INSTITUTE OF THE MOTOR INDUSTRY

IMI RESEARCH
April 2025

AUTOMOTIVE EDUCATION REPORT

Analysis of automotive qualifications and apprenticeships in the UK

Introduction

This report analyses the number of people who complete in automotive qualifications and start automotive apprenticeships in the UK. We use data from the regulatory bodies of the four nations:

- OfQual - The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation [England]
- The Scottish Qualifications Authority [Scotland]
- Qualifications Wales [Wales]
- CCEA Regulation[Northern Ireland]

These datasets give quarterly updates on certifications awarded for each qualification, with the latest data up to 2024 Q4 (October to December).

We align Scottish qualification levels with those in England and Wales for consistency.

For apprenticeship data, we refer to monthly reports from the Department of Education (DfE) in England on starts and achievement rates.

Executive summary

The latest data shows a mixed and often difficult picture for automotive education and skills.

In Q4 2024, automotive qualification certifications dropped by 4% compared to the same period last year. Although seasonal patterns partly explain this (Q3 usually has the highest numbers), certifications have fallen quarter-on-quarter over a longer period, suggesting deeper stagnation in training. General vocational qualifications have risen by 6%, but this growth has not yet reached core automotive routes.

Electric and hybrid vehicle (EV) qualifications now make up 44% of all automotive certifications.

However, total annual volumes fell by 6% in 2024, raising concerns as demand rises under the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) mandate and wider decarbonisation policies.

In April 2025, the UK government adjusted the ZEV mandate, giving manufacturers more flexibility but keeping the 2030 target to end new petrol and diesel car sales.

These changes aim to ease the industry's transition but also bring uncertainty over the speed and scale of EV adoption, especially with possible shifts in consumer confidence and investment.

At the same time, the U.S. introduced a 25% tariff on imported vehicles and parts, which could drive up global vehicle prices and put more pressure on already fragile supply chains.

These developments highlight the need for the UK automotive sector to stay agile and watch international markets closely, as shifts could significantly affect EV demand and future skills investment.

Apprenticeship data also shows a complex picture.

Starts in the first half of 2024/25 fell by 3% year-on-year and sit 12% below pre-pandemic levels. Most apprenticeships (74%) are at an advanced level, with strong participation from young people: 64% of starters are under 19, compared to 28% across all sectors.

However, some pathways show sharp declines, with Mechanical, Electrical and Trim (MET) down 36% and Accident Repair down 23%, raising concerns about future gaps in key vehicle repair roles.

Heavy Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician apprenticeships were the only pathway to experience growth during the quarter, increasing by 11% in total and 2% proportionally.

This steadiness stands out given the wider sector slowdown and may reflect strong employer demand in logistics, freight, and bus operations, where large vehicle maintenance stays crucial to UK transport infrastructure.

Vocational qualification certifications

Automotive qualifications

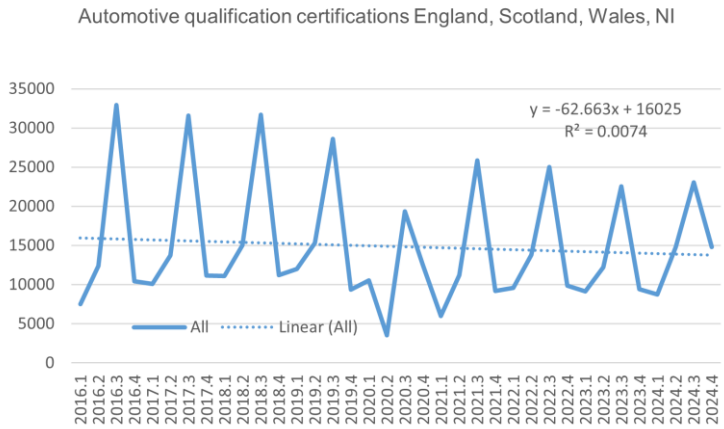
Automotive qualification certificates issued:

