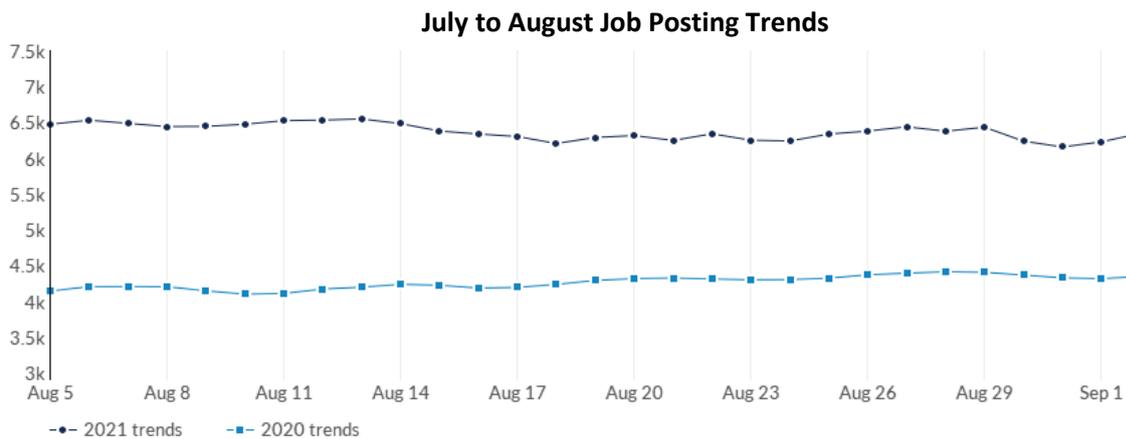
## Building Technologies:

- In July to August 2021 there were 14,853 total job postings and 2,877 unique job postings in the Building Technologies sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 5-to-1, below the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in below average effort towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 32 days compared to a regional average of 31 days.
- The average salary was £32,448.
- Job postings are now 43.7% above levels seen this time last year as the sector had rebounded since the first lockdown last year.
- Demand via job postings was highest for electricians and electrical fitters' occupations at 3,617 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 7-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for electricians with 1,146 total postings and a posting intensity of 8-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for electrical maintenance engineers, with a 10-to-1 posting intensity.
- Carpentry, plumbing and boiler engineers were the top hard skills requested, with carpentry having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 8% of all postings and 2% of workforce profiles.
- Management, communications and customer service were the 3 top common skills requested.



