CITB
EMPLOYERS' SKILL NEEDS SURVEY

SPRING 2001

Introduction

The second nation wide CITB survey of employers' skill needs was carried out by CITB Training Advisors on behalf of the Research Department. The survey was structured to deliver 50 responses from each CITB Area, making 500 responses in total, covering small, medium and large companies. The final sample achieved was 491.

The government's Skills Task Force report distinguished between "skills shortages" – defined as an absolute absence of people with the required skills in the workforce and "recruitment difficulties" where employers could not attract workers in particular locations or at certain terms and conditions. A further category was described as "skills gaps" - this is where members of the existing workforce lack necessary skills to do the job.

The main aim of the survey was to establish the existence of skill shortages by region, by type, as outlined in the previous paragraph, and by the severity of such shortages. Questions were also included on staff development (both manual and non-manual) within the company.

Summary of results

Skill shortages and expected workload

For Great Britain as a whole, 76% of companies said they had experienced difficulties in recruiting skilled staff in the previous six months compared to 82% in Spring 2000 survey. However in the current survey only 24% (compared to 26% in spring 2000) of respondents said they were unable to bid for a contract or had had to refuse a contract due to a shortage of skilled staff. As to be expected absolute skill shortages were considerably lower than difficulties in recruitment.

As regards future workload, 61% of participating employers expected an increase, 36% expected their workload to remain the same and only 3% expected a decrease over the next six months

Chart 1 below shows the regional differences in recruitment problems while Chart 2 shows regional differences in expected workload.

Chart 1
Percentage of employers reporting recruitment difficulties, Spring 2001

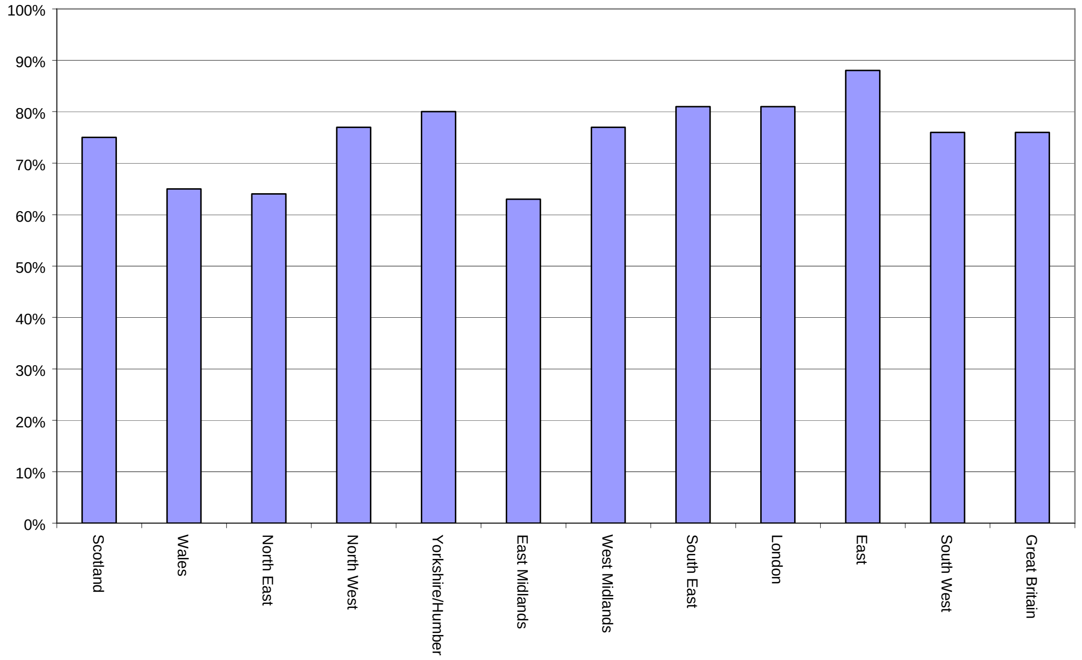
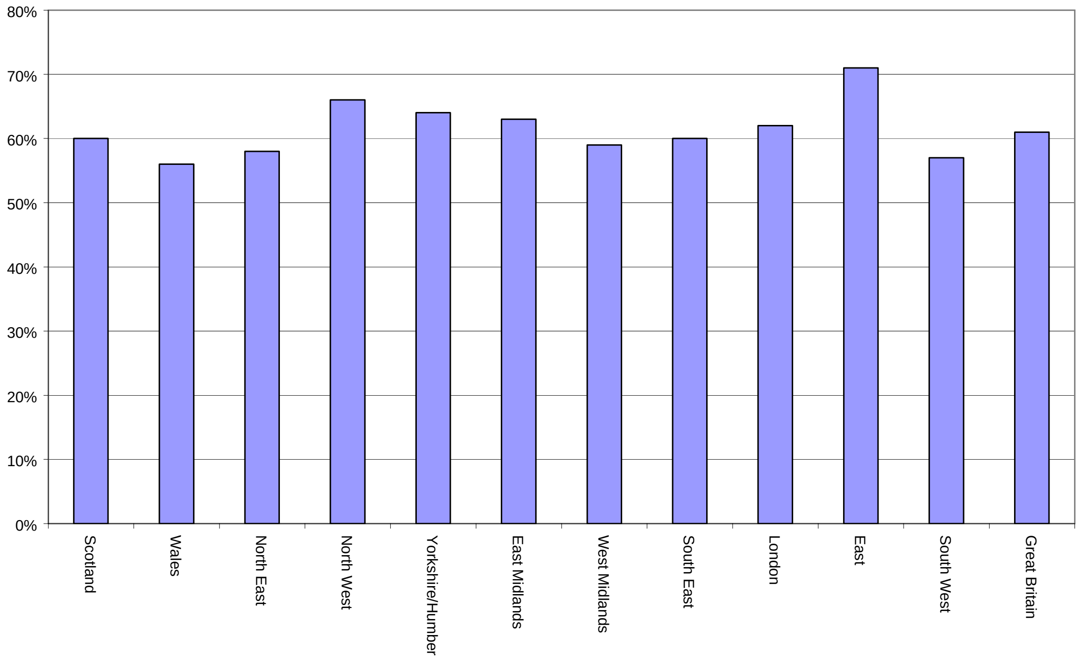