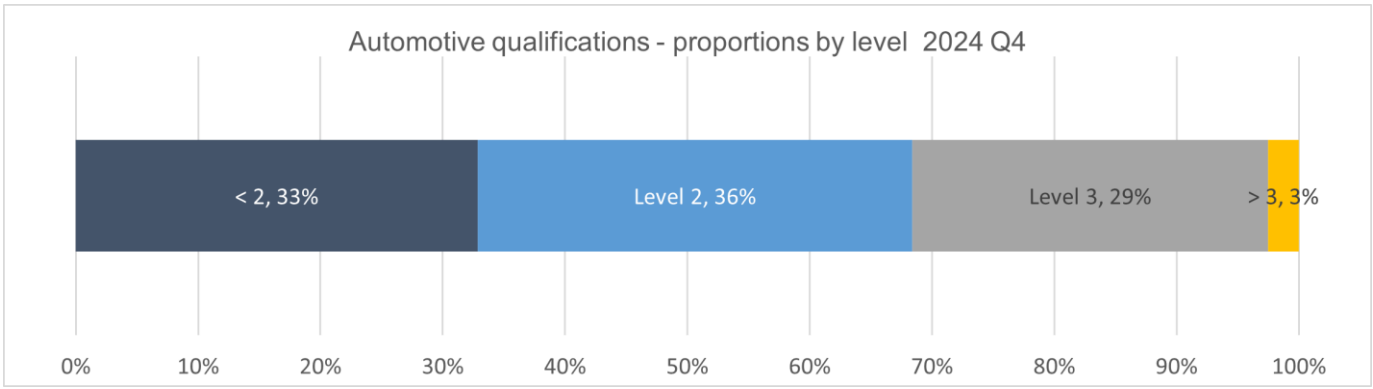
9,028

2024 Q4

In Q4 2024, the automotive sector issued 9,028 certificates, a 61% drop from the last quarter and 4% fewer than the same period last year. This reflects a seasonal trend, as Q3 is typically the peak period for certifications.

At the same time, general vocational qualification certifications rose by 6% compared to the same period last year. Automotive qualifications increased by 11 this quarter, though the overall trend still shows an average quarterly drop of 15.





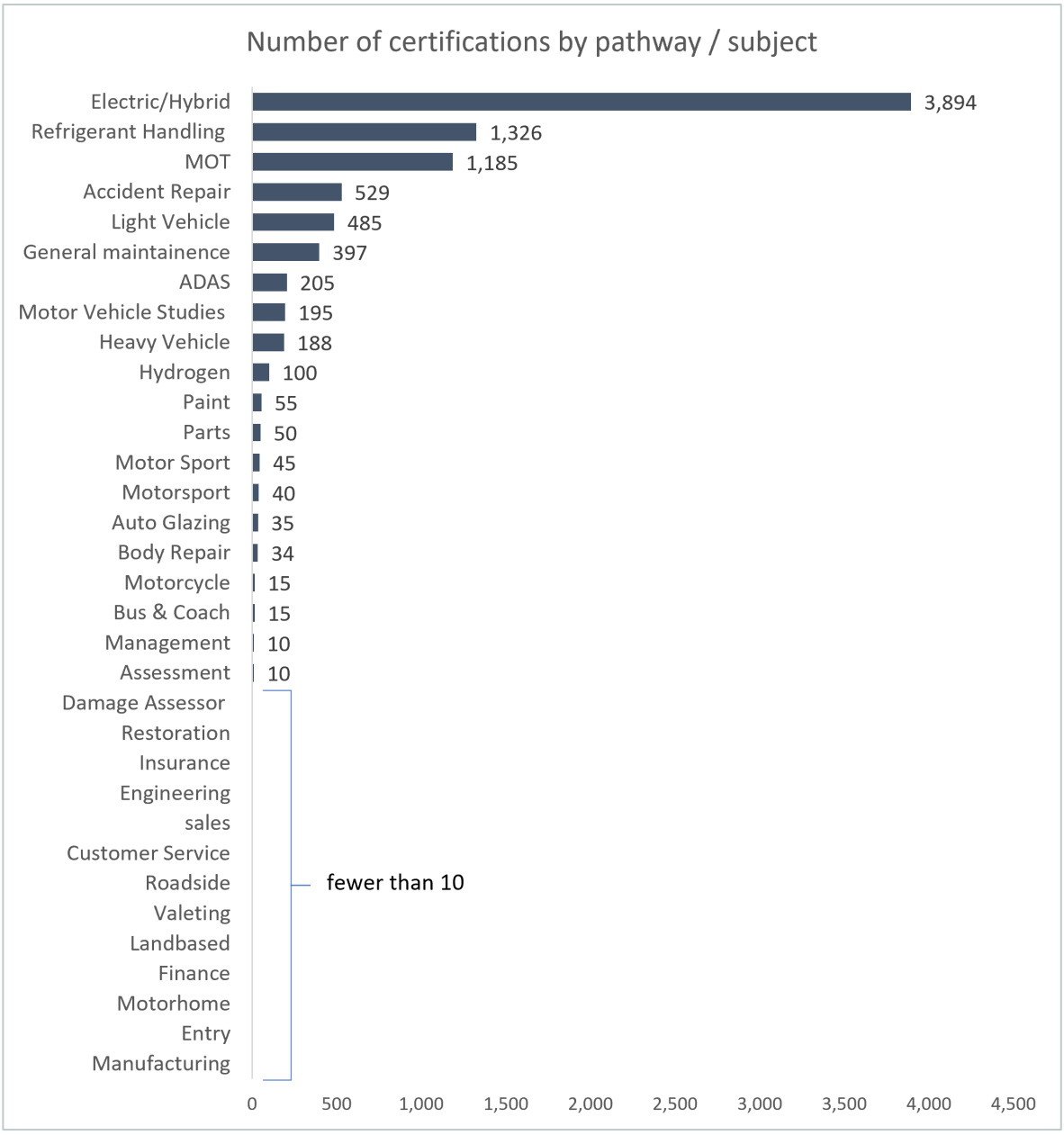
In Q4 2024, Level 2 automotive qualifications led with 8,115 (35%), while Level 3 qualifications made up 29%.

