



AUTOMOTIVE EDUCATION REPORT

Analysis of automotive qualifications and apprenticeships in the UK



Introduction

This report analyses automotive qualification completions and apprenticeship starts across the UK. The analysis uses data from the regulatory bodies in the four nations:

- Ofqual in England¹
- The Scottish Qualifications Authority²
- Qualifications Wales³
- CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland⁴

These organisations publish quarterly statistics on qualification certificates. The most recent data covers the third quarter of 2025.

To allow comparison, Scottish qualification levels are aligned with those used in England and Wales.

For apprenticeships, the report uses monthly statistics from the Department for Education on apprenticeship starts and achievement rates in England.

Key findings: Automotive skills supply

Automotive training activity is recovering, but the sector still faces a growing gap between skills supply and future demand.

Three trends shape the outlook.

1. Qualification volumes are recovering

Awarding bodies issued 25,437 automotive certificates in Q3 2025, 12% higher than a year earlier. Training activity remains concentrated in light vehicle and general maintenance pathways.

2. EV skills are expanding but shortages are likely

The UK now has 71,942 EV-qualified technicians, or 26% of the technician workforce. IMI projections suggest the sector could still face a shortfall of more than 44,000 EV-qualified technicians by 2035.

3. Technician capability in ADAS remains limited

Only 11,518 technicians hold an ADAS-related qualification, which represents about 4% of the workforce. Yet 27% of the UK car parc already

includes Level 2 driver assistance features, and that share is set to rise.

Apprenticeship recruitment stays below historic levels

In the first quarter of the 2025/26 academic year, employers started 4,561 automotive apprenticeships. That was 6% lower than a year earlier and around 20 to 25% below pre-pandemic levels.

Despite the decline, automotive remains a high-volume technical apprenticeship area, ranking 11th out of 38 subjects.

Apprenticeships remain a youth entry route

Sixty-three percent of starters are under 19 and 70% start at advanced level.

Recent IMI research highlights another factor shaping the future skills pipeline.⁵ While most parents support apprenticeships as a pathway, fewer associate automotive with modern professional careers.

Survey research found that around 90% of parents would consider an apprenticeship for their child, but only 41% would consider an automotive apprenticeship specifically.⁵

This suggests the sector's recruitment challenge is not opposition to vocational education but a perception gap in how automotive careers are understood. Closing that gap will be critical if the workforce is to expand fast enough to support electric and connected vehicles.

Training activity has stabilised, but the sector still faces a capacity challenge.

Employers, providers and policy makers will need to expand advanced technical training and strengthen apprenticeship recruitment if the workforce is to keep pace with electric and automated vehicle technologies.

Vocational Qualification Certifications

Automotive training volumes

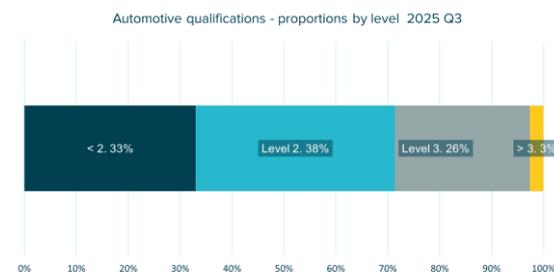
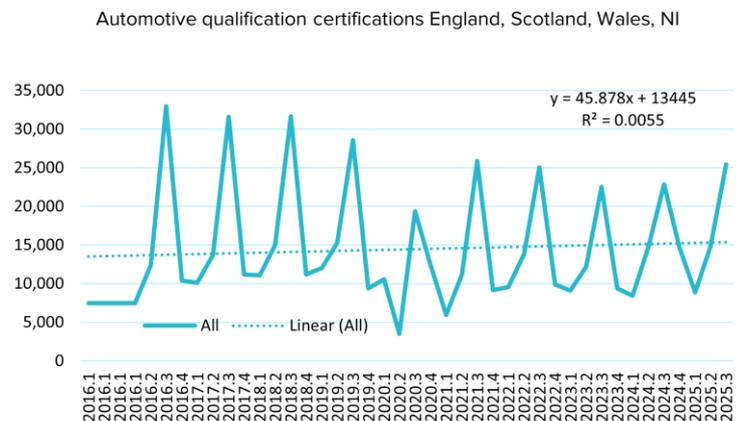
Automotive qualification certificates issued:

25,437

2025 Q3

Automotive training activity increased in 2025. Awarding bodies issued 25,437 certificates in Q3, 76% higher than the previous quarter and 12% higher than in 2024.

Over the same period, certificate volumes across all sectors fell by 4%, indicating stronger demand for automotive training.



Level 2 remains the largest part of the qualifications profile. It accounted for 38% of automotive certificates in Q3 2025, while Level 3 accounted for 26%. Compared with Q3 2024, Level 2 rose by 3% and Level 3 fell by 3%. Similar shifts have appeared several times since 2019, suggesting normal fluctuation rather than structural change.

