

Future Skills for Nuclear: What UCAS Student Data Tells Us



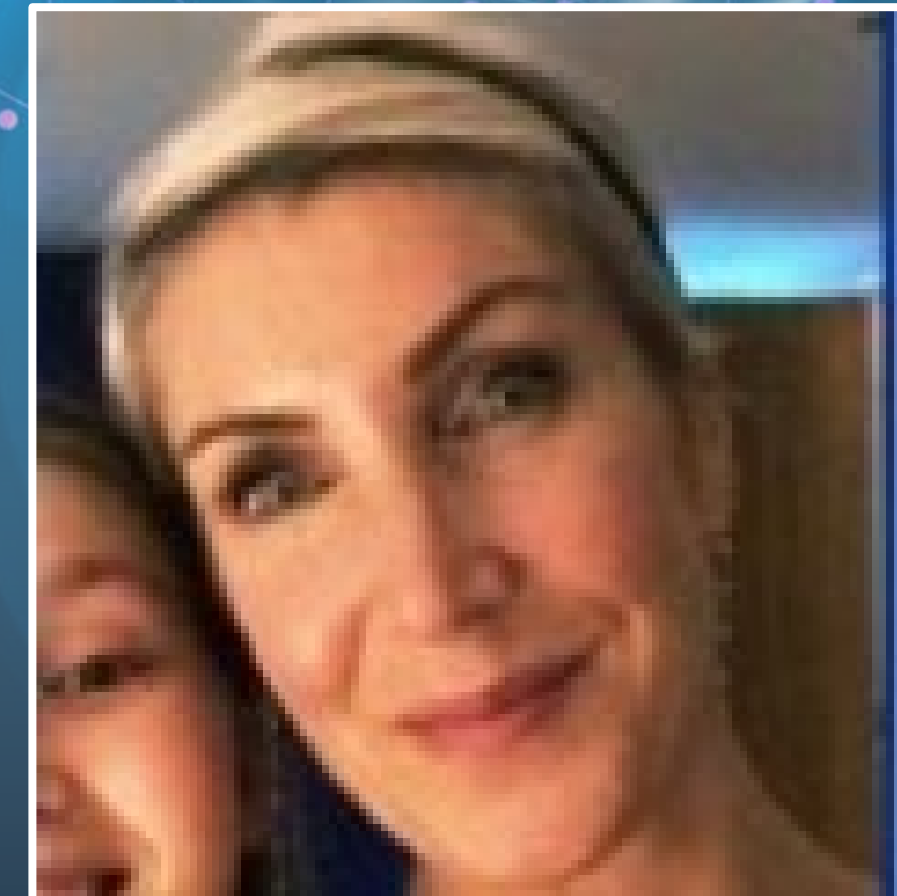
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Nuclear Workforce Assessment

Growing Together

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+20,000

people added to the UK nuclear workforce since 2024

Around half the 40,000 new roles the sector needs by 2030.

How did we do it?

How do we know?

A direct survey of civil and defence organisations — mapping today's workforce and demand out to the mid-2040s.



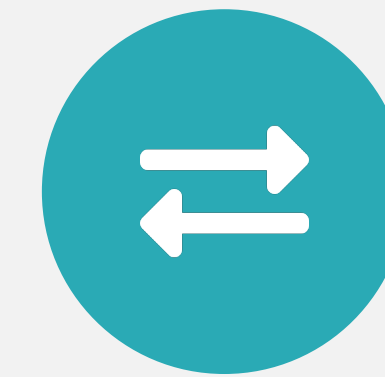
Who works in nuclear

Civil vs defence split, regional spread, age, gender and ethnicity.



What jobs they do

Roles and specialisms, and experience from trainee through to expert.



Workforce movement

New joiners, leavers, and training and apprenticeship numbers.

The only assessment in the UK — possibly worldwide — to bring civil and defence together.

~2x

the number of under-20s recruited into the sector each year, compared with 2023.

120,000

workers needed by 2030 to fill new roles and replace those leaving the sector.

A retirement cliff

thousands of years of hard-won experience set to leave with those who retire.

Into the 2040s

defence will drive the sector's growth, with civil expanding as new energy tech scales.

On two measures, the workforce doesn't yet match the communities organisations sit in, or the wider population.

WHO

~25% women

Ethnic-minority and disabled workers remain underrepresented across the sector too.

WHERE

The North West and South West still dominate.

But Sizewell C, greater onshoring of the supply chain and SMR development are spreading the skills challenge to new regions.



