



2003 Generic Skills Survey

Results for Powys

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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 Totals for Powys

	Number of respondents (before weighting)
The Employer Survey	370
The Household Survey	234

KEY FACTS

- Employers in Powys rated understanding customer needs and the ability to follow instructions as the generic skills needed most at a high or advanced level.
- 20% of employers who reported HTFV believed the main cause to be applicants lacking the relevant skills they required.
- 51% of employers who recruit school or college leavers reported a significant gap between the skills possessed by a leaver and those expected by the employer. Of these 40% found communication skills to be lacking.
- 52% of people who were not working would like to be in either full time or part time paid work.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Employer Survey:

- 71% of employers were based entirely on a single site, compared with 62% throughout Wales. Similarly, employers were less likely to be one of a multiple site employer, with only 26% being so (compared with 33% nationally).
- 9% of employers in Powys were charity or voluntary employers, compared with 5% throughout Wales.
- 45% of employers in Powys had fewer than 5 employees, compared with 40% nationally.

Household Survey:

- 28% reported having a health problem or long-term disability.
- 49% of respondents were educated to NVQ 3 equivalent or higher, compared with 42% nationally. 15% had no qualifications at all, compared with 21% nationally.
- 58% of respondents stated that they had some ability in the Welsh language, with 19% having better than basic ability and 11% being fluent speakers. 6% stated Welsh to be their first language at home.

Powys

Employer Survey

FUTURE SKILLS

- Employers were asked about which generic skills were 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 increase was expected to be for Information Technology skills, with 48% saying high or advanced IT skills will be required in the future, compared with 31% 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 customer needs (78%)
 - 2) Ability to follow instructions (73%)
 - 3) Adaptability/flexibility (70%)
 - 4) Showing initiative (69%)
 - 5) Communication skills (68%)
 - 6) Team working skills (66%).
- The skills employers expect to need most at high or advanced level in the future were identical:
 - 1) Understanding customer needs (81%)
 - 2) Adaptability/flexibility (77%)
 - 3) Communication skills (75%)
 - 4) Ability to follow instructions (76%)
 - 5) Showing initiative (73%)
 - 6) Team working skills (72%).

SKILL GAPS

- 15% of employers surveyed reported that a significant skills gap existed amongst their employees, that is, between the type of skills their employees possessed at the time of the survey and those required to meet their business objectives.

Occupations and skills gaps:

- Of those reporting a skills gap, 21% of employers believed that a gap amongst managers and senior officials had the most significant impact on their business, with 20% regarding sales and customer service occupations as having the most significant impact.

Main measures taken to tackle the skills gap:

Of those reporting a skills gap:

- 46% reported they had provided further training
- 25% of the employers said they had done nothing, preferring to leave the problem to market forces
- 9% increased the level of apprentice or trainee programmes provided
- 9% reported increased recruitment activities
- 5% changed their working practices and
- 4% had more reviews and team meetings.

Employers' attitudes towards skills:

- 43% of employers surveyed strongly agreed that their employees have sufficient skills to meet business needs, whilst 45% tended to agree
- 41% strongly agreed that investment in skills has brought business benefits with 32% tending to agree
- 78% of employers strongly agreed that having a skilled workforce is crucial to the success of their business, whilst 17% tended to agree with this statement.

Investment in skills - areas of benefit:

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

- 35% reported competing on customer service as a benefit
- 23% found that investment in skills had increased productivity
- 22% reported competing on quality as a benefit
- 11% reported increased profits as a result of the investment, and 10% felt it had accelerated business growth
- 8% of employers had introduced new products or processes and
- 7% reported that better trained staff had brought better benefits.

SKILL SHORTAGES

Hard-to-fill vacancies (HTFV):

- 23% of employers surveyed reported having one or more vacancies
- Of these employers, 61% reported that some or all of these vacancies were hard-to-fill
- The net effect of this is that 14% of all employers surveyed reported currently having HTFV.

Causes of HTFV:

Employers with HTFV believed the main cause of them to be as follows:

	Percent
Job entails shift work/unsociable hours	20%
Applicants lack the relevant skills we require	17%
Lack of applicants/people willing to work for market rate /interested in this type of work	10%
Applicants lack the relevant experience	10%
Remote location/poor public transport	10%
Applicants lack the qualifications we want	5%
Applicants lack motivation/right attitude	5%
Employer/industry unable to pay market rate	4%
Seasonal work	3%
Poor image of sector	3%
Too much competition from other employers	3%
Bad economic climate	1%

Consequences of HTFV:

Of those employers reporting HTFV:

- 14% reported that there had been no impact on their business due to HTFV
- 18% reported that the biggest impact was a loss of business to competitors
- 17% reported their employer cannot expand the business and meet growth targets
- 17% reported there was more stress/increased pressure on other staff and
- 14% reported a loss of efficiency/increased wastage.

Measures taken to tackle the problem of HTFV:

- 16% of all employers reporting HTFV had expanded the recruitment channels (as opposed to geography) to tackle the problem of HTFV
- 13% recruited from different geographical areas
- 11% had changed their work practices (flexible hours, working from home) and
- 10% reported that they had highlighted the problem to local providers.

