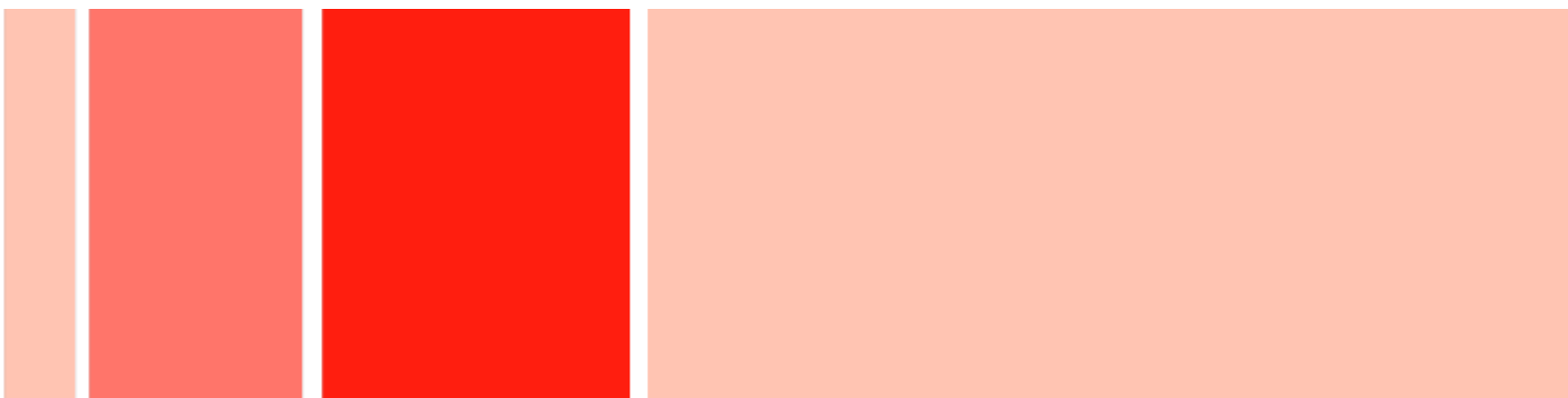


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## Employer Skills Survey 2022: mid Wales report



Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

## Employer Skills Survey 2022: mid Wales report

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## Introduction

This document provides a summary of key findings among employers in mid Wales from the Welsh Government and Department for Education's Employer Skills Survey (ESS 2022), a large survey of employers which provides a definitive picture of the extent, nature and impact of skills challenges faced by employers.

From 2010-2017, ESS sat alongside the Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS) to produce insights that complemented each other. The focus on EPS was primarily outward-looking, covering provision of an engagement with the wider skills system, while ESS was more inward-looking, assessing the current skills position and skills needs of employers. Since the 2019 survey, the EPS content has been incorporated into ESS (this is the second ESS in the series to include questions formerly asked in EPS). For further details about the methodology, please see the [Wales national report](#) or the [technical report](#).