Collaboration

It bridged the civil–defence divide, giving a full 360° view of the sector — a UK first.



A common language

Role names standardised across 50+ organisations and mapped to occupation codes — so the NWA links to other data, like UCAS.



Action

£200m+ in new government funding, recruitment goals met, and the Nuclear Skills Plan.

£200m+ in funding, a common language, and a sector that finally sees itself whole.

1 Timely data access

Real-time data platforms, plus UCAS's early read on who is entering the pipeline.

UCAS HELPS

2 Spotting new and changing skills

Shortening the gap from identifying SMR and fusion skills to teaching them.

3 The demographic challenge

Understanding where and why people opt in or out — UCAS data is most valuable here.

UCAS HELPS

4 Transfer of skills

Keeping nuclear talent as clean-energy sectors compete for the same people.

5 Transfer of knowledge

Capturing experience before the retirement cliff takes it with them.

Where we go together

The NWA tells us about the workforce we have. UCAS tells us about the people deciding, right now, whether to join it.

Together we close the loop — from a subject choice, to an application, to the role someone fills and the career they build.

Occupation codes are the bridge that lets the two datasets talk — so we can spot a dip in applications years before it becomes a workforce gap.

UCAS

FUTURE SKILLS FOR NUCLEAR

What UCAS Student Data Tells Us

26 June 2026



YOU PROBABLY KNOW

UCAS as the UK's shared admissions service for higher education



BUT DID YOU KNOW?

We do more than just helping students to go to university.

As an independent charity, we are committed to providing information, advice and guidance to young people exploring their future options, whether through higher education, apprenticeships or employment.

