

Chapter 7: Skills, education and training

Key facts

- 34.6% of Somerset's economically active population aged 16-64 are qualified to NVQ4 or above, a lower proportion than nationally (40.3%) and across the LEP area (36.1%).
- The number of apprenticeship starts in Somerset increased steadily from 2,580 in 2008/9 to its recent peak of 5,230 in 2011/12.
- Higher Education provision across Somerset is sparse. According to HEFCE mapping, the majority of Somerset wards (63.2%) are in the 2 lowest deciles in terms of access to HE provision.
- Employer surveys indicate that school leavers are better prepared for work in Somerset than nationally. 23% of Somerset employers who were surveyed as part of the UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey (UKCESS) had found 16 year-old school leavers to be poorly prepared for work, compared to 27% across the LEP area and 36% nationally.

National context

Workforce skills

- Labour Force Survey data are used to measure the highest qualification levels of the working age population in England, where Level 2 equates to achievement of 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent qualifications, Level 3 equates to achievement of 2 or more A-levels or equivalent qualifications, and Level 4 and above to higher education and degree level qualifications.¹² Provisional data for 2014 show that for men and women aged 19 to 64: 81% were qualified to at least Level 2; 62.6% were qualified to at least Level 3; 41% were qualified to at least Level 4.¹³

Apprenticeships

- All age Apprenticeship participation has increased since 2009/10 to 851,500 Apprenticeships in 2013/14, although there was a small decrease between 2012/13 and 2013/14. Apprenticeship participation increased between 2012/13 and 2013/14 for those aged under 19 and 19 to 24; the decrease was due to a fall by those aged 25+. Provisional data show 776,800 learners participated on an Apprenticeship in the first three quarters of the 2014/15 academic year (August 2014 to April 2015).

Skills gaps

- Findings from the UKCES 2013¹⁴ support a picture of a UK economy which is moving towards recovery. The number of employers reporting vacancies at the time of the survey (March to July 2013) was higher than at the equivalent time in 2011 (up from 14 per cent to 15 per cent), as was the number of vacancies that they reported (655,000 in 2013, a rise of 12% from 2011). Within England vacancies are back to pre-recession levels, employers reported a total of 559,600 job vacancies, a rise of 45% per cent from 2009.
- Economic growth and recovery may be constrained by skill shortages as the labour market responds to employer requirements. While in most cases demand for skills is met through successful recruitment, almost three in ten vacancies are reported to be hard-to-fill, and shortages in suitably skilled, qualified and/or experienced workers are the main reason for this. Overall, such skill-shortage vacancies represent more than one in five of all vacancies (22 per cent), up from one in six in 2011 (16 per cent).

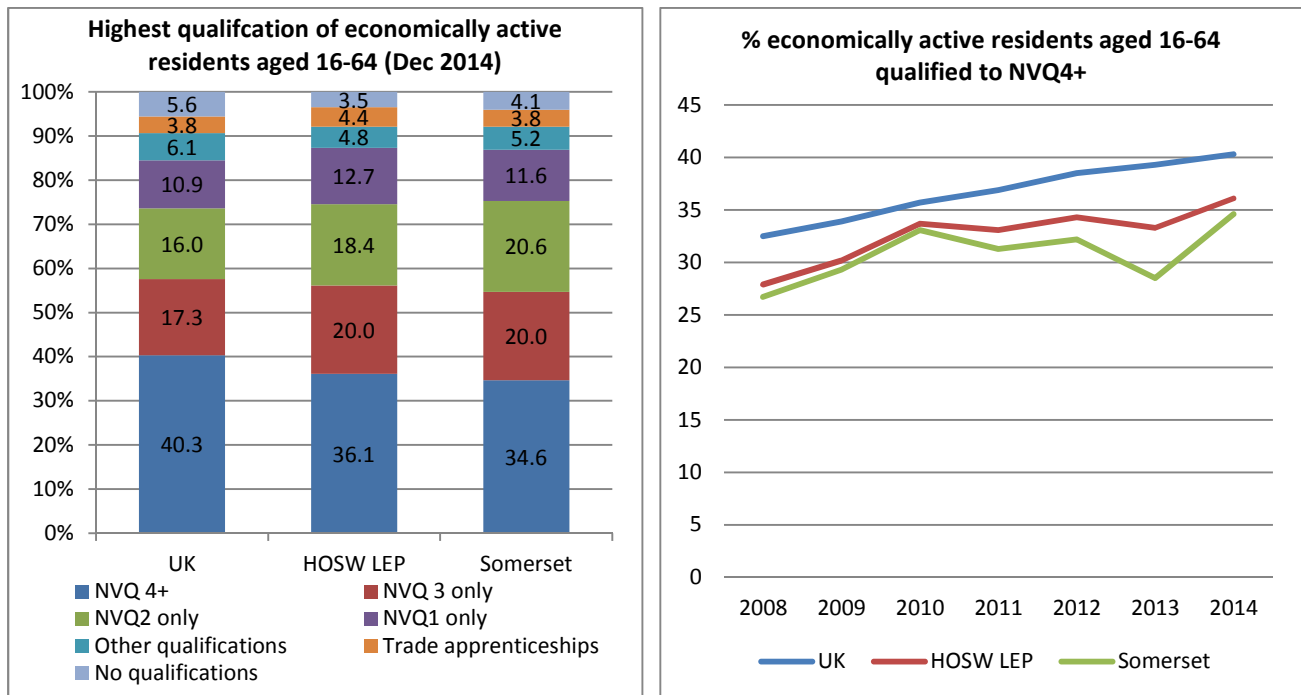
¹² See <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels> for more information.

