



2003 Generic Skills Survey

Results for Torfaen

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 Torfaen

	Number of respondents (before weighting)
The Employer Survey	203
The Household Survey	207

KEY FACTS

- Employers in Torfaen rated understanding customer needs and the ability to follow instructions as the generic skills most in demand at a high or advanced level
- 50% 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.
- 35% of employers who recruit school and college leavers found communication skills to be lacking amongst recruits.
- 27% of people who were not working would like to be in either full time or part time paid work.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Employer Survey:

- 69% of employers were based entirely on a single site, compared with 62% throughout Wales.
- 43% of employers in Torfaen had fewer than 5 employees, compared with 40% nationally. However, 13% of employers had 25 or more employees, compared with only 8% nationally.

Household Survey:

- 26% reported having a health problem or long-term disability.
- 39% of respondents were educated to NVQ 3 equivalent or higher, compared with 42% nationally. 23% had no qualifications at all, compared with 21% nationally.
- The number of Welsh language speakers was low, with 80% stating that they had no ability at all, and only 5% having anything above basic ability.

Torfaen

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, there would be a higher level required in the future (with the exception of ability to follow instructions, which saw a slight drop in requirement at high or advanced level). The most significant increases were expected to be for Information Technology skills, with 49% saying high or advanced IT skills will be required in the future, compared with 31% at the time of the survey, and management skills, with 45% expecting to require high or advanced skills 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 (86%)
 - 2) Ability to follow instructions (78%)
 - 3) Adaptability/flexibility (76%)
 - 4) Communication skills (76%)
 - 5) Team working skills (74%)
 - 6) Showing initiative (69%).
- The skills expected to be needed most at high or advanced level in the future were identical:
 - 1) Understanding customer needs (89%)
 - 2) Adaptability/flexibility (80%)
 - 3) Communication skills (78%)
 - 4) Team working skills (78%)
 - 5) Ability to follow instructions (77%)
 - 6) Showing initiative (77%).

SKILL GAPS

- 16% 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.

Employers' attitudes towards skills:

- 51% of employers surveyed strongly agreed that their employees have sufficient skills to meet business needs, whilst 38% tended to agree
- 48% strongly agreed that investment in skills has brought business benefits with 29% tending to agree
- 79% of employers strongly agreed that having a skilled workforce is crucial to the success of their business, whilst 16% 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:

- 37% reported on competing on customer service as a benefit
- 28% found that investment in skills had increased productivity
- 26% reported competing on quality as a benefit
- 16% felt it had accelerated business growth
- 12% reported that there was a rise in profits
- 9% of employers had introduced new products or processes.

SKILL SHORTAGES

Hard-to-fill vacancies (HTFV):

- 24% of employers surveyed reported currently having one or more vacancies
- Of these employers, 53% reported that some or all of these vacancies were hard-to-fill
- The net effect of this is that 13% of all employers surveyed reported currently having HTFV.

SCHOOL LEAVERS, COLLEGE LEAVERS AND GRADUATE RECRUITS

Recruitment of school leavers, college leavers and graduates:

- 41% recruited college leavers
- 39% of employers surveyed stated they recruited school leavers
- 34% recruited graduates
- 39% 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:

- 35% reported a lack of communication skills
- 26% believed that school and college leavers lacked literacy skills
- 24% reported that there was a lack of numeracy skills
- 18% believed understanding customer needs to be a problem and
- 10% reported that school and college leavers were lacking in their attitude, commitment and work ethics.

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:

- 57% of all employers had arranged off-the-job training for their employees over the previous 12 months when surveyed
- 91% 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:

- 56% for managers and senior officials
- 29% for administrative and secretarial occupations
- 28% for skilled trade occupations
- 19% for associate professional & technical occupations
- 18 for professional occupations
- 14% for sales and customer service occupations.

Barriers to training provision:

- 39% of employers questioned stated that there were no barriers to the amount of training they provided.

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

- 50% of employers couldn't afford staff to have time off for training
- 27% found the cost of training in the local area to be prohibitive
- 6% reported that the training was not relevant to the needs of their business.

Household Survey

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS:

	Percent
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	39%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	18%
At home/not seeking work	18%
Long-term sick or disabled	11%
Full-time education	8%
Retired	3%
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	2%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	3%
Part-time education	1%

- 27% of people who were not working would like to be in full or part time paid work of some sort.
- 28% of respondents who were not in full time or part time paid work said it was due to health or disability. Whilst 25% were responsible for looking after children and family/household members. 5% of those not in work said that they didn't need to work, with 1% stating that there was a lack of suitable jobs locally.
- Of those not employed, 29% were in some form of work 1 year ago, and 23% 2 years ago:

Activity status of respondents compared over time	2 years ago	1 year ago
Long-term sick or disabled	18%	18%
At home/not seeking work	37%	35%
Full-time education	17%	15%
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	18%	21%
Retired	4%	4%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	5%	8%

- 26% of all respondents reported having a health problem or disability that they expected to last for more than a year. Of these, 70% said it affected the kind of paid work they might be able to do, and 66% say it affected the amount of paid work they were able to do.
- 10% of respondents were involved with a local organisation on a voluntary basis.

Sources of careers advice:

- 30% of individuals interviewed said they had sought careers advice in the 2 years leading up to the survey.

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

- 18% used JobCentre/JobCentre Plus
- 12% used websites
- 8% used Careers (Wales) advisers
- 6% had sought advice from school/college careers advice and/or teacher/lecturers whilst 11% relied on family, friends and colleagues for advice
- 8% used recruitment agencies
- 6% stated that course tutors/teachers
- 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 and high level. There was a minor perceived gap at advanced level in understanding customer needs (43% reported requiring skills, 39% reported possessing them).
- The six skills with the highest percentage of respondents in work rating themselves as high or advanced were:
 - 1) Understanding customer needs (86%)
 - 2) Adaptability/flexibility (86%)
 - 3) Showing initiative (85%)
 - 4) Ability to follow instructions (82%)
 - 5) Team working skills (79%)
 - 6) Communication skills (79%).

Types of training individuals would like to be involved in:

- 51% of all individuals interviewed said they would like to be involved in training.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 29% 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
- 28% would like to participate in taught courses that lead to qualifications
- 20% stated that they would like time to keep up to date with the developments in the area that they work in
- 18% would like to receive supervised training whilst doing their job
- 19% would like to be involved in achieving credits or a step towards qualifications
- 15% would like to study for qualifications without participating in a taught course
- 12% want to be involved in any other taught course, instruction or tuition.

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

- 51% 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% had been on taught courses designed to help you develop skills that you might use in a job
- 27% had spent time keeping up to date with developments in the type of work you do
- 23% had been on taught courses that were meant to lead to qualifications
- 16% had received supervised training while you were actually doing a job and
- 12% 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:

- 65% reported an increase in confidence in their own abilities
- 46% said they were able to do their jobs better
- 39% learned a new skill for the job they were doing
- 27% got more satisfaction out of the work they were doing at the time
- 8% developed personal interests unrelated to work.

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

- 49% of all individuals interviewed stated that they experienced barriers to learning or studying new things.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 10% of individuals felt that they will not have enough time to learn or study in the coming year
- 16% specified that family and child care commitments were too great
- 9% said that work pressures and their hours of work prevented them from learning or studying and
- 4% said that it was too expensive.

Preferred learning styles:

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

- 49% preferred to learn things by doing practical things
- 34% preferred to learn by exchanging ideas/information with others and
- 32% preferred to learn by watching demonstrations.

Preferred learning methods:

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

- 66% preferred to use books or written materials for learning something new
- 51% reported lectures as a preferred learning method
- 36% reported videos as a preferred learning method
- 33% reported TV programmes as a preferred learning method and
- 31% reported CD-ROM/computer software packages as a preferred learning method.