UCAS SUPPORTS YOUNG PEOPLE TO DISCOVER HIGHER EDUCATION AND APPRENTICESHIP OPTIONS

1M+

register every year

40%

are interested in
apprenticeships

c.4,500

schools and colleges

c.350

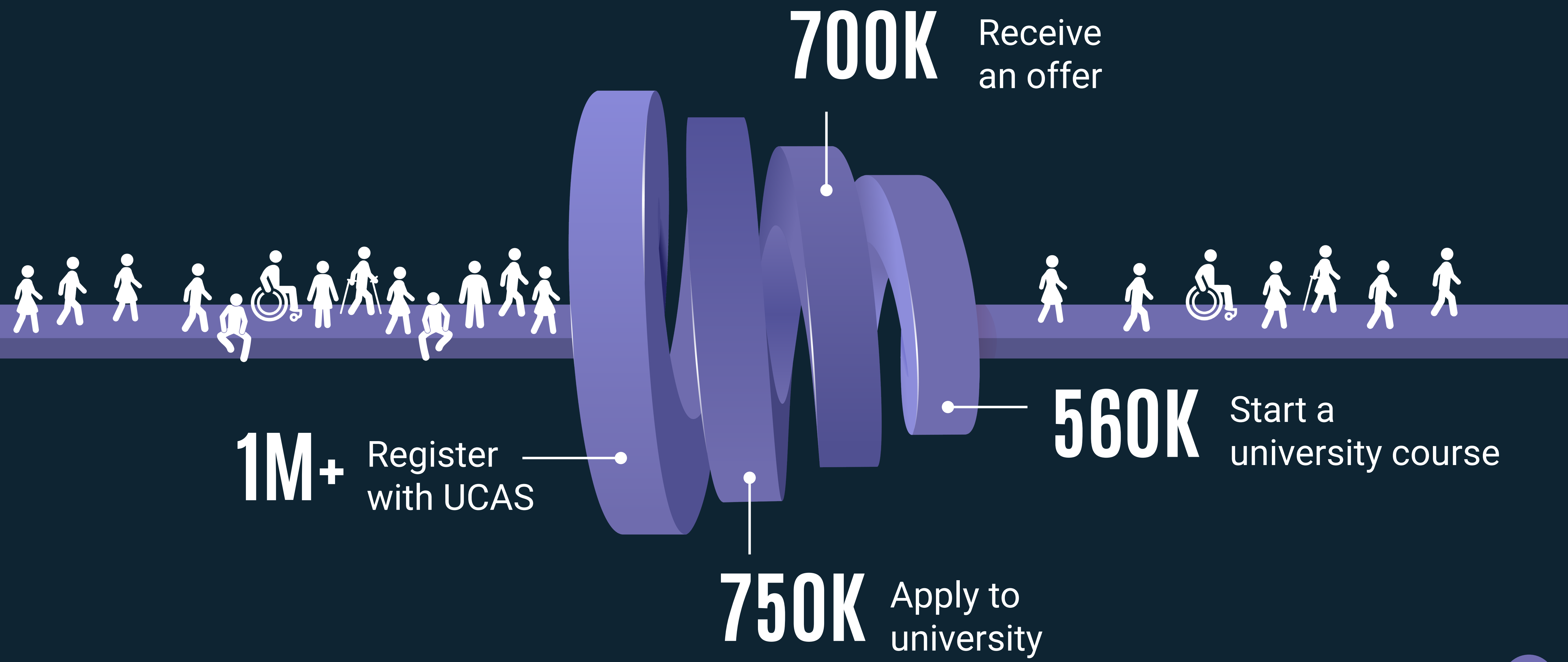
universities and
colleges

c.30K

parents and advisers

ENABLING YOUNG PEOPLE TO DISCOVER, DECIDE AND APPLY IN ONE PLACE

HIGHER EDUCATION APPLICATION CYCLE



UCAS STUDENT DATA

UCAS' current and historic Higher Education application data, alongside the data we hold on those interested in apprenticeships, enables us to provide a wide or segmented view of the UK youth's future pathways.

LOCATION

**APPLICATION
STATUS**

**POLAR
QUINTILE**

SUBJECT

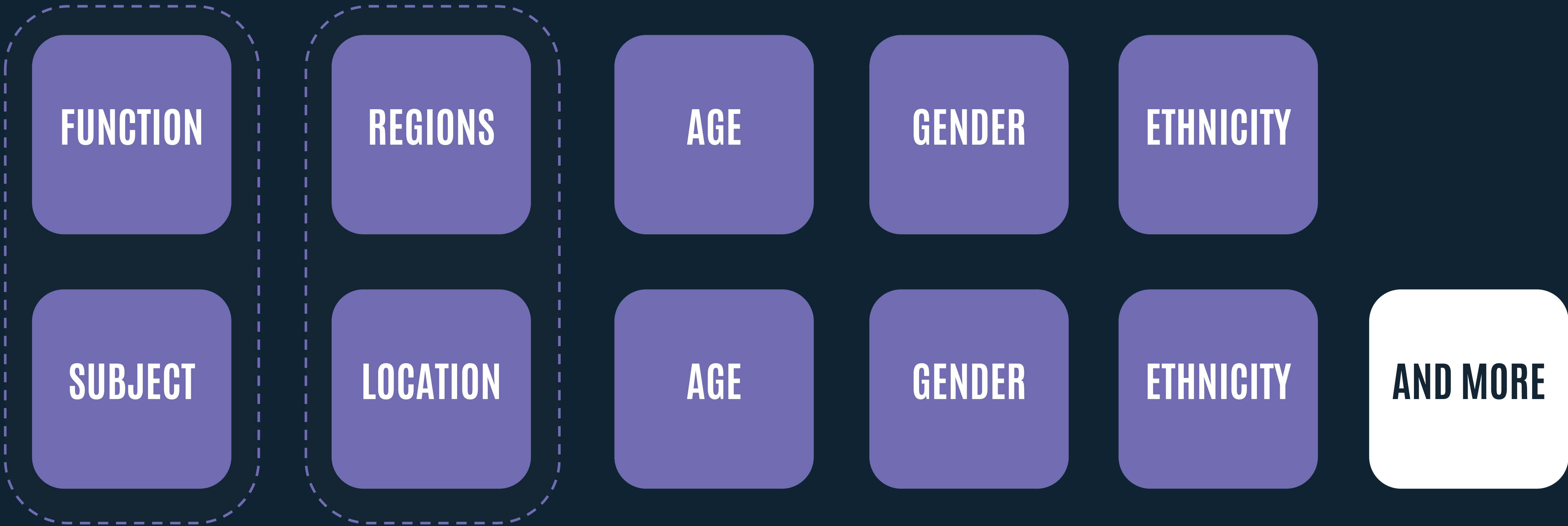
GENDER

**APPRENTICESHIP
INTEREST**

**AND MANY
MORE**

RELATING NUCLEAR SECTOR DATA TO UCAS DATA

Nuclear Workforce Assessment key themes



UCAS student data points

NUCLEAR FUNCTIONS AND FUTURE GRADUATE SUPPLY



HIGHER EDUCATION SUBJECT AREAS

Higher Education pathways are broadly split into 23 subject areas.