Top ten automotive qualifications

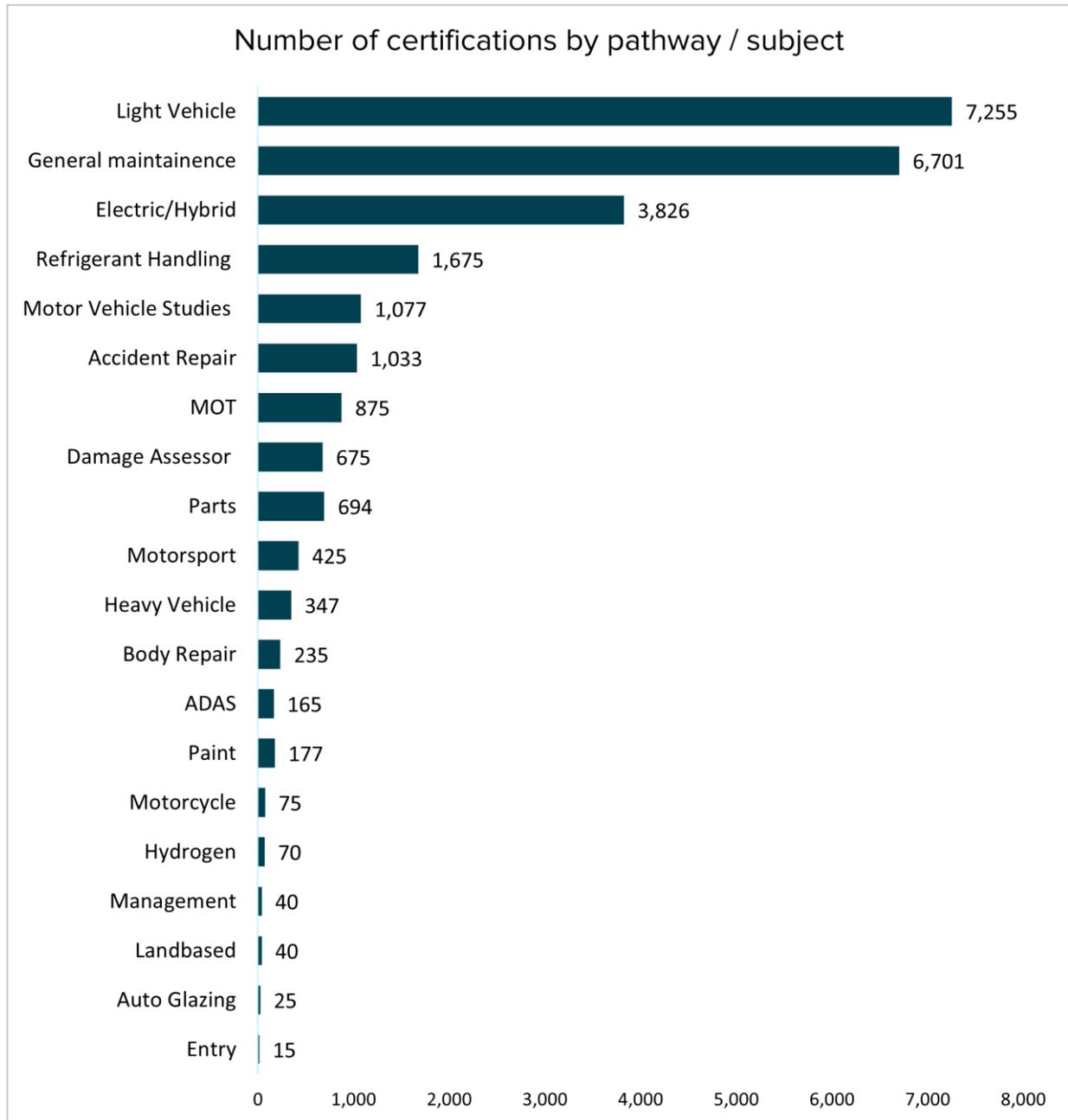
| Qualification title | No. | Level | Pathway |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|----------------------|
| IMI Level 1 Diploma in Automotive Maintenance | 2,200 | Level 1 | General maintenance |
| IMI Level 2 Diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Principles (VRQ) | 2,004 | Level 2 | Light Vehicle |
| IMI Level 3 Award in Automotive Refrigerant Handling (EC842-2006) (VRQ) | 1,595 | Level 3 | Refrigerant Handling |
| City & Guilds Level 1 Diploma in Vehicle Maintenance | 1,350 | Level 1 | General maintenance |
| City & Guilds Level 2 Certificate in Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Principles | 1,210 | Level 2 | Light Vehicle |
| IMI Level 3 Award in Electric/Hybrid Vehicle System Repair and Replacement | 1,138 | Level 3 | Electric/Hybrid |
| City & Guilds Level 2 Diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Principles | 1,106 | Level 2 | Light Vehicle |
| IMI Level 3 Diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Principles (VRQ) | 975 | Level 3 | Light Vehicle |
| IMI Level 2 Diploma in Vehicle Inspection (VRQ) | 640 | Level 2 | Damage Assessor |
| IMI Level 2 Subsidiary Diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance & Repair Technology (VRQ) | 625 | Level 2 | Light Vehicle |

A small group of qualifications still accounts for a large share of activity, but the profile is less concentrated.