Top ten automotive qualifications

Qualification title	No.	Level	Pathway
IMI Level 3 Award in Electric/Hybrid Vehicle System Repair and Replacement	1,462	3	Electric/Hybrid
IMI Level 3 Award in Automotive Refrigerant Handling (EC842-2006) (VRQ)	1,326	3	Refrigerant Handling
IMI Level 2 Award in Electric/Hybrid Vehicle Routine Maintenance Activities	692	2	Electric/Hybrid
IMI Level 2 Award in MOT Testing (Classes 4 and 7)	535	2	MOT
IMI Level 1 Award in Electric/Hybrid Vehicle Awareness	515	1	Electric/Hybrid
IMI Level 4 Award in the Diagnosis, Testing and Repair of Electric/Hybrid Vehicles and Components	363	4	Electric/Hybrid
IMI Level 3 Award in Heavy Electric/Hybrid Vehicle System Repair and Replacement	295	3	Electric/Hybrid
IMI Level 3 Award in MOT Test Centre Management	245	3	MOT
SEG Awards ABC Level 3 Award In MOT Test Centre Management (VRQ)	195	3	MOT
SEG Awards Level 1 Award in Motor Vehicle Studies	185	1	Motor Vehicle Studies

In Q4 2024, the IMI Level 3 Award in Electric/Hybrid Vehicle System Repair and Replacement was the most issued qualification, with 1,462 certificates. This made up 17% of all automotive certifications that quarter. The top ten qualifications accounted for 66% of all automotive certificates, a 17% increase on the previous quarter.

Automotive qualification certifications – pathways / subject areas



Electric and hybrid qualifications made up 44% of all automotive certificates this quarter, up 7% on the previous quarter and now the largest category, with its proportion in line with usual quarterly trends. General Maintenance and Light Vehicle certifications fell by 28% and 42% year-on-year, with their proportions dropping by 3% and 1% respectively. Refrigerant handling made up 15% of certificates, followed by MOT qualifications at 13%.

Four Nation comparison

Nation	Number certificates issued 2024-Q3	% Chg last year	% of Level 3 and above	Top Qualification
England	7,790	-3%	61%	IMI Level 3 Award in Electric/Hybrid Vehicle System Repair and Replacement
NI	549	28%	41%	IMI Level 3 Award in Electric/Hybrid Vehicle System Repair and Replacement
Scotland	449	-25%	51%	IMI Certificate in Transport Maintenance at SCQF Level 4
Wales	240	-7%	29%	IMI Level 2 Award in MOT Testing (Classes 4 and 7)

England issued 86% of all automotive certificates this quarter. All other nations, except Northern Ireland, saw a drop compared to Q3 2023. Scotland recorded the largest decrease at 25%.

