



2003 Generic Skills Survey

Results for Merthyr Tydfil

Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey

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The Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey looks at the skill needs of employers in Wales and the skills offered by the people living in Wales as well as the demands for learning and training amongst employers and people in Wales. It comprises of an Employer's Survey and a Household Survey. Both surveys focus on generic skills, which are skills that are transferable across occupational groups.

The Employer Survey: 6,020 establishments with a minimum of two employees were interviewed between February and April 2003. The sample was drawn from the Yellow Pages Business Database and stratified by the unitary authority (UA) and within each authority by employee size and industry. This data has been weighted by the UA level, the number of employees and SIC using 2001 Annual Business Inquiry data.

The Household Survey: 6,025 households were interviewed face-to-face, across Wales, between February and July 2003. The interviews were constructed in such a way as to be representative of the total Welsh population using ONS (Office for National Statistics) 1996 mid-year estimates for gender and age of the population at UA (Unitary Authority) level.

Survey Numbers - Merthyr Tydfil

	Number of respondents (before weighting)
The Employer Survey	200
The Household Survey	200

KEY FACTS

- Employers in Merthyr rated understanding customer needs and adaptability/flexibility as the generic skills most in demand at a high or advanced level.
- 54% of employers who recruit school or college leavers reported a significant gap between the skills possessed by a school or college leaver and those expected by the employer. Of these 42% found communication skills to be lacking.
- 32% of people who were not working would like to be in either full time or part time paid work.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Employer Survey:

- 16% of employers were public sector employers, compared with 13% nationally.
- There were comparatively few very small employers of fewer than 5 employees in Merthyr Tydfil (35% compared with 40% nationally), however 80% of employers had fewer than 10 employees, more than the national figure (77%).

Household Survey:

- 31% reported having a health problem or long-term disability, compared with 24% throughout Wales.
- Education levels were very low. 35% had no qualifications at all, compared with 21% nationally, whereas only 29% of respondents were educated to NVQ 3 equivalent or higher, compared with 42% nationally.
- 39% of respondents stated that they had some ability in the Welsh language, however only 6% had better than basic ability.

Merthyr Tydfil

Employer Survey

FUTURE SKILLS

- Employers were asked about which generic skills they required at the time of the survey (on a scale of 1=not required to 5=advanced), and what they felt the requirement would be for the same skills in the future (3 years from the time of the survey).
- Employers believed that for each of the skills in the survey, a higher level would be required in the future. The most significant increases were for Information Technology skills, with 44% saying high or advanced IT skills will be required in the future, compared with just 24% at the time of the survey, and organising own learning and development, with 50% requiring high or advanced skills in the future, compared with 38% at the time of the survey.
- The six skills with the greatest requirement at the time of the survey (in terms of percentage of employers requiring them at high or advanced level) were :
 - 1) Understanding the customers needs (78%)
 - 2) Adaptability and flexibility (74%)
 - 3) Ability to follow instructions (74%)
 - 4) Team working skills (72%)
 - 5) Communication skills (69%)
 - 6) Showing initiative (65%).
- The skills employers expect to need most at a high or advanced level in the future were identical:
 - 1) Understanding customers needs (83%)
 - 2) Adaptability and flexibility (81%)
 - 3) Ability to follow instructions (79%)
 - 4) Team working skills (76%)
 - 5) Communication skills (75%)
 - 6) Showing initiative (69%).

SKILL GAPS

- 19% of employers surveyed reported that a significant skills gap existed amongst their employees, that is, between the type of skills their employees possessed and those needed to meet business objectives.

Employers' attitudes towards skills:

- 54% of employers surveyed strongly agreed that their employees have sufficient skills to meet business needs, whilst 37% tended to agree
- 59% strongly agreed that investment in skills has brought business benefits with 19% tending to agree
- 83% of employers strongly agreed that having a skilled workforce is crucial to the success of their business, whilst 13% tended to agree with this statement.

