



# Corrections to Employer Skills Survey 2015 publications

## Summary

The underlying data and publications for the 2015 UK Employer Skills Survey (ESS) have been corrected and republished to rectify an occupational coding error for vacancies and retention difficulties. The survey results were published in 2016 by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, but responsibility for the survey has since passed to the Department for Education. The corrections have the effect of reducing the number of vacancies and reported retention difficulties for 'Elementary occupations'. At the national level, the effect is small, and makes no difference to the narrative of the report. However, the changes are more pronounced for the following areas: East of England, North West, South West, Yorkshire and The Humber, and Northern Ireland. This correction also has a very small effect on the skill lists related to skill shortage vacancies. Full detail of the changes can be found in the annexes of this document.

## Description of error and impact

Fieldwork for the Employer Skills Survey was conducted by three different contractors due to the large sample size of the survey. A coding inconsistency between fieldwork contractors meant that some occupations which should have been coded as 'unclassifiable'<sup>1</sup> were instead treated as generic 'elementary'<sup>2</sup> occupations. This had the effect of inflating the number of vacancies (including hard-to-fill and skill shortage vacancies) and reported retention difficulties for the overall category of elementary occupations.

This only affects analysis of vacancies and retention difficulties *by occupation group*. The overall numbers of vacancies, skill shortage vacancies and retention difficulties are unaffected. Also unaffected are disaggregations of vacancies and retention difficulties by any variable other than occupation group. For instance, vacancies at the 4-digit SOC code level are unaffected, as are overall vacancies by area, industry, and for occupation groups other than 'elementary'.

As the fieldwork contractors were allotted different areas, this coding error only affected fieldwork allocated to the following regions and country: East of England, North West, South West, and Northern Ireland. However, a small number of employers are reported in a different region where the postcode provided during the survey is different from the sample. This means there are some changes to English regions other than those outlined above – notably Yorkshire and the Humber.

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<sup>1</sup> This may occur when the interviewer is not able to obtain sufficient detail on the occupation to allow categorisation into wide, 1-digit SOC groups.

<sup>2</sup> Where coded correctly, this might be the case where the interviewer gets sufficient detail to allow categorisation into wide, 1-digit SOC groups, but in no more detail.

Separately, as a result of the recoding error, the skill lists related to skill shortage vacancies (i.e. the detail on which skills were lacking) needed to be reweighted. This affects all areas to some degree, although the changes are small - generally no more than one percentage point.

The report, data tables, and related outputs have been corrected and re-published on Gov.uk. Data deposited on Data.gov.uk and the UK Data Service have also been corrected.

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## Annex 1 – Corrections to the ESS 2015 main report

The current report has been corrected and republished on Gov.uk reflecting the following changes.

Page number	Change / New text (corrected figure in bold)	Original report
14	“Establishments experiencing retention difficulties were most likely to report them among Skilled Trades and Elementary occupations (21 per cent and <b>19</b> per cent respectively).”	<b>20</b> per cent
35	“The density of vacancies for Skilled Trades increased from 2.7 per cent in 2013 to 4.5 per cent in 2015 and from 2.1 to <b>3.5</b> per cent for Elementary occupations.”	<b>4.0</b> per cent
39	“As illustrated in Figure 2.3, the density of skill-shortage vacancies has increased among Professionals, Skilled Trades, Sales and Customer Service occupations, and Machine Operatives since 2013.”	Removed “Elementary occupations” from the list
40	Figure 2.3 – 2015 bar for ‘elementary occupations’ corrected to <b>14</b> per cent	<b>16</b> per cent
43	Figure 2.4 – bar for ‘construction elementary staff’ corrected to <b>32</b> per cent	<b>35</b> per cent
44, para 7	“...and setting objectives and/or planning resources ( <b>21</b> per cent).”	<b>22</b> per cent
45	Figure 2.5 – “setting objectives” changed to <b>21</b> per cent	<b>22</b> per cent
47	Table 22 – Elementary staff. SSV density changed to <b>14</b> per cent. Under ‘skills most commonly lacking’: “ <i>Managing own or others’ feelings</i> ” removed and “ <i>specialist skills or knowledge</i> ” inserted.	<b>16</b> per cent
52	“Establishments experiencing retention difficulties were most likely to report them among Skilled Trades and Elementary occupations (21 and <b>19</b> per cent respectively; see Figure 2.8)”	<b>20</b> per cent
52	Figure 2.8 – elementary section changed to <b>19</b> per cent	<b>20</b> per cent
53	“Conversely, vacancies in Elementary occupations were less likely to be hard-to-fill ( <b>26</b> per cent of Elementary vacancies were classified by employers as hard-to-fill)...”	<b>28</b> per cent
54	“Retention difficulties with Elementary staff were also attributed to job market issues, particularly not enough people being interested in this type of work ( <b>67</b> per cent).”	<b>66</b> per cent

## Corrections to tables in Appendix A (reflected in the current gov.uk report)

Only tables that have been corrected are shown.