Chart 2
Percentage of employers expecting workload to increase over next six months



The lowest percentage (64%) of employers experiencing recruitment problems was in the North East and the highest (88%) in the East. The percentage of employers expecting their workload to increase was lowest in Wales (56%) and highest in the East (71%).

Table 1 further breaks down recruitment difficulties by occupation in each region. For Great Britain the figures in the table show that Carpenters & Joiners and Bricklayers were the skills in shortest supply with 55% and 45% of participating employers experiencing difficulties in recruitment. Regional variations were considerable: from 71% in the South West to 35% in the East Midlands for Carpenters & Joiners and from 71% in the South West to 29% in London for Bricklayers.

As regards other occupations, for Great Britain as a whole more that 20% of participating employers experienced difficulties in recruiting Professionals, Plasterers, Plumbers and General Operatives.

A similar pattern emerged from the regional figures. There were some exceptions. For example employers in the East experienced difficulties in recruiting Managers (36%) and Plant Operatives (25%). In the South East employers experienced difficulties in recruiting Plumbers (33%) and Painters and Decorators (28%).

Table 1
Percentage of employers experiencing difficulties in recruiting skilled staff, Spring 2001 by RDA Area

RDA AREAS	Scotland	Wales	North East	North West	Yorkshire & The Humber	West Midlands	East Midlands	South East	East	London	South West	Great Britain
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Managers	18	8	19	17	12	23	18	20	36	6	24	19
Professionals	15	8	14	27	20	17	18	22	53	24	24	22
Carpenters & Joiners	56	58	43	51	53	37	35	57	61	65	71	55
Bricklayers	36	44	57	41	39	30	41	43	53	29	71	45
Painters & Decorators	8	6	14	5	10	7	18	28	22	29	32	16
Plasterers	13	19	5	20	14	23	29	22	36	12	29	21
Roofers	13	3	14	7	8	20	6	24	17	12	13	13
Floorers	3	0	0	0	4	3	0	4	17	6	8	4
Glaziers	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	0	5	2
Scaffolders	15	6	10	7	2	0	0	4	11	12	11	7
Plant Operatives	15	14	10	15	10	7	6	9	25	0	13	12
Plant Mechanics	8	3	5	7	0	7	0	7	6	6	5	5
Steel Erectors	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	6	0	5	2
General Operatives	31	11	19	24	14	17	12	20	33	6	29	21
Electricians	8	3	0	12	6	3	18	17	11	12	13	9
Plumbers	21	19	5	29	18	10	24	33	22	12	24	21