The 5 subject areas below relate most closely to the roles/ business functions needed by the nuclear industry.

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

- Physics
- Chemistry
- Natural sciences

MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

- Maths
- Statistics
- Operational research

ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

- Mechanical
- Civil
- Production & manufacturing

COMPUTING

- Computer science
- Information technology
- Software engineering

BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

- Business studies
- Finance
- Marketing
- Human resources

STUDENT VOLUMES VS NUCLEAR DEMAND

UCAS Undergraduate Accepted Applicants:

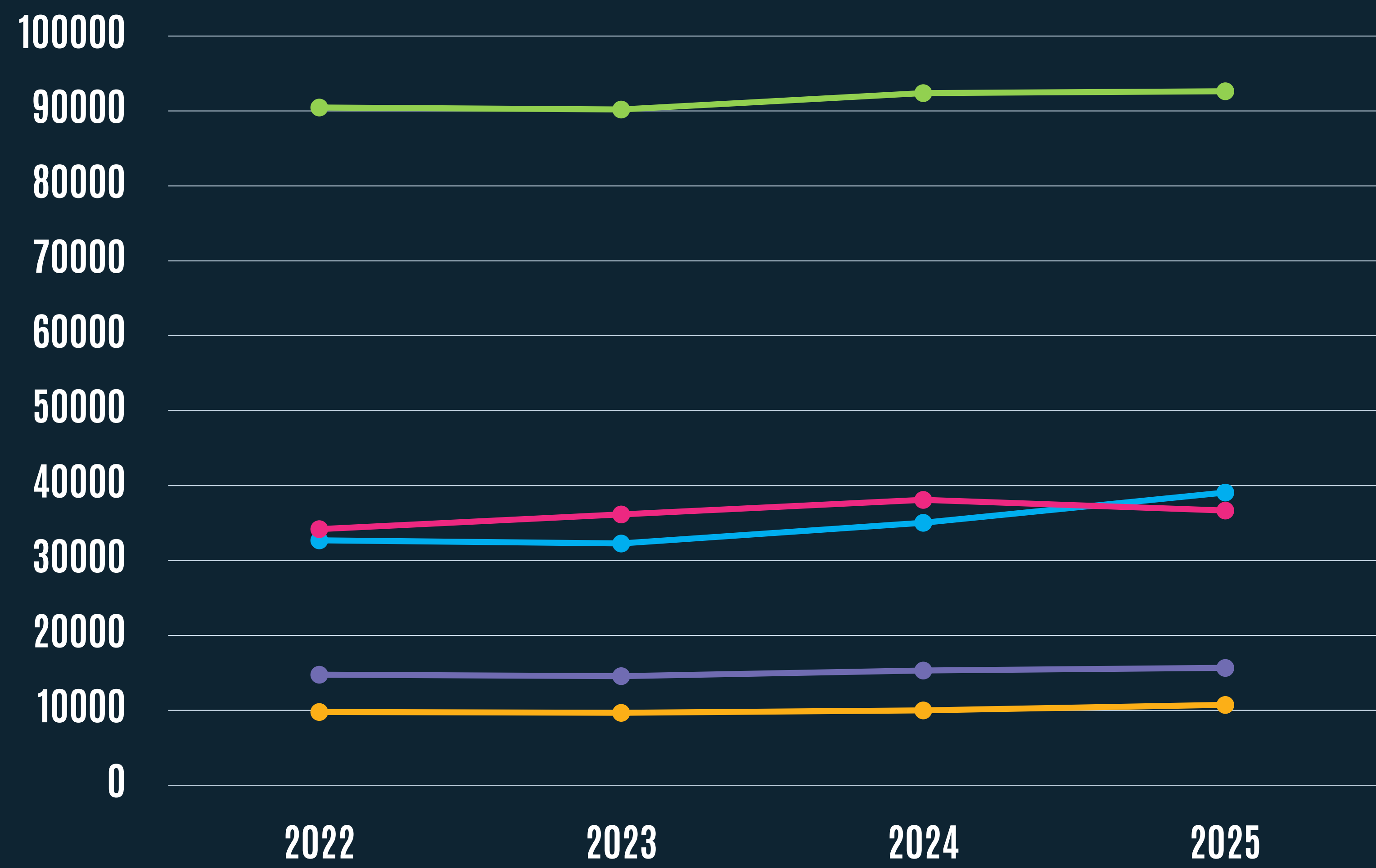
SUBJECT AREAS	2023	2024	2025
Physical Sciences	14,560	15,310	15,670
Engineering & Technology	32,275	35,035	39,070
Computing	36,155	38,095	36,660
Maths	9,670	9,995	10,730
Business Management	90,205	92,390	92,635

