



Employer Attitudes & Motivations to Learning & Training Research (Employer Panel Consultation) Wave 16

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

CITB NI carries out a regular programme of employer research to provide up-to-date intelligence and the evidence needed to underpin policy making and strategic decisions.

The Employer Panel Consultation (EPC) research acts as a regular programme of consultation with employers on hot topics of the moment and allows a reality check on anecdotal reports. The research also helps to enhance our understanding of behavioural issues influencing employers' training decisions.

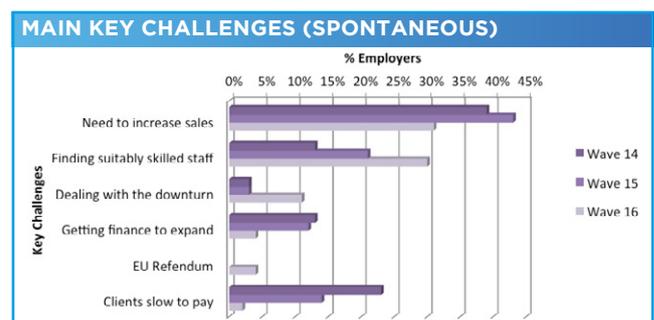
This flyer summarises the findings from Wave 16 of the EPC research, which involved 105 telephone interviews with NI construction employers (contractors and professional services) in July and August 2016.

Headlines

- Whilst many of the findings from this report are positive, the survey was conducted fairly soon after the Brexit vote and its impact may not yet be felt.
- The upward trend in numbers of employers reporting skill shortages continues but there has been a drop in those reporting a need to increase sales.
- 86% expect turnover to stay the same or increase – in 2015 more expected a decrease in turnover than an increase.
- Two-fifths of employers had or had attempted to recruit in the last 12 months (up from one third in 2015). 67% of employers said that rates of pay for their staff had increased.
- 95% of companies could describe an action they had taken to improve the health and safety knowledge of their workers.

Key Business Challenges

The two main business challenges faced by respondents were the need to increase sales (31%) and finding suitably skilled staff (30%). The need to increase sales has been following a generally downward trend over the last few years (53% in 2013, 39% in 2014, 43% in 2015). Conversely the need to find suitably skilled staff has been increasing (from 3% in 2013) and when prompted the number of respondents mentioning difficulties in finding suitably skilled staff increased to 47%.

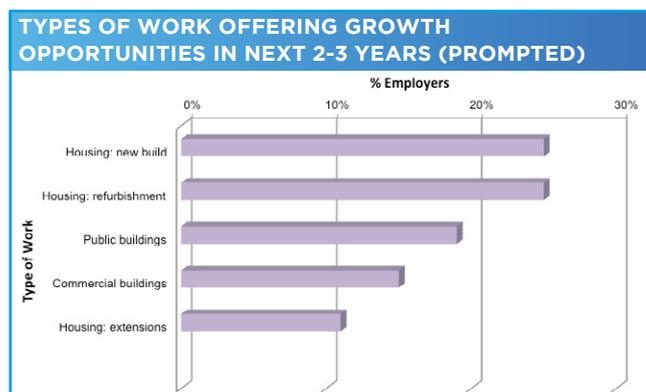


Although the survey took place in the weeks following the Brexit vote, only one in twenty (4%) of employers in NI mentioned this as a key challenge.

Turnover Levels and Growth Opportunities

86% of employers reported that turnover stayed the same or increased (54% and 32% respectively) with 11% reporting a decrease. This is more positive than in 2015 when more reported a decrease than an increase (36% and 24% respectively). Results suggest more stability in terms of turnover for businesses in the past year.

Most companies felt there were client or project types offering growth potential in the coming years. This was most commonly work for the general public (41%) and / or commercial clients (36%). Businesses were most likely to identify housing-related work as a growth opportunity in the next 2-3 years (40%), whether new build (25%) or repairs (25%).



Apprentices and Graduates

One third of construction firms (33%) offer apprenticeships, with one fifth currently employing apprentices (20%). Results suggest apprentices account for around 6% of the workforce at the average construction company (in line with the UK). One in ten (11%) of construction firms had taken on an apprentice in the last 12 months, unchanged from 2015 (10%).

Most construction employers were aware that apprenticeships could be offered to existing employees (68%). In practice, 44% make apprentices available to existing staff and only 1% offer them exclusively to existing staff. 42% offer apprenticeships to new recruits exclusively.

A third of all firms (33%) said they were at least quite likely to take on an apprentice in the next 12 months, roughly the same as last year (32%). Of these most said they were likely to take on one or two apprentices, a mean average of 1.3.

Recruitment and Recruitment Challenges

Two-fifths of all employers had recruited or attempted to recruit in the last 12 months (40%), in line with the UK average (42%). Those most sought after were experienced people with high level technical or craft skills; 61% of those who had attempted to recruit had aimed to do so from this group.



Most recruiters reported recruitment challenges in 2016 (69%; 70% in 2015), with this most often being simply a shortage of good candidates (41%). As a result 63% had recruited a member of staff with lower skill levels than desired and 56% had had projects overrun.

Recruiters were asked why they felt they had difficulties recruiting. A fifth (19%) said poor perceptions or a negative image of the sector, 14% said issues with their approach to recruitment, 11% said there were issues with people leaving the industry and 10% indicated a lack of skills or qualifications held by applicants.

Earnings

Two-thirds of employers (67%) said that the rates of pay for their staff had increased over the last twelve months and in most cases, the pay rises provided were above inflation (53% of all employers).

Off-Site Construction

Overall a quarter of construction businesses in NI (24%) currently use off-site methods. One fifth of construction businesses (20%) expect to use off-site construction methods in the next 3-5 years suggesting a stability in demand for these services.

Health and Safety and Revised CDM Regulations NI 2016

Over the last 12 months, two-fifths (37%) of NI businesses had made some change to the way that they plan, monitor or manage their work in regards to health and safety. Of these, just over half said that the changes had made a significant (13%) or slight positive impact (43%) on their business. Of these 97% said it formalised their health and safety processes (97%), raised the profile of health and safety in their business (84%) or reduced accidents or improved safety (80%).

Almost all companies in NI (95%) were able to describe action that they have taken to ensure that their workers have the right health and safety knowledge, with seven in ten (68%) offering some type of health and safety training or guidance.

In Northern Ireland, about half (53%) of respondents were aware of the impending new CDM regulations and most of these employers felt they had a good (54%) or reasonable (33%) level of understanding of them. Two-fifths of those aware had looked for more information (42%).

For a copy of the full report please go to the Research and Development section of our website: www.citbni.org.uk

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