## Recruitment and external challenges

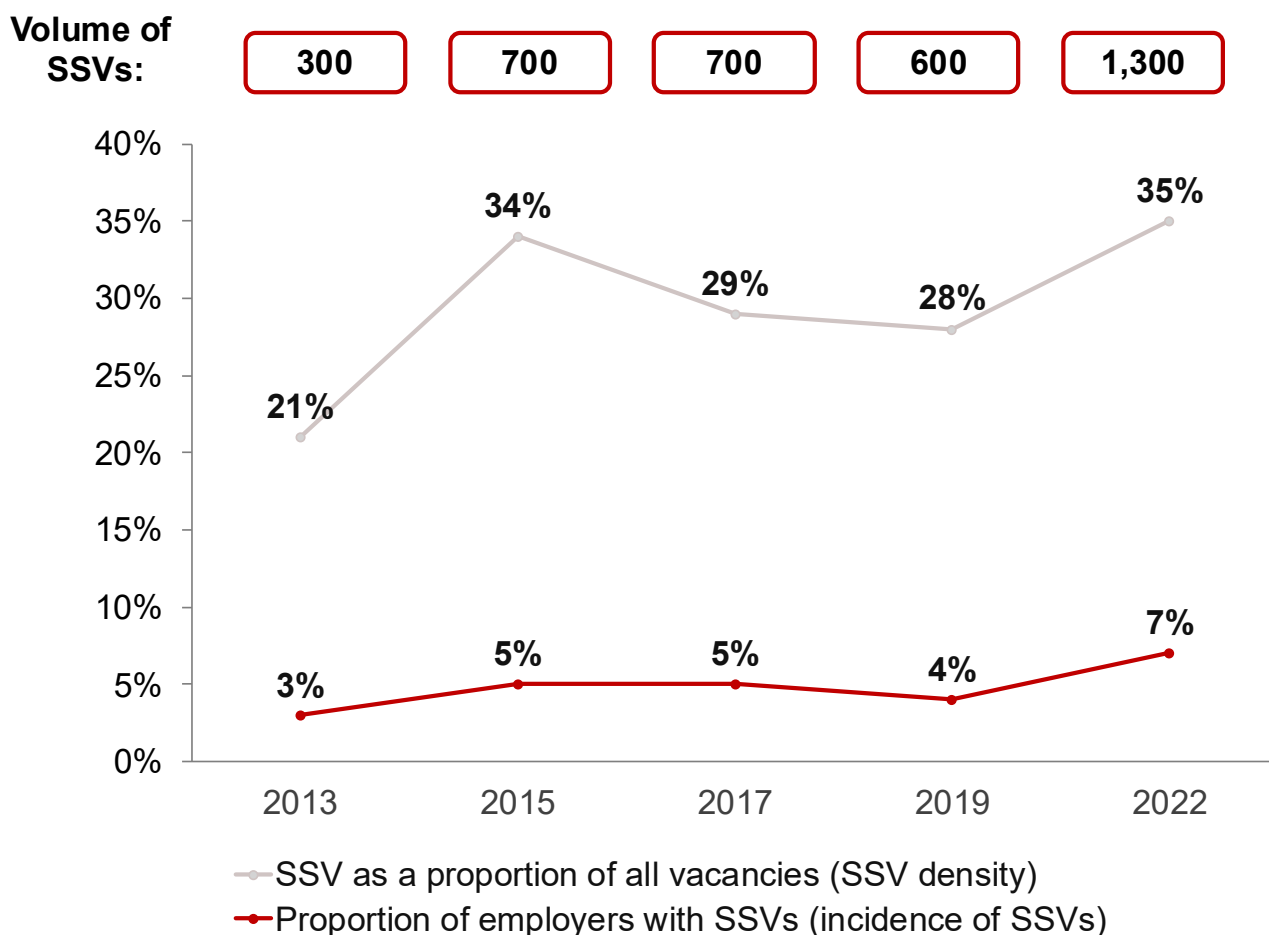
Just under one in five employers in mid Wales (16%) reported having any vacancies at the time of the survey, an increase from 11% that reported this in 2019. This was however lower than the levels reported in Wales as a whole (22%).

When considering vacancies as a proportion of employment (vacancy density), there was around one vacancy for every 22 employees in mid Wales (4.6%); this compares with one vacancy for every 42 employees in 2019 (2.4%). The vacancy density is similar to levels found in Wales as a whole (4.7%). The number of vacancies in mid Wales almost doubled, increasing from 1,900 in 2019 to 3,700 vacancies in 2022.

Vacancies that were proving hard to fill due to shortages of applicants with the required skills, qualifications, or experience (skill-shortage vacancies, or 'SSVs') affected 7% of employers in mid Wales, up from 4% in 2019. However, this figure remained slightly lower than in Wales as a whole (10%).