¹³ Statistical First Release SFA/SFR29, Further Education and Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held, Skills Funding Agency, 25 June 2015.

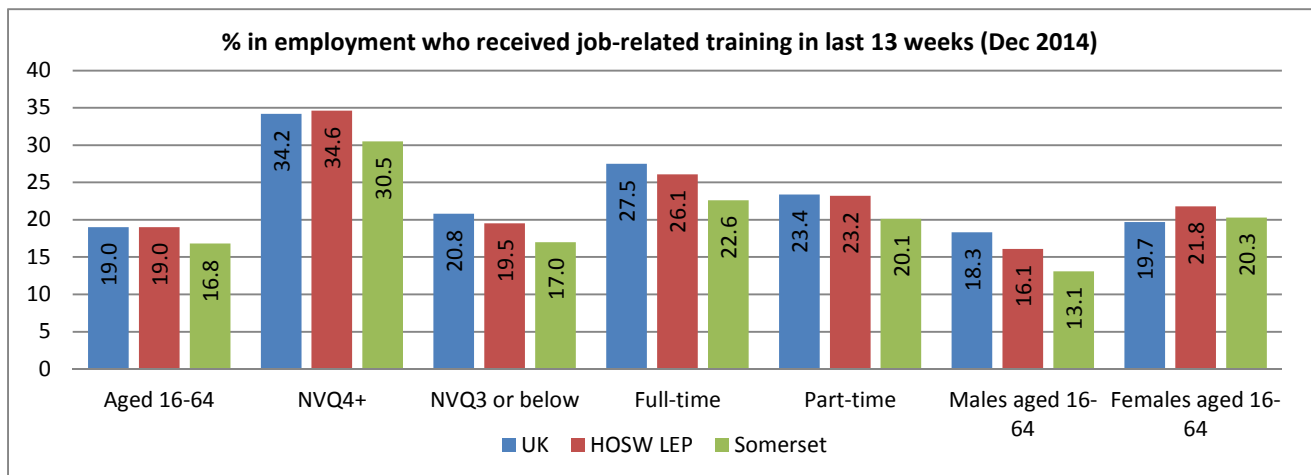
¹⁴ UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey 2013: UK Results, Evidence Report 81, January 2014.

Somerset Overview

Workforce skills



Source: Annual Population Survey, NOMIS 2015

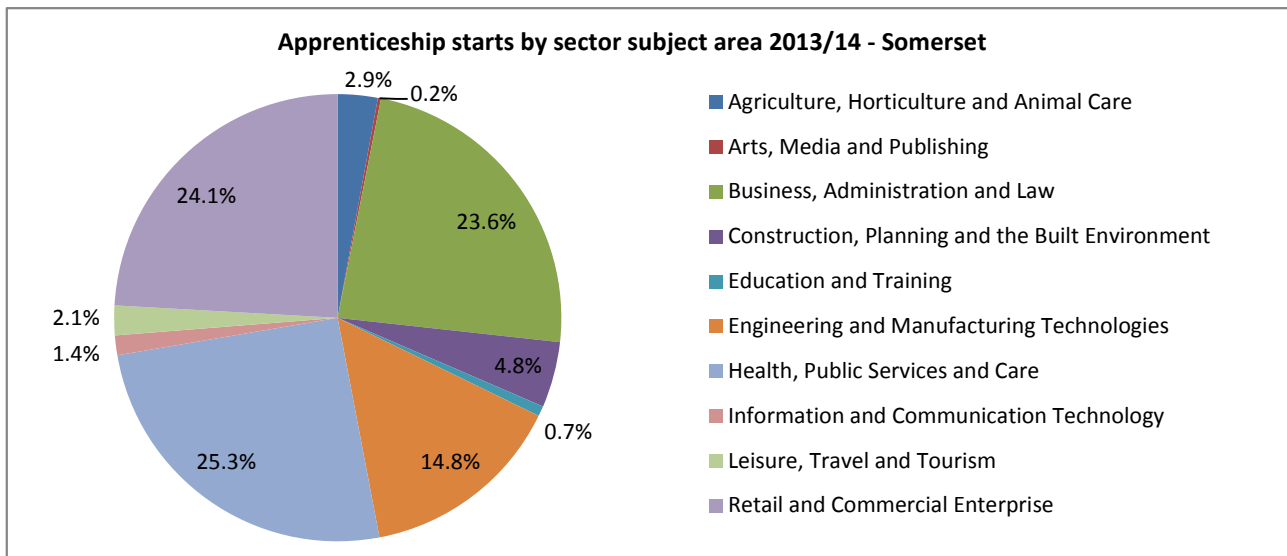
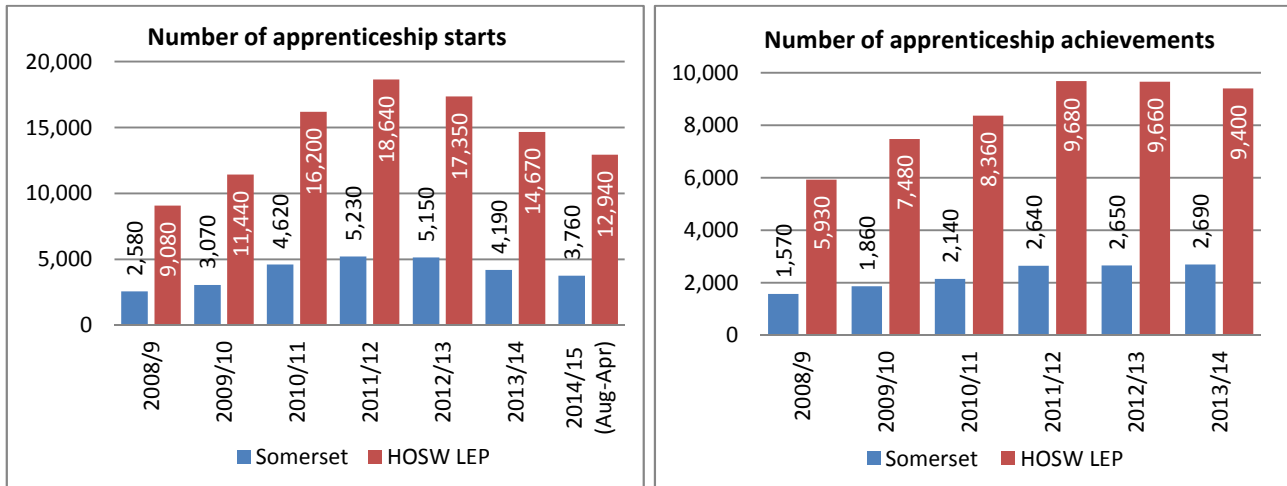


