

WHERE NEXT?

WHAT INFLUENCES THE CHOICES OF WOULD-BE APPRENTICES?



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FOREWORD FROM THE SUTTON TRUST

In December 2022 the Sutton Trust published a piece of research by the London School of Economics which showed that the number of young people doing apprenticeships has plummeted by 30% over the last six years. This is a profound problem facing this country. After over a decade of flatlining growth, we badly need a skills revolution, and apprenticeships must be a central part of it.

I have been an advocate for degree apprenticeships for many years. I have seen first-hand the value apprenticeships can bring, to young people and the economy. Work-based learning can give apprentices the skills they require to succeed in the workplace, and supply employers with the employees they desperately need. They can also be a great driver of social mobility, offering an alternative to the university pathway.

Young people are increasingly won over by this prospect. Our data has been showing that apprenticeships are more and more popular, and today's research confirms that the potential demand for apprenticeships is massive. Breaking down the divide between 'academic' and 'vocational' learning is long overdue.

But supply is not keeping up with demand. The establishment of degree apprenticeships in 2015 was a bold and innovative step. But these opportunities have been increasingly used as professional development for experienced staff already working at large levy-paying employers. Just a small number of higher and degree apprenticeships are open to young people leaving school. They are also often concentrated in London. For the opportunities available, young people face a confusing application process and huge competition for places. This means young people from less well-off homes are being crowded out of the best opportunities.

The data shows that degree apprenticeships have even fewer young people eligible for free school meals than university degrees.

There are three key things we need so apprenticeships can deliver on their promise to young people. First, we need to remove the barriers to application: get the right information to young people and make the process much simpler and more accessible, on a par with the UCAS system. Second, we need to urgently increase the supply of high-quality apprenticeships advertised and targeted at young people. And finally, in order to deliver on social mobility, we need a new culture of widening participation for apprenticeships. Universities have shown the way in recent years, and apprenticeships must follow. Fair access to these opportunities is vital if we are to benefit from transformative change. The Sutton Trust has established our Apprenticeships Summer School in order to take a lead on this issue.

The announcement earlier this year of a partnership between UCAS and the Department for Education to deliver a harmonised apprenticeship application portal is a vital step forward on the first aim. But it is important that portal has a destination. The greatest problem is supply and what we can do about it. Delivering more apprenticeship opportunities is absolutely imperative in the coming years.

I would like to thank UCAS and the authors for their excellent work on this research, and their efforts to promote and widen access to apprenticeships.

Sir Peter Lampl

Founder and Executive
Chairman of the Sutton Trust,
Chairman of the Education
Endowment Foundation



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year, nearly 1.5 million individuals come to UCAS for support in exploring their post-secondary choices, and they have more options than ever before.

In recent years, we have seen demand for apprenticeships grow significantly across our personalised student hub and in-person exhibitions. Today, 40% of students (430,000) interested in undergraduate options are also interested in apprenticeships. Despite this growth in demand, the number of starts for young learners remains low – with the number of Level 4 and above starts for under-19 year olds less than 5,000¹.

The reasons for this significant drop from interest to employment are wide ranging, including availability of suitable options, support in making decisions and financial considerations. In this report, UCAS has tracked the experience of five groups as they progress from initial interest to starting an apprenticeship, and explored where students drop out of the journey. These five groups are:

- ▶ **Those currently interested in an apprenticeship opportunity**
- ▶ **Those previously interested in an apprenticeship opportunity**
- ▶ **Those who have applied for an apprenticeship**
- ▶ **Former applicants who did not pursue an apprenticeship**
- ▶ **Apprentices**

The key findings across this journey are:

- ▶ **Discovery:** Around half (46%) of student respondents considered apprenticeships an option for them while studying for GCSEs or National 5s and thinking about post-16 options, with those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds 6 percentage points more likely to do so (49% vs 43%).

70% of respondents also report having a positive initial perception of apprenticeships – with **applicants** and those **interested** having the most positive initial perception.

- ▶ **Exploration:** 41% of student respondents indicated that they had received the same or more information about apprenticeships than they did university options, with those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds more likely to report hearing more about apprenticeships than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Equally, those students that went on to become **apprentices** report receiving more information about apprenticeships.
- ▶ **Applying:** Generally speaking, respondents had a negative experience of applying for apprenticeships, with 50% of **apprentices** saying their experience of applying was positive, compared to 90% of placed university and college applicants. At present, there isn't a central application service for apprenticeships, meaning that applying for multiple opportunities can be burdensome – and the more opportunities students apply for, the less satisfied they are. Furthermore, we observe disparities in support for students – with 1 in 3 **apprentices** from a lower socioeconomic background receiving no support with their application.
- ▶ **Entry:** The concept of 'earn while you learn' was a popular area of interest for students – with those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds being eight percentage points more likely to cite pay as a top research topic than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (31% vs 23%). While for some, pay can act as a key attraction to becoming an apprentice, for others this can also be a barrier - a quarter (24%) of **former applicants** said that one of the top three reasons why they did not pursue an apprenticeship was because they felt they could not afford to do so.



¹ England Data. See: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>

Amongst the **previously interested** group, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were almost twice as likely to say that affordability acts as a barrier than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (9.3% vs 4.8%).

Furthermore, a common reason for students not entering an apprenticeship was due to availability. For **former applicants**, lack of availability of apprenticeships was in the top three reasons for every region in the UK, and 1 in 3 of the **previously interested** group said that there are 'no apprenticeships in the career I want to go into'.

- ▶ **Experience:** Overall, **apprentices** were positive about their experience, and 63% were likely to recommend this route to family or friends, with those in engineering or business and administration most likely to do so. However, younger apprentices were less likely to recommend this route. In addition, 1 in 3 said their apprenticeship was not what they thought it would be like.

What we see in the journey of students exploring apprenticeships is disparities in the support and experience of students when compared to those exploring their university choices. To achieve equal access to both apprenticeship and university routes, we need to unpack what 'parity' between these two routes looks like – we need to achieve parity in the following five areas:

- ▶ **Ambition:** 1 in 3 students consider university as early as primary school, with advantaged students 40% more likely to do so. However, for apprenticeships, this figure is less than 5% – meaning around one student in the average primary school class². This highlights the aspiration divide.
- ▶ **Access:** Disadvantaged students are more likely to be interested in apprenticeship options, with 46% from the most disadvantaged areas interested in this route, compared to 41% from the most advantaged areas. Furthermore, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (63%) are more likely to have considered apprenticeships while thinking about

post-16 options than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (51%). However, despite this level of interest, we still see significant disparities in entry – with the Sutton Trust reporting that twice as many degree apprentices are from the wealthiest areas compared to the poorest³, indicating disparities in entry by background.

- ▶ **Connection:** Students find it challenging to explore and connect to apprenticeship opportunities. 3 in 4 students find it easy or somewhat easy to find information about applying for university study – compared to 1 in 4 for apprenticeships. Furthermore, those that applied for an apprenticeship found the process arduous as they applied for multiple opportunities, suggesting the current process stifles choice. In contrast, the single application from UCAS promotes choice and provides an overall more positive experience.
- ▶ **Opportunity:** Each year, over half a million students enter full-time undergraduate study, with the entry rate of 18 year olds across the UK ranging from 30% – 41%. However, for apprenticeship opportunities, whilst we see significant demand, the number of starts for young individuals at Level 4 and above is less than 5,000¹, some of which will be existing employees. Furthermore, our report finds a number of students do not pursue an apprenticeship opportunity because they cannot find one in their preferred subject or location.
- ▶ **Award:** 76% of students view university degrees as 'prestigious' compared to just 4% for apprenticeships. This is despite undergraduate courses and Degree Apprenticeships offering the same award.

The need to address the challenges associated with progressing to an apprenticeship, and create this true parity, will only increase over the course of the decade. UCAS projects that we may see **a million higher education applicants in a single cycle by 2030**, double the number seen in 2006 and quarter of a million higher than today. As part of this, we expect to see demand for apprenticeships increase – with over half a million students interested in this route.

During this period of increased demand for post-secondary choices, we will see intensified competition across all routes – including university study and apprenticeships – as students seek to progress with their education and training.

This increasing competition will require some students to think differently about their choices, exploring routes and pathways that they may not have previously considered – including apprenticeships.

Without specific action to drive awareness of apprenticeship opportunities, ensure they

are better understood and made available and accessible, we risk missing a significant economic opportunity.

Apprenticeships hold a key to addressing the challenge presented by the Journey to a Million, to tackle shortage occupation areas and the wider skills gap, all whilst ensuring the increase in applicants does not result in an increase in wasted talent.

² <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>

³ <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/the-recent-evolution-of-apprenticeships/>



RECOMMENDATIONS

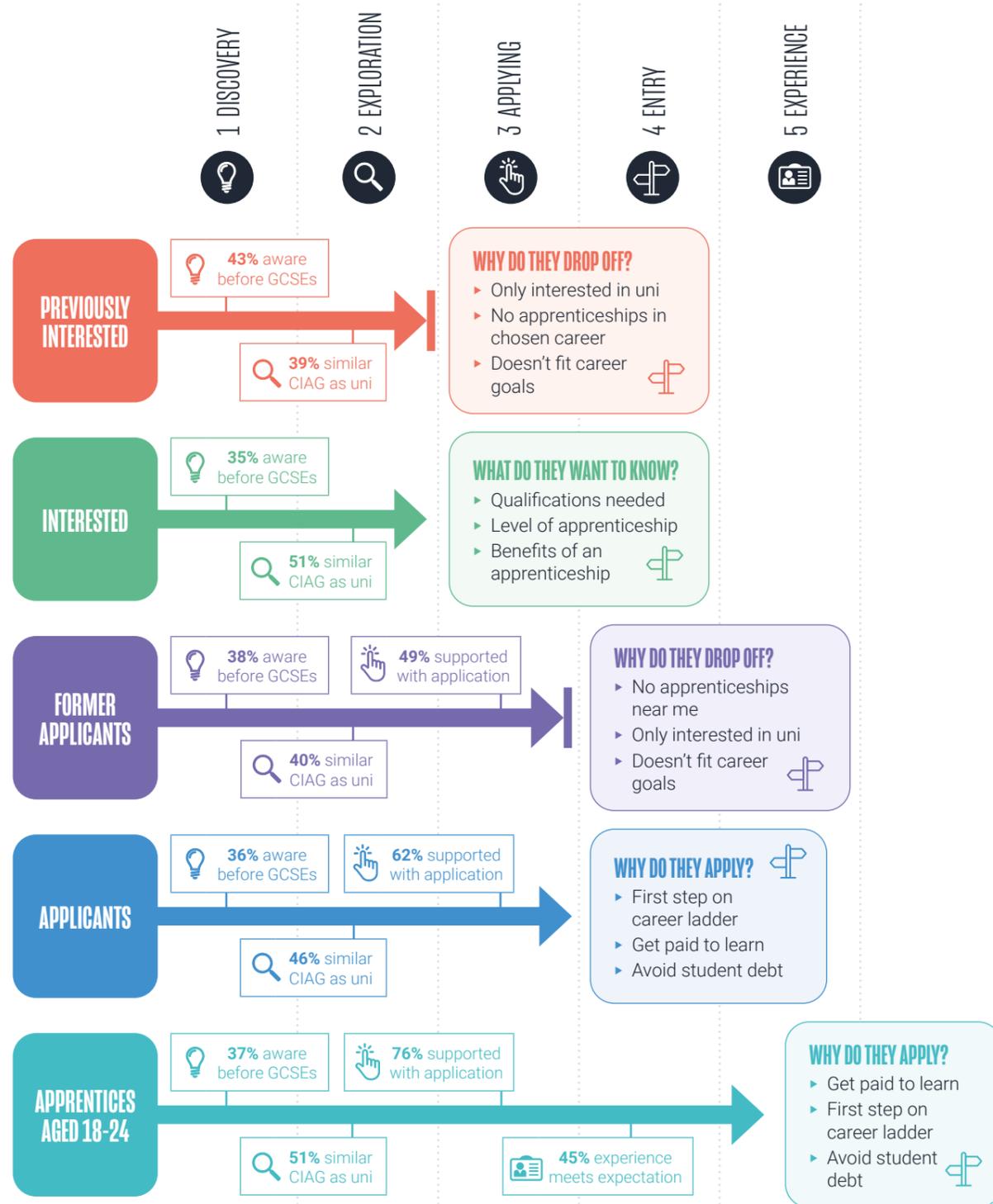
RECOMMENDATION	FOR
<p>Expand apprenticeship provision to accommodate growing demand, which will only increase as a result of the Journey to a Million</p> <p>UCAS has repeatedly highlighted the growing demand for apprenticeships, with 40% of students interested in undergraduate study also interested in apprenticeship options. However, whilst we see this growing demand, sufficient opportunities do not exist for these students to enter this pathway – with less than 5,000 starts at Level 4 and above for under-19 year olds. This suggests a lack of opportunity, and intense competition.</p> <p>This challenge is only going to increase – in 2030, UCAS projects there will be a million higher education applicants. This will likely further increase demand for apprenticeship, with UCAS estimating that over half a million students may wish to follow this route. Therefore, the pressure and demand on this pathway will only increase without a corresponding increase in supply.</p> <p>The growing demand, and demographic increases, mean there is pressing need to expand the range of apprenticeship opportunities available, particularly for young people – with SMEs playing a key role in this expansion.</p> <p>Growing the range of apprenticeship opportunities available spans a range of organisations and government departments. IfATE is well placed to address this issue, in partnership with UCAS and with support from DfE, especially by making the system simpler and supporting employers of all sizes with information and guidance on the right apprenticeship standards for their skills gaps. In short, while UCAS plays that role for young people and adults considering their next step in education and training, IfATE could drive up the supply of apprenticeship opportunities.</p>	<p>UK government departments and regulators responsible for apprenticeships</p> <p>Employers and training providers</p>

RECOMMENDATION	FOR
<p>Mature efforts to support disadvantaged students entering apprenticeships, particularly for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships</p> <p>Individuals from a more advantaged background are significantly more likely to enter a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship, with the Sutton Trust reporting that twice as many degree apprentices are from the wealthiest areas compared to the poorest.</p> <p>In our report we highlight that a greater proportion of disadvantaged students are interested in apprenticeship routes, but they are less supported throughout their journey. Universities and colleges have a range of mature approaches to supporting access and participation, and much of this can be applied to the apprenticeship context.</p> <p>Areas to explore include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A light touch Access and Participation Plan-like model for levy-paying employers – outlining how they will recruit students from a range of disadvantaged backgrounds – with levy-paying employers able to use funds for access and outreach activities. As part of this, employers would publish data on their spend on skills to further promote transparency. ▶ Inclusion of social mobility and widening opportunity as an explicit criterion in any review of the apprenticeships levy ▶ Further promoting the use of contextual information as part of the apprenticeship recruitment journey. ▶ Review of apprentice maintenance support, including the potential for maintenance loans for apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds, mirroring the approach undertaken with Higher Technical Qualifications, and with the introduction of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement. ▶ Further promoting financial support for apprentices via UCAS. For example, increasing visibility of the Apprenticeship care leavers’ bursary, or schemes that support transport costs for apprentices. 	<p>UK government departments and regulators responsible for apprenticeships</p> <p>Employers and representative groups</p> <p>UCAS</p>

RECOMMENDATION	FOR
<p>Support mobility of young people in gaining apprenticeship opportunities</p> <p>One of the most heralded benefits of apprenticeships is that individuals can ‘earn while you learn’. However, whilst this is a benefit to some individuals, we also found that to some students this is a barrier. A quarter (24%) of former applicants said that one of the top three reasons why they did not pursue an apprenticeship was because they felt they could not afford to do so.</p> <p>Furthermore, we also see that availability locally and availability in particular career routes are common reasons for not pursuing apprenticeship opportunities. Three in five (61%) former applicants cited ‘there aren’t any apprenticeships near me’ as a top three reason why they did not pursue an apprenticeship, making it the most common reason for this group.</p> <p>Areas to explore include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reviewing the apprentice minimum wage, with specific focus on whether this could be aligned to the national minimum wage or living wage. ▶ As part of any review of apprenticeship funding, dedicated support for the relocation or travel of apprentices, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to support social justice. ▶ The development and inclusion of maintenance loans for apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds, mirroring the approach undertaken with Higher Technical Qualifications ▶ Capitalising on the potential of apprenticeships as part of the levelling up agenda, incentivising the creation of opportunities in locations where current options are limited. 	<p>UK government departments and regulators responsible for apprenticeships</p> <p>UCAS</p>

RECOMMENDATION	FOR
<p>Achieve parity in the way that students explore and connect to apprenticeship opportunities via UCAS services</p> <p>The findings of our report, and repeated research from UCAS and the Sutton Trust, highlight the disparities in experience for students exploring the apprenticeship pathway compared to university choices, and how this can be influenced by background.</p> <p>In February 2023, UCAS announced an expansion of its apprenticeship offer. From this autumn, UCAS will expand their service so that young people can see more personalised options, including apprenticeships within the UCAS Hub, alongside undergraduate choices. Later in 2024, students will then be able to apply for apprenticeships through UCAS alongside an undergraduate degree application. These enhancements will transform the experience of students taking that next step towards an apprenticeship, and support in addressing many of the challenges identified in this report.</p> <p>This is a significant step towards providing parity of how students explore and connect to these opportunities. To further enhance this, UCAS would recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All apprenticeship vacancies from across the UK are listed on ucas.com, presenting these opportunities to nearly 1.5m people that visit UCAS each year to explore their options, significantly enhancing the visibility of vacancies. ▶ Employers and sector bodies engage with UCAS on the development and enhancement of the apprenticeship service, particularly our matching service – which will provide a data-led and personalised method for targeting potential apprentices, especially from widening participation backgrounds. ▶ UCAS, along with IfATE, Department for Education and equivalents across the UK to undertake an ongoing communications and training campaign as part of the roll out of the enhanced service, with the aim of building further confidence amongst the teaching and careers community when advising on apprenticeship opportunities. <p>Furthermore, as the service matures, UCAS will have greater insight regarding the progression of students across a wider range of destinations. UCAS would welcome the opportunity to work with organisations such as the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), IFATE and Skills Development Scotland to tell a deeper story regarding the progression of students across the full range of post-secondary destinations.</p>	<p>UK government departments and regulators responsible for apprenticeships</p>

THE APPRENTICESHIP DECISION MAKING JOURNEY



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE CURRENT JOURNEY OF AN APPRENTICE?

In May 2021 UCAS published **'Where Next? Improving the journey to becoming an apprentice'**. In this we looked at the experience of students exploring apprenticeships - building on our previous 'Where Next?' report, which identified that 1 in 3 students do not receive information about apprenticeship opportunities.

Through this research, we identified that the apprenticeship journey is less transparent and supported than its undergraduate equivalent - almost a third (31%) of students said it was 'very easy' to access information about higher education compared to just 6% who said the same about apprenticeships, with UCAS cited as the most common source of information for both.

We also saw that there is work still to do to articulate the benefits of apprenticeships. The word 'prestigious' was associated with university degrees by 76% of those polled

compared to just 4% for apprenticeships – a further 14% of respondents rated them equally prestigious. Equally, 87% of applicants think a university degree is important to getting a job, compared to 57% who think the same for apprenticeships. Only 8% associated doing an apprenticeship with leading to a good job.

What is the current demand for apprenticeships?

As of April 2023⁴, there were 713,000 individuals undertaking an apprenticeship of any level in England, with a decline from c. 900,000 in the early 2010s - including a 60% decline in Intermediate Apprenticeships. Participation has seen a small increase in recent years, with a 4% increase seen in 2021/22. The 349,200 starts reported for the 2021/22 academic year are 8.6% higher than the 321,400 reported for 2020/21, and 8.3% higher than the 322,500 reported for 2019/20.

⁴<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>

In Scotland, there were 30,689 starts⁵ for apprenticeships in the 2021/22 academic year, a slight increase from 28,666 starts in 2017/18 - the first year that the Graduate Apprenticeship route was available. There were 20,040 starts⁶ in Wales in the 2021/22 academic year – down from a height of 31,360 starts in 2017/18 and below levels seen in the early 2010s of c. 28,000, with the decline in Level 2 apprenticeships over the past decade contributing to this. Finally, starts in Northern Ireland were 7,748⁷ in the 2021/22 academic year, an increase from the 6,393 starts in 2018/19, the first year where Higher Level apprenticeships were offered in HEIs.

Higher Level Apprenticeships in England have continued to see growing demand, with starts are now at their highest level - today, nearly

1 in 3 apprenticeship starts is at Higher level, compared to 1 in 25 in 2014/15. Starts in Degree-Level Apprenticeships (Level 6 and 7) have grown to 43,200 – representing 12.4% of all starts in 2021/22. However, despite this growth, there remains significant disparities in participation – with The Sutton Trust reporting that over half of those undertaking these opportunities are aged over 25, and twice as many degree apprentices are from the wealthiest areas compared to the poorest⁸.

⁵ Data available on www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk

⁶ <https://www.gov.wales/apprenticeship-learning-programmes-started-interactive-dashboard>

⁷ Data available on www.economy-ni.gov.uk/

⁸ <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Degree-Apprenticeships-Levelling-Up.pdf>

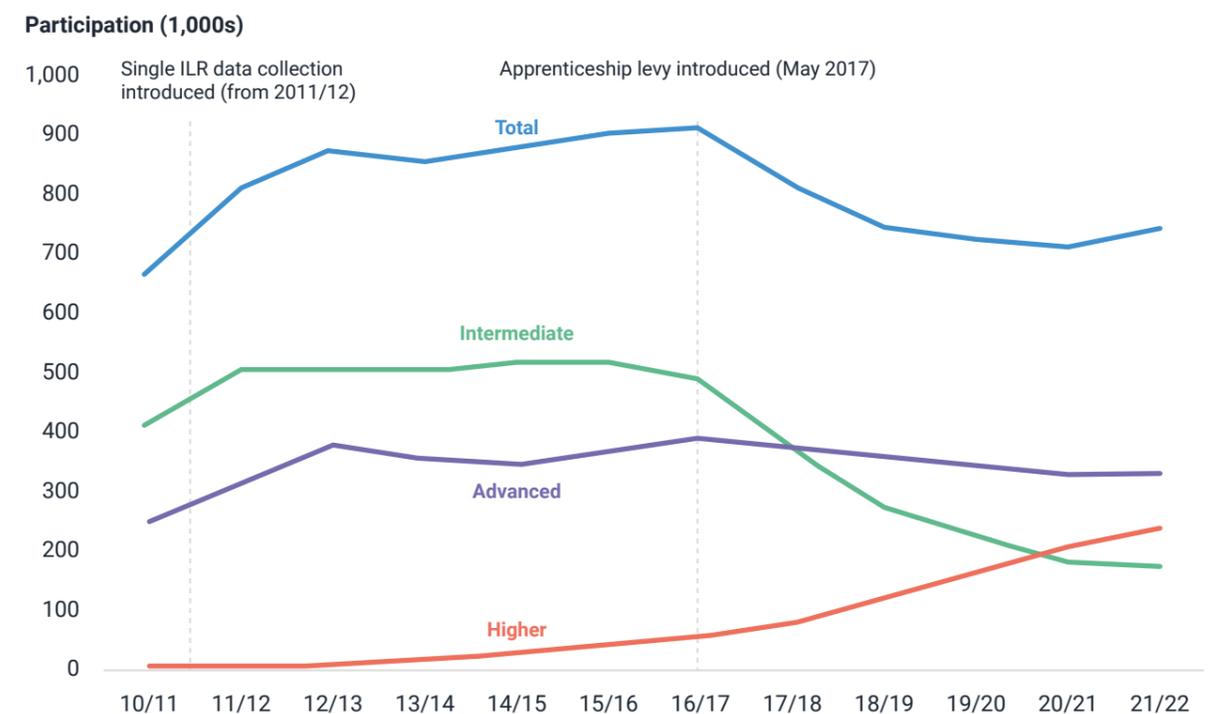


Figure 1: All age apprenticeship participation by level in England



In Scotland, those from the top three least deprived declines by SIMD are 35% are more likely to enrol on Graduate Apprenticeships than the top three most deprived, and for Modern Apprenticeships this figure stands at 34% - although Foundation Apprenticeships are accessed equally across SIMD deciles.

Similar data however is not captured for apprentices in Wales and in Northern Ireland, data around social disadvantage is only available for the small numbers who are undertaking Higher Apprenticeships.

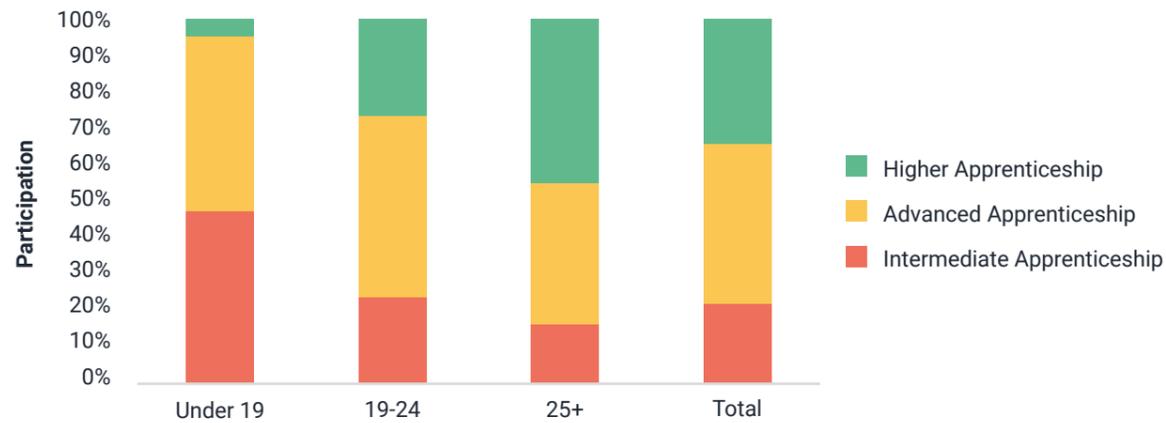


Figure 2: Apprenticeship participation by age and level, England, 2021/22 academic year

As of April 2023, there were 126,000 young people (under 19) participating in apprenticeships in England, making up around 17% of all participants. Around 6,000 of these are undertaking a higher apprenticeship, and the remaining evenly split between Intermediate and Advanced. Similarly, around half of 19-24 year olds participating in apprenticeships do so at Advanced level (131,000). However, this group are significantly more likely to be undertaking a Higher level apprenticeship – with 27% of this group training at that level. Through understanding the age of participants, we can infer the type of support they may

have readily available to them – such as an independent careers adviser, or the HR department at their current employer.

In Scotland, 43% of Graduate Apprenticeship enrolments are aged 24 and under, with 42% of Modern Apprentice enrolments in this age bracket. The proportion of those 24 and under in Wales studying Foundation Apprenticeships is 62%, Level 3 Apprenticeships is 48% and Higher Apprenticeships is 14%. In Northern Ireland, 84% of Level 2 and 3 Apprenticeships are undertaken by those 24 and under, and 73% of Higher Level Apprenticeships.

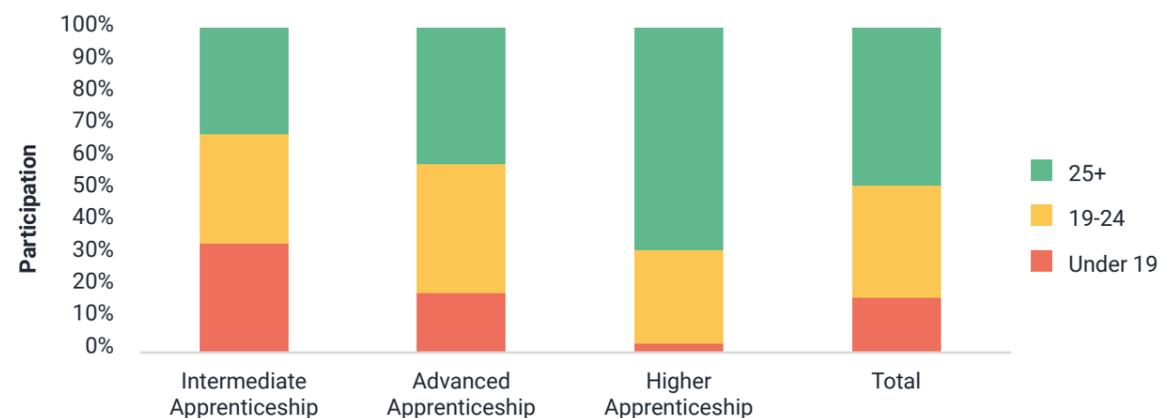


Figure 3: Apprenticeship participation by level and age, England, academic year 2021/22

We consistently see individuals from more advantaged backgrounds undertake Higher apprenticeships in England, supporting previous findings from the Sutton Trust.

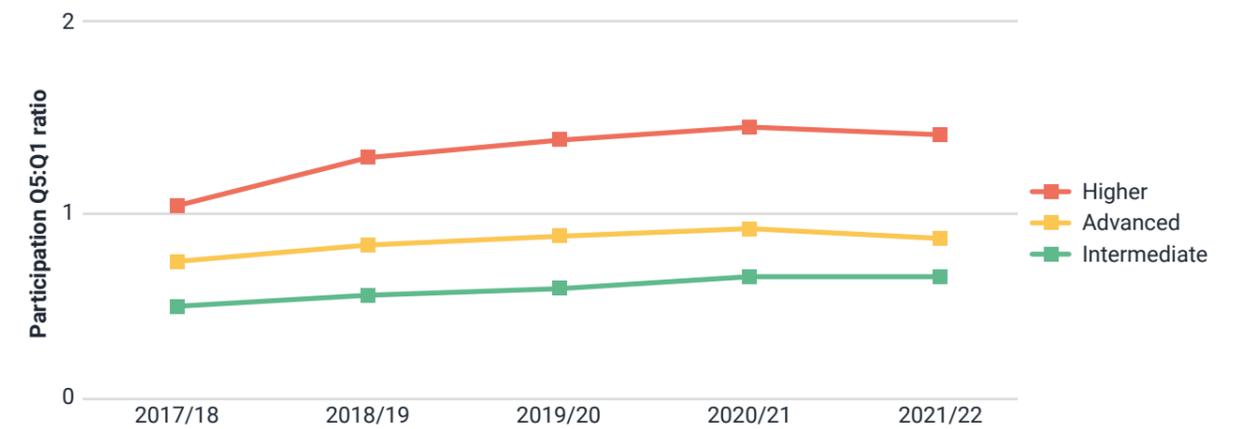


Figure 4: Ratio of apprenticeship participants from the most and least deprived areas (IMD) by academic year and level, England

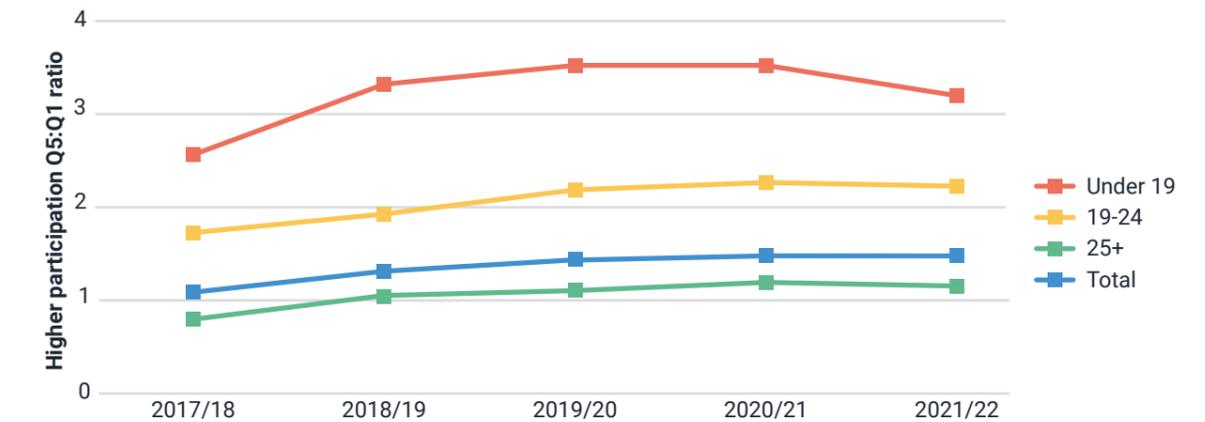


Figure 5: Ratio of Higher apprenticeship participants from the most and least deprived areas (IMD) by academic year and age, England

Demand by subject in England is largely driven by two areas – Health, Public Services and Care; and Business, Administration and Law. In 2021/22, these two areas accounted for 56% of Apprenticeship starts. However, it is Business, Administration and Law that is most common amongst Higher Apprenticeships, accounting for 42% of starts. Information and Communication is the most common STEM subject, accounting for nearly 10% of total starts.

In Wales, 35% of apprenticeships across all levels are in Healthcare and Public Services, with no other sector above 10%. No sector dominates starts in Scotland – with Construction and the Built Environment having the highest percentage of starts at 17%. Similarly in Northern Ireland there is no sector which accounts for a large proportion of starts.

Who is interested in apprenticeships?

UCAS continues to see growing demand for apprenticeship opportunities, with over 40% of individuals interested in undergraduate study also interested in apprenticeship opportunities.

In 2023, 430,000 students expressed an interest in apprenticeship opportunities via UCAS – a 180% increase since 2021. Furthermore, the use of apprenticeship content on ucas.com and our current Career Finder service continues to grow year-on-year, as does engagement at our national exhibitions. The message from students is clear – they want to know more about apprenticeships as they assess the full range of choices available to them.

However, as can be seen above, the number of starts available to these students is significantly less.

When looking at where this interest is – we see that 56% of students interested in studying a social studies related course (110,000) are interested in following an apprenticeship route, along with 46% of those interested in a business-related course (73,000).

These students are more likely to be from areas with the least participation in higher education: 46.3% from the most disadvantaged areas were interested in apprenticeships, compared to 40.9% from the most advantaged areas.

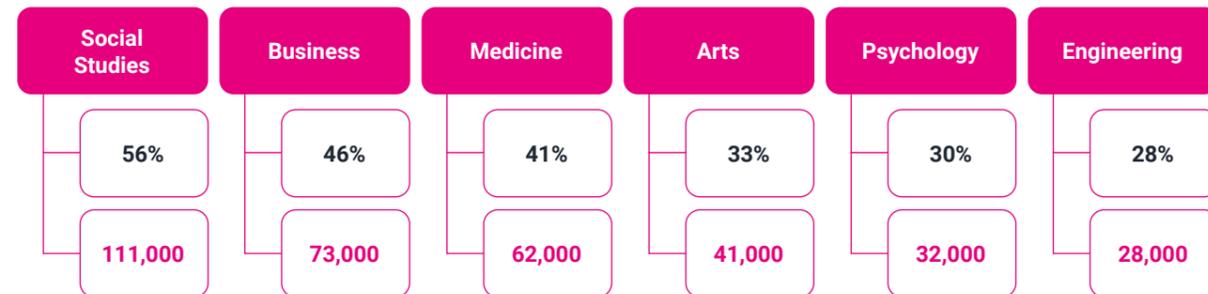


Figure 6: Percentage of students interested in apprenticeship opportunities by course

What is the future journey of an apprentice?

In February 2023, UCAS announced an acceleration of its apprenticeship ambitions. From this autumn, UCAS will build on its existing offer, expanding their service so that young people can see more personalised options, including apprenticeships. Later in 2024, students will then be able to apply for apprenticeships through UCAS alongside an undergraduate degree application.

The plans will help put technical and vocational education on an equal footing with traditional academic routes. By opening up the service to apprenticeship opportunities, thousands more young people will benefit from a wider choice of high-quality options.

Employers will also benefit from better reach to the right applicants and talent for their vacancies, and the ability to manage their apprentice recruitment process.