More than one third (35%) of vacancies were SSVs in mid Wales, matching the national average (35%), but an increase compared to 2019 (28%). Overall, there were around 1,300 SSVs across mid Wales, approximately double the 2019 figure (600). The 2022 survey marked the highest levels of SSVs in mid Wales since the start of the series in 2011, both in terms of overall volume and the proportion of vacancies they accounted for (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Incidence, density, and volume of SSVs over time in mid Wales**



Description: Figure 1 shows the proportion of establishments with skill-shortage vacancies (SSVs), SSVs as a proportion of all vacancies (SSV density), and the volume of SSVs for the years 2013 to 2022. The proportion of employers with SSVs increased to 7% after remaining relatively stable from 2013 to 2019 (between 3% and 5% throughout). SSV density increased from 28% in 2019 to 35% in 2022, returning to 2015 levels (34%). The total number of SSVs in 2022 was 1,300, the highest in the time series.

Base for incidence of skill-shortage vacancies: All establishments in mid Wales: 2022 (694); 2019 (793); 2017 (605); 2015 (742); 2013 (717). Base for skill-shortage vacancies: All establishments with vacancies: 2022 (209); 2019 (138); 2017 (122); 2015 (137); 2013 (101).

The most common skills that employers found lacking among applicants were specialist skills or knowledge needed to perform the role (contributing to 62% of SSVs); the ability to manage their own time and prioritise tasks (62%); and solving complex problems requiring a solution specific to the situation (54%). These were also the most common skills lacking among applicants in 2019.

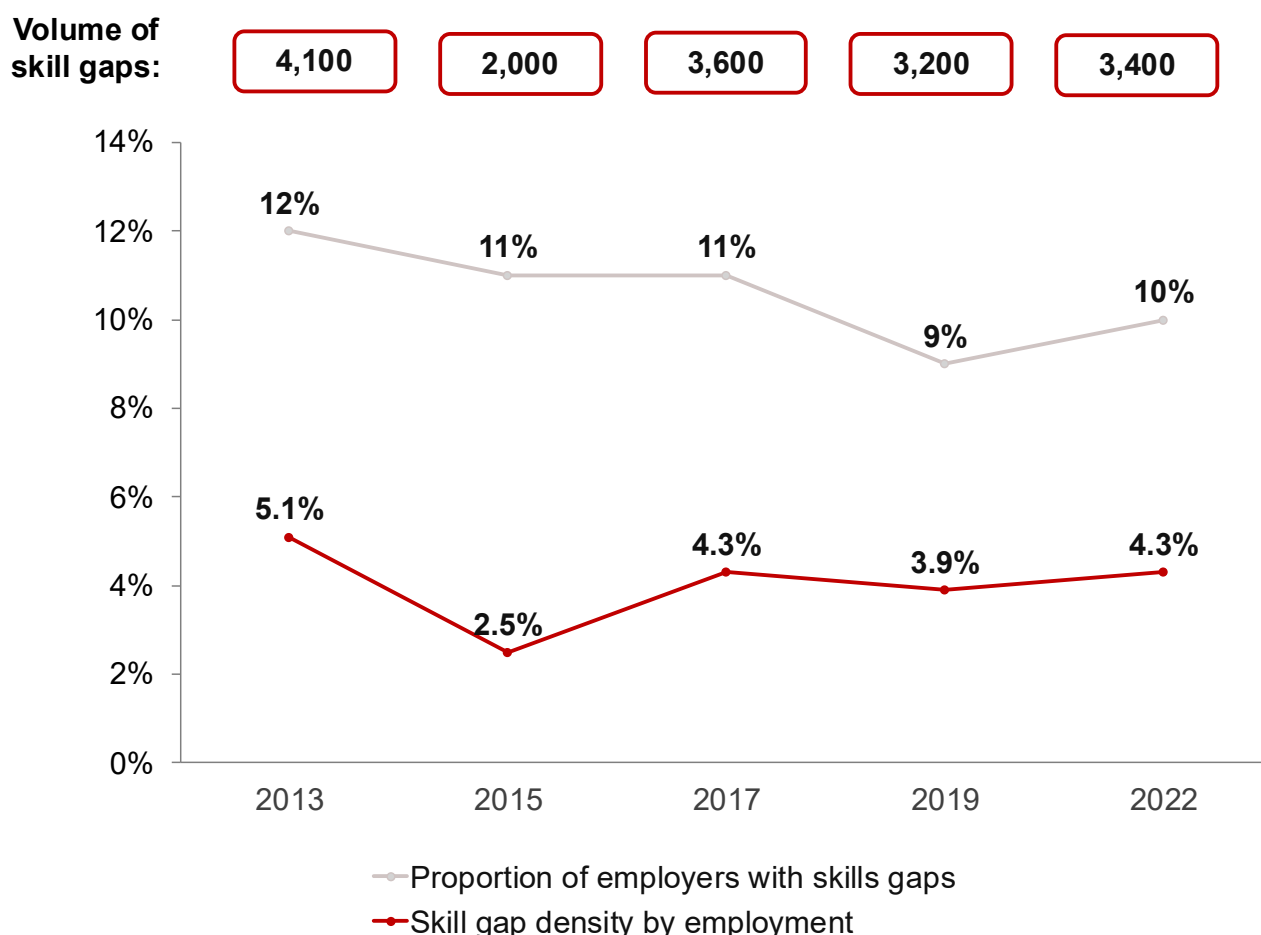
By far the most common consequence of struggling of SSVs was increased workloads for other staff (91%), in line with levels across Wales (87%). SSVs were also commonly linked to increased operating costs (64%, higher than the Wales average of 50%), difficulties meeting customer services objectives (58%) and difficulties introducing new working practices (57%, also higher than the Wales average of 44%).