Source: Annual Population Survey, NOMIS 2015

- Somerset's workforce has a lower skills profile than the UK and LEP area. 34.6% of Somerset's economically active population aged 16-64 are qualified to NVQ4 or above, a lower proportion than nationally (40.3%) and across the LEP area (36.1%). However, higher level skills are showing improvement in the County, with a steady increase from 26.7% of the workforce qualified to this level in 2008.¹⁵
- 16.8% of Somerset's workforce aged 16-64 report that they have received job-related training in the last 13 weeks, compared to 19% nationally and across the LEP. Levels of job-related training are highest amongst those in the workforce already qualified to NVQ4+, with 30.5% of this group in Somerset receiving training in the last 13 weeks.

¹⁵ For more information on qualification levels and equivalents see: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/courses/Pages/QualificationsTable.aspx>

Apprenticeships



Source: Skills Funding Agency / Department for Business, Innovation & Skills 2015¹⁶

- The number of apprenticeship starts in Somerset increased steadily from 2,580 in 2008/9 to its recent peak of 5,230 in 2011/12. Starts have remained consistently above 4,000 per annum since then and provisional year-to-date figures for 2014/15 show continued strong performance with 3,760 apprenticeship starts in the County so far.
- The highest proportion of apprenticeships started in Somerset in 2013/14 were in health, public services and care (25.3%) followed by retail and commercial enterprise (24.1%) and business, administration and law (23.6%).
- The number of apprenticeship achievements in Somerset reached 2,690 in 2013/14, almost double the number in 2008/9 and showing consistent year-on-year improvement.

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships>

Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)

- The majority of young people succeed in education and make a positive transition to adult life and the world of work. But there remains a small proportion who do not, and who become NEET (not in education, employment or training).
- Department for Education annual estimates of young people aged 16-18 not in education, employment or training reveal that, at the end of 2013, an estimated 870 young people in Somerset were NEET, representing 5.0% of the 16-18 population. There are wide variations with age: 2.0% of 16 year olds were NEET, increasing to 5.0% of 17 year olds, and 8.1% of 18 year olds.
- The estimated proportion of NEETs in Somerset in 2013 was marginally below the South West regional average (5.2%).