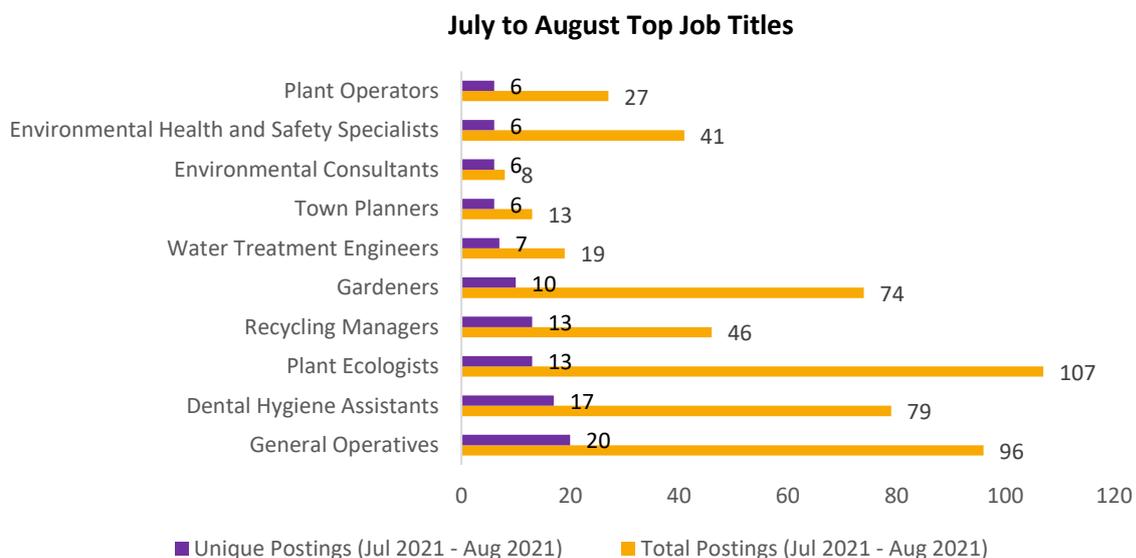
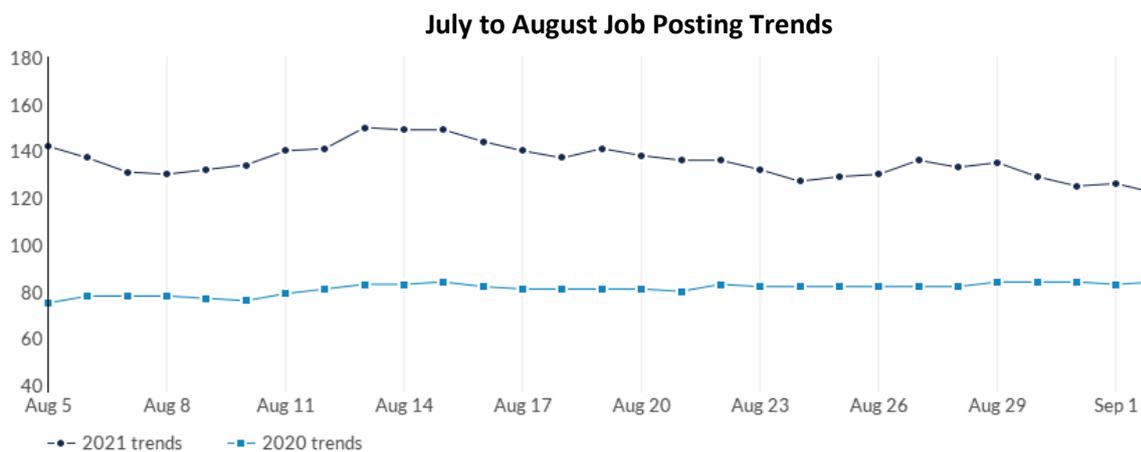
**Business Services:**

- In July to August 2021 there were 72,408 total job postings and 13,458 unique job postings in the Business Services sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 5-to-1, slightly lower than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in below average towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 29 days compared to a regional average of 31 days.
- The average salary was £27,104.
- Job postings are now 43.7% above levels seen this time last year as the sector had rebounded since the first lockdown last year.
- Demand via job postings was highest for sales accounts and business development managers at 4,967 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 5-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for finance and investment analysts and advisers at 3,028 postings, and also customer service occupations at 3,442 postings but a posting intensity of 7-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for customer service advisors with 1,332 total postings and a posting intensity of 8-to-1. Sales administrators had 1,080 total postings and an 8-to-1 posting intensity.
- Finance, accounting and selling techniques were the top hard skills requested, with finance having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 8% of all postings but in none of the workforce profiles.
- Communications, sales and management were the 3 top common skills requested.



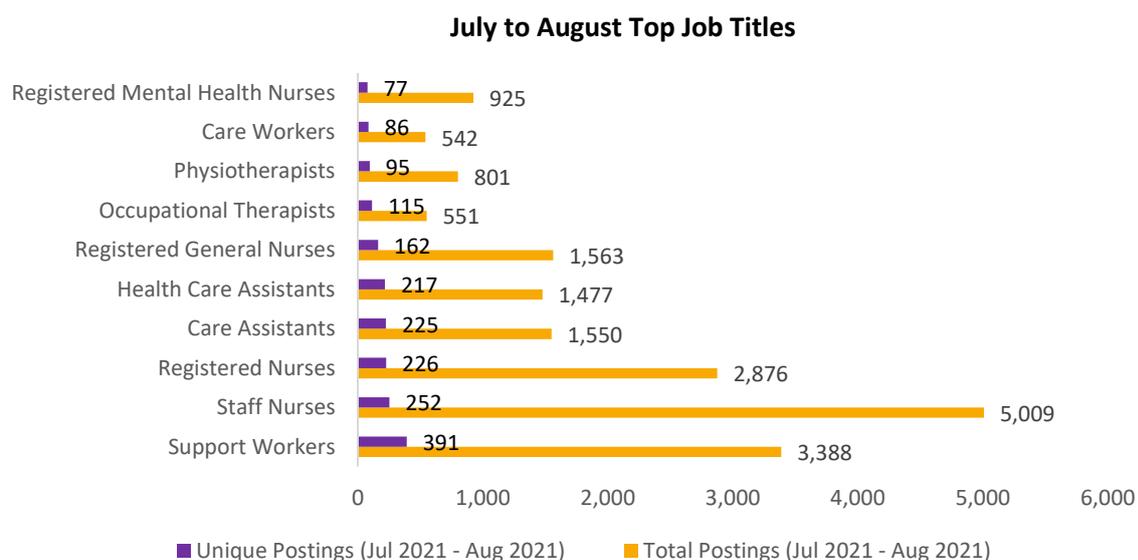
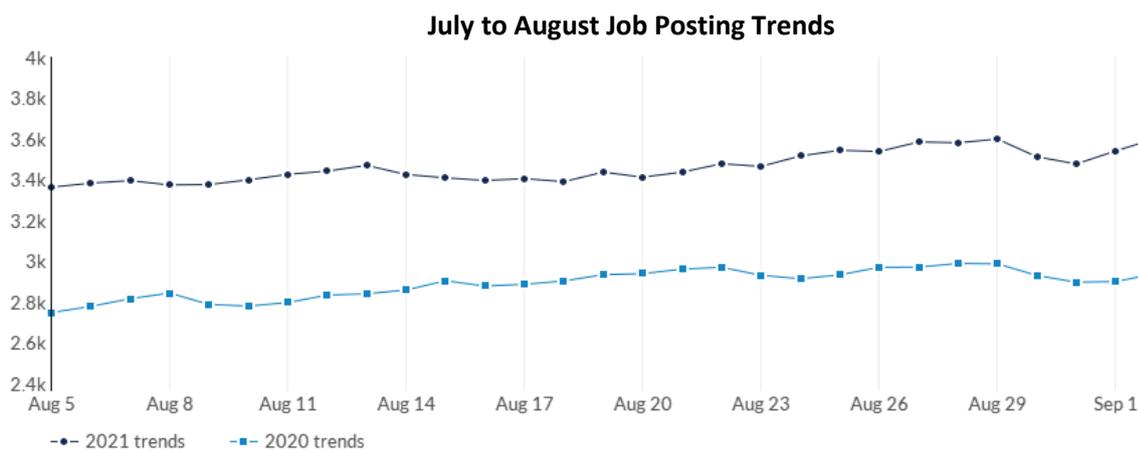
## Environmental Technologies:

- In July to August 2021 there were 1,324 total job postings and 294 unique job postings in the Environmental Technologies sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 5-to-1, lower than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in below average effort towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 29 days compared to a regional average of 31 days.
- The average salary was £21,696.
- Job postings are now 47% above levels seen this time last year, suggesting the sector has rebounded well since the first lockdown last year.
- Demand via job postings was highest for refuse and salvage occupations at 337 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 4-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for energy plant operatives at 80 postings but a posting intensity of 11-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for general operatives with 96 total postings and a posting intensity of 5-to-1. But the job title with the highest posting intensity was for plant ecologists at 8-to-1 with a total of 107 job postings.
- Ecology, risk analysis and environmental health were the top sought after hard skills in the sector, with ecology having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 9% of all postings and only 1% of workforce profiles.
- Communications, management and planning were the 3 top common skills requested.



