

Skills & Demand in Industry

2017 Survey

The IET undertakes an annual survey of engineering employers to gauge the state of skills in the engineering and technology sector. The survey reports on current and planned engineering recruitment, identifies skills shortages and skills gaps and explores issues around diversity in the workforce.

Below are the key facts and figures about engineering employers in the UK as a result of our survey.

61%

consider the recruitment of engineering and technical staff with the right skills as a barrier to achieving business objectives over the next three years



81%

agree that more employers need to provide work experience for those in education or training to help improve the supply of engineers and technicians



75%

of those that plan to introduce/increase use of digital technologies need to develop new skills in their existing workforce



30%

have firm plans to introduce or extend their current use of digital technologies in the next three years



46%

face difficulties in the availability of people in the external labour market with the right skills when they try to recruit



51%

expect to employ more engineering and technical staff over the next three years



87%

don't have LGBT/BAME diversity initiatives in place*



*3% don't know/refused

11%

of the UK engineering and technical workforce is female



Recommendations from the survey

Foster home-grown talent while retaining existing skills



Recommendation for: Government

Now that the UK is in the process of leaving the EU, it is critical that government works more closely with educators and industry on a long-term plan. This should focus on developing UK engineering expertise, while retaining non-UK workers who have the skills needed by engineering businesses as Brexit comes into effect.

There is also a need to make the apprenticeship levy guidelines clearer so employers can use it effectively to develop training.

Build a flexible and agile workforce through CPD and work experience



Recommendation for: employers and educators

Businesses recognise the impact that digitisation and advanced automation will have in the near term but many are not fully prepared.

To ensure the current and future workforce has the right skills and capability, establishing and maintaining a solid Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework must now be a top priority for employers.

Furthermore, to improve work-readiness in new recruits, we urge employers to work together with schools and colleges to provide more work experience opportunities for young people.

Make engineering accessible to everyone



Recommendation for: employers

The vast majority of employers surveyed this year have not introduced gender/BAME/LGBT initiatives. Companies need to increase their efforts to encourage people from diverse backgrounds into the profession. For example, providing regular unconscious bias awareness training would help eliminate barriers into the profession and retain those already in it.



How we can help?

It is widely acknowledged that there is a skills shortage in the UK, and a lot of businesses recognise that they need to do more to boost engineering skills and promote diversity, but not all are aware of the best approach. This is where the IET can offer assistance with our CPD resources, Work Experience for All campaign and Women's Network, for example. See <https://workexperience.theiet.org> and <https://www.theiet.org/women>.

“THE SKILLS CRISIS CANNOT BE SOLVED BY GOVERNMENT ALONE. WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER COLLECTIVELY AS A PROFESSION TO ENSURE THE UK IS EQUIPPED TO MEET THE INCREASING SKILLS DEMANDS AND FUTURE NEEDS OF THE INDUSTRY.”

Stephanie Baxter, Skills and Education Lead, IET