Investment in skills - areas of benefit:

Of those employers who believed that investment in skills had brought benefits to their business:

- 34% reported competing on customer service as a benefit
- 30% reported that investment in skills had increased productivity
- 23% reported competing on quality as a benefit
- 18% reported increased profits as a result of the investment, and 16% felt it had accelerated business growth
- 8% reported that they had introduced new products or processes
- 8% had better trained staff as a result of investment in skills.

Vacancies:

- 18% of employers surveyed reported currently having one or more vacancy.

SCHOOL LEAVERS, COLLEGE LEAVERS AND GRADUATE RECRUITS

Recruitment of school leavers, college leavers and graduates:

- 39% of employers surveyed stated that they recruited school leavers
- 36% recruited college leavers
- 35% recruited graduates
- 45% recruited none of the above.

Skills lacking in school and college leavers:

- 54% of employers who recruit school or college leavers reported a significant gap between the skills the leavers have and those that are expected of them when first recruited.

Of those reporting a gap:

- 42% reported a lack of communication skills
- 22% reported a lack of numeracy skills
- 15% reported that school and college leavers lacked literacy skills
- 13% reported a lack in ability to follow instructions and
- 9% reported a lack of leadership and motivational skills.

Skills lacking in graduates:

- 32% of employers who recruit graduates reported a significant gap between the skills the graduates have and those that are expected of them when first recruited.

TRAINING

Employers were asked about off-the-job training, that is training that takes place away from the immediate work position:

- 51% of all employers had arranged off-the-job training for their employees over the previous 12 months when surveyed
- 77% of these employers used external sources to provide off-the-job training
- 81% of employers who had arranged training said that they had had no problems in finding an appropriate training provider.

Employers who had arranged training did so for the following type of occupations:

- 52% for managers and senior officials
- 34% for administrative and secretarial occupations
- 30% for professional occupations
- 28% for sales and customer service occupations
- 25% for associate professional and technical occupations.

Barriers to training provision:

- 34% of employers questioned stated that there were no barriers to the amount of training they provided.

Of those reporting barriers, three factors dominated as being the most important barriers to training provision:

- 34% of employers couldn't afford for staff to have time off for training
- 25% found the cost of training in local area to be prohibitive
- 8% reported that training was not available locally.

Household Survey

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS:

Employment/training: Status of respondent	Percent
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	42%
Long-term sick or disabled	16%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	14%
At home/not seeking work	10%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	8%
Full-time education	7%
Retired	3%
Part-time education	2%
Not registered un employed but seeking work	1%

- 44% of people who were not working would have liked to be in full or part time paid work of some sort.
- 54% of respondents who were not in full time or part time paid work said their health or a disability prevented them from working. 17% want to look after children or other family/household members and 9% of those not in work said that they didn't need to work, with 4% stating that they were in full-time education.
- Of those not employed, 16% were in some form of work 1 year ago, and 16% were also employed 2 years ago:

Activity status of respondents compared over time	2 years ago	1 year ago
Long-term sick or disabled	40%	41%
At home/not seeking work	16%	18%
Full-time education	15%	15%
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	10%	9%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	6%	7%
Retired	6%	6%
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	4%	2%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	2%	2%
Part-time education	1%	1%

- 31% of all respondents had a health problem or disability that they expected to last for more than a year. Of these, 75% said it affected the kind of paid work they might be able to do, and 68% said it affected the amount of paid work they were able to do.
- 11% of respondents reported being involved with a local organisation on a voluntary basis.

Sources of careers advice:

- 47% of individuals interviewed said they had sought careers advice in the 2 years leading up to the survey.

Respondents who had sought careers advice had used a variety of sources:

- 22% used JobCentre/JobCentre Plus
- 17% had sought advice from school/college careers advice and/or teacher/lecturers, whilst 12% relied on family, friends and colleagues for advice
- 16% used web-sites to seek careers advice
- 8% used Careers (Wales) advisers
- 7% stated that course tutors/teachers
- 5% used their line managers and/or their personnel departments
- 4% used recruitment agencies.