In Q3 2025, the most popular qualification was the IMI Level 1 Diploma in Automotive Maintenance, with 2,200 certificates. That represented 9% of all awards. The top ten qualifications accounted for 50% of total certificates, down 18% since Q1. This suggests certification activity is spreading across a wider range of qualifications.

Growth in light vehicle and general maintenance pathways has reshaped the ranking of high-volume qualifications. Several previously prominent awards, including MOT, have moved down the list. Electric and hybrid qualifications now hold one place in the top ten, compared with six in Q1. This does not indicate a fall in EV training. It reflects faster growth in other pathways.

Automotive Qualification Pathways and Subject Areas



Light vehicle and general maintenance dominate the qualifications landscape. In Q3 2025, light vehicle qualifications accounted for 7,255 certificates and general maintenance accounted for 6,701. Together, these pathways made up 55% of certificates, up 3% on the same period in 2024.

Electric and hybrid awards accounted for 15% of certificates. That share fell by 1%, but these awards still ranked among the three most common qualification areas.

Elsewhere, change was modest. Damage assessor, motorsport and parts pathways recorded small increases. Motor vehicle studies, accident repair and MOT awards each fell slightly. Overall, the certification profile shifted between pathways but showed no major structural change.

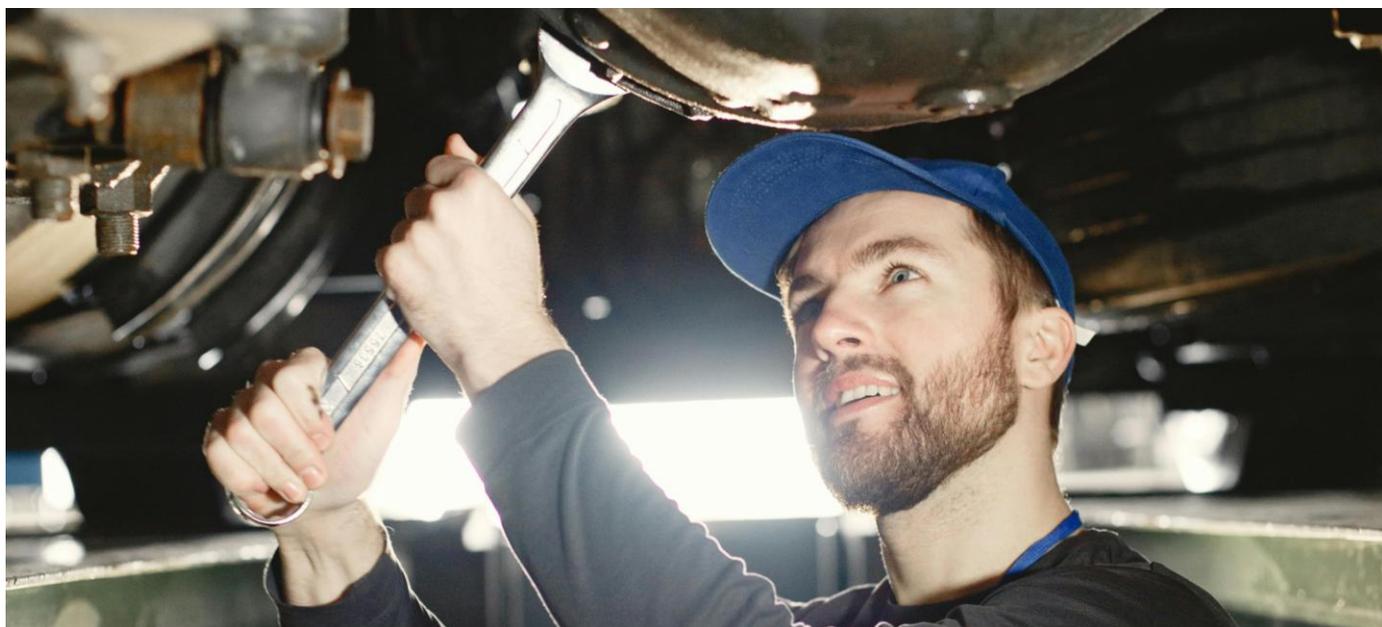
Four Nation comparison

| