

Analysis finds soaring demand for people skills in Aussie post-pandemic jobs market

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Aussie employers' demand for workers with strong interpersonal skills has surged following the COVID-19 pandemic, according to research by CSIRO, Australia's national science agency.

Researchers analyzed more than 12 million online job ads captured by Adzuna Australia between 2015 and 2022, reporting the [pandemic](#) further accelerated demand for [employees](#) who can work well with others—especially when working from home.

[The study](#), "Accelerated demand for [interpersonal skills](#) in the Australian post-pandemic labour market," was published in *Nature Human Behaviour*.

Lead author and CSIRO scientist David Evans said the results were unexpected given the [unemployment rate](#) hit a historic low at 3.5% between 2021 and 2022.

"Periods of low unemployment are usually associated with a dampening of employer's skills expectations," Evans said.

"Despite this job seekers' market following the pandemic, we were surprised to observe a further acceleration of interpersonal skills demand across many occupations.

"You'd also be forgiven for thinking the rise of remote working arrangements might suit introverts or more independent workers. But the data shows working from home is not working alone. We observed job postings offering remote work were 1.2 times more likely to mention interpersonal skills than face-to-face roles."

The accelerated demand for interpersonal skills was primarily driven by an increase in job postings seeking skills in communication and collaboration.

Interpersonal skills were defined using the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) skills hierarchy, which groups more than 13,000 detailed skills into four broad classes:

Interpersonal, Digital, Manual and Analytical.

Evans said the findings can help job seekers tailor their applications and interviews, as well as inform the education and training sector.

"This finding can help individuals prioritize what skills to invest in developing. We also know that when employees' skills are aligned with employers' expectations, you have happier employees, lower turnover, and higher productivity," he said.

"Our results also support the ongoing relevance of calls for Australia's education and training providers to focus on developing the interpersonal skills of students. The data suggests these 'soft skills' are increasingly front of employers' minds and critical not to overlook," he said.

The study also reported an increase in the demand for digital skills post-pandemic, such as accessing and analyzing [digital data](#). On the other hand, demand for manual skills decreased post-pandemic and demand for analytical skills increased steadily in-line with pre-pandemic predictions.

More information: David Evans et al, Accelerated demand for interpersonal skills in the Australian post-pandemic labour market, *Nature Human Behaviour* (2024). [DOI: 10.1038/s41562-023-01788-2](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01788-2)

Provided by CSIRO

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