



# 2003 Generic Skills Survey

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## Results for Swansea

## 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 Totals for Swansea

	Number of respondents (before weighting)
The Employer Survey	400
The Household Survey	441

## KEY FACTS

- Employers in Swansea rated “understanding customer needs” and “communication skills” as the generic skills most in demand at a high or advanced level.
- 22% of employers who reported HTFV believed the main cause was due to applicants lacking motivation or the right attitude.
- 48% of employers who recruit school or college leavers reported a significant gap between the skills possessed by school or college leavers and those they expected them to possess. Of these, 37% found communication skills to be lacking.
- 22% of people who were not working would like to be in either full time or part time paid work.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Employer Survey:

- 65% of employers were based entirely on a single site, compared with 62% throughout Wales.
- 32% of employers in Swansea had 10 or more employees, compared with 23% nationally.

### Household Survey:

- 24% reported having a health problem or long-term disability.
- 44% of respondents were educated to NVQ 3 equivalent or higher. 22% had no qualifications at all.
- 43% of respondents stated that they had some ability in the Welsh language, with 15% having better than basic ability.

# Swansea

## *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 individual skills listed, there would be a higher level required in the future. The most significant expected increase was for Information Technology skills, with 53% saying high or advanced IT skills will be required in 3 years time, compared with 35% today.
- The six skills which employers required the most (in terms of percentage of employers requiring them at high or advanced level) were :
  - 1) Understanding customer needs (83%)
  - 2) Communication skills (79%)
  - 3) Ability to follow instructions (77%)
  - 4) Showing initiative (71%)
  - 5) Adaptability/flexibility (70%)
  - 6) Team working skills (69%).
- The skills employers expect to need the most at high or advanced level in the future were identical:
  - 1) Understanding customer needs (87%)
  - 2) Communication skills (81%)
  - 3) Ability to follow instructions (80%)
  - 4) Adaptability/flexibility (78%)
  - 5) Showing initiative (76%)
  - 6) Team working skills (75%).

## **SKILL GAPS**

- 23% 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 their business objectives.

### **Occupations and skills gaps:**

- Of those reporting a skills gap, 33% of employers surveyed believed that the lack of managers and senior officials has had the most significant impact on their business, with 15% regarding skilled trade occupations as having the most impact.

### **Main measures taken to tackle the skills gap:**

Of those reporting a skills gap:

- 70% reported they had provided further training
- 17% had increased the level of apprentice or trainee programmes provided
- 8% increased their level of recruitment activities
- 6% changed their working practices
- 3% said they changed their working practices and
- 2% of the employers said they had done nothing, preferring to leave the problem to market forces.

### **Employers' attitudes towards skills:**

- 48% of employers surveyed strongly agreed that their employees have sufficient skills to meet business needs, whilst 38% tended to agree
- 44% strongly agreed that investment in skills has brought business benefits with 36% tending to agree
- 78% of employers strongly agreed that having a skilled workforce is crucial to the success of their business, whilst 19% 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:

- 42% reported competing on customer service as a benefit
- 26% found that investment in skills had increased productivity
- 24% reported competing on quality
- 15% reported increased profits as a result of the investment, and a further 15% felt it had accelerated business growth
- 11% of employers had introduced new products or processes and
- 10% reported that staff morale had improved as a result of the investment.

## SKILL SHORTAGES

### Hard-to-fill vacancies (HTFV):

- 24% of employers surveyed reported having one or more vacancies
- Of these employers, 62% reported that some or all of these vacancies were hard-to-fill
- The net effect of this is that 15% of all employers surveyed reported having HTFV.

### Causes of HTFV:

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

	Percent
Applicants lack motivation/right attitude	22%
Lack of applicants/people willing to work for market rate /interested in this type of work	22%
Applicants lack the relevant skills we require	16%
Applicants lack the qualifications we want	12%
Applicants lack the relevant experience	10%
Job entails shift work/unsociable hours	5%
Lack of resources to carry out effective recruitment	4%
Remote location/poor public transport	2%
People with required skills don't want to relocate to this area	1%
Employer/industry unable to pay market rate	1%
Too much competition from other employers	1%
Poor image of sector	1%
Poor career progression / lack of prospects	1%

### Consequences of HTFV:

Of those employers reporting HTFV:

- 13% reported that there had been no impact on their business due to HTFV
- 20% reported stress/more work/increased pressure on other staff
- 18% reported a loss of efficiency/increased wastage
- 18% lost business to competitors and
- 13% reported a loss in quality in service.

### Measures taken to tackle the problem of HTFV:

- 42% of all employers surveyed expanded the recruitment channels (as opposed to geography) to tackle the problem of HTFV
- 11% reported that they had recruited from different geographical areas
- 10% reported that they had highlighted the problem to local providers, such as colleges and training bodies and
- 8% reported that they increased or expanded trainee programs.

## SCHOOL LEAVERS, COLLEGE LEAVERS AND GRADUATE RECRUITS

**Recruitment of school leavers, college leavers and graduates:**

- 41% recruited college leavers
- 41% recruited graduates
- 38% of employers surveyed stated they recruited school leavers
- 36% recruited none of the above.

**Skills lacking in school and college leavers:**

- 50% 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:

- 37% reported a lack of communication skills
- 28% believed that school and college leavers lacked literacy skills
- 23% reported a lack of numeracy skills
- 17% stated school and college leavers did not show any initiative and
- 10% believed that school and college leavers lacked the ability to learn.

**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.

Of those reporting a gap:

- 22% of employers surveyed reported graduates lacked initiative
- 21% reported a lack of understanding communication skills
- 16% reported that graduates displayed a lack of understanding customer needs
- 15% reported literacy skills as lacking and
- 6% reported graduates lacked Information Technology skills.