Total 2025 (across all subjects) 577,725

Nuclear Workforce Assessment
projected demand in 2030:

Science, Technical, Health, Safety and Environment	5,539
Engineering	27,230
Operations	12,757
Trades	29,510
Business Functions	29,784
Project Management	15,061

ACCEPTANCE TRENDS 2022-2025



+2%

Business & Management

+7%
-4%

Computing

+19%

Engineering & Technology

+6%

Physical Sciences

+10%

Maths

REGIONAL SKILLS DEMAND AND FUTURE SUPPLY



STUDENT VOLUMES BY HOME REGION

UCAS Undergraduate Accepted Applicants' Home Region (across all subjects):

UK REGION	2024	2025
North East	14,845	15,090
North West	55,350	55,765
Yorkshire and The Humber	37,055	37,365
Midlands	76,375	78,565
East of England	42,240	43,135
London	99,360	99,775
South East	65,665	67,915
South West	32,220	33,180
Scotland	39,310	38,945
Wales	18,980	19,120

REGIONALITY IN APPRENTICESHIPS

66% of former applicants cited lack of local supply as a top-three reason for not pursuing the pathway.

24% of former applicants said affordability was a top-three reason for not pursuing an apprenticeship. Highest in the North West (35%).

SW The South West has the highest apprenticeship awareness but among the lowest higher education progression rates.

LDN London has the lowest apprenticeship awareness but the highest higher education entry rate.

REGIONS OF STUDY

Different regions of Higher Education study have the potential to supply the demand for nuclear skills roles when students graduate:

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

North West
Yorkshire and
the Humber
Scotland

MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

West
Midlands
South West
North West

ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

North West
East Midlands
South East

COMPUTING

North West
West Midlands
South East

BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

South East
North West
West
Midlands

STUDENT VOLUMES BY REGIONS OF STUDY

UCAS Undergraduate Accepted Applicants
(across 5 nuclear related subject areas)