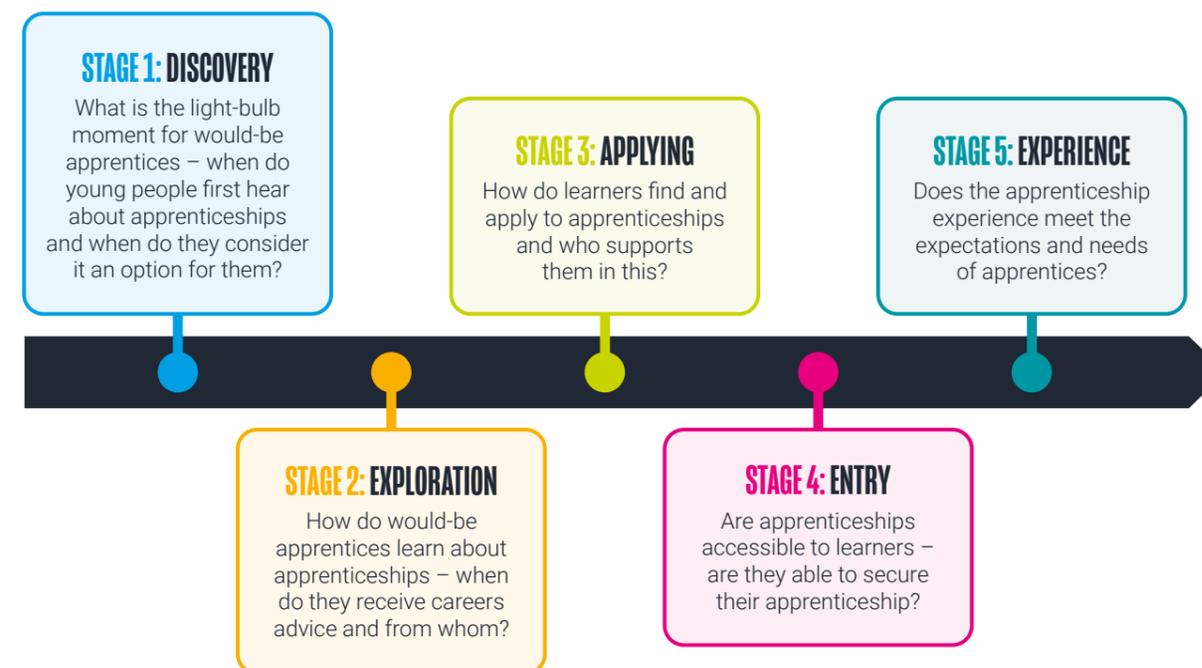
The current climate means that bringing parity of experience is essential for students. UCAS has projected that this decade could see a million higher education applicants in a single cycle, with a growing 18-year-old cohort making the largest contribution. This increasing demand will heighten competition across the full range of post-secondary choices, including apprenticeships, making choice more critical. Given this increased competition, it is vital that students are fully aware of all their choices and are able to make the best decision for them.





INTRODUCTION

When undertaking this research, UCAS has explored the apprentice and student journey for a range of students that achieve different outcomes. The journey is split into five key decision points:



This report seeks to understand the above questions, with a particular focus on how would-be apprentices from different backgrounds and with different characteristics are able to navigate the apprenticeships journey.

To understand the answers to the questions above, we examined the following groups:

1. Students who are currently interested in apprenticeship opportunities, but not yet at the point of applying and therefore still considering their options. This group is known as the **interested** group.
2. Students who told us they were interested in apprenticeships previously, but have now decided they aren't interested in pursuing apprenticeships as a route going forward – the **previously interested** group

3. Students who told us they were interested in apprenticeships and are now at the point of applying or have already begun making applications – the **applicant** group
4. Students who told us they were interested in apprenticeships, had made applications but were unsuccessful, and are now not pursuing apprenticeships as a route – the **former applicant** group
5. Individuals who are currently undertaking an apprenticeship – the **apprentices**

In this report we refer to groups 1-4 together as students, and all of our survey respondents (groups 1-5) as either learners or respondents

Audience profiles

Interested		Applicant		Apprentice	
Total	1,200	Total	450	Total	1,020
18 and under	76%	18 and under	72%	Under 25	18%
Under 25	93%	Under 25	91%	Under 45	75%
Female	58%	Female	53%	Female	55%
IMD Q1-Q2	47%	IMD Q1-Q2	45%	C2DE	25%
London	19%	London	26%	London	19%
North West	14%	North West	11%	North West	10%
East Midlands	6%	East Midlands	4%	East Midlands	8%

Previously interested		Former applicant	
Total	2,190	Total	390
18 and under	72%	18 and under	46%
Under 25	93%	Under 25	80%
Female	63%	Female	61%
IMD Q1-Q2	39%	IMD Q1-Q2	51%
London	14%	London	17%
North West	10%	North West	14%
East Midlands	6%	East Midlands	6%

Our four student groups, the **interested**, **applicant**, **previously interested** and **former applicant** see a broadly similar profile – although our **former applicants** are more likely to be older. Our **applicant** group is more likely to be from London and more likely to be Male than our other student cohorts.

Looking at our **apprentice** cohort, we see a much higher proportion of those above 25, 82% in comparison with our student groups which range from 20% to 7%. Hence, in much of the analysis below we focus in on the 18-24 age group for **apprentices**, as their experience in researching and applying to

apprenticeships will be most comparable to our student cohorts. Whilst not directly comparable, our **apprentice** cohort appears to be more likely to come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds than our **student** cohorts - 75% in ABC1 social grades, in comparison to around 50-60% of our **student** cohort from IMD Q3-5.

We have been careful to ensure that we look at the breakdown of those in higher and lower socioeconomic backgrounds within each cohort throughout the report.



STAGE 1: DISCOVERY

Awareness and Lightbulb Moments



- ▶ Students and apprentices are a lot less likely to have considered apprenticeships an option for them by age 11 than university
- ▶ Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are 12 percentage points more likely to consider apprenticeships an option for them at the point of choosing their post-16 options
- ▶ Regions that have the lowest level of progression to higher education have the highest levels of awareness of apprenticeships at an early age
- ▶ Initial perceptions about apprenticeships tend to be positive and improve over time

When do learners first hear about apprenticeships?

Looking at the start of the 'apprenticeships journey' - the point where learners first hear about apprenticeships and initially start considering their options - we found that only 6% of students and 8% of **apprentices** had heard about apprenticeships by age 11. By contrast, **UCAS research** has shown students become alert to higher education from an early age – with one in three considering higher education as early as primary school.

When looking at the **student** audience, we found that almost half (42%) of young respondents had heard of apprenticeships by the time they were choosing their GCSE or National 5 options⁹ - with students from a lower socioeconomic background less likely to do so (39%) compared to their more advantaged peers (45%).

We also note a difference in awareness by gender, with men (45%) more likely to be alert to apprenticeships at this point compared to women (40%). Differences by gender is a consistent theme throughout this report – whilst we have seen more females undertake apprenticeships in recent years, males make up the majority of participants (largely due to participation in Intermediate apprenticeships)¹⁰.

⁹ Proportions of total responses excluding "Don't know/I can't remember" responses.

¹⁰ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>

We also observe a large contrast by region of the UK, with only 31% of those from London hearing about apprenticeships by this point - in contrast to 74% in Scotland and 54% in Wales, showing the success of early engagement on apprenticeships in the devolved administrations¹¹. Whilst London has the lowest level of awareness, it does have the highest entry rate into higher education. Conversely, the South West has the highest level of awareness – an area which also traditionally has one of the lowest progression rates to higher education¹².

It might have been expected that those individuals who went on to become apprentices may have had an earlier first exposure to apprenticeships to influence their decision. However, this is not what we see - at the point of making GCSE or National 5 choices, 37% of **apprentices** aged 18-24 had heard of apprenticeships, which is broadly similar to the **interested** and **applicant** groups (both 38%), and the **former applicant** group (41%).

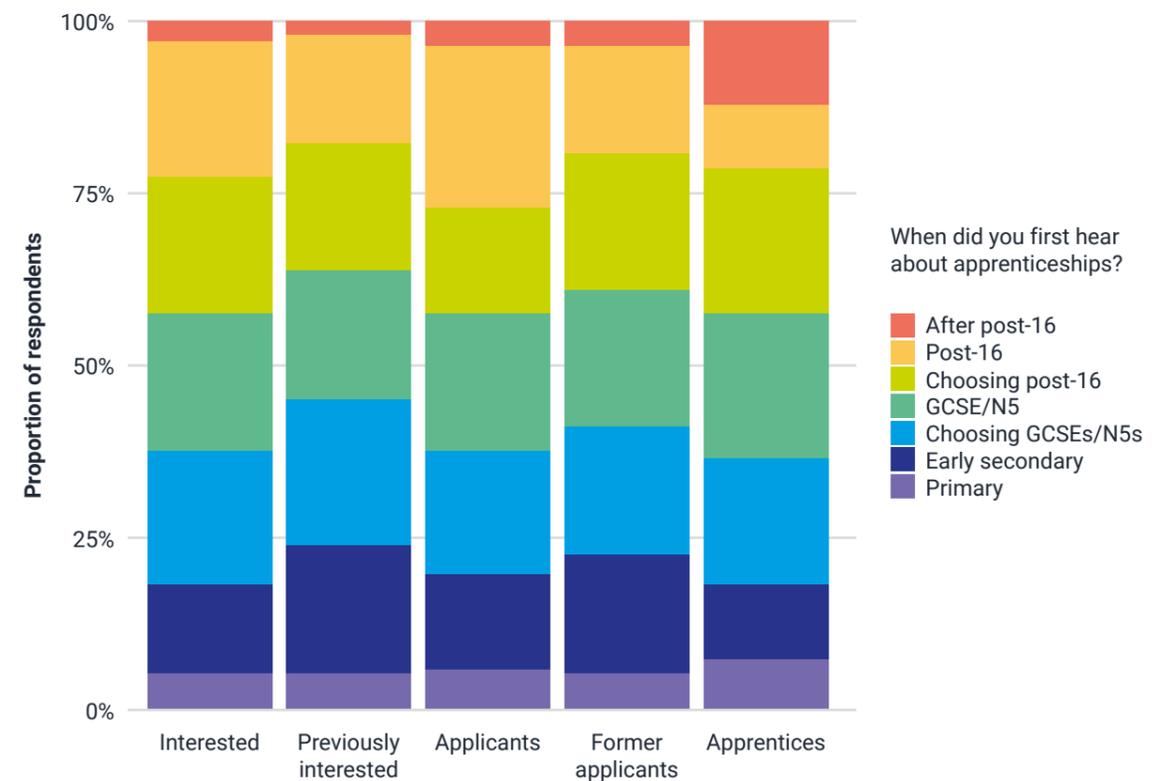


Figure 7: Proportion of student and apprentice respondents aged 18-24 by when they had first heard of apprenticeships

When do learners first consider apprenticeships an option for them?

We asked those respondents who had started an apprenticeship application, the **applicants**, **former applicants**, and **apprentices**, about the point where they considered apprenticeships as an option for them.

Within these groups, less than 5% (4%, 2% and 2% respectively) considered apprenticeships an option for them by age 11 – again, this

represents a significant difference to awareness around higher education, with **previous UCAS research** finding that the equivalent figure stands at 1 in 3.

¹¹ The total for England is 39% and for Northern Ireland is 48%.

¹² <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-data-resources-2022>

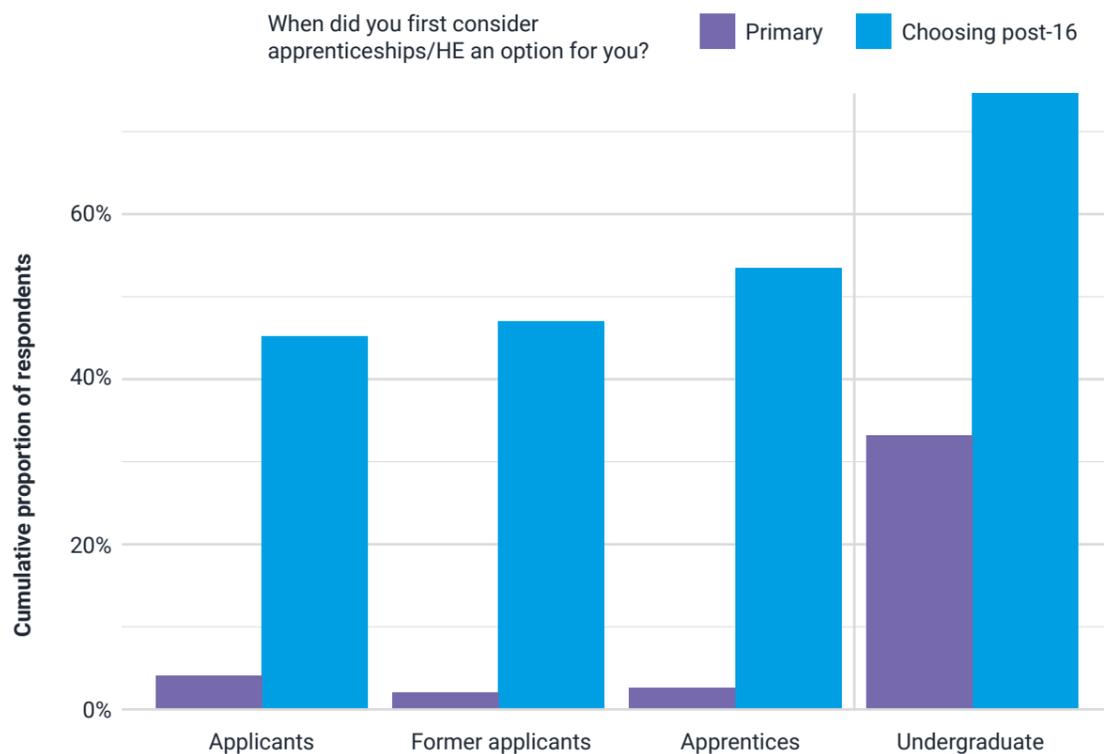


Figure 8: Cumulative proportion of relevant student and apprentice respondents by when they considered apprenticeships an option for them, and the equivalent data for undergraduate students considering HE

Around half (46%) of the student respondents considered apprenticeships an option for them while studying for GCSEs or National 5s and thinking about post-16 options¹³. When looking at **apprentices**, this figure increases to 54%. Therefore, while our apprentice audience were less likely to have first heard about apprenticeships at an earlier stage than our student audience, they were more likely to have considered it an option for them earlier in their discovery journey.

Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (49%) were also more likely to have considered apprenticeships when studying for GCSEs or National 5s and thinking about post-16 options than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (43%). However, we find later in the report that this earlier engagement with apprenticeships for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds does not translate to stronger engagement with careers information and making applications.

60% of **apprentices** currently on Advanced Level apprenticeships (Level 3) and 56% of those in Higher apprenticeships (Levels 4-5) considered apprenticeships an option for them by the time they were thinking about post-16 options – more than for degree apprenticeships (49%), which is perhaps unsurprising considering the recent nature of degree apprenticeships being introduced¹⁴.

Is this first encounter with apprenticeships a positive one?

Initial perceptions of apprenticeships are positive – 70% of student respondents said their first perception was positive or very positive, and 7% said it was negative or very negative. These figures remain similar for people who first heard of apprenticeships by the time they were choosing their GCSEs or National 5s as those who heard of them after this point. Our **applicant** and **interested** students had a more positive first impression (79% and 76% respectively) than **former**

applicants and **previously interested** students (73% and 64% respectively). This indicates that those that have a more positive first interaction with apprenticeships are more likely to progress further down the 'apprenticeships journey'.

Perceptions also improve with time – 65% said their perception has improved since first hearing about apprenticeships, and only

5% say it has got worse, thus showing the value of sustained engagement with careers information, advice and guidance.

¹³ Proportions of total respondents excluding "Don't know/I can't remember" responses.

¹⁴ Excluding those on Scottish apprenticeships which operate under different level groupings.



STAGE 2: EXPLORATION

How do students engage with careers advice around apprenticeships?



- ▶ Previous UCAS research indicates that 1 in 3 students feel they don't receive information about apprenticeships.
- ▶ Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and women are less able to access careers information, advice, and guidance regarding apprenticeships
- ▶ Those that undertook an apprenticeship reported better careers information and advice regarding their route compared to other groups.
- ▶ 3 in 4 students that decided not to pursue an apprenticeship opportunity did not receive support on this decision.
- ▶ Those that receive more information regarding apprenticeships, on par with information about higher education options, are more likely to follow an apprenticeship route.

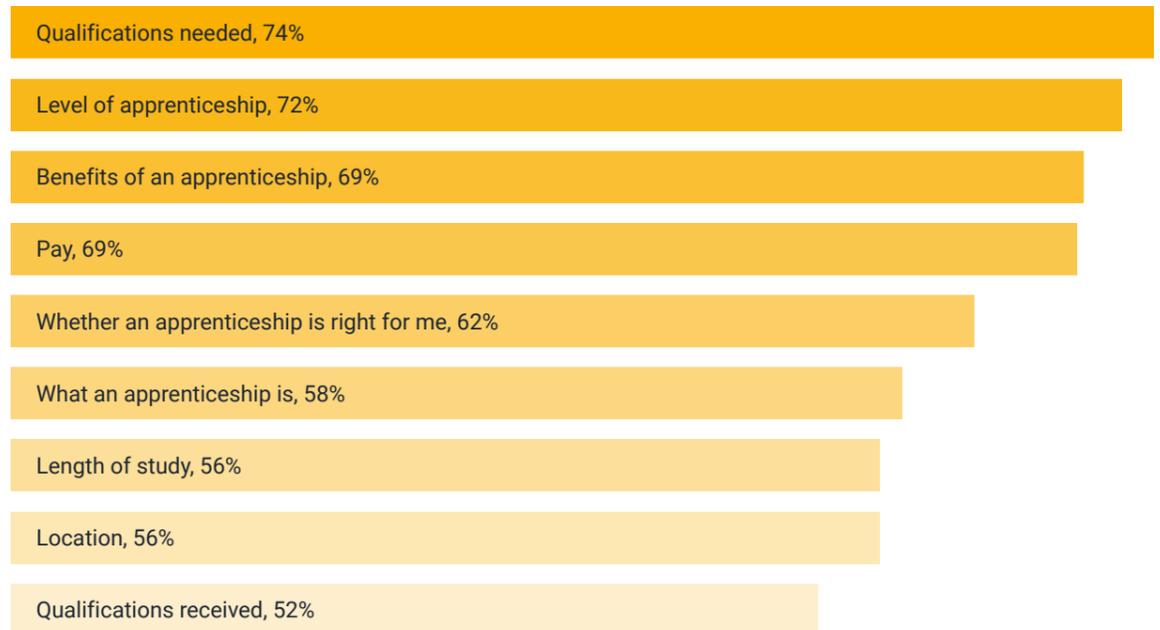
Previous UCAS research has highlighted the challenges faced by some students exploring apprenticeship options. In our 'Where Next? Improving the journey to becoming an apprentice' report, we found that almost a third (31%) of students said it was 'very easy' to access information about higher education compared to just 6% who said the same about apprenticeships, with UCAS cited as the most common source of information for both.

Exploring what happens after the point where learners first engage with apprenticeships, we initially find a positive picture – four in five (79%) student respondents have proactively searched for information about apprenticeships, of which 83% agreed or

strongly agreed that they found the information they were searching for.

Those that gained an apprenticeship were less likely to agree, with 68% reporting they found the information they were searching for. Whilst this could be for a range of reasons, it may be linked to their overall commitment to the pathway – with this audience seeking a more detailed set of information. **Apprentices** from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were even less likely to find the information they were searching for (62%) compared to those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (70%). This disparity in access to careers advice based on background is a theme that runs throughout this section.

The most common topics researched by students were:



Support around careers advice and guidance

What support would-be apprentices have during their apprenticeship discovery journey? Parents and carers were the most common source of influence, with 78% citing some level of influence and 22% reporting that they were the main influence. **Previous UCAS research** explored this further – with parents who had taken an apprenticeship themselves twice as likely to encourage their child to follow

in their footsteps rather than choose an undergraduate degree.

When exploring apprenticeships specifically, all audiences rely heavily on online resources - with 93% citing that information online had some level of influence and 25% reporting it was the main influence. This suggests a significant element of self-serve when exploring this route.

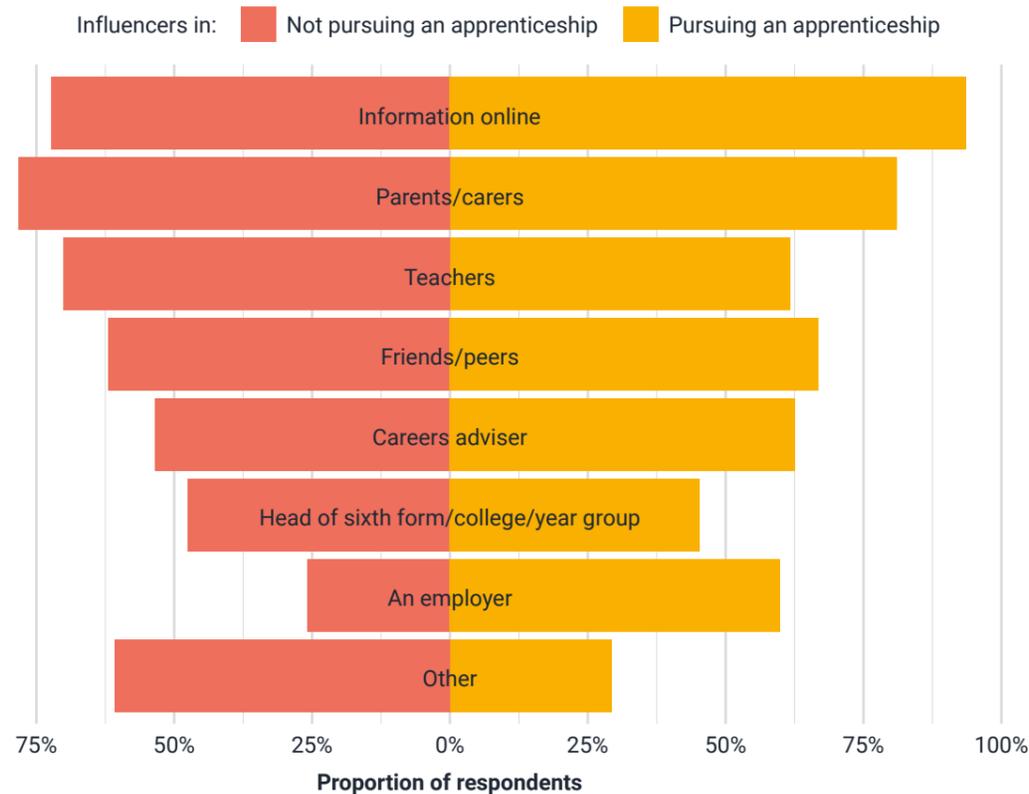


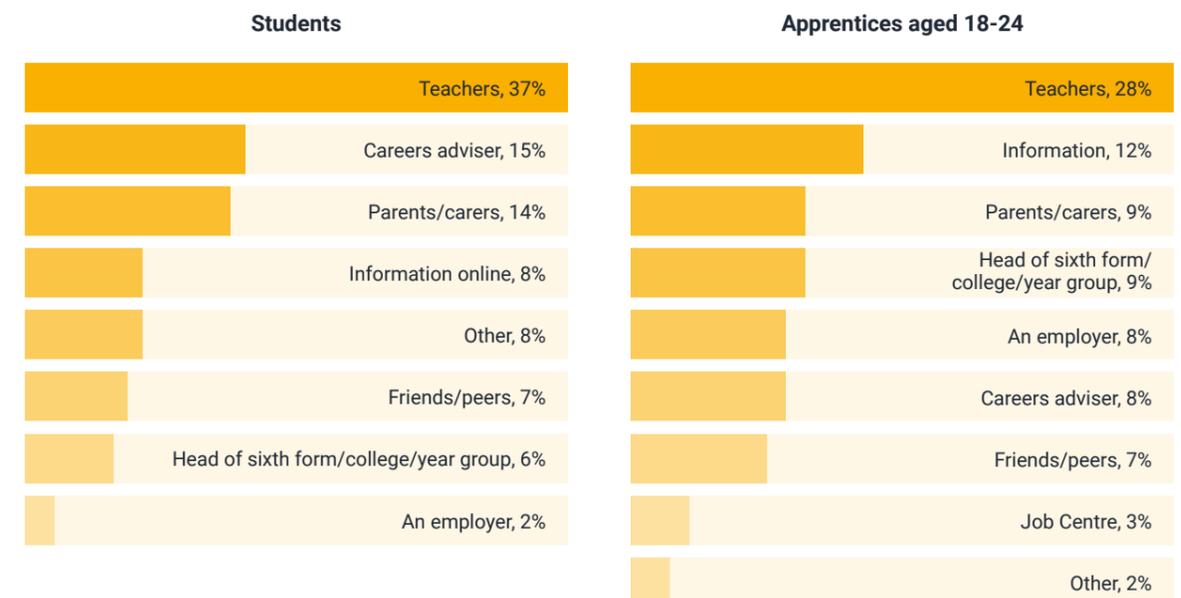
Figure 9: Proportion of student respondents who rated the level of influence on their decision-making as either the main influence, very influential or somewhat influential. 'Other family members' did not appear as an option when asked about considering applying for an apprenticeship, so has been grouped with 'Other'.

We also found that for the **former applicant** group, 12% cite a negative perception from a parent, carer, teacher, or careers adviser as one of the top three reasons they did not pursue the apprenticeships route, along with 7% of the **previously interested** group. It is important to recognise the role these audiences play in advising students, and the need to ensure their understanding of various pathways remains up to date. **Previous UCAS research** shows that nearly 30% of parents did not know you could study an apprenticeship at degree level and one-third of parents were unaware that you could apply for a degree apprenticeship as well as applying for a university undergraduate course.

When looking at those audiences that had not decided to pursue an apprenticeship opportunity - the **previously interested** and **former applicant** groups together - only 23% had advice on their decision not to pursue an apprenticeship. This theme of an overall lack of support and buy-in from key advisers for learners on their apprenticeship journey is explored further in section 3.

Influencers

Previous research has cited UCAS as the most common source of online information for students. However, when discussing their direct influencers, we saw students utilise a range of sources to gain information and insight¹⁵.



What we see is that there is a wide range of influencers with regard to apprenticeships. For **apprentices** of all ages, employer websites are the second most popular source for research (18%), below apprenticeship providers or colleges (22%), and employers are the most significant source of support to find and apply to apprenticeships (26%), above parents and carers (20%). It is important that we recognise

this wide range of influencers as a core part of any approach to apprenticeships information, advice and guidance and that the information they provide is up to date and high quality and independent. This is explored further in the next section.

¹⁵ Excluding 'Don't know' options.



Disparities with information about Higher Education

While we saw in Section 1 that the **apprentice** group were more likely to first hear about apprenticeships at a later point than the **applicant** and **previously interested** group – when asked about the amount of information about apprenticeships received in comparison to information about university, this trend inverts. For the **previously interested** group, 39% say the amount of information they had about apprenticeships at school or college was

the same or more than for university¹⁶, rising to 46% for the **applicant** group, and peaking for current **apprentices** at 56%. While early engagement with apprenticeships is important, receiving equal or more information about apprenticeships as university at school appears a greater factor in helping would-be apprentices along the apprenticeships journey, as illustrated in Figure 10.

¹⁶ Proportions of total respondents excluding "Don't know/I can't remember" responses.

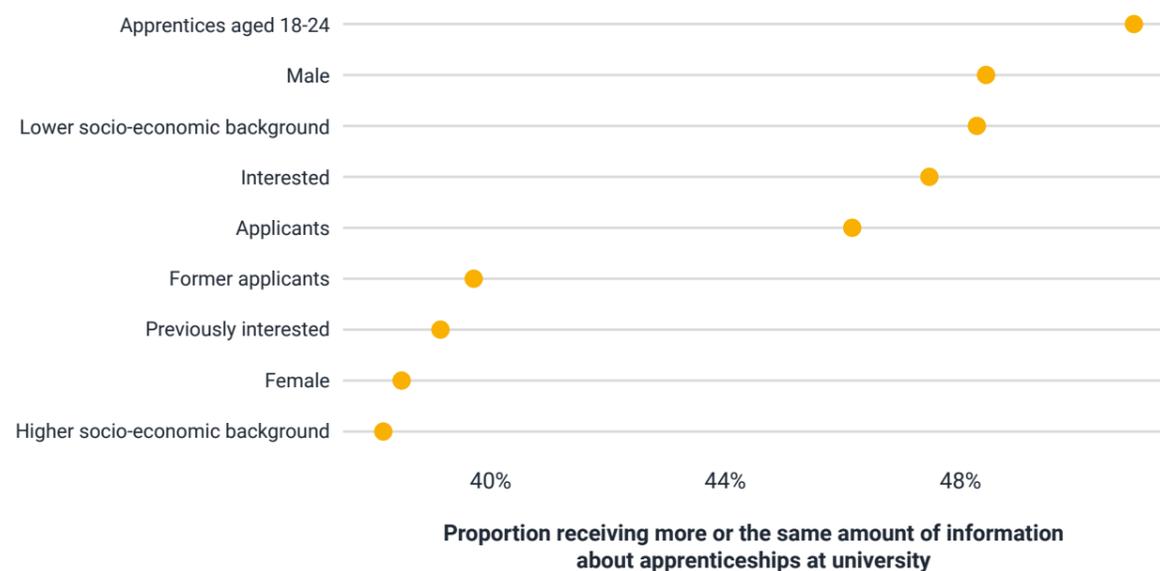


Figure 10: Proportion of respondents receiving more or the same amount of information at school or college about apprenticeships as university. All student respondents except for the 'Apprentices aged 18-24' category.

What is the understanding of apprenticeships?

Previous UCAS research has indicated a lower understanding of apprenticeships compared to undergraduate options - the word 'prestigious' was associated with university degrees by 76% of those polled compared to just 4% for apprenticeships – a further 14% of respondents rated them equally prestigious. This is despite them, in many instances, being the same award.

Despite the disparities in information received between different groups, 73% of our student

respondents said that they feel they have a very strong or strong understanding of apprenticeships - this is particularly high for the **applicant** group, of which 92% feel they have a good understanding. However, as we discuss in section 5, this feeling of having a strong understanding of apprenticeships does not track to the experiences of current apprentices, many of whom tell us that their apprenticeship was not what they thought it would be like. This suggests these levels of confidence might be misplaced.

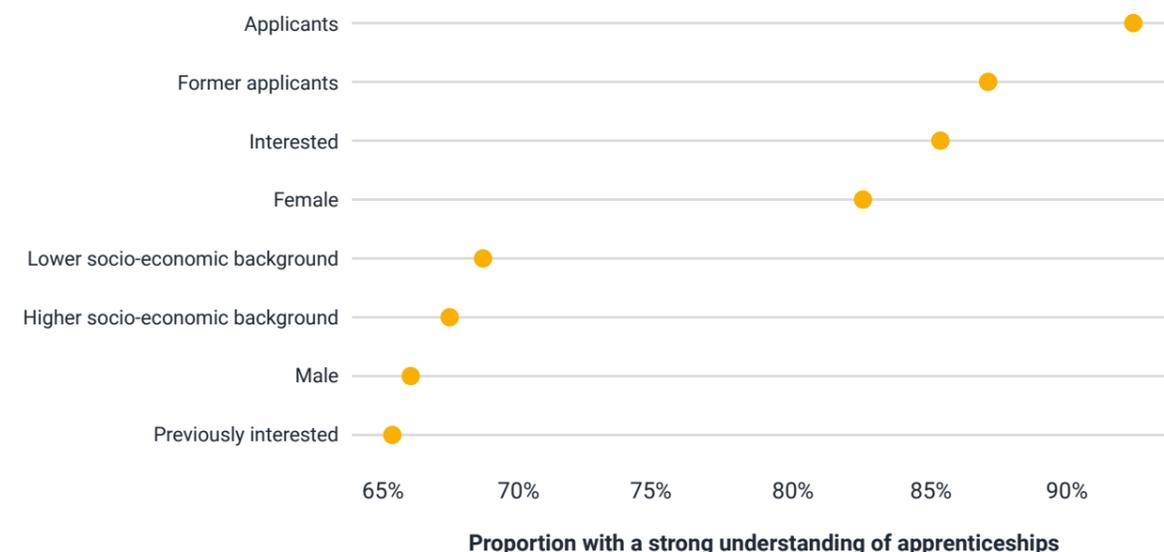
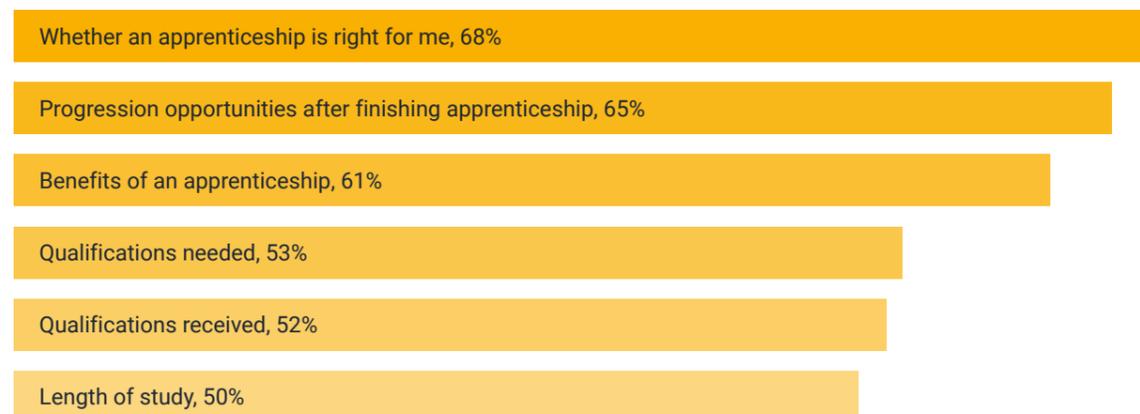


Figure 11: Proportion of student respondents who have a 'strong' or 'very strong' understanding of apprenticeships.

We asked the **previously interested** group why they decided not to proceed with an apprenticeship application, with the most common reason being they decided they only wanted to apply for university (72%).

However, 18% felt they had not received enough information about apprenticeships to allow them to make that final decision. When asked what they would like to receive information about, they said:



STAGE 3: APPLYING

Understanding Application Experiences



- ▶ The former applicant group wanted to pursue apprenticeships and have high levels of information – but face other barriers to applying to apprenticeships
- ▶ The current application process is burdensome – the more applications individuals need to make, the less positive they are about their experience.
- ▶ Experiences of apprenticeship applicants are not very positive in comparison to experiences of university applicants, driven partly by a lack of support for applications.
- ▶ Apprentices from lower socioeconomic backgrounds receive less support for apprenticeship applications – 8 percentage points less than their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds

As we have seen in Sections 1 and 2, there are different levels of access to information, advice and guidance about apprenticeships. In this section we look at the application experiences faced by would-be apprentices as well as current apprentices.

Looking at our **apprentice** cohort, only half (51%) say their application experience was positive¹⁷, with 10% negative. This reduces further for the 18-24 age cohort (44% positive and 16% negative) - representing low levels of satisfaction with the current application process. As a comparison, 90% of placed higher education applicants surveyed by UCAS say they are happy with their experience applying to university or college, and 61% of unplaced applicants¹⁸.

Indeed, the number of apprenticeship applications made has a correlation with the experience of applying; 69% of students

who made 1 choice said they had a positive application experience, falling to 67% for 2-3 choices, 62% for 4-5 choices and 57% for 6+ choices. In contrast, the satisfaction with applying through UCAS has little variation by the number of university or college choices made (92% for 1 choice, through to 90% for 5 choices)¹⁹. These findings suggest that the process of applying to apprenticeships is an arduous one, whereas the UCAS system has created a less time-consuming way to make multiple university or college choices.

¹⁷ 'Good' or 'very good' experience.

¹⁸ End of Cycle Placed Applicant Survey 2022 and End of Cycle Unplaced Survey 2022, respectively. Responses of 'Extremely happy' or 'Mostly happy' to the question "How happy, or unhappy, were you with your experience of using UCAS to apply to university or college?", which appears in both surveys.

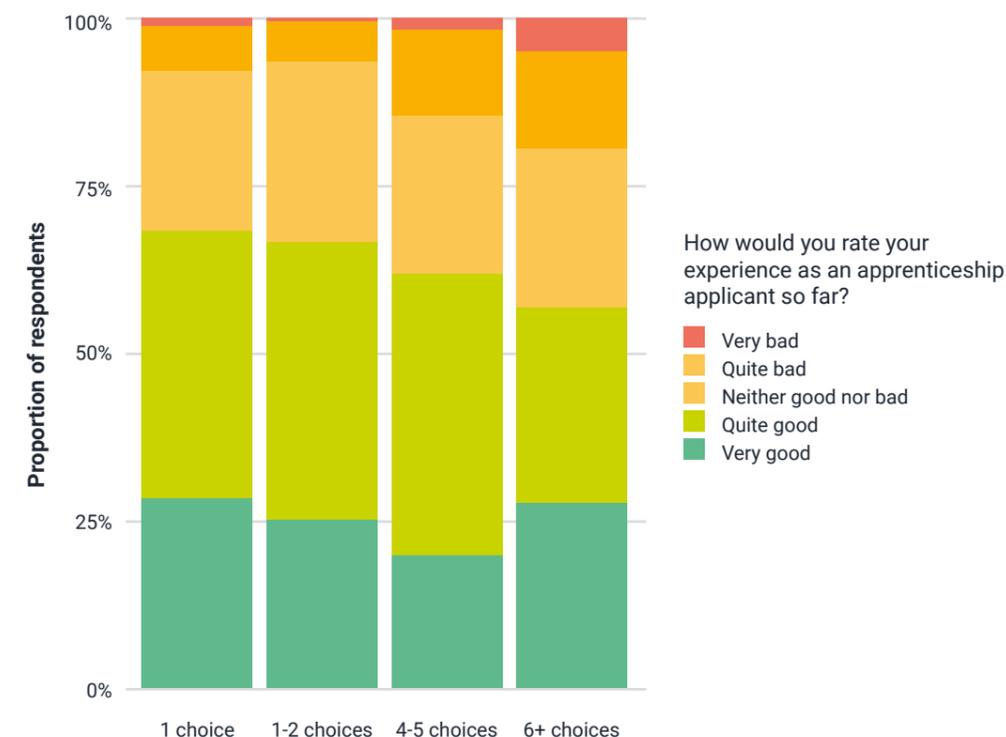


Figure 12: Proportion of **applicant** and **former applicant** respondents by their rating of the application process and the number of applications they have made

The **applicant** group had higher levels of satisfaction, where 72% said they have had a positive experience to date. However, this group are yet to complete the entire application process. 56% of the **former applicant** group said they had a positive experience, more in line with the **apprentice** group, suggesting the **apprentice** group were either more resilient or had other advantages which allowed them to overcome the poor application experience and secure their apprenticeship.

Support for applications

We know that 49% say their application experience was either negative or neutral – but what is driving this?

Looking at the support received for apprentice applications, **apprentices** from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to have received no support for apprenticeship applications (34%) than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (26%). Whilst we see a similar trend in relation to progression to higher education, it is more pronounced in apprenticeships – which in itself is a less understood journey.

¹⁹ End of Cycle Placed Applicant Survey 2022. Responses of 'Extremely happy' or 'Mostly happy' to the question "How happy, or unhappy, were you with your experience of using UCAS to apply to university or college?". Main scheme applicants only.

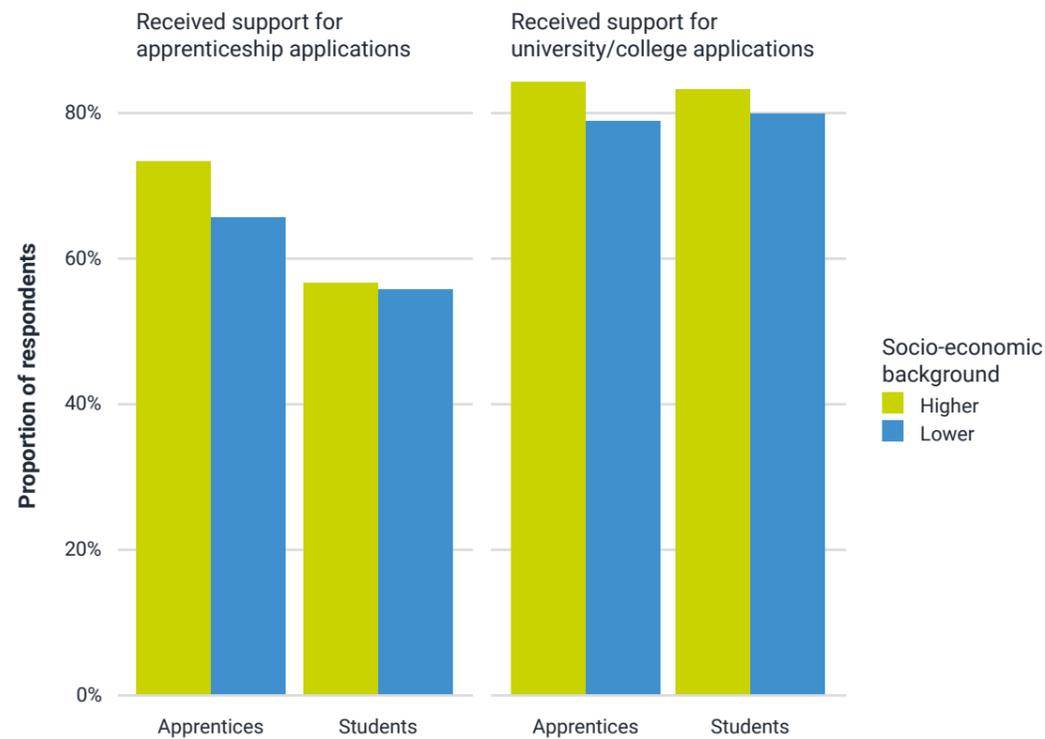


Figure 13: Proportion of apprentice and student respondents who said they received support for their apprenticeship application (where applicable), and for their university or college application (where applicable), by socioeconomic background

Looking at our student cohort, only 56% said that they have received some level of support around researching and applying to apprenticeship opportunities. We see that support for apprenticeships is higher for the **applicant** group, at 62%, compared to the **former applicant** group, at 49%. This comparative lack of support could have been a driver for this group to decide not to pursue apprenticeships.

These findings also contrast with 82% of **students** who receiving support with their university or college application – some 26 percentage points higher than for apprenticeship applications. This lack of support for apprenticeship applications helps explain the disparities in the application experience of those applying to university in comparison to apprenticeships.

Application timing

Two in five (39%) **students** spent at least 10 hours on their apprenticeship application and research – about the same as the equivalent figure for applying to university (40%). We saw those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to spend at least 10 hours on their research and applications than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, despite applying for a similar number of applications.

23% of the applicant group told us they spent over 20 hours researching and applying for apprenticeship opportunities, compared to 11% of this group who said they had spent the same amount of time on their university applications. This could suggest an additional burden involved in applying for apprenticeship opportunities.

Apprentices on average spent less time on the application and research process (26% over 10 hours), and a majority (53%) make just one choice. We also saw that those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds spent less time (25% over 10 hours) on broadly the same number of applications (80% made 3 or fewer) than those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (30% over 10 hours, 81% made

3 or fewer). 18-24 year old apprentices spent broadly the same amount of time (27% over 10 hours) as those over the age of 24 (26% over 10 hours), but make on average more applications (38% made 4 or more compared to 16% of those aged over 24), meaning younger people are spending less time on average per application than older apprentices.

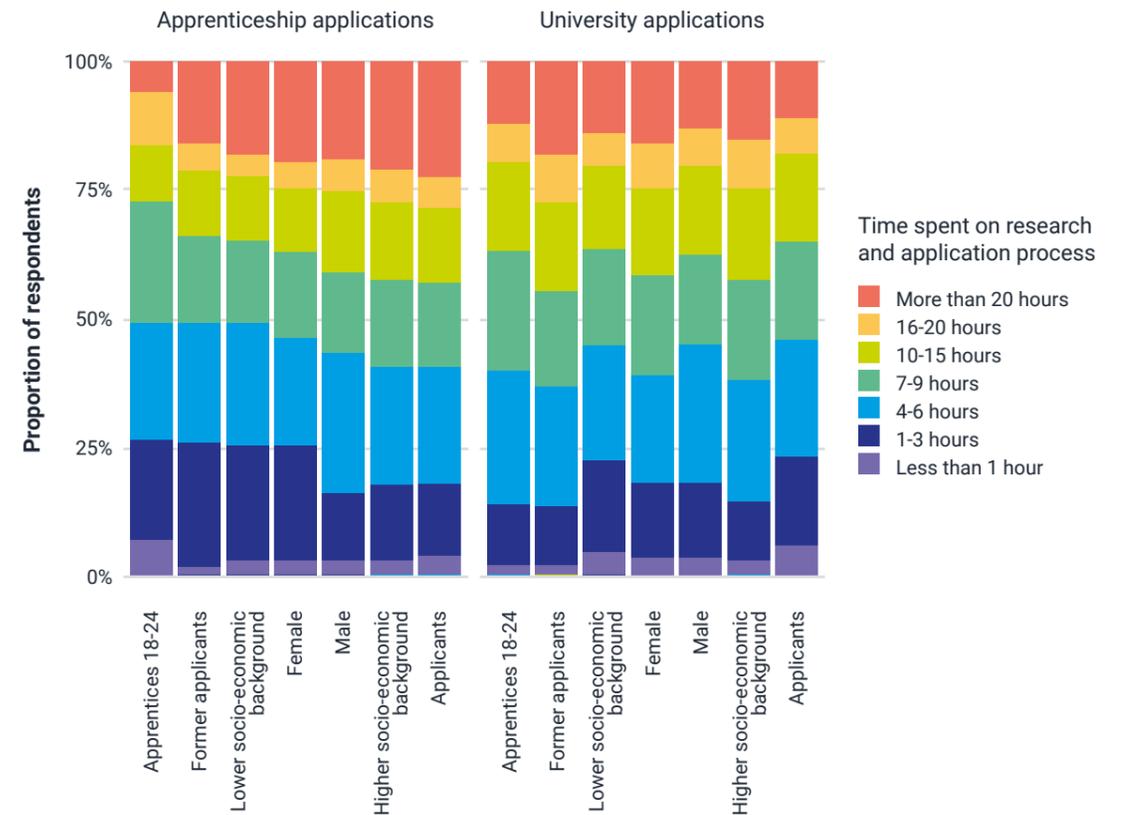
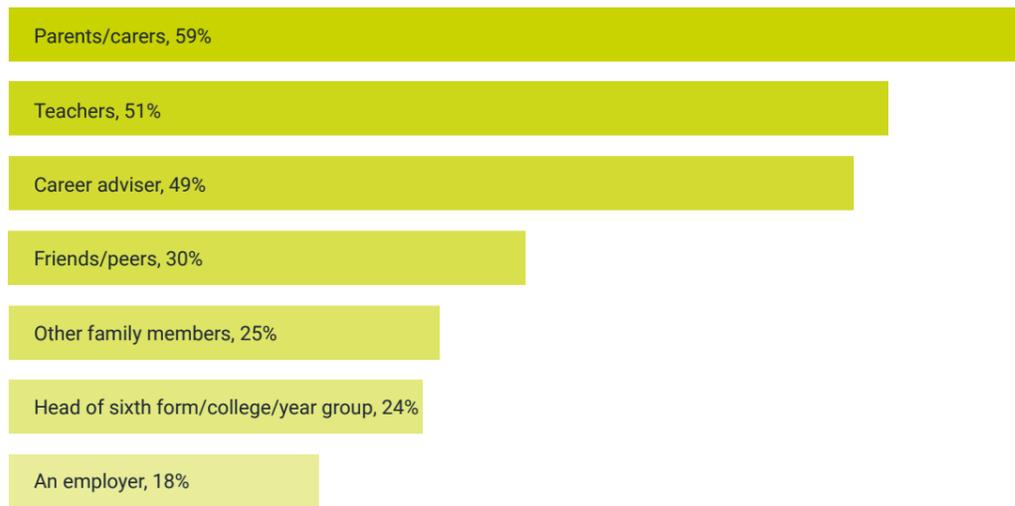


Figure 14: Proportion of student respondents in certain categories, and apprentice respondents aged 18-24, by how much time they have spent on the application process for apprenticeship opportunities, and their university application if they have applied to university

Who is providing application support?