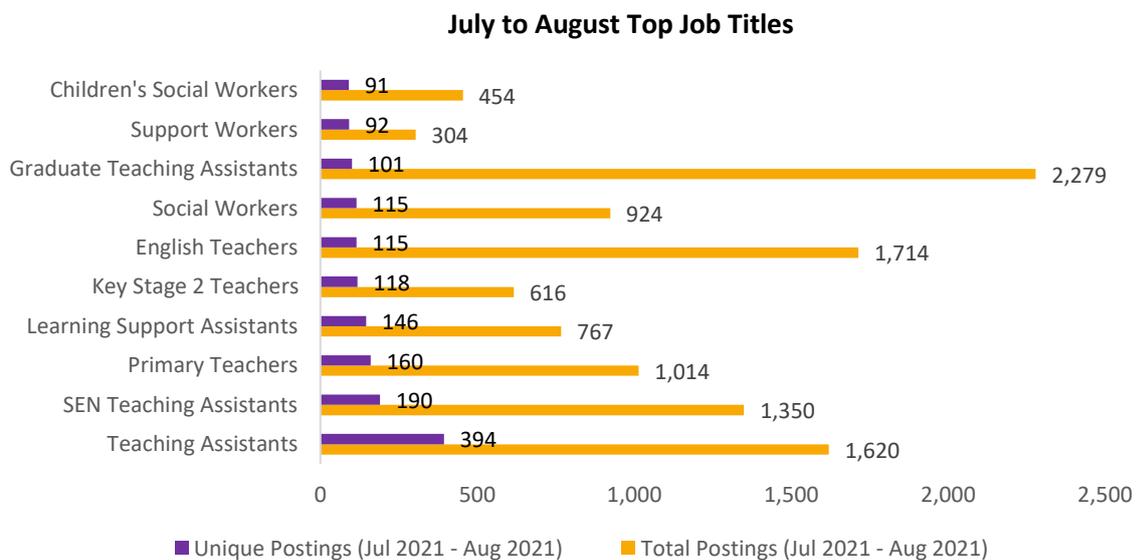
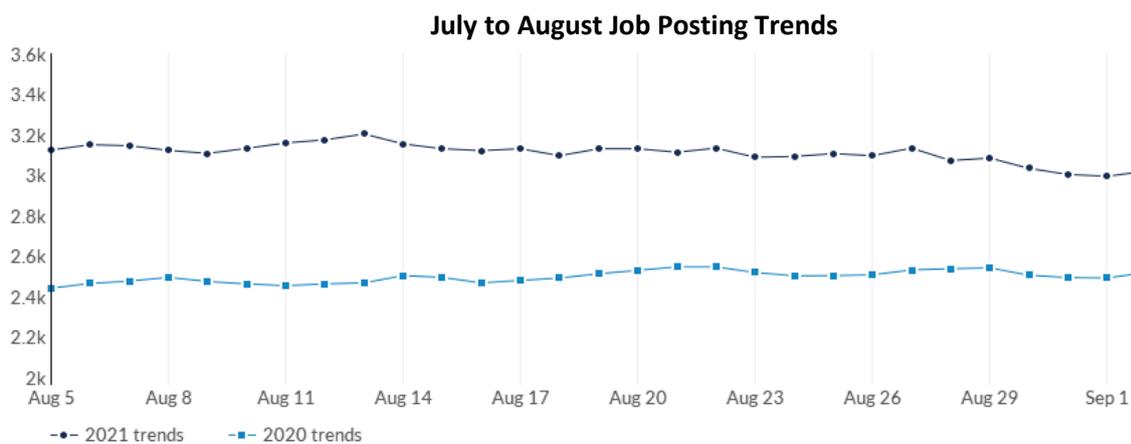
## Health and Care:

- In July to August 2021 there were 50,810 total job postings and 6,597 unique job postings in the Health sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 8-to-1, higher than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in above average towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 32 days compared to a regional average of 31 days.
- The average salary was £33,728.
- Job postings are now 20.5% above levels seen this time last year as the sector continues to have high demand for roles as the pandemic continues.
- Demand via job postings was highest for nurses at 24,298 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 11-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for support workers with 3,388 total postings and a posting intensity of 9-to-1. The job title most in demand was registered nurses at 2,876 total job postings and a posting intensity of 13-to-1.
- Nursing, mental health and learning disabilities were the top hard skills requested, with nursing having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 21% of all postings and in 3% of workforce profiles.
- Communications, management and enthusiasm were the 3 top common skills requested.