IMI TechSafe

IMI TechSafe®

Electric Vehicles

Technician forecasts - April 2024

64,700
qualified EV technicians in the UK

26%
of all technicians in the country are EV qualified

	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035
Technicians Required	111,632	126,628	138,748	151,070	165,629	175,596
Gap			4,988	13,310	23,869	29,835

Forecast gap between predicted number of technicians required to service and maintain Electric Vehicles and TechSafe EV Technicians

IMI TechSafe®

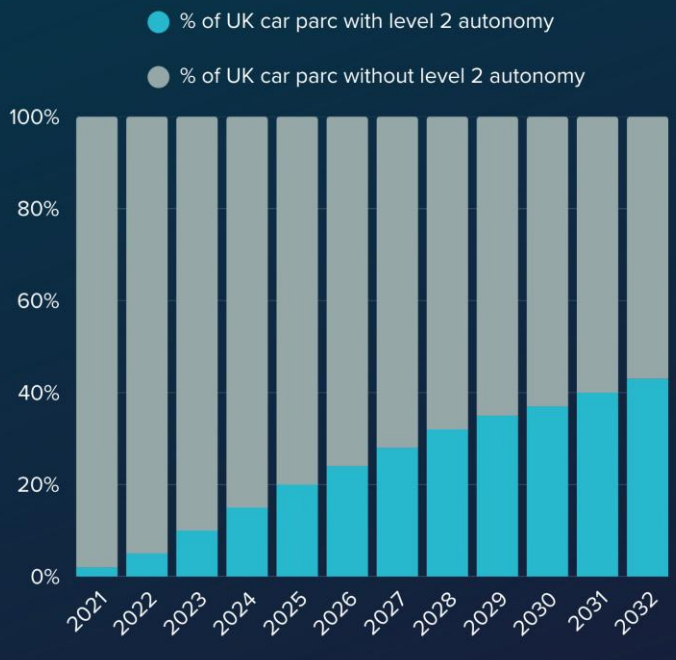
ADAS

Technician forecasts - April 2025

20%
of UK cars have some degree of level 2 autonomy

6,000
ADAS TechSafe eligible qualified

2%
of all technicians in the country are ADAS qualified



Proportion of UK car parc with level 2 autonomy

TechSafe EV

In Q4 2024, 2,820 technicians gained their EV certification, including those with eligible IMI accreditations.

Although interest is strong, this was a 10% drop compared to the same period in 2023. For the full year, total EV certifications fell by 6% compared to 2023. The confirmed number of qualified EV technicians in the UK now stands at 63,789.

Early IMI estimates suggest a decline in Q1 2025, with around 3,437 certifications expected. This would bring the total to 67,226, covering about 28% of the UK's technician workforce. Although Q1 usually marks a peak in certifications, early signs show it may be 9% lower than the same period last year.

If trends continue, 137,760 technicians are expected to be qualified by 2033, rising to 145,760 by 2035. However, projected demand stands at 151,070 by 2033 and 175,596 by 2035.

This could result in a shortfall of 13,310 technicians in 2033, growing to 29,835 by 2035.

These figures highlight the ongoing need to train more technicians to meet future demand. Although the ZEV mandate and the 2035 target are in place, it is not yet clear how they will affect the number of EVs on the road. Ongoing monitoring is essential.

TechSafe ADAS

In Q4 2024, regulators issued 552 ADAS-related certificates and accreditations eligible for TechSafe, bringing the total number of certified ADAS technicians in the UK to 5,727. The total for 2024 was 1,953, the highest annual figure so far – but overall take-up remains low.

Unofficial IMI data shows a decrease in Q1 2025, with 327 awards issued. This brings the total to 6,054, which is just 2% of the UK's technician workforce.

Around 20% of the UK car fleet now features some Level 2 autonomy, and this is expected to rise to 57% by 2032. Based on this forecast, the UK may need 129,078 trained technicians to support future demand.

Although the rise of software-managed diagnostics makes it hard to define the technician's role in ADAS work, certain areas such as body repair and glazing will continue to need skills and knowledge linked to ADAS technology.

