

## Call centres benefit from rise in graduate applicants

Despite a reputation for badly paid work, one in three call centre staff is a graduate, as university-educated workers struggle to find suitable employment



Hang ups: call centres have a reputation for repetitive, badly paid work. Photograph: Christopher Thomond for the Guardian

One in three call centre workers in the UK now has a degree, according to a new survey, reflecting the problems faced by university-educated workers in finding suitable employment.

The report, conducted by recruitment firm [Hays](#) in conjunction with [Top 50 Call Centres for Customer Service](#), said 35% of all call centre workers now have degrees – a 10% increase since last year.

Despite having a reputation for offering repetitive, badly paid work, call centres are an increasingly popular port of call among [graduate](#) jobseekers, with 43% of call centre managers reporting a rise in graduate applications. Earlier this year the [Association of Graduate Recruiters](#)' biannual survey on the state of the graduate jobs market revealed there were on average 69 candidates chasing every job, up from 31 in 2008.

AGR's chief executive, Carl Gilleard, said: "In difficult economic times, graduates are showing flexibility and adaptivity. It is great news for call centres, who are getting added value, but the challenge for them will be holding on to those people when the jobs market improves."

The findings are backed up by another recent survey by recruitment solutions provider [Randstad](#), which claims half of all workers feel their skills are underused by their employers, despite 23% having upskilled during the recession.

During the economic downturn, a third of permanent staff and a fifth of interims and contractors have upskilled to cover additional responsibilities, often because organisations have not hired new staff.

Brian Wilkinson, head of Randstad UK, said: "There is a gap between what organisations think will motivate their key talent to stay with them and what their employees actually say will retain them. The research also showed that a quarter of workers, who are not actively looking, would consider changing employer if something attractive came up."

A separate report conducted by [Gumtree](#) revealed that nearly half of all jobseekers would be prepared to take a pay cut from their previous job, while four in 10 would be happy to take on a more junior role.

Reflecting the anxiety felt by many public sector workers ahead of [anticipated cuts in next month's spending review](#), one in five HR professionals responding to the Gumtree survey said they had seen a surge in applications from those trying to move from the public to the private sector.

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