



# Skilled for Work

**A survey of the literacy,  
numeracy and computer skills  
of UNISON members**

# Background

- ***“People with inadequate literacy skills earn on average 11% less than their better skilled colleagues, whilst people with inadequate numeracy skills earn on average 6% less”.***
- ***“Poor basic skills among the workforce have significant consequences for business. Low levels of literacy and numeracy result in poor customer service (40%) and lower productivity (34%).”***
- ***“Too many young people in the UK fail to gain the basic, employability and lower skill levels needed to progress in work. As a result, too few adults possess the skills to succeed in tomorrow’s labour market.”***

# Focus and Methodology



# Focus

- **Skills, confidence, attitudes and needs of UNISON members in relation to literacy, numeracy and computers**
  - *Literacy includes reading, writing, speaking and listening. At work this can be reading signs, posters, union information, emails or reports, taking part in meetings or writing emails or messages.*
  - *Numeracy includes everyday maths skills. At work this can be estimating time, using money, completing timesheets, measuring, understanding payslips, working out mileage allowance or calculating annual leave.*
  - *Computer skills include writing emails, word processing, using spreadsheets and using the Internet to find information.*

# Methodology

- **Mixed methods approach**
- **Quantitative survey of UNISON members**
- **Discussion group with UNISON activists and staff**

# Who responded?

- **Over 27,000 responses – 2% of the 1.3 million UNISON members**
- **Seventy one per cent of survey respondents are female and 29 per cent are male, roughly equivalent to the gender profile of UNISON members overall.**
- **Eighty-nine per cent of both survey respondents and UNISON members identify themselves as being white.**
- **A slightly higher proportion of survey respondents, than UNISON members, identify themselves as being of ‘other’ ethnic origin.**

# Profile of respondents and UNISON members

**Table 1: Profile of survey respondents and UNISON members**

		UNISON Skills for Life survey respondents*	UNISON members
<b>Gender</b>	Male	29%	31%
	Female	71%	69%
<b>Ethnic origin</b>	White	89%	89%
	Other	8%	6%
	No response	2%	5%
<b>Service Group</b>	Energy	2%	2%
	Healthcare	19%	33%
	Higher Education	10%	3%
	Local Government	41%	58%
	Police and justice	5%	3%
	Water, Environment and Transport	2%	1%
	Community	6%	-
Unsure	17%	-	
<b>Working hours per week</b>	Less than 16	2%	6%
	16-35	25%	36%
	35+	72%	55%

# Who responded?

- **Survey respondents are less likely than UNISON members overall to be working in healthcare and local government, and more likely to be working in higher education. Some of the differences may be explained by the 17 per cent of survey respondents who said that they were unsure about which service group they belong to.**
- **Survey respondents are more likely to work full-time than UNISON members overall. Seventy-two per cent of survey members work 35 hours or more compared with just 55 per cent of UNISON members.**