SUPPLY OF SKILLS

- Respondents (both working and not working) were asked what level of generic skills they already had, and what level of skills they felt were required for their current job (those working), or for the job they want (those not working) on a scale of not required to advanced.
- Those in work reported that their skill levels were sufficient for, and in most cases well above, their employer's need for all skills at basic, intermediate and high level. There was a minor perceived gap at advanced level in communication skills (36% reported requiring skills, 33% reported possessing them).
- The six skills with the highest percentage of respondents in work rating themselves as possessing high or advanced levels were:
 - 1) Ability to follow instructions (90%)
 - 2) Understanding customer needs (87%)
 - 3) Team working skills (86%)
 - 4) Communication skills (86%)
 - 5) Adaptability/flexibility (85%)
 - 6) Showing initiative (82%).
- Those out of work reported that their levels at many skills were insufficient for the jobs they want. Particularly in short supply at intermediate level or above were IT skills (43% reported requiring formal qualifications at this level, 28% reported possessing them), and Welsh language skills (17% required, 5% possessed). At high or advanced level there were significant perceived gaps in adaptability/flexibility (60% required, 42% possessed) and showing initiative (66% required, 53% possessed). At advanced level there were significant perceived gaps in management skills (14% required, 2% possessed), organising own learning and development

(10% required, 0% possessed) and formal qualifications (12% required, 2% possessed).

- The six skills with the highest percentage of respondents out of work rating the need for them in the job they want as high or advanced were:
 - 1) Ability to follow instructions (68%)
 - 2) Showing initiative (66%)
 - 3) Adaptability and flexibility (60%)
 - 4) Communication skills (60%)
 - 5) Understanding the customers needs (59%)
 - 6) Team working skills (57%).

Types of training individuals would like to be involved in:

- 65% of all individuals interviewed would like to be involved in training.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 35% of individuals felt that they would like to be involved in taught courses designed to help them develop the skills that they might use in a job
- 31% would like to participate in taught courses that lead to qualifications
- 22% stated that they would like time to keep up to date with developments in the area that they work in
- 17% would like to be involved in achieving credits or a step towards qualifications
- 16% would like to study for qualifications without participating in a taught course
- 14% would like to receive supervised training whilst doing their job
- 13% want to be involved in any other taught course, instruction or tuition
- 9% would participate in any other non-taught course or training
- 34% would not like to be involved in any of these options.

Types of training or learning actually carried out in the past 12 months:

- 52% of all respondents had undertaken training in the 12 months leading up to the survey.

All individuals were asked about any training they had been involved in, in the 12 months leading up to the survey:

- 30% of respondents had been on taught courses designed to help them develop skills that might be used in a job
- 29% had spent time keeping up-to-date with developments in the type of work that they do, e.g. reading books, manuals or attending seminars
- 23% received supervised training whilst they were actually doing a job
- 19% had been on taught courses that were meant to lead to qualifications and
- 14% had been on another taught course, instruction or tuition.

Of those who had done any of the above, the most common outcomes of the training or learning were:

- 55% reported an increase in confidence in their own abilities
- 50% gained new skills for the job they were doing at the time
- 46% said they were able to do their jobs better
- 31% got more satisfaction out of the work they were doing at the time
- 27% developed personal interests unrelated to work.

Barriers to learning or studying new things in the coming year:

- 69% of all individuals interviewed stated that they experienced barriers to learning or studying new things.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 16% said that work pressures and their hours of work prevented them from learning or studying, whilst 16% specified that family and child care commitments were too great
- 15% of individuals felt that they will not have enough time to learn or study in the coming year
- 8% said it was too expensive
- 2% said it was too far for them to travel and 2% said that a lack of transport prohibited them in learning or studying.

Preferred learning styles

All respondents were asked to comment on their preferred learning styles:

- 49% preferred to learn by doing practical things
- 44% preferred to learn in a group being instructed by a teachers or tutor and
- 33 preferred to learn alone or by self-study.

Preferred learning methods:

All respondents were asked to comment on their preferred methods of learning:

- 72% preferred to use books or written materials for learning something new
- 45% reported lectures as a preferred learning method
- 42% reported videos as a preferred learning method
- 38% reported CD-ROM/computer software packages as a preferred learning method and
- 36% reported TV programmes as a preferred learning method.