LONDON

38,360

SOUTH EAST

27,575

NORTH WEST

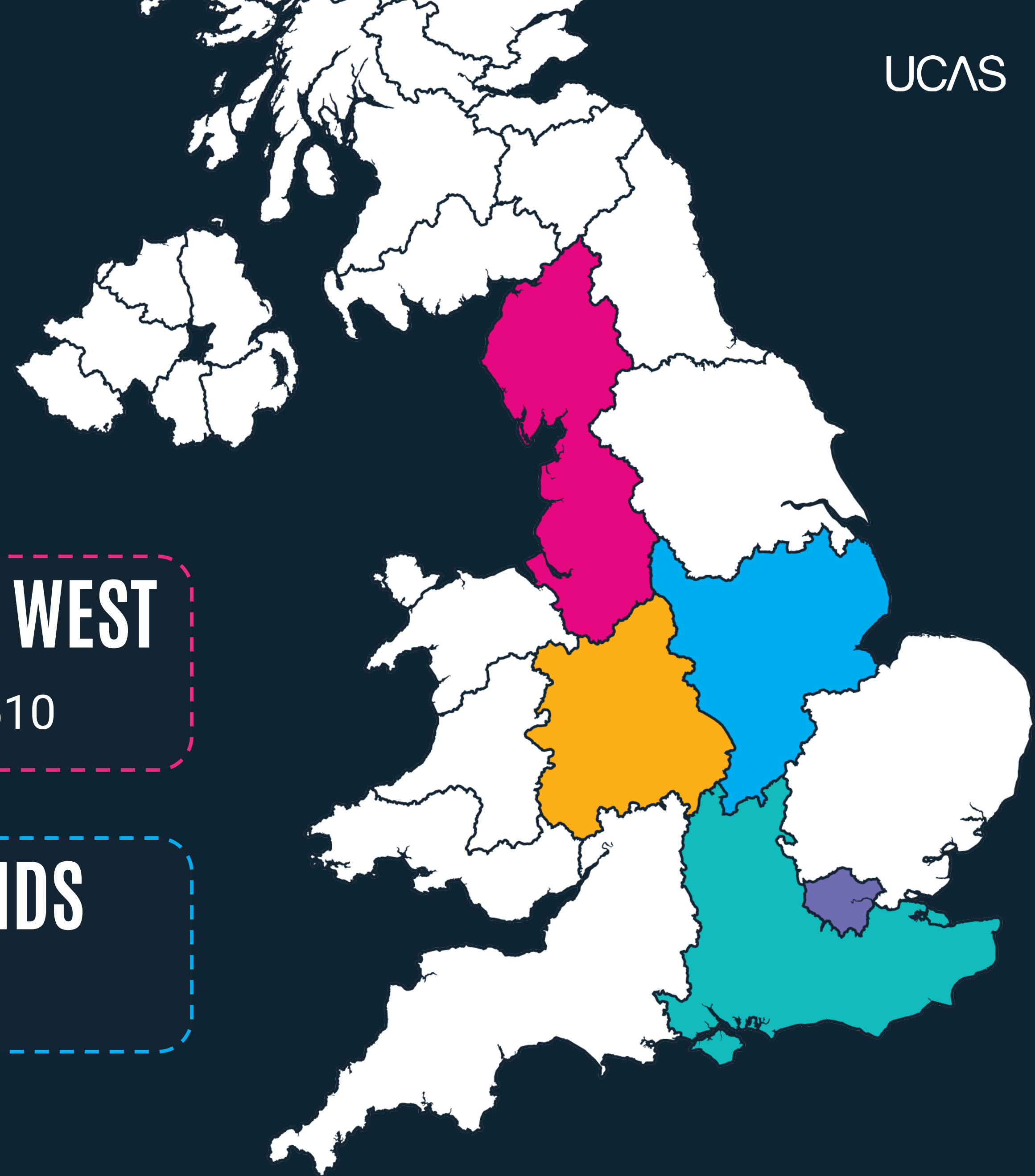
20,610

WEST MIDLANDS

18,390

EAST MIDLANDS

16,190



AGE, GENDER, ETHNICITY FOR THE 2025 APPLICATION CYCLE

AGE

- The highest volume of accepted applicants **under 25**, in the identified nuclear related subjects, go on to study in London.
- The highest volume of accepted applicants **over 25**, go on to study in the South East.

GENDER

- 55% of accepted applicants were **female** (across all subjects) in the 2025 application cycle.
- Engineering and Technology acceptances for females have **increased by 17.2%** from 2024-25.

ETHNICITY

- The highest volume of accepted applicants from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the identified nuclear related subjects, progress to study in **London**.
- The highest volume from white ethnic backgrounds for these subjects, progress to study in the **South East**.

Look out for the next webinar focusing on EDI data

CAREERS & EMPLOYABILITY RESEARCH 2025

Bespoke survey with 1,692 16-19-year-olds
looking to start university in September 2026



MAJOR LIFE DECISIONS WITH LIMITED KNOWLEDGE

Young people today
are more career
focused than ever

95%

say employability
shapes their
course choice

87%

say employability
shapes their
university choice

But the route from education to work isn't equally clear for everyone

36%

I know what I want
to be, and I have a
clear plan on how
to get there

38%

I know what field,
but I wouldn't say
I have a plan

21%

I know what subjects
I'm interested in and
I'm going to see
where it takes me

4%

I'm still not sure

- Household brand names
- Well-known professions and sectors

[illegible]

CAREERS ADVICE & DISCOVERY

Careers advice is generally available, but its impact varies dramatically.

66%

had careers advice from family and friends.

49%

had one-to-one careers support from school or college.

28%

said careers advice has been inadequate or limited.

30%

found careers advice overwhelming.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE ASKING FOR

Practical help with career discovery:

58%

wanted to be introduced to the careers they haven't yet considered

50%

are interested in virtual work experience opportunities

49%

wanted talks from employers about potential roles, with real stories and 'day in the life' examples

Ongoing opportunities to build work experience:

91%

said work placements were important when choosing university

86%

want their university to have strong links with their chosen industry

85%

want direct employer engagement during their studies

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL

EARLY AND CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT CREATES ADVANTAGE

Companies (or sectors) that engage early and consistently, shape aspirations, build awareness and trust – become employers of choice.

Translating directly into a stronger, higher-quality future talent pipeline.

**DOWNLOAD OUR
WHITEPAPER FOR
FULL INSIGHTS**



**REGISTER
INTEREST FOR
THE EDI SESSION**



THANK YOU



SIOBHAN WILLIAMS

Business Engagement Manager, UCAS



Register your interest
for the EDI Session

Thank you for your participation!

For any follow-up queries or ideas/suggestions,
contact andy.mcivor@nsan.co.uk.

We will email an evaluation form to all attendees.