## The internal skills challenge

Overall, 10% of employers in mid Wales had skills gaps (at least one member of staff not fully proficient in their role), similar to the proportion in 2019 (9%) but lower than the proportion in Wales overall (14%). Despite the relatively low incidence of skills gaps compared to Wales overall, the proportion of employees that were considered to lack full proficiency (skills gap density) was in line with the national average (4.3% for mid Wales compared with 4.1%), suggesting a larger concentration of skills gaps among employers who had them. Skills gap density was higher than in 2019 (4.3% compared with 3.9%). Overall, 3,400 employees had skills gaps across mid Wales, compared with 3,200 in 2019 (Figure 2).

Just over one in ten skills gaps (12%) were caused entirely by factors that can be considered 'transient', causes that will naturally ease over time, such as being new to the role or training only being partially completed; this was lower than in Wales as a whole (17%). These elements contributed to 81% of skills gaps overall, the same as the national average. Being new to the role contributed to 70% of skills gaps, while training being only partially completed contributed to 66% of skills gaps. These remain the two most common causes of skills gaps both in mid Wales and in Wales overall.

**Figure 2: Incidence, density, and volume of skills gaps over time in mid Wales**



Description: Figure 2 shows the proportion of establishments with skills gaps (incidence), the proportion of employees with skills gaps (skills gap density), and the volume of skills gaps for the years 2013 to 2022. The proportion of employers with skills gaps remained consistent with levels seen throughout the time period (10% in 2022). Skills gaps density increased from 3.9% in 2019 to 4.3% in 2022. The total number of skills gaps in 2022 was 3,400, in line with the 3,200 figure seen in 2019.

Base: All establishments in mid Wales: 2022 (694); 2019 (793); 2017 (605); 2015 (742); 2013 (717).

The most common skill lacking in the workforce in mid Wales was the ability of staff to manage their own time and prioritise tasks (62% of skills gaps). This was also the most common skill lacking in 2019 (61%). Other skills commonly found to be lacking in 2022 were specialist skills of knowledge needed to perform the role (58%), knowledge of products and services (49%) and persuading or influencing others (49%). Compared with 2019, there were particularly large increases in skills gaps caused by a lack of knowledge of products and services (49% compared with 25%) and a lack of written Welsh skills (30% compared with 10%).