Currently, students receive support during their apprenticeship applications from a broad range of sources, namely:



We found variance by socioeconomic background for this support for apprenticeship applications, with careers advisers being more common for lower socioeconomic backgrounds (53%) than those from higher ones (45%) – while for parents we saw the opposite story, with those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds 20 percentage points more likely to seek advice from this group (68%) than those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (48%).

This finding is in keeping with previous Sutton Trust research **'Parent Power'**, which showed that parents in higher socioeconomic groups are more confident in supporting choices for both university and apprenticeships, and that parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are not as well informed about choices that were not an option for them when growing up, such as degree apprenticeships - as evidenced in the report **'Paving the Way'**.



STAGE 4: ENTRY

Are students able to access apprenticeship opportunities?



- ▶ Pay acts as a key incentive for some to access apprenticeships, but low pay and levels of maintenance support is a barrier for others.
- ▶ Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are 8 percentage points more likely to cite pay as a top research topic than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, showing a greater concern around pay for those from backgrounds with lower incomes.
- ▶ 1 in 4 respondents in the applicant or former applicant groups aged 18-24 applied to just one apprenticeship opportunity.
- ▶ Many are not able to access apprenticeships due to a lack of opportunities near them or in career pathways they want to pursue. Those in the North East are more likely to report there being no apprenticeships near them, with those in London and Scotland the least likely to report this.

Looking beyond the barriers faced in the application process – what other barriers exist for those accessing apprenticeship opportunities?

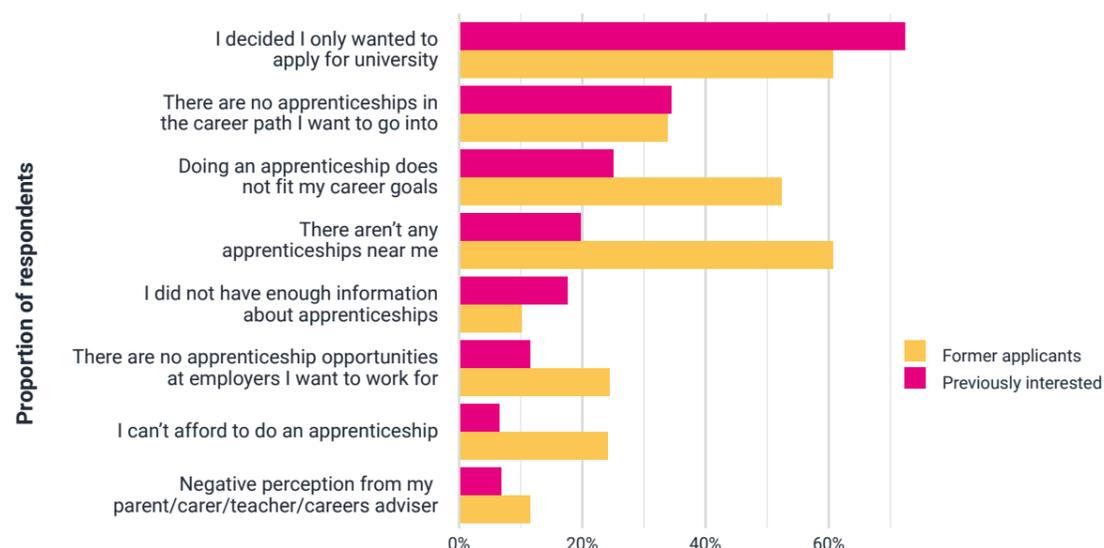


Figure 14: The proportion of those in the **former applicant** and **previously interested** groups ranking reasons why they decided not to pursue an apprenticeship in their top three reasons

Financial attraction and barriers

During the research stage, pay was one of the most common research areas (69%) for these students; this figure is higher in some regions of the UK, such as the East of England (75%) and North West (71%). Pay was similarly in the top 5 most common research topic for **apprentices** before securing their apprenticeship (25%), with those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds being 8 percentage points more likely to cite pay as a top research topic than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (31% vs 23%). This is similar to undergraduate progression, with students from disadvantaged backgrounds more likely to be alert to the financial implications and opportunities of higher education.

Considerations of earnings may speak to a cost-of-living impact on decision-making. A quarter (24%) of **former applicants** said that one of the top three reasons why they did not pursue an apprenticeship was because they felt they could not afford to do so. While this was broadly similar for those from higher and lower socioeconomic backgrounds (25% and 23% respectively), it was highest for those from the North West (35%). Pay appears to be a more common barrier for the **former applicant** group than the **previously interested** group, 7% of whom cited affordability as a reason for not pursuing an apprenticeship. We can infer that as students get further along in the apprenticeship journey towards entry, they are more likely to consider the practical implications of doing an apprenticeship, and therefore pay becomes more reported as a barrier.

Amongst the **previously interested** group, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were almost twice as likely to say that affordability acts as a barrier than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (9.3% vs 4.8%). As affordability could be a more prominent issue for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, they may be more likely to consider it at an earlier stage in their process of pursuing an apprenticeship.

In contrast, pay was also cited as the most popular reason for **apprentices** of all backgrounds for why they decided to become an apprentice (28%), rising for those aged 18-24 (34%). Indeed, one in five (21%) students in the **applicant** and **former applicant** groups decided to apply for an apprenticeship in order to get paid to learn²⁰. It is clear that the financial benefits of an apprenticeship are an attraction for some – for example those on degree apprenticeships who can enjoy the benefits of avoiding student debt while collecting a salary. However as we see above, the low levels of pay that some apprentices face can act as a barrier to some – especially where levels of pay on or around the apprentice minimum wage are offered, which lies below the national minimum wage and national living wage.

Geography

Three in five (61%) **former applicants** cited 'there aren't any apprenticeships near me' as a top three reason why they did not pursue an apprenticeship, making it the most common reason for this group.

Lack of availability was in the top three reasons for **every region in the UK**, the figure was highest for those from the North East (77%), South West (68%) and East Midlands (68%) – which are the regions that have had the lowest number of apprenticeship starts for the last three years. Conversely, individuals in Scotland and London (both 52%) are less likely to report unavailability.

²⁰ Students who had applied previously or have an active application were asked 'What was the main reason for deciding to apply for an apprenticeship?'

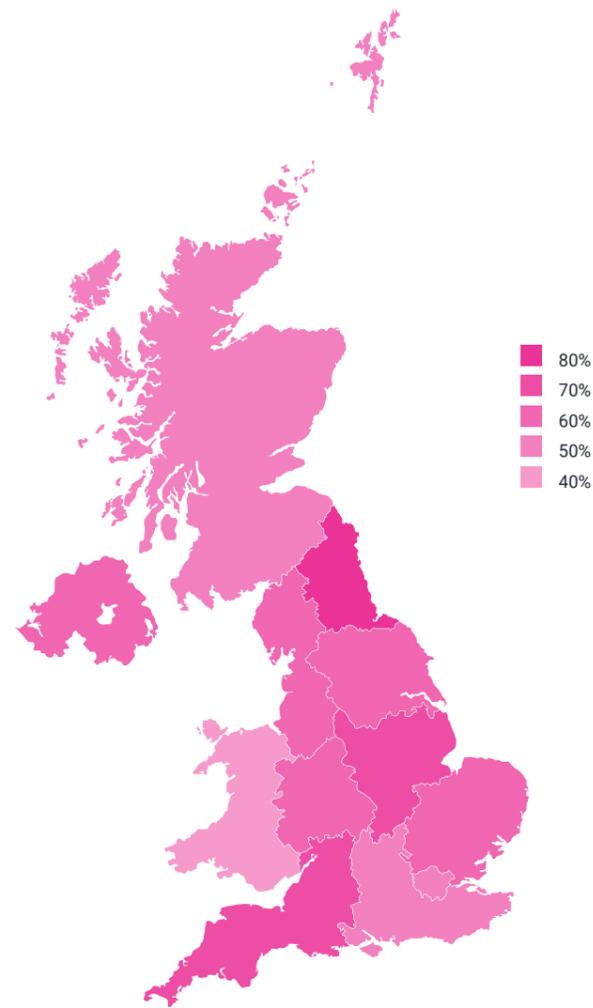


Figure 15: Proportion of **former applicants** ranking “There aren't any apprenticeships near me” as a top three reason why they did not pursue an apprenticeship, by UK region

While students in the **previously interested** group may not have reached as far a point in their apprenticeship journey, still one in five (20%) of this group cite the same reason in their top three reasons for not pursuing an apprenticeship. It was highest for the North East (32%) and Wales (25%), and again lowest for London (13%) and Scotland (15%). This highlights the structural barriers that exist for learners to access apprenticeships, beyond the information and application barriers, and shows the magnitude of the challenge that policymakers face in enabling learners, irrespective of where they live, to benefit from apprenticeship opportunities. It is vital that funding and financial support provided enables

learners to move around the country to pursue their apprenticeship, as they are enabled to do so for university.

Combined with consideration with pay and affordability, it is clear that some students are unable to access apprenticeships due to financial or geographical reasons. There are some examples of support for students to support relocation – such as the Apprenticeship care leaver bursary. Given we see continued concern in this space, it is important that more is done to promote the financial support available to students, with UCAS presenting this to students in a personalised fashion based on their individual circumstances.

Supply and choice

A related issue of the supply of apprenticeships is clear to see - the second most common reason for not pursuing an apprenticeship for our **previously interested** group is that there are ‘no apprenticeships in the career I want to go into’ (35%).

This varies by the subject that students express an interest in; for those **interested** in business-related apprenticeships this reason is rated lower (25%) than those expressing interest in a health-related apprenticeship (44%)²¹. While this can partly be explained by the lack of knowledge of all the different career routes that apprenticeships can facilitate, we also see evidence of students being unable to pursue an apprenticeship standard or framework in a desired area. Therefore, along with the continued expansion in the range of apprenticeship standards and frameworks available, this needs to be coupled with strengthened careers information to support uptake to ensure capitalisation on this demand.

In addition, we found that 23% of students in the **applicant** or **former applicant** groups aged 18-24 applied to just one apprenticeship opportunity – driven by the difficulties in

application processes described in Section 3, but also through the lack of choice and supply as discussed in this section. This figure is in contrast to UCAS data which shows that just 5% of 18-24 undergraduate applicants apply to one university choice²².

While there are many valid reasons for only applying to one apprenticeship or university opportunity, it is vital that the breadth of choice that learners are able to access for university routes is matched by apprenticeship ones. Even for those that managed to secure an apprenticeship – 31% of those aged 18-24 said they only applied to one opportunity. The acceleration of UCAS’ apprenticeship plans, with students able to apply for both apprenticeship opportunities and undergraduate choices in a single location from later in 2024, will bring with it greater efficiency for students, and support the broadening of choice.

²¹ Students have the option to express interest in certain apprenticeship fields in the UCAS Hub. Students may select multiple fields of interest, so double counting may occur.

²² <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-data-resources-2022>



ANNEX A: TECHNICAL NOTES

Survey populations

Three surveys were distributed to aid this research:

UCAS undergraduate audience	UCAS Hub audience	Apprentice audience
Students		Apprentices
Those who had submitted an application in the 2022 cycle, and expressed an interest in apprenticeships in the UCAS Hub	Those who had registered for the UCAS Hub for 2023 entry, and expressed an interest in apprenticeships in the Hub	Current adult apprentices on level 3 or above apprenticeships in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and level 6 or above SCQF apprenticeships in Scotland
2,325 responses	1,895 responses	1,020 responses

Socioeconomic background

Student respondents from the UK were given a socioeconomic background based on the associated Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) of their country of domicile (postcode-based), with those from IMD quintiles 1-2 described as being from a lower socioeconomic background and those from IMD quintiles 3-5 described as being from a higher socioeconomic background.

Apprentice respondents were assigned a socioeconomic background based on social grade²³; those in the A, B or C1 group are classed as being from a higher socioeconomic background and those in the C2, D or E group are classed as being from a lower socioeconomic background.

²³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatisticssocioeconomicclassificationnssecrebasedonsoc2010>