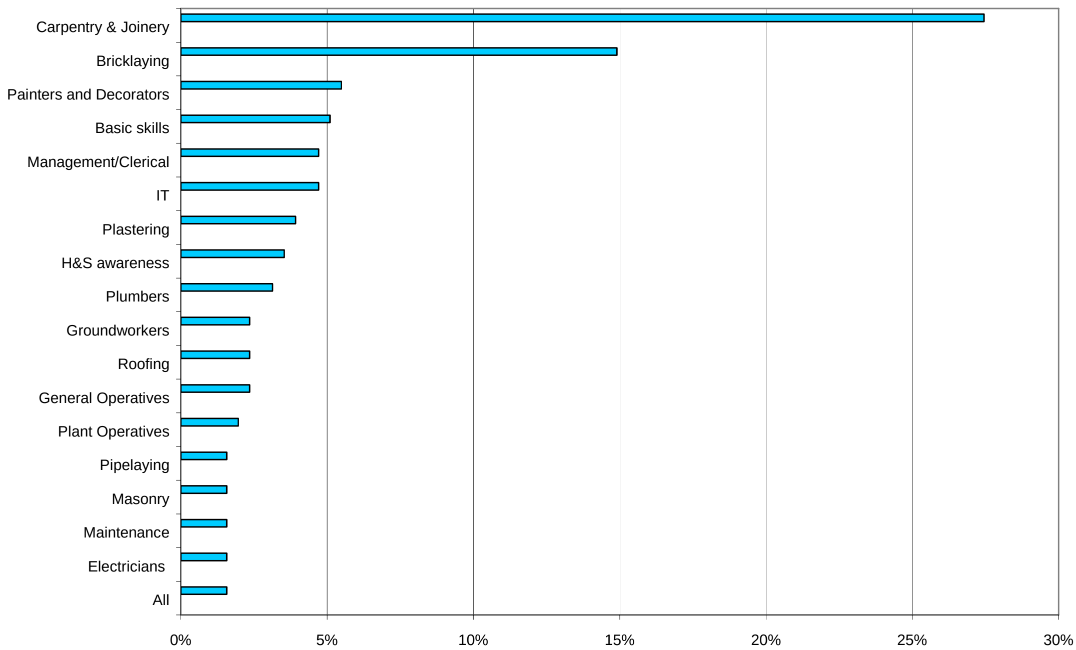
Skill Gaps

The results of the survey seem to indicate ‘skill gaps’ are not a particular problem for **existing** employees. The majority of employers (87%) were satisfied that their existing employees were able to cope with new technology, new construction methods and/or new materials.

However approximately 50% of participating employers reported problems with **new** employees who, although trained and qualified for certain occupations, still lacked a variety of skills required. This response is possibly not surprising since new trainees will need to do some on-the-job training even if formally qualified. This is probably more so in the construction industry than in other sectors.

Chart 3 below shows the skills in which some new recruits are deficient. Carpentry & Joinery comes top followed by Bricklaying.

Chart 3
Percentage of employers reporting skill deficiencies with new recruits to particular trades



Staff Development

The aim of this section of the survey was to establish the importance of in-house training and promotion compared to recruiting from other companies, either in the construction industry or in other sectors.

The employers were asked what percentage of their staff they trained and promoted from within, recruited from other construction companies or from non-construction companies. The question was asked for managerial, professional and operative recruitment.

Table 3 shows that recruitment from outside the industry is relatively rare. Also that internal training and promotion is most likely at the managerial level and least likely at the operative level.

Table 3
Staff Development

	Trained and Promoted from within	Recruited from other construction companies	Recruited from non-construction companies	Total
Managers	68%	28%	4%	100%
Professional Staff	56%	39%	5%	100%
Skilled Operatives	52%	45%	3%	100%

Conclusion

Results from the current survey show that difficulties in recruitment were still high affecting 76% of participating employers but slightly below what they had been in Spring 2000.

Overall employers were satisfied with their existing workforce but a considerable proportion (approximately 50%) felt new employees lacked certain skills.

The majority of employers were optimistic about future trends expecting either an increase (61%) or no change (34%) in workload.

Training and promotion from within – i.e. the maintenance of a ‘core’ workforce is still more common at managerial than operative levels.