



2003 Generic Skills Survey
Results for Blaenau Gwent

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 Blaenau Gwent

	Number of respondents (before weighting)
The Employer Survey	202
The Household Survey	207

KEY FACTS

- Employers in Blaenau Gwent rated understanding customer needs and adaptability/flexibility as the generic skills most in demand at a high or advanced level.
- 55% 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
- 32% of people who were not working would like to be in either full time or part time paid work.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Employer Survey:

- 64% of employers were based on a single site, and 84% were private sector employers, roughly in line with the national pattern.
- 49% of employers in Blaenau Gwent had fewer than 5 employees, compared with 40% nationally.

Household Survey:

- 37% reported having a health problem or long-term disability, well above the national average of 24%.
- Education levels were very low. 28% had no qualifications at all, compared with 21% nationally, whereas only 28% of respondents were educated to NVQ 3 equivalent or higher, compared with 42% nationally.
- The number of Welsh language speakers was low, with 77% stating that they had no ability at all, and only 4% having anything above basic ability.

Blaenau Gwent

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 in the survey a higher level would be required in the future. The most significant increase was for Information Technology Skills, with 42% saying high or advanced IT skills will be required in the future, compared with just 27% 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 (83%)
 - 2) Adaptability/flexibility (78%)
 - 3) Communication skills (78%)
 - 4) Showing initiative (74%)
 - 5) Ability to follow instructions (72%)
 - 6) Team working skills (71%).
- The skills employers expect to need most at high or advanced level in the future were:
 - 1) Understanding customer needs (87%)
 - 2) Adaptability/flexibility (82%)
 - 3) Communication skills (82%)
 - 4) Showing initiative (80%)
 - 5) Team working skills (74%)
 - 6) Ability to follow instructions (74%).

SKILL GAPS

- 23% of employers surveyed reported that a significant skills gap existed amongst their employees, that is, between the type of skills they 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, 23% of employers believed that a gap in skilled managers and senior officials had the most significant impact on their business, with 24% regarding administrative and secretarial occupations as having the most significant impact.

Main measures taken to tackle the skills gap:

Of those reporting a skills gap:

- 61% reported they had provided further training
- 22% increased apprentice/trainee programmes
- 15% changed work practices
- 8% of these employers increased their recruitment activity
- 4% of the employers said they had done nothing about the skills gap, preferring to leave the problem to market forces and
- 6% reported relocating their work elsewhere.

Employers' attitudes towards skills:

- 49% of employers surveyed strongly agreed that their employees have sufficient skills to meet business needs, whilst 36% tend to agree
- 44% strongly agreed that investment in skills has brought business benefits with 31% tending to agree
- 79% of employers strongly agreed that having a skilled workforce is crucial to the success of their business, whilst 16% tend 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:

- 31% reported competing on customer service as a benefit
- 34% found that investment in skills had increased productivity
- 22% reported increased profits as a result of the investment, and 19% felt it had accelerated business growth
- 20% reported competing on quality as a benefit
- 12% of employers had introduced new products or processes and
- 8% reported that staff morale had improved as a result of the investment.

SKILL SHORTAGES

Hard-to-fill vacancies (HTFV):

- 19% of employers surveyed reported having one or more vacancies
- Of these employers, 60% reported that some or all of these vacancies were hard-to-fill
- The net effect of this is that 11% of all employers surveyed reported currently having HTFV.

SCHOOL LEAVERS, COLLEGE LEAVERS AND GRADUATE RECRUITS

Recruitment of school leavers, college leavers and graduates:

- 36% of employers surveyed stated they recruited school leavers
- 38% recruited college leavers
- 25% recruited graduates
- 47% recruited none of the above.

Recruitment of school and college leavers:

- 55% 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
- 17% believed that school and college leavers lacked literacy skills
- 24% reported a lack of showing initiative
- 17% reported that numeracy were lacking and
- 7% believed that understanding customer needs was a problem.

Skills lacking in graduates:

- 38% 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 provision and demand for off-the-job training:

- 47% of all employers had arranged off-the-job training for their employees over the previous 12 months when surveyed
- 89% of employers who had arranged training said that they had no problems in finding an appropriate training provider.