As with SSVs, the most common consequence of skills gaps was increased workloads for other staff (44%), as was the case in 2019 and in Wales overall (though at higher proportions of 59% and 56% respectively). Employers in mid Wales were more likely to say that skills gaps caused no particular problems for their business compared with 2019 (47% compared to 33%).

Just over a third (37%) of employers had staff with both qualifications and skills more advanced than required for their current job role, similar to the Wales average (38%). This translated to 11.1% of staff that had skills and qualifications that were underutilised in their work, a higher proportion than in Wales overall (8.8%).

## **Training and workforce development**

Around half of employers in mid Wales (49%) had funded or arranged training for their staff over the previous 12 months (Table 1). This was lower than in Wales overall (60%) and a decrease from levels reported in 2019 (58%). A larger proportion of employers provided on-the-job training (42%) than off-the-job training (29%), contrasting to 2019 where similar proportions offered each type of training (40% on-the-job, 43% off-the job).

Overall, 61% of the workforce received training over the last 12 months, higher than 2019 levels (57%) despite the lower proportion of employers offering training. This is likely due to the largest reduction in training incidence occurring among smaller employers with 2 to 4 establishments (33% providing training versus 45% in 2019); in contrast, the larger employers with 25 or more employees saw little change in training incidence (93% and 96% in 2019). The proportion of staff trained in mid Wales was also similar to the proportion in Wales overall (63%).

Among employers that had not arranged or funded training for staff over the previous 12 months, the standout reason for not doing so was that staff were already considered fully proficient in their work (64%). Around one in ten (9%) mentioned reasons relating COVID-19, namely that it led to planned training courses being suspended (8%) or had made staff reluctant to attend training (2%). The next most common reason, mentioned by 7%, was training not being available in the relevant subject area.

**Table 1: Proportion of employers that trained staff and the proportion of staff trained over the previous 12 months in Wales and mid Wales since 2013**

	2013		2015		2017		2019		2022	
	Wales	Mid Wales	Wales	Mid Wales	Wales	Mid Wales	Wales	Mid Wales	Wales	Mid Wales
% of employers that trained staff over the last 12 months	62	51	63	54	62	58	62	58	60	49
% of staff trained over previous 12 months	62	44	64	71	58	67	65	57	63	61

Base: All establishments 2022: Wales (4,825); mid Wales (694); 2019: Wales (6,773); mid Wales (793); 2017: Wales (5,913); mid Wales (605); 2015: Wales (6,027); mid Wales (742); 2013: Wales (5,996); mid Wales (717).

Overall, 49,000 staff were trained in mid Wales, for a total of 0.3m training days, equating to 5.2 training days per person trained per year ('per trainee') and 3.2 days per employee. These figures remained stable compared to 2019, when each trainee received 6.4 days of training and each employee received 3.6 days. However, they are lower than in Wales as a whole (6.8 days per trainee and 4.2 days per employee).

Among establishments providing training, the most common types of training that were provided were job specific training (87%), health and safety and first aid training (70%) and basic induction training (57%). These were also the top three training types in Wales overall, although employers in mid Wales were slightly less likely to have provided basic induction training (63% provided this nationally). They were also less likely than Wales overall to have provided more extensive induction training (29% versus 34%). These results reflect the lower proportion of employers in mid Wales having recruited in the last 12 months compared with employers in Wales more generally (38% versus 48%). Compared with

2019, there were increases in the proportion of training employers providing job specific training (87% versus 82%) and supervisory training (31% versus 26%).

Over half (57%) of employers in mid Wales considered themselves to be in 'training equilibrium', meaning that they undertook the amount of training over the previous 12 months that they wanted. This was in line with national levels (57%), but lower than the proportion in 2019 (64%). This meant around two in five (43%) employers wanted to deliver more training than they had been able to over the previous year.

## **Apprenticeships**

Just over one in 20 employers in mid Wales employed apprentices (6%), remaining similar to 2019 levels (7%). However, the proportion not currently employing apprentices but offering them more generally decreased compared with 2019 (4% compared with 10%). Taken together, this meant that 9% of employers in mid Wales either had apprentices or offered apprenticeships, down from 17% in 2019. Provision of apprenticeships in mid Wales was also less common than in Wales overall, where 17% either employed apprentices or currently offered apprenticeships.

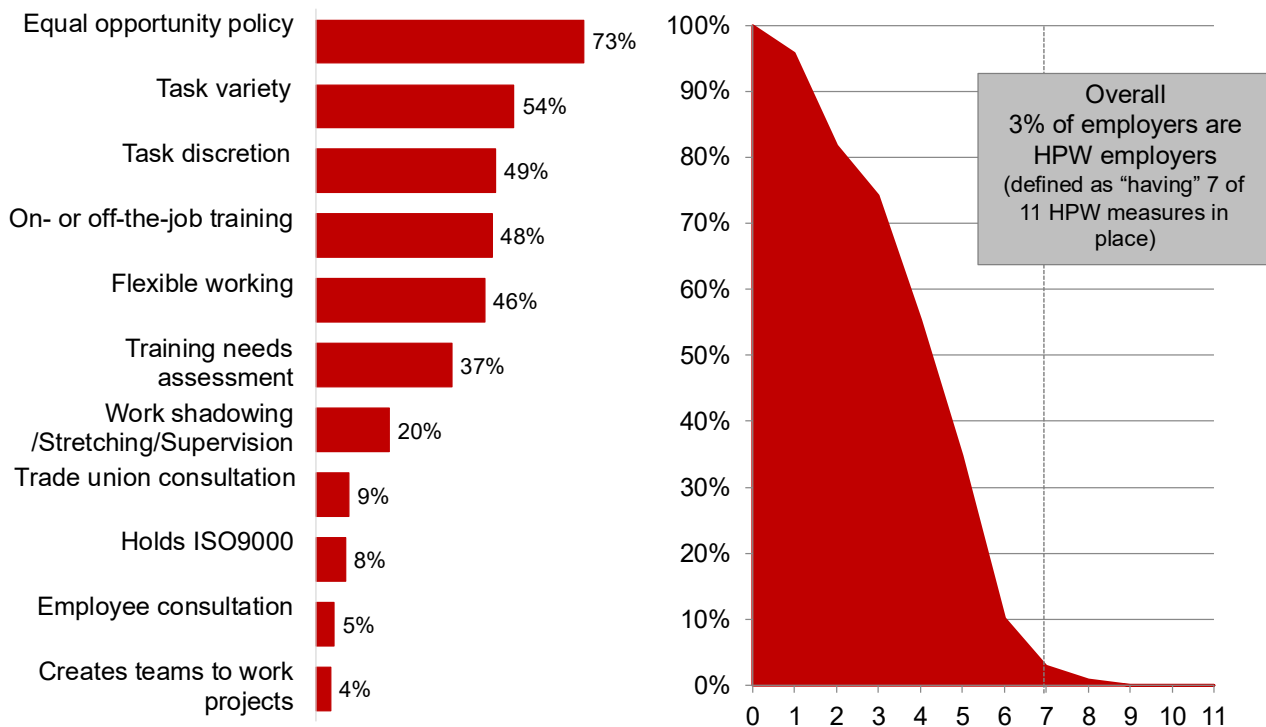
The main three reasons for not offering apprenticeships were because they are not suitable due to the size of the establishment (17%), because staff were already considered fully skilled (16%), and because employers were not looking to recruit new staff (16%). These were also the most common reasons in 2019 (18%, 16% and 24% respectively) and in Wales as a whole. However, employers in mid Wales were more likely than in Wales overall to state that apprentices were not suitable due to the size of their establishment (17% compared with 11%).