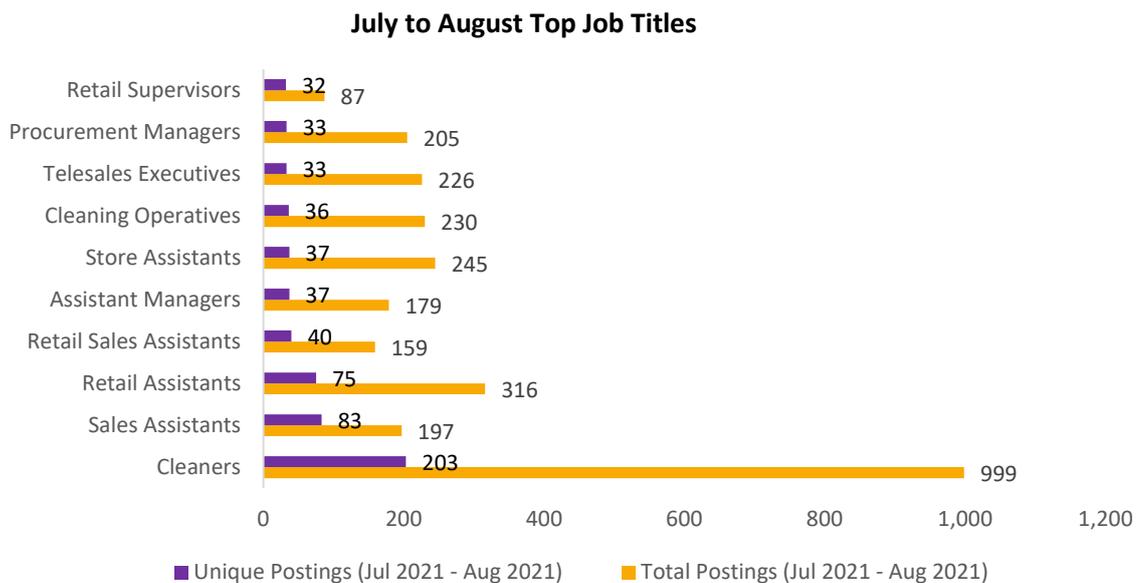
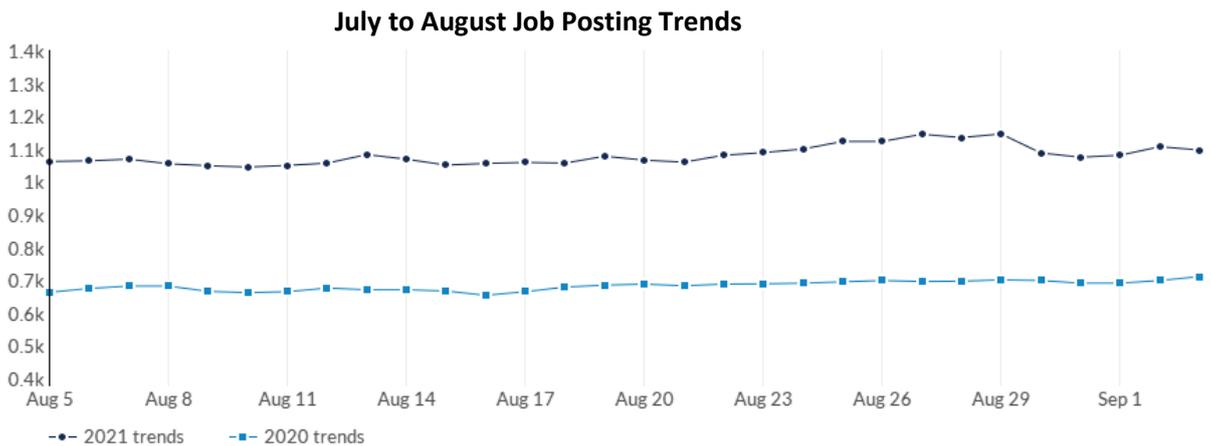
## Public Sector including Education:

- In July to August 2021 there were 32,429 total job postings and 5,625 unique job postings in the Public Sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 6-to-1, same as the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in average towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 30 days compared to a regional average of 31 days.
- The average salary was £22,464.
- Job postings are now 18.2% above levels seen this time last year as the sector rebounded above levels seen before the pandemic.
- Demand via job postings was highest for primary and nursery education teaching professionals' occupations at 7,951 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 5-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for teaching and other educational professionals at 3,679 total postings and a posting intensity of 14-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for teaching assistants with 1,620 total postings and a posting intensity of 4-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for graduate teaching assistants at 23-to-1 and 2,279 total posts.
- Working with children, autism spectrum disorders and social work were the top hard skills requested, with working with children having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 11% of all postings but in 0% of workforce profiles.
- Teaching, enthusiasm and communications were the 3 top common skills requested.