Automotive apprenticeships – England

Apprenticeship Starts – academic year 2024/25

Automotive apprenticeships starts first six months 2024/5:

5,326

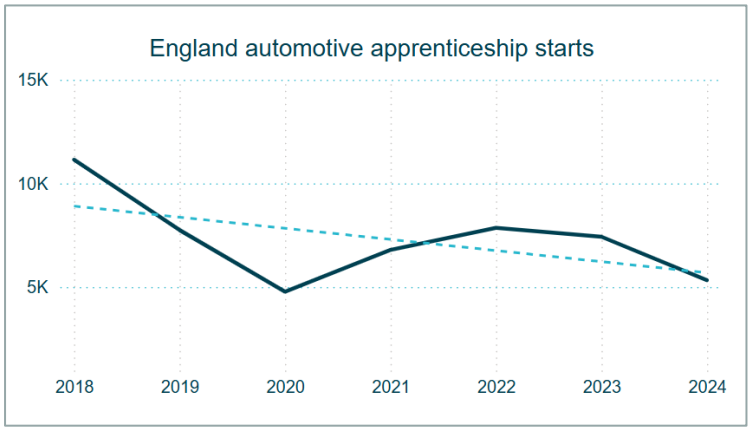
2024/5 to date

In the first six months of the 2024/25 academic year, there were 5,326 automotive apprenticeship starts.

This figure is 3% lower than the previous year and 8% lower than in 2022/23.

Automotive apprenticeship starts have not returned to pre-pandemic levels and are 12% lower than 2018/19 starts for the period.

The trend shows automotive apprenticeship starts are decreasing on average by 790 per year.



Comparison of apprenticeship subject areas

Automotive apprenticeships fell by 3%, which is slightly lower than the overall drop across all apprenticeships at 4%, based on the first six months of the academic year.

Out of 40 subject areas analysed, automotive had the twenty fourth largest percentage decrease in apprenticeship starts. Manufacturing technologies saw a sharper decline of 12%. While this area covers several sectors, automotive is a major user of advanced manufacturing technologies.

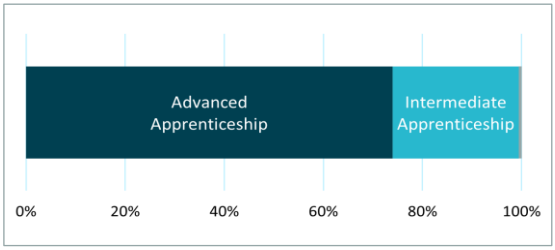
These trends reflect wider challenges around apprenticeship funding and the rising cost of delivery, which continue to put pressure on training providers.

Apprenticeship starts – level

Automotive apprenticeship starts first six months 2024/5:

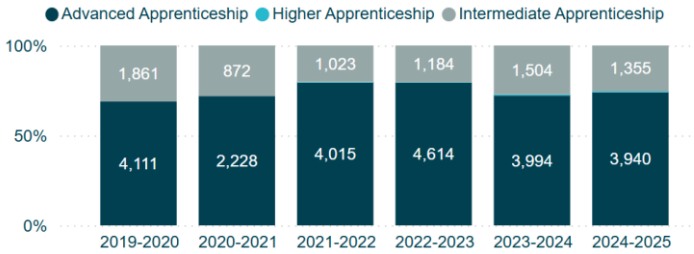
74%

Advanced apprenticeship



In the first six months of 2024/25, 74% of automotive apprenticeships (3,940) were at an advanced level. This is well above the 42% average across all apprenticeships.

The proportion of advanced-level starts has risen from 72% compared to the same period last year, alongside a 2% drop in intermediate-level starts.



Apprenticeship starts – age profile

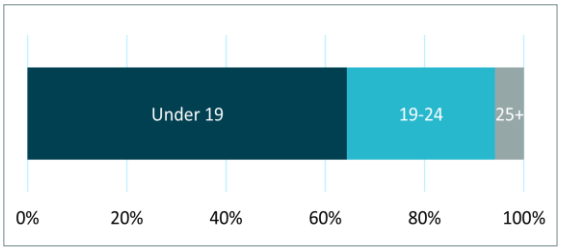
Automotive apprenticeship starts first six months 2024/5:

64%

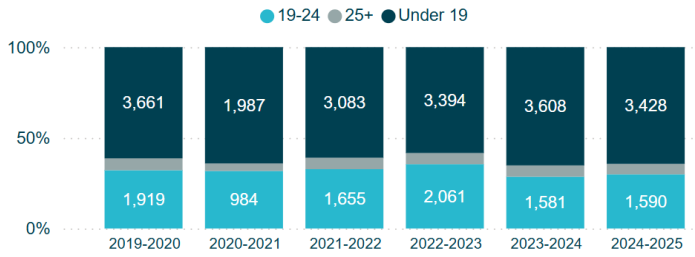
Under 19

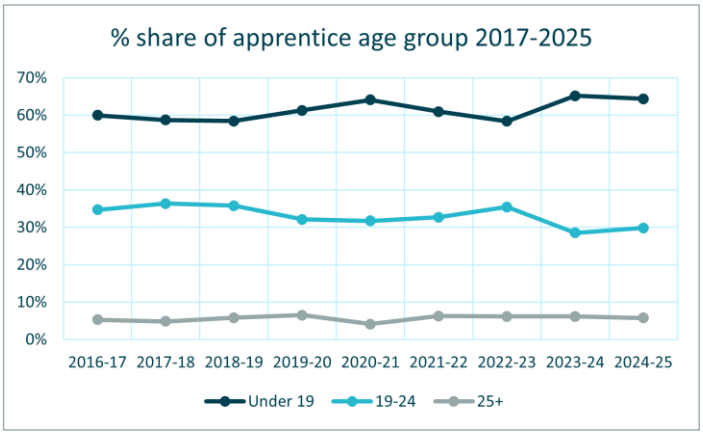
64% of automotive apprenticeship starters (3,428) were under 19, far higher than the 28% average across all apprenticeships.

The share of starters aged 19 to 24 rose by 1% compared to 2023/24, reaching 30%. However, this age group still sits at the second-lowest level since 2019.



While under-19s form the largest group, the relative growth in the 19–24 and 25+ cohorts since 2020/21 suggests that the average age of automotive apprentices is increasing.





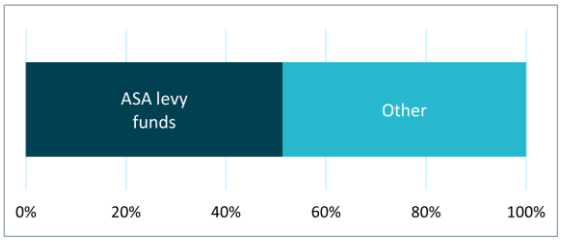
Apprenticeship starts – funding

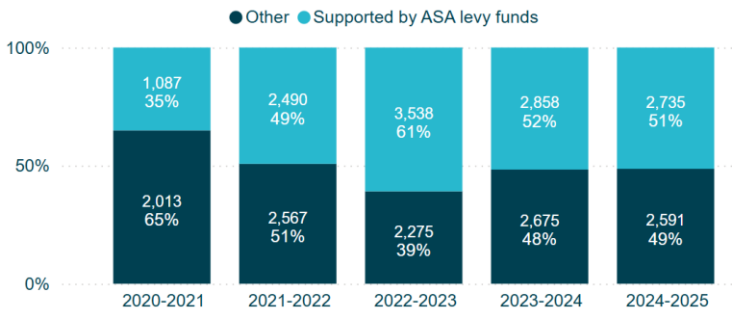
Automotive apprenticeship starts first six months 2024/5:

51%

Levy-funded

In the first half of the 2024/25 academic year, 51% of automotive apprenticeship starts were levy-funded, unchanged from last year but down from 61% in 2022/23. This is far below the 65% average across all levy-funded apprenticeships.