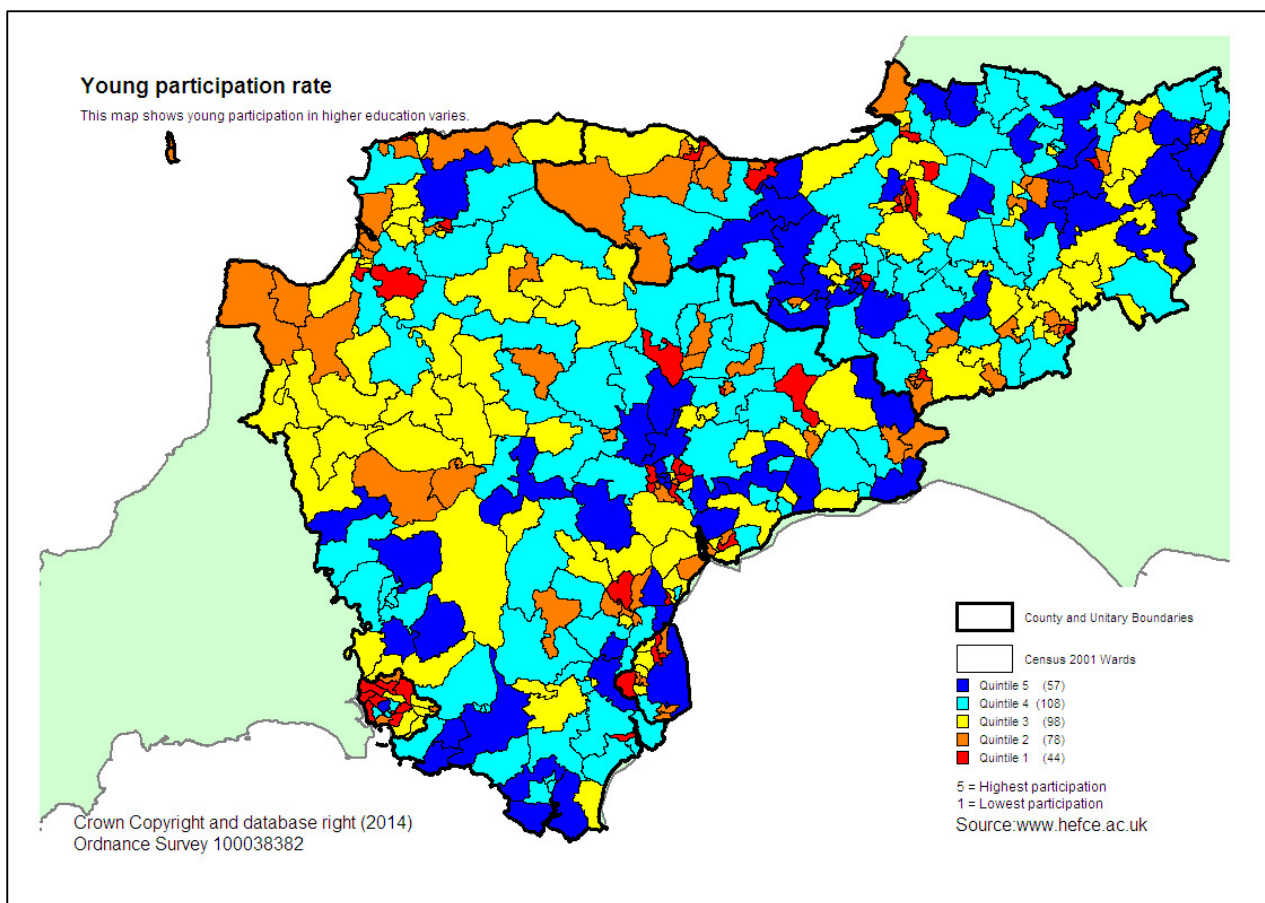
Pupils going into Higher Education

- Around 37% of pupils in state-funded mainstream schools and colleges in Somerset attended a UK higher education (HE) establishment the year after Key Stage 5, according to 2012/13 figures. This represents a notable fall on the 44% of Somerset pupils going to HE in 2011/12, a year before the increase in tuition fees.
- The proportion of Somerset pupils going to HE in 2012/13 remained well below the national average (of 48%) and was the 11th equal lowest of any local authority area in England. The South West continues to have the lowest rate of pupils going to university of any region in England.¹⁷

Higher Education Participation

- Somerset is a recognised 'HE Cold Spot'. The map below shows the proportion of young people in each ward across the LEP area who participate in Higher Education (HEFCE HE 'cold spots' mapping, 2014). According to the HEFCE research, 32% of Somerset's wards have a low HE participation rate (in the 1st or 2nd quartile), a higher proportion than the LEP overall (31.3%).
- Somerset also has concentrated areas of very low participation. Bridgwater Hamp ward has the lowest HE participation rate (9%) of all the LEP wards and Bridgwater Sydenham has the third lowest (10.4%).

¹⁷ <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/eet-neet.html>



Source: HEFCE Data maps of Higher Education Provision 2015 <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/>

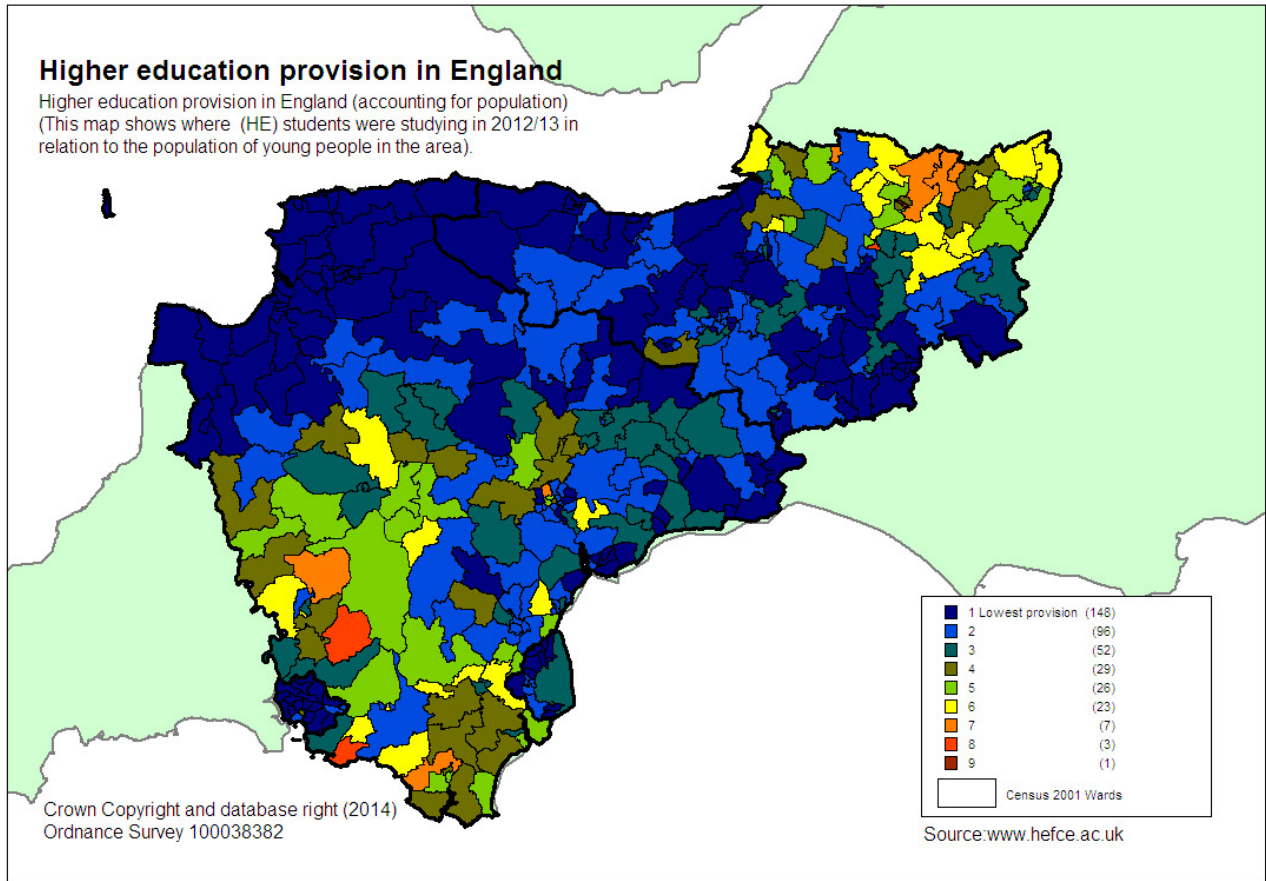
The HEFCE research also examined ‘participation gaps’; the difference between expected¹⁸ and actual levels of HE participation:

- Somerset has a higher percentage than the LEP area of wards with lower than expected participation rates (55% vs 53.2%).
- Only 27.8% of Somerset wards have participation rates at the expected level.
- Blackdown ward (in South Somerset) has the greatest participation gap of all the LEP wards (16.5 percentage points).