**Table A.2.3, 2015, row for Elementary occupations**

<b>Change / New text / (corrected figure in bold)</b>	<b>Original report</b>
17% of establishments with vacancies who have a vacancy in occupation	18%
Number of vacancies: <b>130,800</b>	<b>147,000</b>
<b>4,491</b> unweighted base	4,717
<b>3.5</b> vacancies as a % of employment (density)	<b>4.0</b>

**Table A.2.6a – density of skill shortage vacancies by occupation and sector**

	<b>Elementary staff</b>	
	<b>Corrected</b>	<b>Original</b>
UK	14	16
Agriculture	14	15
Manufacturing	13	20
Electricity, Gas and Water	11	17
Construction	32	35
Transport and Communications	7	11
Business Services	9	20
Public Administration	7	17
Education	12	9
Health and Social Work	10	9
Arts and Other Services	18	19

**Table A.2.6a - Unweighted base sizes for previous table (Table A.2.6)**

	Elementary staff	
	Corrected	Original
<b>UK</b>	4,491	4,717
Agriculture	102	104
Manufacturing	147	170
Electricity, Gas and Water	42	43
Construction	135	148
Wholesale and Retail	441	477
Hotels and Restaurants	2,446	2,484
Transport and Communications	135	151
Financial Services	**	**
Business Services	359	396
Public Administration	32	35
Education	196	210
Health and Social Work	198	217
Arts and Other Services	254	274

**Table A.2.7 Skills lacking among applicants, overall and by country (prompted)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Corrected</b>	<b>Original</b>
		<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>UK</b>	Setting objectives for others / planning resources	21	22
<b>England</b>	Basic numerical skills	25	24
	Communicating in a foreign language	15	14
	Team working	33	32
	Making speeches or presentations	17	16
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	Ability to manage own time and prioritise tasks	46	47
	Sales skills	38	37
<b>Scotland</b>	Customer handling skills	42	41
<b>Wales</b>	<b>Technical or practical skills</b>		
	Specialist skills or knowledge	68	69
	Solving complex problems	43	44
	Knowledge of products and services offered	40	41
	Knowledge of how the organisation works	41	42
	Complex numerical/statistical skills	27	26
	Reading/understanding instructions, reports etc.	31	30
	Writing instructions, reports etc.	35	34
	Computer literacy / basic IT skills	18	17
	Adapting to new equipment or materials	31	30
	Manual dexterity	24	23
	Communicating in a foreign language	14	16
	Oral Welsh language skills ( <i>Wales only base</i> )	13	15
	Written Welsh language skills ( <i>Wales only base</i> )	12	11
	<b>People and personal skills</b>		
	Team working	45	44
	Persuading or influencing others	32	33
	Managing or motivating other staff	40	39
	Sales skills	32	33

**Table A.2.8 Technical and practical skills lacking among applicants, overall and by occupation (prompted) – (cells without numbers did not change during the correction process)**

	Overall		Elementary staff	
	Corrected	Original	Corrected	Original
<b>Unweighted Base</b>			<b>315</b>	<b>331</b>
			%	%
Specialist skills or knowledge			58	48
Solving complex problems			36	33
Knowledge of products and services offered			45	38
Knowledge of how the organisation works			44	34
Complex numerical/statistical skills			30	38
Reading/understanding instructions, reports etc.			37	32
Writing instructions, reports etc.			22	21
Basic numerical skills			38	34
Computer literacy / basic IT skills			19	21
Advanced or specialist IT skills			9	8
Adapting to new equipment or materials			27	22
Manual dexterity			27	25
Communicating in a foreign language			23	20
Written Welsh language skills ( <i>Wales only base</i> )	*	1		

**Table A.2.9 People and personal skills lacking among applicants, overall and by occupation (prompted) - (cells without numbers did not change during the correction process)**

