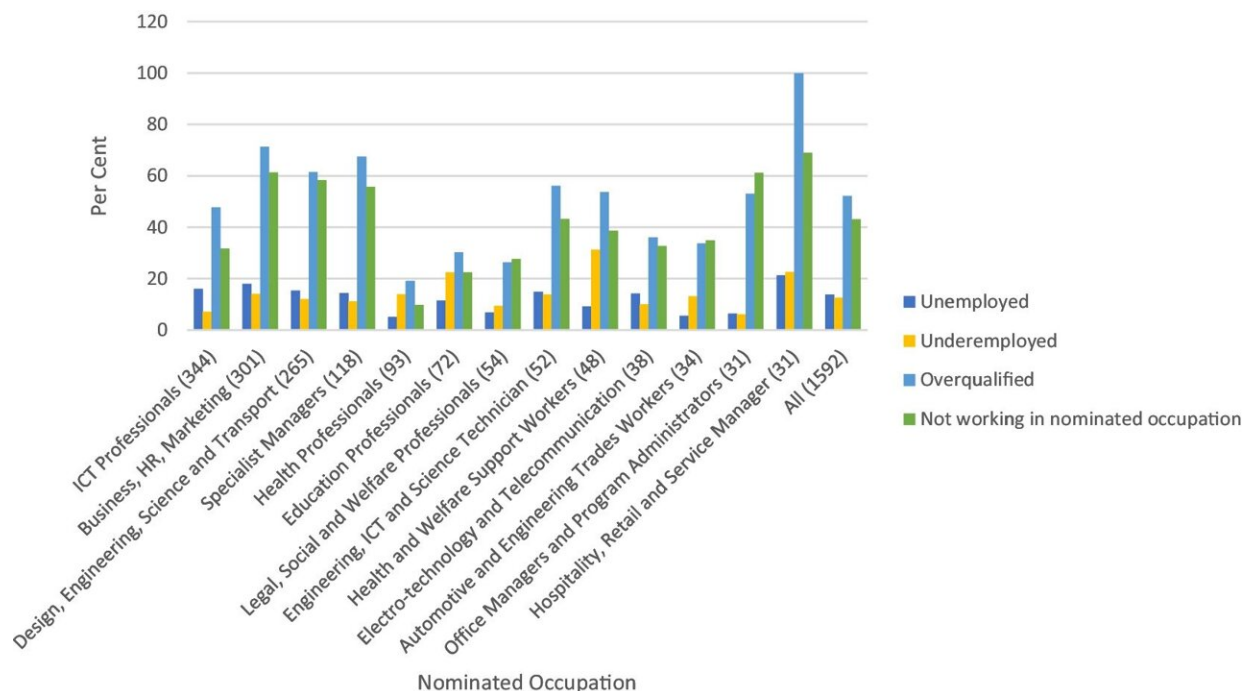


# Unrecognized qualifications thwart Australia's skilled migrants

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Unemployment, underemployment, overqualification and working outside nominated occupation, by nominated occupation. Note: Numbers in () indicate sample size. Display limited to occupations with at least 30 visa holders. Occupations sorted in sample size order. Source: GSM Survey. Credit: *International Migration* (2022). DOI: 10.1111/imig.13030

New research by workforce experts at Flinders University and Charles Darwin University shows that efforts by skilled migrants to meet

employer demands for Australian qualifications result in only marginal returns for these efforts, at least in the short term.

"The relative lack of consideration given to the portability of skills is demonstrated through the skills mismatch and underutilization shown in our data," says research co-author Dr. Andreas Cebulla, Associate Professor in The Future of Work at Flinders University's Australian Industrial Transformation Institute.

Despite federal migration policies selecting skilled migrants through measurements of credentials and skills pegged to [education levels](#) and occupations, the non-recognition of overseas qualifications and experience still widely occurs.

Most puzzling to many skilled migrants is a gap between what the Australian government accepts in its points score to allow the entry of skilled migrants into the country, and then what employers do not accept as transferrable qualifications.

Significantly, the researchers found that a [migrant's](#) rush to find regular income by quickly accepting any job offer increased their risk of occupational and skills mismatch.

The Australian Government's own survey of recent migrants to Australia shows that despite high employment rates, nearly one-quarter of all permanent migrants (23%) in 2018 experienced skills mismatch. This was more prevalent for those under South Australia's State-Sponsored migration scheme, with 32% working in a job lower than their [skill level](#), compared with only 13% of employer-sponsored visa holders.

The largest groups of affected migrants were from occupation groups involving Information and Communication Technology professionals; those working in business, [human resource](#) or marketing; design,

engineering, science or transportation; and specialist managers, health or education professionals.

About one-third (34%) of skilled migrants involved in the survey sought additional qualifications and skills by enrolling in one or more occupational courses, and some also sought to obtain English language proficiency certificates.

However, acquiring additional Australian qualifications makes comparatively little difference to their employment status when compared to migrants who do not seek new qualifications.

The researchers noted that the exclusion of migrants from Australia's welfare system for the first four years after their arrival can pressure migrants into accepting job that do not match their nominated occupation or skills.

"We recommend exploring measures within the welfare system that allow for more extended job searches to avoid the cost of occupational mismatches," says Dr. Cebulla.

"For Australia to keep focusing on employment or [unemployment rates](#), it obfuscates the underemployment or the utilization of migrant's skills."

Dr. Cebulla says policy implications stem from this research, including statutory agencies providing better advice and guidance on the challenges of skills recognition and building appropriate pathways specific to a migrant's occupation; a review of current skills recognition in Australia, and re-examining the welfare system available to skilled migrants in Australia.

"We argue that Australia should consider developing a more coherent skilled migration process to better harness the human capital of [skilled](#)

[migrants](#)," says Dr. Cebulla.

The research, "When what you have is not enough: Acquiring Australian qualifications to overcome non-recognition of overseas skills, by George Tan and Andreas Cebulla," has been published by *International Migration*.

**More information:** George Tan et al, When what you have is not enough—Acquiring Australian qualifications to overcome non-recognition of overseas skills, *International Migration* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/imig.13030](#)

Provided by Flinders University

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