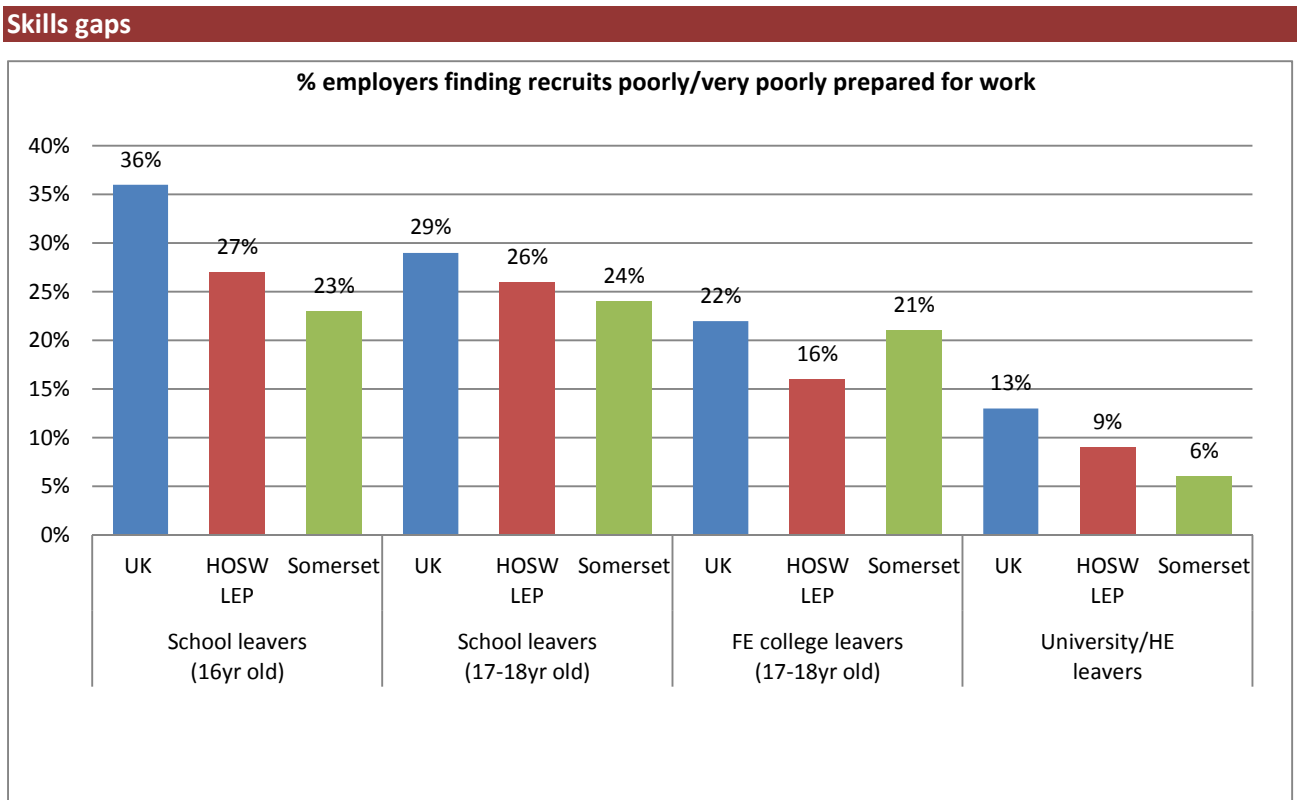
Current Higher Education provision

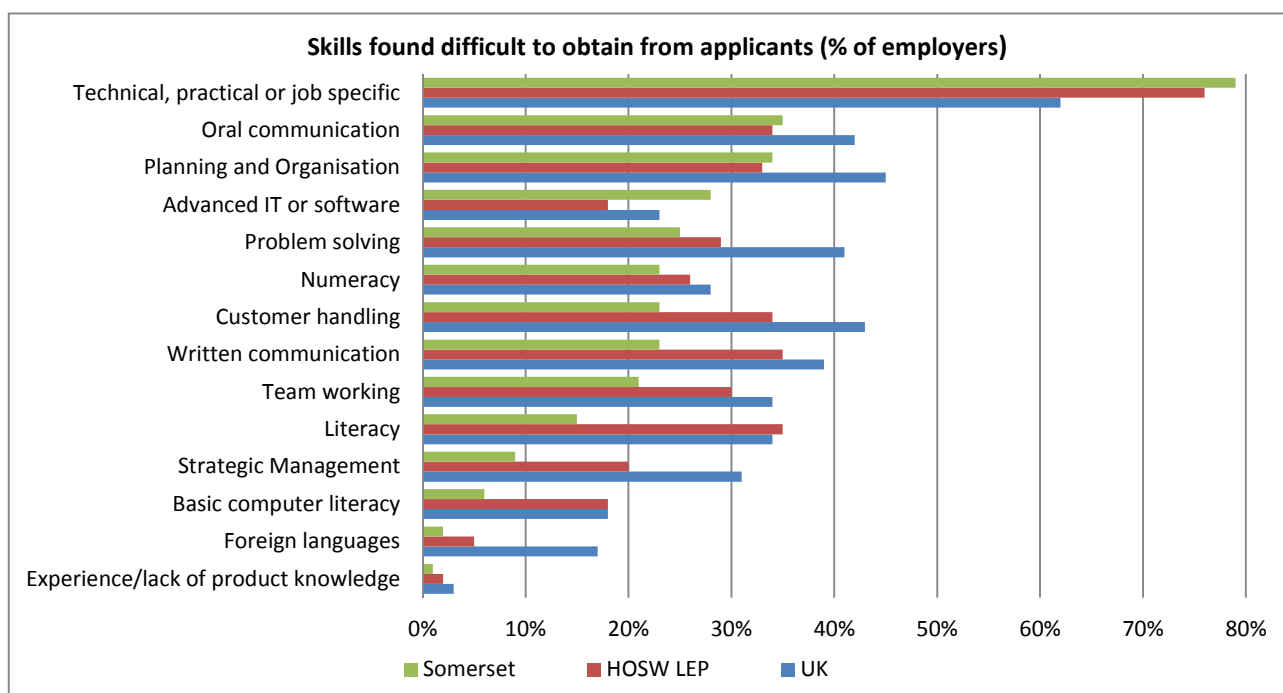
- Higher Education provision across Somerset is sparse. According to HEFCE mapping, the majority of Somerset wards (63.2%) are in the 2 lowest deciles of HE provision, compared to 58.2% of Devon wards. West Somerset and parts of South Somerset have the lowest levels of provision within Somerset (shown in dark blue on the map below).

¹⁸ Based upon levels of GCSE attainment and ethnic profile, which are known to have a bearing on levels of young participation (HEFCE 2014).



