



Skills Funding Agency

FE Choices Learner Satisfaction Survey

2014 to 2015 National Report

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report provides an overview, at a national level, of the findings from the FE choices learner satisfaction survey 2014 to 2015.

Colleges and training providers in scope for FE choices and eligible to take part in the survey included:

- general FE colleges
- specialist colleges (including art and design and land based)
- special designated institutions
- higher education institutions
- other public-funded institutions
- private sector, public funded institutions

Learners in scope were those funded through the Adult Skills Budget, including apprenticeship provision and those in receipt of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans for learning undertaken between November 2014 and March 2015.

FE Choices provides consistent and comparable information for learners and employers to help them make informed choices about publicly funded education and training. It also provides consistent management information on key performance indicators. FE Choices comprises a set of performance indicators

that cover aspects of a college or provider's provision such as: success rates, learner destinations and satisfaction levels of learners and employers.

This report focuses on the Learner Satisfaction Survey results only.

The 2014 to 2015 learner satisfaction survey took place between November 2014 and March 2015. In scope learners for the survey included all learners funded by the Skills Funding Agency apart from those on Community Learning, Offender Learning and European Social Fund programmes.

The total number of learners who submitted a valid response to the Learner Satisfaction Survey in 2014 to 2015 was 348,148. Of these, 326,273 were linked to the Individualised Learner Record (ILR), allowing us to identify details of their learning programme and personal characteristics, such as age and gender. The vast majority submitted an online response, with 4.4% completing a paper-based survey.

The 326,273 learners were broadly representative of the approximately 1.8 million learners who were eligible to take part in the survey. This is a response rate of 17.9% and gives an overall confidence interval of 0.1%. Due to the large number of responses and the sample being broadly representative in terms of highest level of study and sex the results in this report are un-weighted.

Learner satisfaction is one of four performance indicators available on the [.GOV.UK website](#), which is a key part of the government's approach to informing and empowering learners and employers, helping them make choices about where they learn or train. The learner satisfaction performance indicator gives a score at provider-level on how learners rated a particular organisation and is based on answers to the learner satisfaction survey.

The 2014 to 2015 learner satisfaction survey had 11 rating questions. For the first nine, learners were asked to rate various aspects of their course, learning programme or training programme on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 represented 'very bad' and 10 represented 'very good'. The questions were:

1. How good or bad was the information you were given when you were choosing your course?
2. How good or bad was the help staff gave you in the first few weeks?
3. How good or bad is the teaching on the course?
4. How good or bad is the respect staff show to you?
5. How good or bad is the advice you have been given about what you can do after the course?
6. How good or bad is the support you get on this course?
7. How good or bad are the college staff at listening to the views of learners?
8. How good or bad is the college at acting on the views of learners?
9. Overall, how good or bad do you think the college is?

10. How good or bad has the course been at meeting your expectations?
11. How likely is it that you would recommend the college to friends or family?

Question 10 was piloted for the 2014 to 2015 survey. It used the same scoring scale as questions 1-9 but was not included in the scoring calculation.

Question 11 used a different scale. There were six possible responses to this question; "Extremely likely", "Likely", "Neither likely nor unlikely", "Unlikely", "Extremely unlikely" and "Does not apply".

Note: Question wording was tailored to the learner's environment. The version above is for learners in a college environment.

Key Findings

The learner satisfaction survey provides a rich dataset, which can be analysed by a wide range of different variables including age, level of study and gender. Additional analysis also took place by subject area and apprenticeship framework. This level of detailed analysis is possible because of the robust methodology employed by the survey, the large number of responses and the matching of learner responses to the ILR. All differences highlighted between groups are statistically significant.

The key findings from the survey at a national level are:

Overall (Q9: Overall how good or bad do you think the college/learning provider/company's training programme is?)

- Almost three quarters of learners, (74%) rated their provider highly (score of 8-10 for question 9). Just over a third of learners (36%) gave a score of 10 out of 10 whilst only 9% gave a score of 5 or less.
- Adults (people aged 19 and over), were in general more satisfied than 16- to 18-year-olds, with 84% of adults rating the provider highly (score of 8 to 10) for this question compared to only 67% of 16-18 year olds. More than 57% of learners aged over 35 years of age gave a score of 10 out of 10 compared to only 25% of 16-18 year olds.
- Female learners were slightly more satisfied than male learners, with 76% of females giving a score of 8-10 for question 9 compared to 72% of males.
- Learners studying at entry level were considerably more satisfied (88% of respondents scoring 8 to 10 for question 9) compared to those studying at Level 3 or above (68%). 61% of learners at entry level gave a score of 10 out of 10 for question 9, compared to 27% of Level 3 learners.
- Learners living in the areas of highest deprivation, are defined as learners whose home postcode is in the 10% most deprived Super Output Areas in

England according to the rank of Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010.