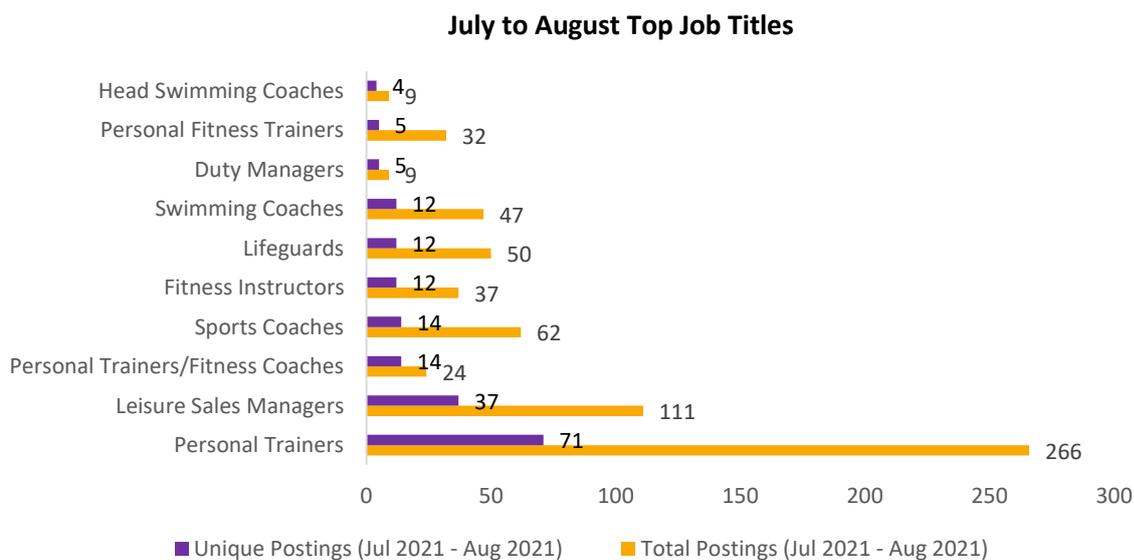
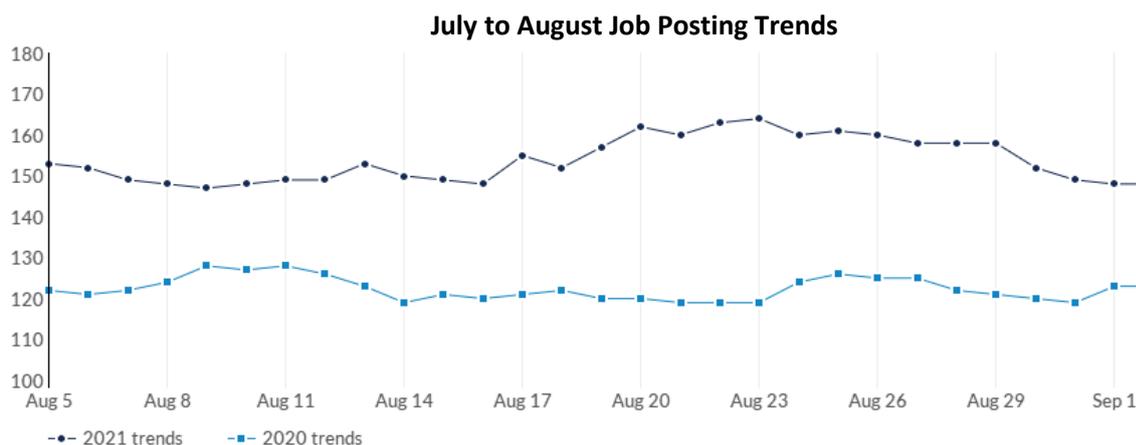
**Retail:**

- In July to August 2021 there were 11,027 total job postings and 2,299 unique job postings in the Retail Sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 5-to-1, lower than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in slightly less than average effort towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 27 days compared to a regional average of 31 days.
- The average salary was £19,776.
- Job postings are now 54.3% above levels seen this time last year as the sector has rebounded to levels seen before the pandemic.
- Demand via job postings was highest for sales and retail assistants occupations at 3,425 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 5-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for telephone salespersons at 537 total postings and a posting intensity of 7-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for cleaners with 999 total postings and a posting intensity of 5-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for store assistants at 7-to-1 at 245 total postings.
- Merchandising, selling techniques and warehousing were the top hard skills requested, with merchandising having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 7% of all postings but only in 3% of workforce profiles.
- Sales, customer service and communications were the 3 top common skills requested.