SCHOOL LEAVERS, COLLEGE LEAVERS AND GRADUATE RECRUITS

Recruitment of school leavers, college leavers and graduates:

- 36% of employers surveyed stated they recruited school leavers
- 35% recruited college leavers
- 33% recruited graduates
- 50% recruited none of the above.

Skills lacking in school and college leavers:

- 51% 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:

- 40% reported a lack of communication skills
- 19% believed that school and college leavers lacked literacy skills
- 17% reported that numeracy skills were lacking
- 15% reported a lack of showing initiative and
- 12% reported a lack of work experience to be a problem.

Skills lacking in graduates:

- 27% 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:

- 53% of all employers had arranged off-the-job training for their employees over the previous 12 months when surveyed
- 82% of these employers used external sources to provide off-the-job training
- 85% 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:

- 55% for managers and senior officials
- 26% for administrative and secretarial occupations
- 25% for skilled trade occupations
- 25% for professional occupations
- 15% for sales and customer service.

Barriers to training provision:

- 28% of employers questioned stated that there were no barriers to the amount of training they provided.

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

- 37% of employers couldn't afford for staff to have time off for training
- 28% found that the cost of training in the local area to be prohibitive
- 10% reported that training is not available locally.

Household Survey

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS:

	Percent
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	49%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	25%
At home/not seeking work	8%
Long-term sick or disabled	6%
Full-time education	5%
Retired	5%
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	3%
Part-time education	2%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	2%
Local or government training scheme (including New Deal) involving paid work	2%

- 52% of people who were not working would like to be in full or part time paid work.
- Of those not employed, 28% were in some form of work 1 year ago, and 22% two years ago:

Activity status of respondents compared over time	2 years ago	1 year ago
At home/not seeking work	28%	20%
Long-term sick or disabled	19%	18%
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	17%	16%
Full-time education	16%	19%
Retired	10%	12%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	5%	12%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	4%	4%
Part-time education	1%	1%

- 28% of all respondents reported a health problem or disability that they expected to last for more than a year. Of these, 60% said it affected the kind of paid work they might be able to do, and 50% said it affected the amount of paid work they are able to do.
- 24% of respondents were involved with a local organisation on a voluntary basis.

Sources of careers advice:

- 44% 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:

- 20% used JobCentre/JobCentre Plus
- 14% relied on family, friends and colleagues for advice
- 11% used web-sites to seek careers advice
- 9% used Careers (Wales) advisers
- 7% had sought advice from school/college careers advice and/or teacher/lecturers
- 7% used recruitment agencies
- 6% used their line managers and/or their personnel departments.

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 management skills (10% reported requiring skills, 7% reported possessing them).
- The six skills with the highest percentage of respondents in work rating themselves as high or advanced were:
 - 1) Ability to follow instructions (84%)
 - 2) Adaptability and flexibility (84%)
 - 3) Understanding customer needs (81%)
 - 4) Communication skills (81%)
 - 5) Showing initiative (74%)
 - 6) Team working skills (78%).

Types of training individuals would like to be involved in:

- 73% of all individuals interviewed would like to be involved in training.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 40% 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
- 33% would like to participate in taught courses that lead to qualifications
- 24% stated that they would like time to keep up to date with the developments in the area that they work in
- 23% would like to study for qualifications without participating in a taught course
- 21% want to be involved in any other taught course, instruction or tuition
- 21% would like to receive supervised training whilst doing their job
- 20% would like to be involved in achieving credits or a step towards qualifications
- 14% would participate in any other non-taught course or training
- 27% would not like to be involved in any of these options.

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

- 58% 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:

- 27% of respondents stated that they had spent time keeping up to date with developments in the type of work they do, e.g. reading books, manuals or attending seminars
- 26% had been on taught courses designed to help them develop skills that they might use in a job
- 21% had been on taught courses that were meant to lead to qualifications
- 18% had received supervised training while they were actually doing a job
- 14% had been on another other taught course, instruction or tuition.

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

- 57% reported an increase in confidence in their own abilities
- 49% said they were able to do their jobs better
- 45% learned new skills for the job they were doing at the time
- 18% got more satisfaction out of the work they were doing at the time
- 14% developed personal interests unrelated to work.

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

- 62% of all individuals interviewed stated that they experienced barriers to learning or studying new things.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 28% of individuals felt that they will not have enough time to learn or study in the coming year, whilst 14% specified that family and child care commitments were too great
- 10% said that it was too expensive
- 7% said that work pressures and their hours of work prevented them from learning or studying
- 5% said that it was too far for them to travel and 5% 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:

- 47% preferred to learn by doing practical things
- 38% preferred to learn in a group being instructed by a teacher or tutor and
- 36% had a preference for learning alone or by self-study.

Preferred learning methods:

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

- 70% preferred to use books or written materials for learning something new
- 45% reported lectures as a preferred learning method
- 38% reported videos as a preferred learning method
- 34% CD-ROM/computer software packages as a preferred learning method and
- 32% reported the Internet as a preferred learning method.