These learners were slightly more satisfied with their provider than other learners. 78% of learners from the most deprived areas gave a score of 8 to 10 for question 9, compared to 70% of learners in the most affluent areas.

- Learners on apprenticeship and work based learning programmes were more satisfied with their provider than learners who were classroom based (85% of apprentices and work placed learners gave a score of 8 to 10 for question 9 compared to only 70% of classroom based learners). 16-18 year old apprentices were slightly less positive than adult apprentices (81% compared to 87%). 16-18 year old classroom based learners appeared to be the least satisfied, with 65% giving a score of 8 or higher.
- Learners rated private training providers particularly highly (86% of learners giving a score of 8 to 10 for question 9). General further education colleges were rated less highly by their learners (67% of learners giving a score of 8 or above).
- High learner satisfaction ratings appear to be associated with outstanding or good Ofsted grades. 77% of learners at providers rated as outstanding by Ofsted gave a score of 8 to 10 for question 9. This compares with only 68% of learners at providers who were rated as 'requires improvement' and 70% of learners at providers who were rated as inadequate by Ofsted (based on Ofsted scores from the 2012 to 2013 academic year onwards).
- Learners living in the Liverpool City Region and Sheffield City Region Local Enterprise Partnership areas were more satisfied than learners in any other LEP areas, with 81% giving a score of 8 to 10 for question 9. The LEP area with the next highest rating from its learners for question 9 was Leeds City region (79% giving a score of 8 to 10). Swindon and Wiltshire LEP had the lowest percentage of learners giving a score of 8 to 10 for question 9 (66%).

Subject Analysis

Responses to the 2014 to 2015 learner satisfaction survey were matched to the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) to identify a main subject of study (using the sector subject area tier 1 classification) or apprenticeship framework. This process identifies a main subject area for 80% of all responses. Key findings from this analysis are:

- The subject area Education and Training had the highest satisfaction rating for question 9 (“Overall, how good or bad do you think the college/learning provider/ company’s training programme is?”), with 85% of all respondents studying in this area giving a score of 8 or higher. The second highest rated subject areas were Preparation for Life & Work and Languages, Literature & Culture (84% of learners giving a score of 8 or above). Other highly rated subject areas included History, Philosophy & Theology (81%), Business, Administration and Law (79%) and Retail & Commercial Enterprise (79%).
- Three subject areas had only 68% of respondents giving question 9 a score of 8 to 10. These were Science & Mathematics, Agriculture, Horticulture & Animal Care and Leisure, Travel & Tourism. Other areas with below average ratings were Construction, Planning & the Built Environment (70%) and Arts, Media & Publishing (71%).
- Only 61% of learners taking two or more A-Levels (in similar or different subject areas) rated their provider highly (giving a score of 8 or higher for question 9).
- In almost all subject areas, Level 2 learners rated their provider more highly than level 3+ learners. The exception was Education & Training, where Level 2 and Level 3+ learners gave similar scores for question 9.
- All apprenticeship framework areas were highly rated by learners compared to classroom based study in equivalent subject areas. However, there were significant variations between frameworks. In Hospitality & Catering, Retailing & Wholesaling, Health & Social Care, Warehousing & Distribution, Service Enterprises and Business Management more than 90% of

respondents gave a score of 8 to 10 for question 9. In contrast, only 71% of respondents taking ICT practitioner frameworks gave a score of 8 to 10.

Questions 1-8

- The percentage of learners who rated the teaching on their course highly (score of 8 to 10 for question 3 “how good or bad is the teaching/or training on your course/programme?”) was 76%. This suggests that they are slightly more satisfied with the quality of teaching (question 3) than they are with the provider as a whole (question 9). Learners aged over 35 were particularly positive about the quality of teaching, with more than 90% rating the teaching highly (8 or above).
- Most learners felt that they were well supported. More than three quarters of all respondents (77%) gave a score of 8 to 10 for question 6 “how good or bad is the support you get on this course?” Adult workplace learners rated this question particularly highly with 94% giving a score of 8 or more. Entry level learners were also very positive about the support they received, with 64% giving a score of 10 out of 10.
- The lowest satisfaction rating, out of all of the questions, was for question 5 (advice learners had been given about what they could do after their course had finished). A third of learners (33%) gave a score of 7 or less, with 14% giving a score of 5 or less. The satisfaction score was even lower amongst 16 to 18 year olds, where only 60% of respondents gave a score of 8 to 10.
- 16 to 18 year old learners at general Further Education Colleges were less likely to believe that providers listened to and acted upon their views (questions 7 and 8), than learners at private training providers. Only 55% of 16 to 18 year old learners at general Further Education Colleges gave question 8 a score of 8 to 10, compared to 77% who were enrolled with private training providers.