	Overall		Elementary staff	
	Corrected	Original	Corrected	Original
<b><i>Unweighted Base</i></b>			<b>315</b>	<b>331</b>
	%	%	%	%
Ability to manage own time and prioritise tasks			64	66
Customer handling skills			54	46
Team working			51	54
Managing own feelings / handling those of others			48	52
Persuading or influencing others			39	33
Managing or motivating other staff			40	33
Sales skills			30	35
Instructing, teaching or training people			27	21
Setting objectives for others / planning resources	21	22	25	22
Making speeches or presentations			17	15



**Table A.2.10 Technical or practical skills lacking among applicants, by sector (prompted)**

**CORRECTED** – (cells without numbers did not change during the correction process – see next page for original numbers)

	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Construction	Hotels & Restaurants	Transport & Comms	Business Services	Education	Arts & Other Services
<b>Unweighted Base</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>225</b>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Specialist skills or knowledge	76	67	64			63		54
Solving complex problems	60	43		32				30
Knowledge of products and services	51		42					
Knowledge of how your organisation works	58		32	39				
More complex numerical or statistical skills	43	31			30	39		
Reading and understanding instructions etc.		27	36	38		22		
Writing instructions, guidelines etc.		24	35	28				
Basic numerical skills and understanding	51	24	33	31				23
Computer literacy / basic IT skills		15	17					16
Adapting to new equipment or materials	60					20		14
Manual dexterity	45			19	13		11	
Communicating in a foreign language			15	28				
None of the above	9			10				

**ORIGINAL** – (cells without numbers did not change during the correction process – see previous page for corrected numbers)

	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Construction	Hotels & Restaurants	Transport & Comms	Business Services	Education	Arts & Other Services
<i>Unweighted Base</i>	30	282	233	398	339	608	230	225
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Specialist skills or knowledge	78	66	65			64		53
Solving complex problems	62	42		31				29
Knowledge of products and services	52		41					
Knowledge of how your organisation works	60		33	38				
More complex numerical or statistical skills	44	30			31	37		
Reading and understanding instructions etc.		26	35	37		23		
Writing instructions, guidelines etc.		23	34	27				
Basic numerical skills and understanding	52	23	32	30				22
Computer literacy / basic IT skills		14	18					15
Adapting to new equipment or materials	62					21		13
Manual dexterity	46			20	14		12	
Communicating in a foreign language			14	27				
None of the above	7			11				

**Table A.2.11 People and personal skills lacking among applicants, by sector (prompted)**

*CORRECTED – (cells without numbers did not change during the correction process – see next page for original numbers)*

	Overall	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Construction	Hotels & Restaurants	Transport & Comms	Business Services	Education	Health & Social Work
<i>Unweighted Base</i>	3,224	30	282	233	398	339	608	230	375
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Ability to manage own time and prioritise own tasks		74	42	51		45	46	33	50
Customer handling skills			29	36	44				
Team working		36		33		34	32		31
Managing their own feelings, or handling the feelings of others			40	32	52				33
Persuading or influencing others			33			37			
Managing or motivating other staff		27	31		43			30	
Sales skills		20		18	25		31		13
Instructing, teaching or training people		11		26	31				
Setting objectives for others	21	16		26		21		21	
Making speeches or presentations				11		17			
None of the above		11							

**ORIGINAL** – (cells without numbers did not change during the correction process – see previous page for corrected numbers)

	Overall	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Construction	Hotels & Restaurants	Transport & Comms	Business Services	Education	Health & Social Work
<i>Unweighted Base</i>	3,224	30	282	233	398	339	608	230	375
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Ability to manage own time and prioritise own tasks		76	41	52		46	45	34	49
Customer handling skills			28	37	43				
Team working		37		34		35	31		32
Managing their own feelings, or handling the feelings of others			39	31	51				32
Persuading or influencing others			32			38			
Managing or motivating other staff		28	30		42			31	
Sales skills		21		19	24		30		14
Instructing, teaching or training people		12		27	30				
Setting objectives for others	22	17		25		22		22	
Making speeches or presentations				10		18			
None of the above		9							

**Table A.2.12 Skills lacking among applicants, 'old' skills descriptor time series comparisons**

	2015	
	Corrected	Original
<b>Unweighted Base</b>	<b>3,587</b>	<b>3,587</b>
	%	%
Planning and organisation	36	37
Team working	30	31
Customer handling	36	37
Strategic Management	28	27
Advanced IT or software	22	21
Foreign language	15	14
None of the above	7	6

**Table A.2.12a Skills lacking among applicants, 'old' skills descriptor nation comparisons**

**CORRECTED** – (cells without numbers did not change during the correction process – see next page for original numbers)