**TRAINING**

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

- 55% of all employers had arranged off-the-job training for their employees over the previous 12 months when surveyed
- 88% 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:

- 53% for managers and senior officials
- 30% for administrative and secretarial occupations
- 22% for sales and customer service occupations
- 22% for professional occupations
- 21% for associate professional and technical occupations.

**Barriers to training provision:**

- 30% of employers surveyed 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:

- 33% of employers couldn't afford for staff to have time off for training
- 25% found the cost of training in the local area to be prohibitive and
- 8% reported the time of day the courses are run to be a problem.

## Household Survey

### EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS:

Employment/training: Status of respondent	Percent
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	44%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	22%
At home/not seeking work	14%
Long-term sick or disabled	10%
Full-time education	9%
Retired	4%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	3%
Part-time education	2%

- 22% of people who were not working would like to be in full or part time paid work of some sort.
- 36% of respondents that were not in full time or part time paid work said it was because health or disability prevented them. 16% said they didn't want a job. 12% of those not in work said that they were in full-time education, with 8% stating that there was a lack of childcare facilities, which stopped them from working.
- Of those not in full time or part time work, 18% were in some form of work 1 year ago, and 20% 2 years ago:

Activity status of respondents compared over time	2 years ago	1 year ago
Long-term sick or disabled	23%	25%
At home/not seeking work	35%	33%
Full-time education	19%	17%
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	13%	10%
Retired	8%	10%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	8%	9%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	4%	3%
Part-time education	1%	1%

- 24% of all respondents reported a health problem or disability that they expected to last for more than a year. Of these, 74% said it affected the kind of paid work they were able to do, and 70% said it affected the amount of paid work they were able to do.
- 14% of respondents were involved with a local organisation on a voluntary basis.

### **Sources of careers advice:**

- 36% of individuals interviewed said they had sought careers advice in the previous 2 years.

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

- 15% used JobCentre/JobCentre Plus
- 12% relied on family, friends and colleagues for advice, whilst 8% had sought advice from school/college careers advice and/or teacher/lecturers
- 9% used web-sites to seek careers advice
- 8% used Careers (Wales) advisers
- 6% used recruitment agencies
- 5% stated that course tutors/teachers and
- 3% 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, high and advanced level.
- The six skills with the highest percentage of respondents in work rating themselves as high or advanced were:
  - 1) Communication skills (87%)
  - 2) Showing initiative (83%)
  - 3) Ability to follow instructions (88%)
  - 4) Understanding customer needs (83%)
  - 5) Team working skills (82%)
  - 6) Adaptability /flexibility (82%).
- Those out of work reported that their levels at some skills were insufficient for the jobs they wanted. Particularly in short supply at intermediate level or above were formal qualifications (66% reported requiring formal qualifications at this level, 53% reported possessing them), and IT skills (54% required, 44% possessed). At high level or above there were also significant perceived gaps in formal qualifications (54% required, 32% possessed) and leadership/motivational skills (63% required, 48% possessed). At advanced level there were significant perceived gaps in organising own learning and development (14% required, 6% possessed), and ability to follow instructions (16% required, 12% possessed).

- The six skills with the highest percentage of respondents out of work rating the level need in the job they would like to get as high or advanced was:
  - 1) Communication skills (81%)
  - 2) Understanding customer needs (76%)
  - 3) Ability to follow instructions (75%)
  - 4) Showing initiative (72%)
  - 5) Team working skills (71%)
  - 6) Adaptability and flexibility (66%).

### **Types of training individuals would like to be involved in:**

- 64% of all individuals interviewed said that they would like to be involved in training.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 31% 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
- 29% 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
- 20% would like to receive supervised training whilst doing their job
- 14% want to be involved in any other taught course, instruction or tuition
- 12% would like to study for qualifications without participating in a taught course
- 12% would like to be involved in achieving credits or a step towards qualifications
- 8% would participate in any other non-taught course or training
- 36% would not like to be involved in any of these options.

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

- 56% of all respondents had undertaken training in the 12 months prior to the survey.

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

- 31% of respondents had been on taught courses designed to help you develop skills that you might use in a job
- 25% had spent time keeping up-to-date with developments in the type of work that they did, e.g. reading books, manuals or attending seminars
- 22% had been on taught courses that were meant to lead to qualifications
- 16% had been on another taught course, instruction or tuition and
- 13% had received supervised training while they were actually doing a job.

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

- 54% reported an increase in their confidence in their own abilities
- 48% said they were able to their jobs better
- 34% learned new skills for the work they were doing at the time
- 20% 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:**

- 46% of all individuals interviewed stated that they experienced barriers to learning or studying new things.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 17% of individuals felt that they will not have enough time to learn or study in the coming year, whilst 11% specified that family and child care commitments were too great
- 7% said that it was too expensive
- 5% said that work pressures and their hours of work prevented them from learning or studying
- 2% said that a lack of transport prohibited them in learning or studying and
- 1% said that it was too far for them to travel.

### **Preferred learning styles:**

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

- 50% preferred to learn by doing practical things
- 44% preferred to learn in a group setting being instructed by a teacher or tutor and
- 39% preferred to learn alone or by self-study.

### **Preferred learning methods:**

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

- 74% preferred to use books or written materials for learning something new
- 43% reported lectures as a preferred learning method
- 37% reported the Internet as a preferred learning method
- 36% reported TV programmes as a preferred learning method and
- 36% reported CD-ROM/computer software packages as a preferred learning method.