## **High Performance Working practices**

Only 3% of employers in mid Wales qualified as High Performance Working (HPW) employers, meaning they adopted seven out of the 11 High Performance Working practices that were included in the survey (Figure 3). This was lower than both the national average (9%), and all other regions (all between 8 and 10%).

The most common HPW practice implemented by employers was having an equal opportunity policy (73%), followed by task variety (54%) and task discretion (49%). Having an equal opportunity policy was also the most common HPW practice across Wales (82%), but employers in mid Wales were less likely to provide this. They were however more likely to have flexible working arrangements in place than Wales as a whole (46% compared with 37%).

**Figure 3: Prevalence of High Performance Working practices in mid Wales, 2022**



Description: Figure 3 shows the proportion of employers that have implemented each 'High Performance Working' practice in their workplace. The most common HPW practice to have been implemented was having an equal opportunity policy (73%), followed by working on a variety of tasks (54%). The least common practices to implement were creating teams of people who don't usually work together to work on projects (4%) and having employee consultation (5%). Overall, 3% of employers adhered to seven or more HPW practices.

Base: All establishments in mid Wales (Module D) (162)

## Conclusions

ESS 2022 highlights the challenges faced by mid Wales employers in the recruitment market. The proportion of employers with vacancies has increased (though is still lower than the Wales average), as has the density of these vacancies compared to employment. Increases in SSVs demonstrates that taking on high-quality, skilled recruits is harder than it has been in the last decade or so and continues to have a negative impact on business performance.

In terms of the internal skills picture, while a lower proportion of employers in mid Wales reported skills gaps compared with the national average, results were much closer in terms of skills gap density. This suggests a larger concentration of skills gaps among those employers in mid Wales that had them compared with the situation nationally. Skills gap density increased compared with 2019 despite little change in the proportion of employers that had them over the same period.

Positively, the proportion of employers reporting that skills gaps caused no particular problems within their businesses increased, suggesting that employers may be finding strategies to perform effectively even with underskilled staff.

Training and workforce development can be a means of addressing skills challenges, however, the proportion of employers providing training decreased, and was significantly lower than national average. Despite this, a higher proportion of employees received training compared to 2019 and to Wales as a whole, due to the larger employers not experiencing the level of decrease in training incidence found among smaller employers. The proportion of employers in mid Wales offering apprenticeships also decreased from 2019 levels and remains below the national average. In this context, it will be important to continue to monitor the challenging recruitment landscape for mid Wales and ensure that employers in this region are taking adequate steps to overcome skills challenges.

## Main findings

	2019	Mid Wales 2022	Wales 2022
<b>Vacancies and skill-shortage vacancies (SSVs)</b>			
% of establishments with any vacancies	11	16	22
% of establishments with any hard-to-fill vacancies	5	11	15
% of establishments with SSVs	4	7	10
% of all vacancies that are SSVs	28	35	35
Number of vacancies	1,900	3,700	58,900
Number of skill-shortage vacancies	600	1,300	20,600
<b>Skills gaps</b>			
% of establishments with any staff not fully proficient	9	10	14
Number of staff not fully proficient	3,200	3,400	51,500
% of staff not fully proficient	3.9	4.3	4.1
<b>Training</b>			
% of establishments training any staff over the last 12 months	58	49	60
% of establishments providing off-the-job training in the last 12 months	43	29	36
% of workforce trained	57	61	63
Total days training	0.3m	0.3m	5.3m
<b>Training</b>			
Training days per trainee	6.4	5.2	6.8
Training days per employee	3.6	3.2	4.2
<b>Apprenticeships</b>			
Currently have apprentices on site or offer apprenticeships	17	9	17
% of employers planning to offer apprenticeships in the future	25	27	35

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest 100.