Source: HEFCE Data maps of Higher Education Provision 2015 <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/coldspots/>





Source: UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey (UKCESS) 2013¹⁹

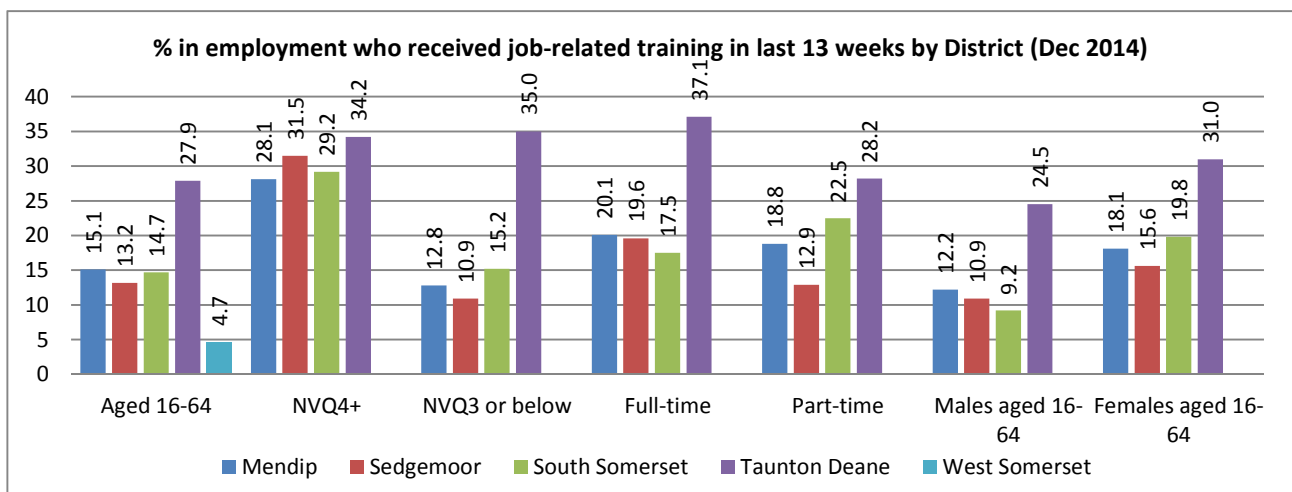
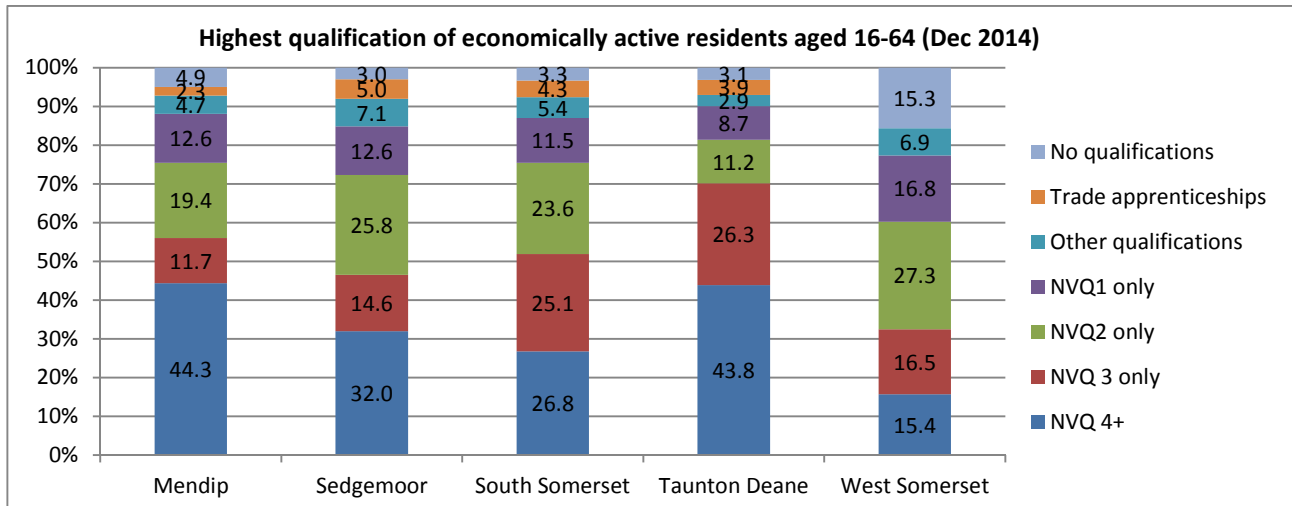
- School leavers are better prepared for work in Somerset than nationally. 23% of Somerset employers who were surveyed as part of the UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey (UKCESS) had found 16 year-old school leavers to be poorly prepared for work, compared to 27% across the LEP area and 36% nationally. Only 6% of Somerset employers stated that University/Higher Education leavers had been poorly prepared for work, compared to 9% and 13% across the LEP area and UK respectively. According to employers, further education leavers in Somerset are most poorly prepared compared to the national level.
- Of those employers in Somerset who stated they had difficulty in obtaining certain skills from applicants, the most frequent deficiency was in technical, practical or job specific skills (79%). Whilst this is a high proportion, many skills of this nature are specific and could reasonably expect to be addressed by on-the-job training of new recruits. In terms of general skills, deficiencies in oral communication and planning and organisation were identified by 35% and 34% respectively of Somerset employers.
- In January 2015, Wavehill carried out a survey on behalf of Somerset County Council to understand local employer skills needs²⁰. According to the survey:
 - 77% of businesses in the Somerset Skills Survey have trained staff in the last 12 months compared to 62% in the ESS.
 - 36% of businesses in the Somerset Skills Survey had employed school, college or university leavers in the last 12 months.
 - The skills most needed improving by employees were Technical, Practical or job specific (42%), Planning and organizing (31%) and Customer handling (30%) and Team working (29%). These vary by sector.
 - When asked about the qualifications sought when recruiting staff 48% said they looked for vocational qualifications.
 - When recruiting young people, employers thought that the skills most prevalent were IT skills (90%) and the least prevalent strategic management skills (69%).

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/employer-skills-survey-local-data>

²⁰ Somerset Employer Skills Survey – A Report for Somerset County Council, Wavehill Ltd, January 2015.

- Businesses are keen to link into educational institutions to help young people, 29% said they would like to help more and 31% to help more but would need a bit more information to help them decide how.
- Businesses are more concerned about finding higher skilled staff in the future than lower skilled staff with only 44% confident of finding higher skilled compared to 70% for lower skilled.

Local trends (Districts)



Source: Annual Population Survey, NOMIS 2015

- Mendip and Taunton Deane have the highest qualified workforce of all the Somerset districts, with 44.3% and 43.8% respectively of their economically active population aged 16-64 qualified to NVQ4 or above. Taunton Deane and South Somerset also have just over a quarter of their workforce qualified to NVQ3.
- 27.9% of Taunton Deane's workforce aged 16-64 report that they have received job-related training in the last 13 weeks, the highest proportion of all the Somerset districts. Across all districts, levels of job-related training are generally highest amongst those in the workforce already qualified to NVQ4+, with around a third of this group in all areas receiving training in the last 13 weeks.

DATA TABLES Chapter 7: Skills, education and training

Economically active residents

Area	Highest qualifications of economically active aged 16-64 (% , Dec 2014)							% of all who received job related training in last 13 wks (Jan-Dec 2014)						
	NVQ 4+	NVQ 3 only	NVQ2 only	NVQ1 only	Other qualifications	Trade apprenticeships	No qualifications	Aged 16-64	NVQ4+	NVQ3 or below	Full-time	Part-time	Males aged 16-64	Females aged 16-64
UK	40.3	17.3	16.0	10.9	6.1	3.8	5.6	19.0	34.2	20.8	27.5	23.4	18.3	19.7
HOSW LEP	36.1	20.0	18.4	12.7	4.8	4.4	3.5	19.0	34.6	19.5	26.1	23.2	16.1	21.8
Somerset	34.6	20.0	20.6	11.6	5.2	3.8	4.1	16.8	30.5	17.0	22.6	20.1	13.1	20.3
Mendip	44.3	11.7	19.4	12.6	4.7	2.3	4.9	15.1	28.1	12.8	20.1	18.8	12.2	18.1
Sedgemoor	32.0	14.6	25.8	12.6	7.1	5.0	3.0	13.2	31.5	10.9	19.6	12.9	10.9	15.6
South Somerset	26.8	25.1	23.6	11.5	5.4	4.3	3.3	14.7	29.2	15.2	17.5	22.5	9.2	19.8
Taunton Deane	43.8	26.3	11.2	8.7	2.9	3.9	3.1	27.9	34.2	35.0	37.1	28.2	24.5	31.0
West Somerset	15.4	16.5	27.3	16.8	6.9	N/A	15.3	4.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Annual Population Survey, NOMIS 2015

Apprenticeship starts by sector subject area (2013/14)

	Agriculture, Horticulture & Animal Care	Arts, Media & Publishing	Business, admin & law	Construction, Planning & the Built Environment	Education & Training	Engineering & Manufacturing Technologies	Health, Public Services & Care	ICT	Leisure, Travel & Tourism	Retail & Commercial Enterprise	Science & Maths	Total
England	6,870	1,390	124,420	15,640	4,710	63,850	107,210	12,890	11,100	86,190	350	434,620
HOSW LEP	390	30	3,170	840	140	2,110	4,420	200	370	3,020	20	14,710
Somerset	120	10	990	200	30	620	1,060	60	90	1,010	0	4,190

Source: Skills Funding Agency / Department for Business, Innovation & Skills 2015

Skills employers found difficult to obtain from applicants (% employers with skills shortage vacancies)

	Experience/ product knowledge	Foreign languages	Basic computer literacy	Strategic Management	Literacy	Team work	Written communication	Customer handling	Numeracy	Problem solving	Advanced IT or software	Planning and Organisation	Oral communication	Technical, practical or job specific
UK	3%	17%	18%	31%	34%	34%	39%	43%	28%	41%	23%	45%	42%	62%
HOSW LEP	2%	5%	18%	20%	35%	30%	35%	34%	26%	29%	18%	33%	34%	76%
Somerset	1%	2%	6%	9%	15%	21%	23%	23%	23%	25%	28%	34%	35%	79%

Source: UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey (UKCESS) 2013