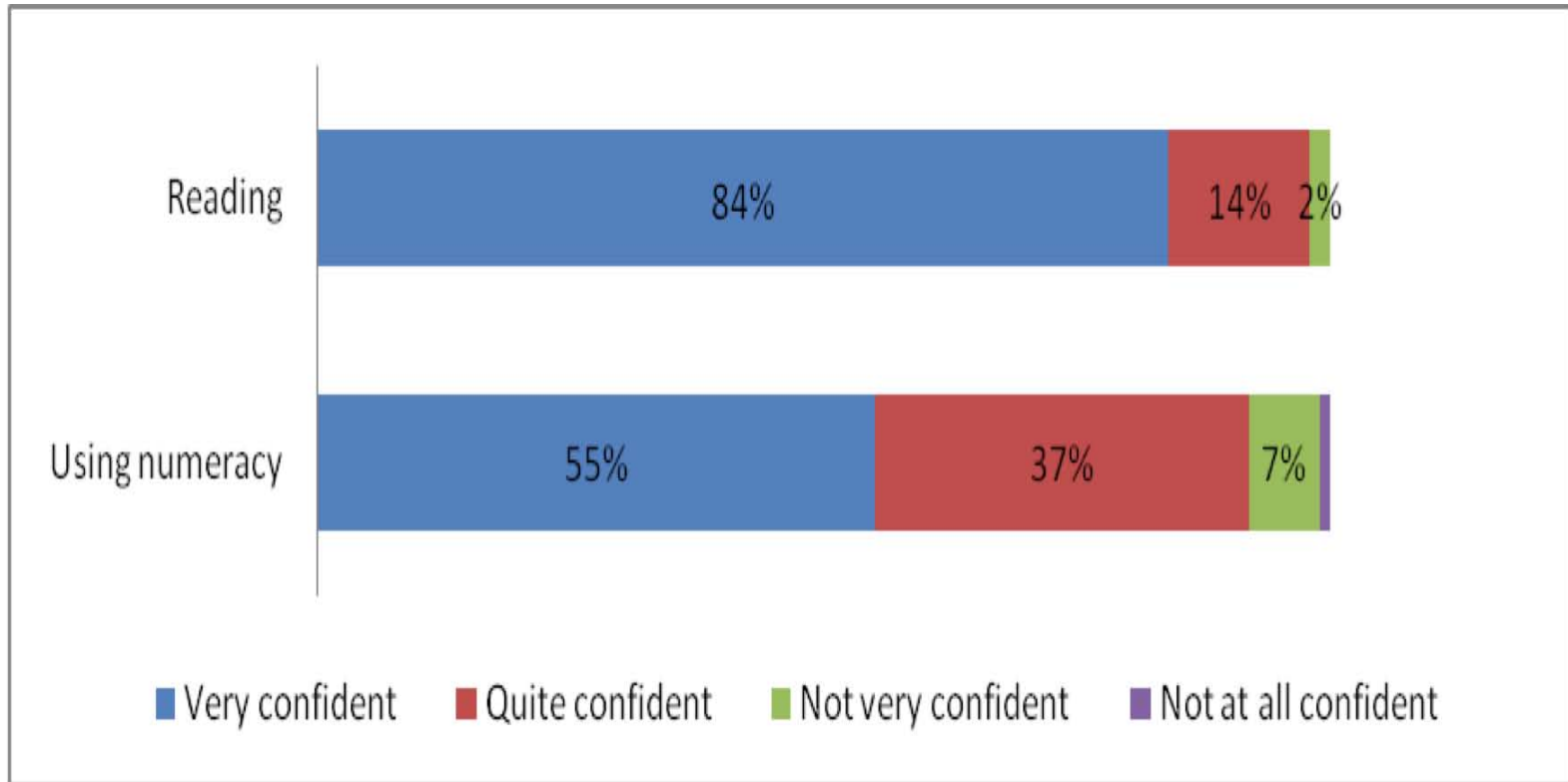
# Profile of survey respondents

- **Three-quarters of survey respondents are aged 40 and over**
- **Only 7 per cent describe themselves as having a disability**
- **90 per cent work in the public sector; 8 per cent in the private sector and 3 per cent in the voluntary sector**
- **The sample is skewed towards those members with office-based or higher-level occupations, such as professionals (28 per cent), administrators (17 per cent) and managers (12 per cent)**
- **40 per cent left initial education qualified at least to degree level; while fewer than one in ten left with no qualifications or with qualifications below level 2**

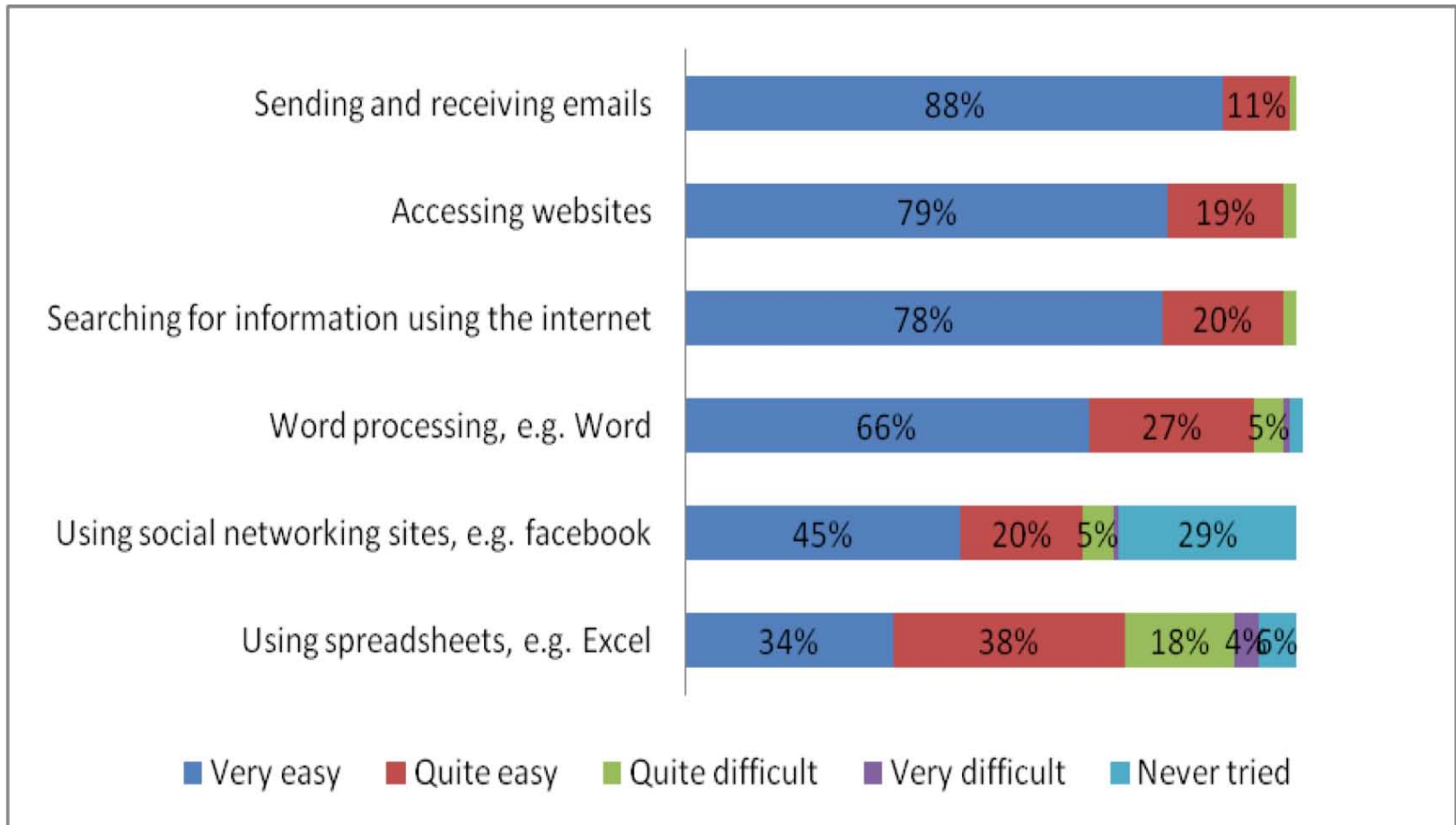
# Profile of respondents: participation in learning since leaving full-time education

Table 4: Profile of survey respondents: Participation in learning since leaving full-time education	
	UNISON Skills for Life survey respondents
On-the-job training, e.g. being shown by others how to do certain tasks	67%
Off-the-job training, e.g. training courses	58%
Vocational courses, e.g. specific for your trade or occupation	55%
Literacy, numeracy or computer learning	36%
Non-vocational courses, e.g. not specifically related to your trade or occupation	26%
Other	12%
I have not taken part in any learning since leaving full time education	4%

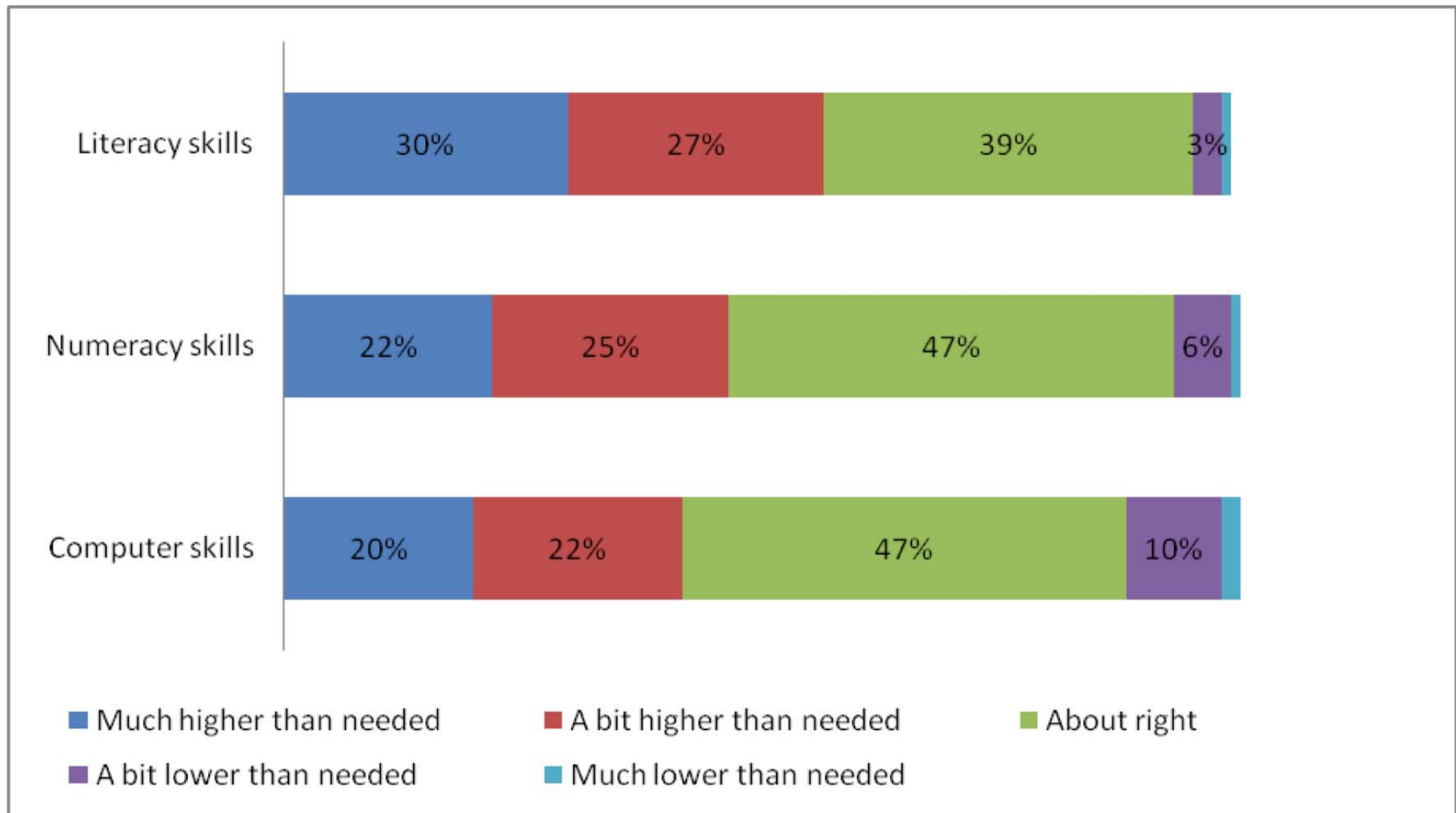
# Confidence in literacy & numeracy skills



# Confidence in computer skills

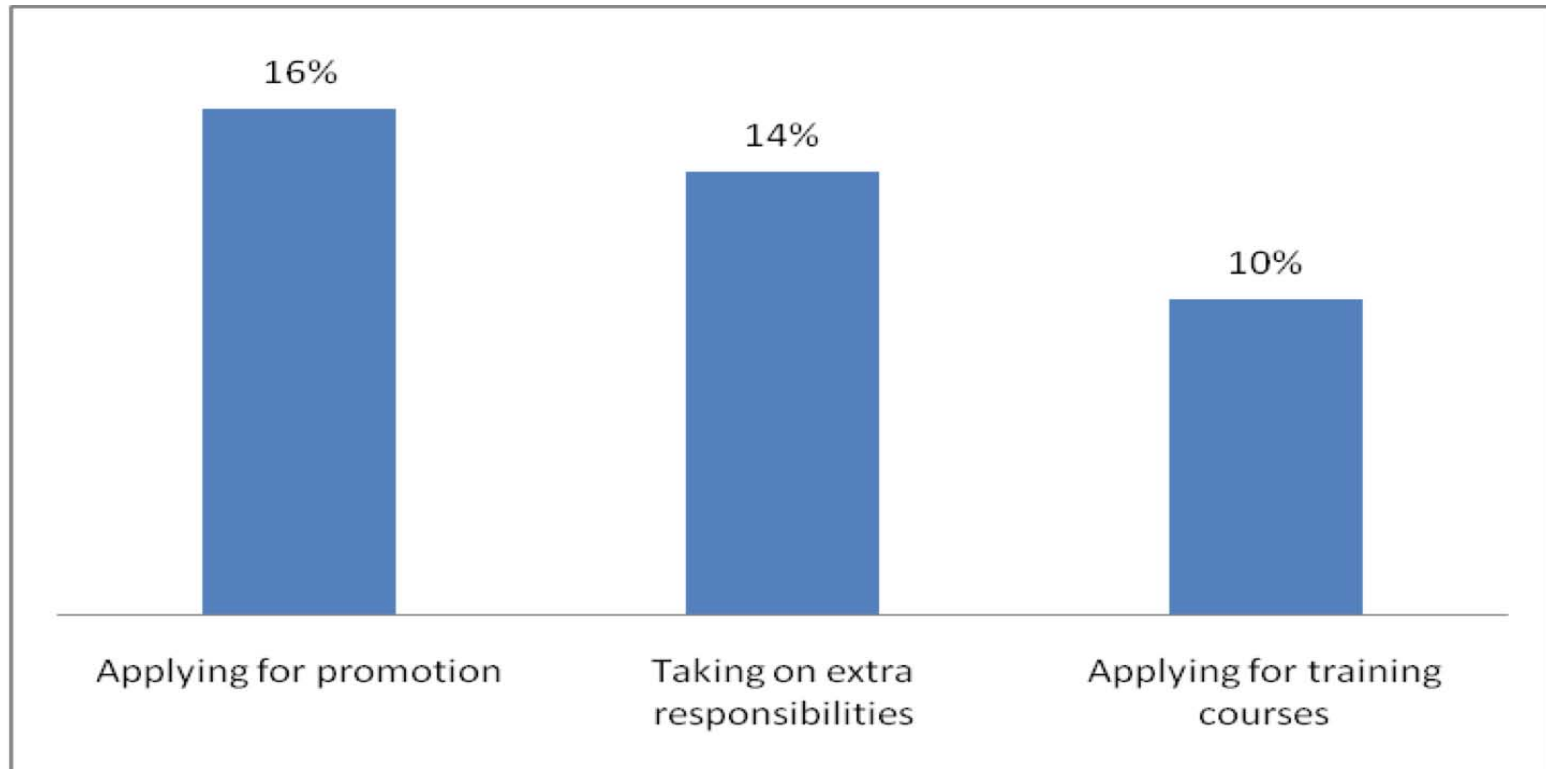


# Literacy, numeracy & computer skills for the workplace

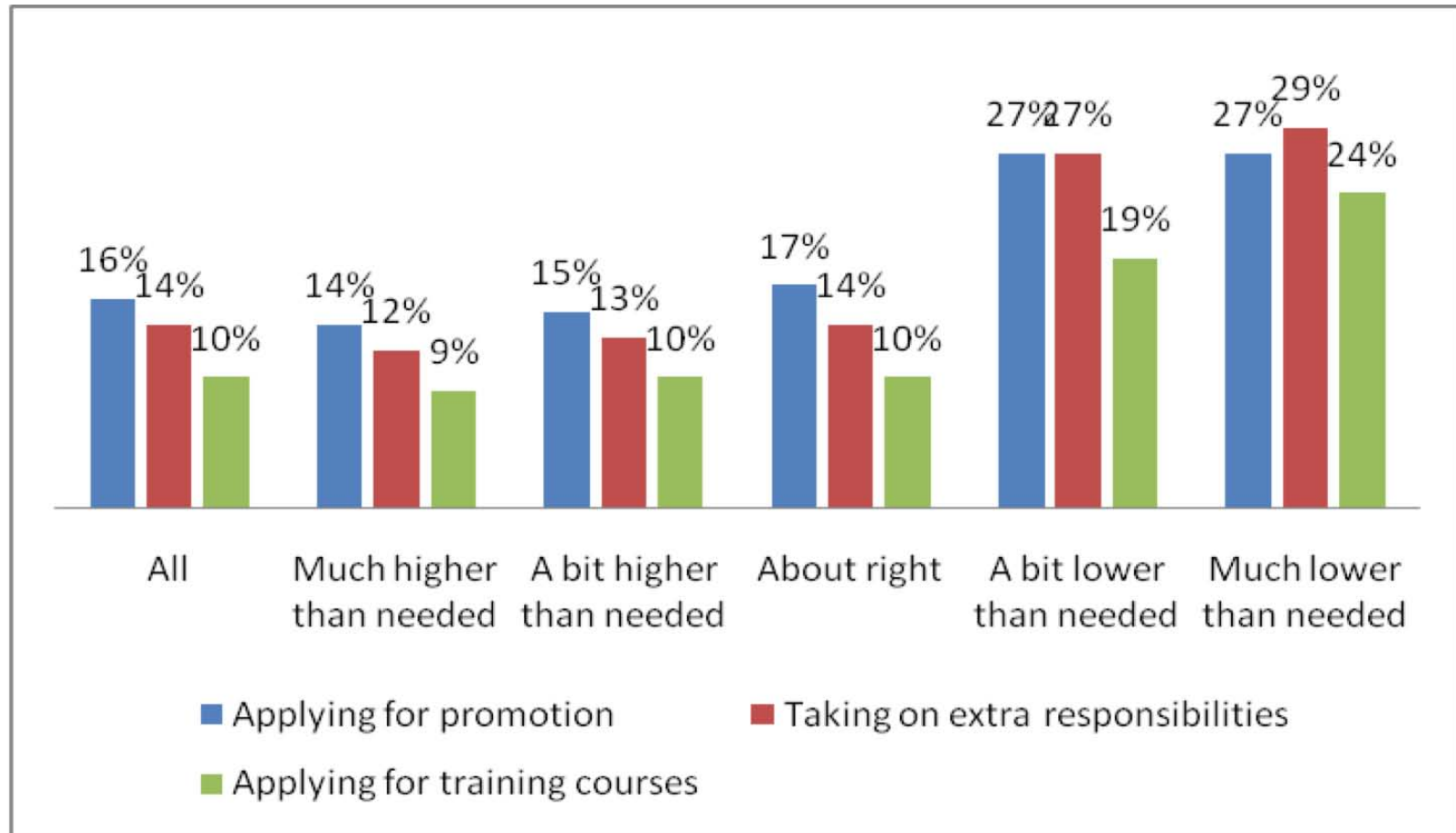


# What's the impact?

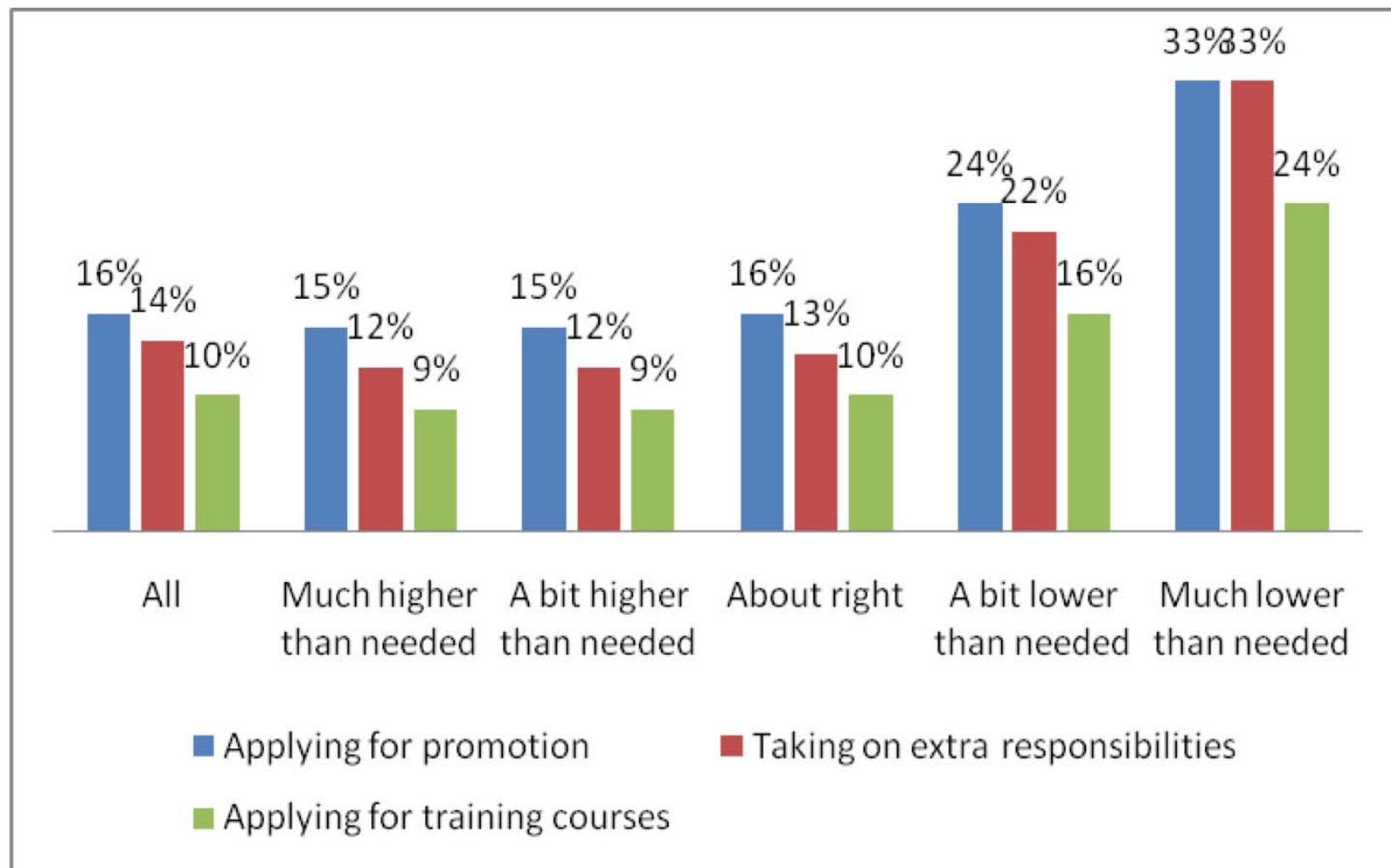
*“Confidence is the belief in one’s own abilities to do something in a specific situation. This belief includes feeling accepted and on equal terms with others in that situation.”*



# Levels of confidence & literacy needed at work



# Levels of confidence & numeracy needed at work



# Implications of the survey findings

- **Profile of the respondents**
- **The vital nature of skills in literacy, numeracy & computing**
- **Appetite for further skills development**
- **A whole organisation approach to literacy, language, numeracy and computing skills**

# Recommendations

- **Raise awareness**
- **Ensure written communication is accessible**
- **Organise learning opportunities**
- **Capitalise on the success of Union Learning Reps**

# Contact details

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