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

- 59% for managers and senior officials
- 26% for administrative and secretarial occupations
- 32% for professional occupations
- 19% for associate professional and technical occupations
- 27% for sales and customer service occupations.

Barriers to training provision:

- 35% 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:

- 27% found the cost of training in the local area to be prohibitive
- 23% of employers couldn't afford staff to have time off for training
- 12% reported that courses ran at the wrong time of the day.

Household Survey

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS:

Employment/training: Status of respondent	Percent
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	39%
At home/not seeking work	17%
Long-term sick or disabled	17%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	14%
Full-time education	6%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	5%
Retired	4%
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	3%
Part-time education	1%

- 32% of people who were not working at the time of the survey reported that they would like to be in full or part time paid work of some sort.
- 47% of respondents who were not in full time or part time paid work said it was because health or disability prevented them. 23% were responsible for looking after children and family/household members. Of those not currently employed, 11% were in some form of work 1 year ago, and 15% 2 years ago:

Activity status of respondents compared over time	2 years ago	1 year ago
Long-term sick or disabled	25%	31%
At home/not seeking work	28%	29%
Full-time education	13%	12%
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	12%	6%
Retired	7%	7%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	4%	5%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	11%	10%

- 37% of all respondents reported a health problem or disability that they expected to last for more than a year. Of these, 67% said it affected the kind of paid work they might be able to do, and 63% said it affected the amount of paid work they were able to do.
- 12% of respondents were involved with a local organisation on a voluntary basis.

Sources of careers advice:

- 45% 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:

- 23% used JobCentre/JobCentre Plus
- 11% had sought advice from school/college careers advice and/or teacher/lecturers whilst 14% relied on family, friends and colleagues for advice
- 13% used web-sites to seek careers advice
- 10% used recruitment agencies
- 9% stated that course tutors/teachers
- 7% used Careers (Wales) advisers
- 5% 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 were some perceived gaps at advanced level, particularly in understanding customer needs (43% reported requiring skills, 33% reported possessing them), organising own learning and development (16% required, 11% possessed), and IT skills (10% required, 6% possessed).
- The six skills with the highest percentage of respondents rating themselves as possessing high or advanced levels were:
 - 1) Ability to follow instructions (94%)
 - 2) Understanding customer needs (92%)
 - 3) Team working skills (89%)
 - 4) Communication skills (87%)
 - 5) Showing Initiative (84%)
 - 6) Adaptability/flexibility (83%).

Types of training individuals would like to be involved in:

- 66% all respondents reported that they would like to be involved in training.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 29% 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
- 19% would like to be involved in achieving credits or a step towards qualifications
- 17% would like to receive supervised training whilst doing their job
- 17% stated that they would like time to keep up to date with the developments in the area that they work in
- 16% would like to study for qualifications without participating in a taught course
- 10% want to be involved in any other taught course, instruction or tuition
- 6% would participate in any other non-taught course or training
- 32% would not like to be involved in any of these options.

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

- 50% 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:

- 28% 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 you do, e.g. reading books, manuals or attending seminars
- 18% had been on taught courses that were meant to lead to qualifications
- 18% had been on any other taught course, instruction or tuition and
- 15% had received supervised training while you were actually doing a job.

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

- 51% reported an increase in confidence in their own abilities
- 49% said they were able to do their jobs better
- 41% learned new skills for the job they were doing
- 26% got more satisfaction out of the work they were doing at the time
- 16% developed personal interests unrelated to work.

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

- 59% of all individuals interviewed stated that they experienced barriers to learning or studying new things.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 23% felt that family and child care commitments were too great, whilst 16% felt that they will not have enough time to learn or study in the coming year
- 13% said that work pressures and their hours of work prevented them from learning or studying
- 5% said it was too expensive
- 1% said it was too far for them to travel and 1% said that a lack of transport prohibited them from learning or studying.

Preferred learning styles:

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

- 46% preferred to learn by doing practical things
- 39% preferred to learn in a group being instructed by a teacher or tutor and
- 35% preferred to learn by watching demonstrations.

Preferred learning methods:

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

- 65% of individuals would like to use books or written materials for learning something new
- 45% reported lectures as a preferred learning method
- 41% reported videos as a preferred learning method
- 35% reported CD-ROMS/computer software packages as a preferred learning method and
- 33% reported the Internet as a preferred learning method.