## Sports:

- In July to August 2021 there were 1,053 total job postings and 321 unique job postings in the Sports Sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 3-to-1, lower than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in less than average effort towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 36 days compared to a regional average of 31 days.
- The average salary was £21,472.
- Job postings are now 17.5% above levels seen this time last year as the sector has now recovered since the pandemic began.
- Demand via job postings was highest for fitness instructors' occupations at 536 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 4-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for personal trainers with 266 total postings and a posting intensity of 4-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for personal fitness trainers at 6-to-1 and 32 total postings.
- Instructing, circuit training and anatomy were the top hard skills requested, with anatomy having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 27% of all postings but appearing in no workforce profiles.
- Customer service, self-motivation and enthusiasm were the 3 top common skills requested.



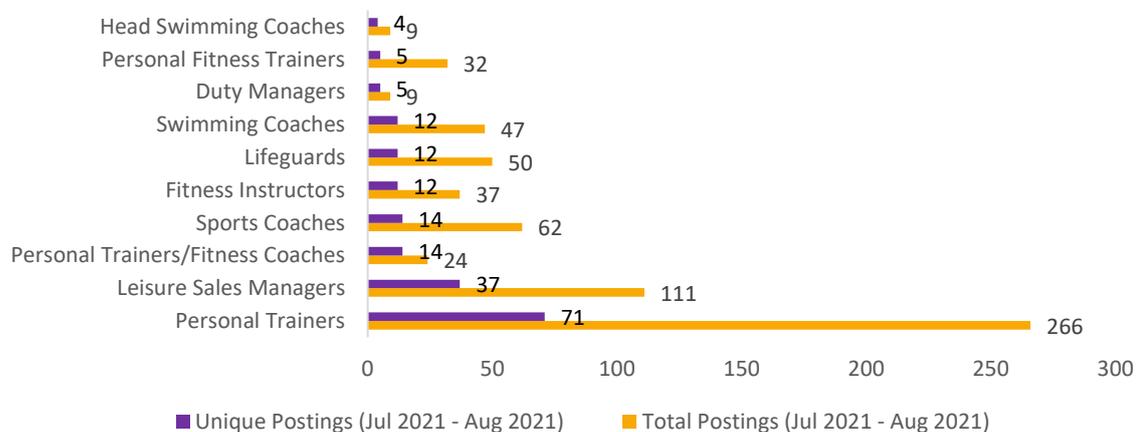
## Transport Technologies:

- In July to August 2021 there were 19,872 total job postings and 4,163 unique job postings in the Transport Technologies Sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 5-to-1, slightly lower than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in slightly less than average effort towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 31 days compared to a regional average of 31 days.
- The average salary was £26,048.
- Job postings are now 55.9% above levels seen this time last year as the sector has rebounded to levels seen before the pandemic.
- Demand via job postings was highest for van driving occupations at 7,689 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 5-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for vehicle and parts salespersons and advisers at 713 total postings and a posting intensity of 8-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for HGV Class 1 drivers with 1,504 total postings and a posting intensity of 4-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for HGV Class 2 drivers at 6-to-1 and 1,227 total postings.
- Warehousing, trunking and collections were the top hard skills requested, with warehousing having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 11% of all postings but only in 4% of workforce profiles.
- Customer service, communications and management were the 3 top common skills requested.