	UK	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
<b>Unweighted Base</b>	<b>3,587</b>	<b>3,051</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>189</b>
	%	%	%	%	%
Technical, practical or job-specific		68		57	61
Planning and organisation	36	36	42	29	50
Team working	30		44	29	
Customer handling	36			30	
Problem solving		32		28	
Oral communication				31	
Written communication			34	29	
Strategic Management	28	28			31
Literacy				28	
Advanced IT or software	22	23	30		22
Numeracy				17	
Foreign language	15	15			
None of the above	7			12	

**Table A.2.12a Skills lacking among applicants, 'old' skills descriptor nation comparisons**

*ORIGINAL – (cells without numbers did not change during the correction process – see previous page for corrected numbers)*

	UK	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
<b>Unweighted Base</b>	<b>3,587</b>	<b>3,051</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>189</b>
	%	%	%	%	%
Technical, practical or job-specific		67		59	62
Planning and organisation	37	37	41	28	51
Team working	31		46	30	
Customer handling	37			31	
Problem solving		33		30	
Oral communication				33	
Written communication			33	31	
Strategic Management	27	27			30
Literacy				30	
Advanced IT or software	21	22	29		23
Numeracy				16	
Foreign language	14	14			
None of the above	6			11	

**Table A.2.18 Density of 'other' non-skills-related hard-to-fill vacancies by occupation (2013 and 2015)**

Elementary occupations, 2015, changes to **12%** from 13%

## Annex 2 – Corrections to the ESS 2015 slide packs

The slide packs have been corrected and republished on Gov.uk reflecting the following changes.

### UK slide pack

Slide 13 - Elementary 'number of SSVs' from table C11a/C12; the Elementary bar; the Elementary base size

Slide 14 - Elementary in Construction changed from 35% to 32%

Slide 15 - Basic IT 'main' skill changed from 3% to 4%

Slide 16 - Setting objectives changed from 22% to 21%

Slide 22 - Elementary changed from 20% to 19%

### England slide pack

Slide 12 - Elementary number of SSVs changed from 19,823 to 14,747, Elementary density changed from 16% to 14%, Elementary base size changed from 3,982 to 3,777

Slide 13 - Specialist skills changed from 64% to 63%, Basic numerical skills changed from 24% to 25%

Slide 14 - Team working changed from 32% to 33%, Making speeches changed from 16% to 17%

Slide 21 - Elementary changed from 20% to 19%

### Northern Ireland slide pack

Slide 12 - Elementary 'number of SSVs' changed from 400 to 300; the Elementary bar changed from 14% to 13%; the Elementary base size changed from 152 to 131

Slide 13 - Specialist skills 'main skill lacking' changed from 21% to 22%

Slide 14 - Ability to manage tasks changed from 47% to 46%; Sales skills changed from 37% to 38%

Slide 21 – Elementary changed from 33% to 26%

### Scotland slide pack

Slide 13 - Specialist skills 'most important skill' changed from 36% to 35%

Slide 14 - Customer handling changed from 42% to 41%; Managing feelings changed from 40% to 39%

### Wales slide pack

Slide 13:

Changes to skill lacking among any applicants:

- Specialist skills needed for the role - changed from 69% to 68%;
- Solving complex problems - from 44% to 43%;
- Knowledge of how the organisation works - from 42% to 41%;

- Knowledge of the organisation's products and services - from 41% to 40%;
- Writing instructions, guidelines etc. - from 34% to 35%;
- Reading and understanding instructions, guidelines etc. - from 30% to 31%; Adapting to new equipment - from 30% to 31%;
- Complex numerical skills - from 26% to 27%;
- Manual dexterity - from 23% to 24%;
- Basic IT skills - from 17% to 18%;
- Advanced IT skills remains at 15% but moves above oral Welsh language skills;
- Communicating in a foreign language enters list above oral Welsh language skills and written Welsh language skills;
- Oral Welsh language skills - from 15% to 13%;
- Written Welsh language skills - from 11% to 12%

Changes to main skill lacking, from C13B: Communicating in a foreign list enters list with 4%

Slide 14:

Changes to skill lacking among applicants from C13NW:

- Team working - from 44% to 45%;
- Managing or motivating other staff - from 39% to 40%;
- Persuading or influencing others - from 33% to 32%;
- Sales skills - from 33% to 32%;
- Instructing, teaching or training people remains on 27% but moves above setting objectives for others and planning resources.

Changes to main skill lacking from C13B:

- Team working - from 6% to 7%;
- Sales skills - from 7% to 5%.