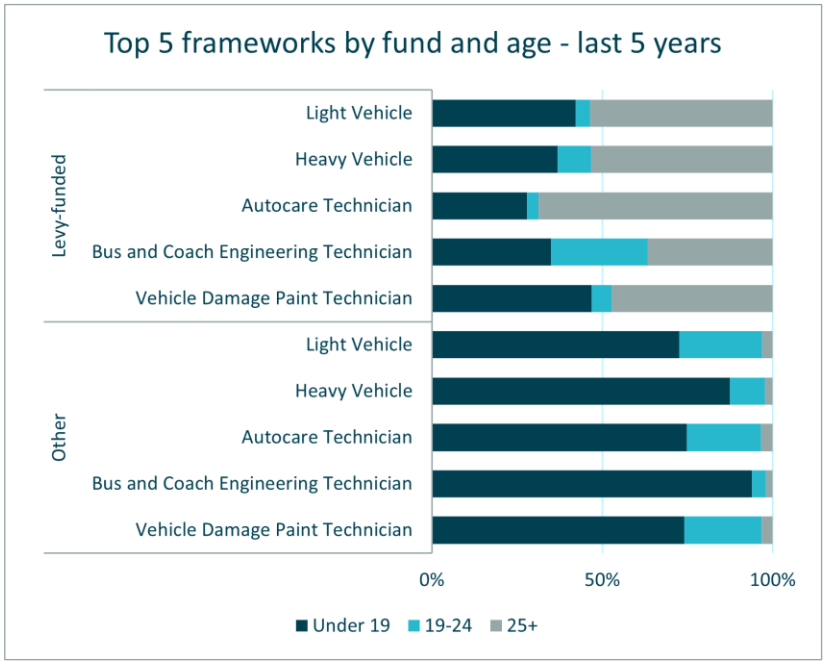




Automotive apprenticeships starts by pathway

	2023/24	2024/25	% Change
Motor Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician - Light Vehicle	2,335	2,292	-2%
Autocare Technician	1,504	1,355	-10%
Heavy Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician	820	913	11%
Bus and Coach Engineering Technician	214	196	-8%
Vehicle Damage Paint Technician	209	190	-9%
Vehicle Damage Panel Technician	142	141	-1%
Vehicle Damage Mechanical, Electrical and Trim (MET) Technician	124	79	-36%
Accident Repair Technician	88	68	-23%
Motorcycle Technician (Repair and Maintenance)	49	48	-2%
Vehicle Damage Assessor	35	31	-11%
Automotive Glazing Technician	11	13	18%
Motor Finance Specialist	2		-100%
Total	**5,531**	**5,326**	**-4%**

In the first half of 2024/25, 2,335 apprentices (43%) started the Motor Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician (Light Vehicle) pathway, making it the most popular. This reflects a 2% drop from last year and a 19% fall compared to 2022/23. However, while Light Vehicle numbers are down, the Heavy Vehicle pathway grew by 11% in total and 2% proportionally.



Over the past five years, 45% of apprentices aged 19 to 24 on the Heavy Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician pathway were levy-funded. Among apprentices aged 25 and over, this figure rises to 95%.

This suggests that levy-paying employers focus more on training older heavy vehicle apprentices. By contrast, just 27% of apprentices under 19 are levy-funded on this route, around 5% lower than the average for this age group.

One possible reason is that levy-paying employers may recruit apprentices with existing experience or upskill existing staff, who are typically older. Smaller employers, who do not pay the levy, are more likely to recruit new entrants straight from school, leading to more under-19 apprentices funded through other routes.

The Automotive Glazing Technician pathway saw the largest percentage increase, though overall numbers are low. Autocare Technician starts dropped by 10% and fell 2% proportionally but still made up 25% of all automotive starts.

Vehicle Damage MET Technician and Accident Repair Technician pathways recorded the sharpest falls, down 36% and 23% respectively. Both are now at their lowest levels for this stage of the academic year since 2020/21. This continuing decline may signal growing challenges in attracting talent to these roles, which could limit future repair and bodywork capacity.

Data sources

1. OfQual (England) – Vocational and other qualifications quarterly: October to December 2024.
2. SQA Accreditation (Scotland) – Quarterly Statistical Report, October to December 2024.
3. Qualifications Wales (Wales) – Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly: Quarter 4 2024.
4. CCEA Regulation (Northern Ireland) – Technical and Professional Qualifications Bulletin: Quarter 4 2024.
5. DfE (England) – Apprenticeships and Traineeships, data released 27 March 2025.

Institute of the Motor Industry
Fanshaws, Brickendon, Hertford, SG13 8PQ
+44(0) 1992 519 025
hello@theimi.org.uk
www.theimi.org.uk

Company Number 00225180