July to August Job Posting Trends



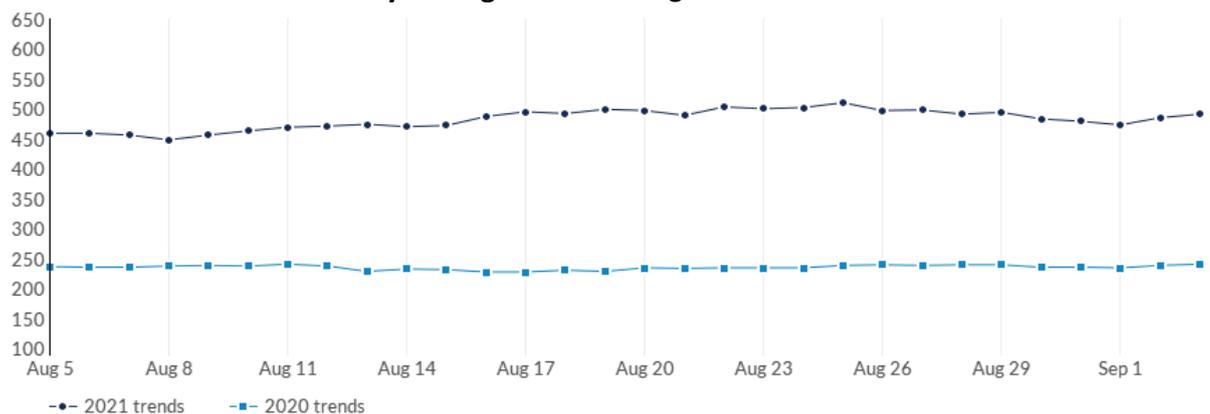
July to August Top Job Titles



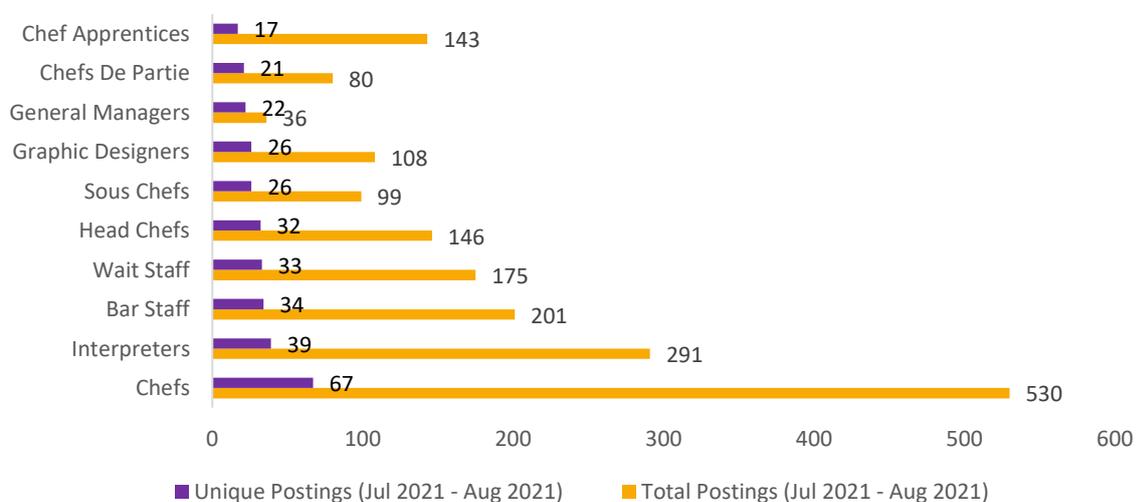
## Visitor Economy:

- In July to August 2021 there were 6,329 total job postings and 1,009 unique job postings in the Visitor Economy Sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 6-to-1, same as the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in average effort towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 30 days compared to a regional average of 31 days.
- The average salary was £22,976.
- Job postings are now 104.6% above levels seen this time last year as the sector has rebounded to levels seen before the pandemic.
- Demand via job postings was highest for chef occupations at 2,177 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 6-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for authors, writers and translators at 1,418 total postings and a posting intensity of 11-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for chefs with 530 total postings and a posting intensity of 8-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for chef apprentices at 8-to-1 and 143 total postings.
- Restaurant operation, cooking and food safety were the top hard skills requested, with restaurant operation having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 15% of all postings but only in 2% of workforce profiles.
- Communications, customer service and sales were the 3 top common skills requested.

### July to August Job Posting Trends



### July to August Top Job Titles





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