## Annex 3 – Details of corrections to the ESS 2015 data tables

The data tables have been corrected and republished on Gov.uk reflecting the following changes.

**Main UK data tables, England data tables, and Northern Ireland data tables.** Cells related to 'Elementary' or 'Labour Intensive' occupations have reduced, and cells for 'Unclassified staff' have increased for the tables outlined directly below. This is only for those cells that relate to the UK overall, England and its regions, or Northern Ireland.

Table 4 – Employee summary table – by occupation (Elementary and Labour-intensive)

Table 16 – Occupations in which there are most difficulties in retaining staff

Table 27 – Incidence of vacancies by occupation (employer base)

Table 28 – Incidence of vacancies by occupation (employer base)

Table T54 – Profile of vacancies by occupation (vacancy base)

Table T54A – Vacancy density by occupation type

Table 31 – Incidence of hard-to-fill vacancies by occupation (employer base)

Table T56 – Profile of hard-to-fill vacancies by occupation (hard-to-fill vacancy base)

Table 34 – Main causes of having a hard-to-fill vacancy (unprompted) (employer base - occupational summary)

Table 36 – Main causes of having a hard-to-fill vacancy (unprompted) (hard-to-fill vacancy base - occupational summary)

Table 37 – Incidence of skills shortage vacancies by occupation – (employer base)

Table T63 – Profile of skill-shortage vacancies by occupation – (all skills shortage vacancy base)

Table T63A – Density of skill-shortage vacancies by occupation

Table T63B – Base sizes for Table T63A

**England LEP and LEA standard tables.** Cells related to 'Elementary' or 'Labour Intensive' occupations have reduced, and cells for 'Unclassified staff' have increased for the tables outlined directly below. Regions/areas affected are: North West, South West, East of England, Leeds, and to a very small degree the West Midlands. Other regions remain unchanged.

Table 19 – Incidence of vacancies by occupation (employer base)

Table 20 – Incidence of vacancies by occupation (employer base)

Table T54 – Profile of vacancies by occupation (vacancy base)

Table 23 – Incidence of hard-to-fill vacancies by occupation (employer base)

Table T56 – Profile of hard-to-fill vacancies by occupation (hard-to-fill vacancy base)

Table 26 – Incidence of skills shortage vacancies by occupation – (employer base)

Table T63 – Profile of skill-shortage vacancies by occupation – (all skills shortage vacancy base)

**All nation tables and main UK data tables.** Cells related to 'Elementary' or 'Labour Intensive' occupations have reduced, and cells for 'Unclassified staff' have increased for the tables outlined directly below. Additionally, due to necessary reweighting, other cells in these tables may have changed by a very small amount and without any systematic pattern.

Table 41 – Summary of causes of having a hard-to-fill vacancy due to lack of quality (employer base – occupational summary)

Table 43 - Technical / practical skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (employer base - occupational summary)

Table 45 - Technical / practical skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (all skill-shortage vacancy base - occupational summary)

Table 47 - Soft / people skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (employer base - occupational summary)

Table 51 – Skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (employer base - occupational summary)

Table 53 - Skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (all skill-shortage vacancy base - occupational summary)

Table 55 - The main skill(s) found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (employer base - occupational summary)

Table 57 - The main skill(s) found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (all skill-shortage vacancy base - occupational summary)

Table 59 - Skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted unless \*) (employer base - occupational summary)

Table 61 – Skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted unless \*) (all skills shortage vacancy base - occupational summary)

Table 63 - Main skills(s) found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted unless \*) (employer base - occupational summary)

Table 69 - Actions taken to overcome difficulties finding candidates to fill hard-to-fill vacancies (unprompted) (employer base - occupational summary)

**All nation tables and main UK data tables.** A number of cells may have changed by a very small amount due to reweighting of skill lists. There is no systematic pattern to these changes.

Table 44 – Technical / practical skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (all skill-shortage vacancy base)

Table 46 - Soft / people skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (employer base)

Table 48 – Soft / people skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (all skill-shortage vacancy base)

Table 52 - Skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (all skill-shortage vacancy base)

Table 56 - The main skill(s) found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted) (all skill-shortage vacancy base)

Table 60 - Skills found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted unless \*) (all skills shortage vacancy base)

Table 64 - Main skills(s) found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted unless \*) (all skill-shortage vacancy base)

Table 65 - Main skills(s) found difficult to obtain from applicants (prompted unless \*) (all skill-shortage vacancy base - occupational summary)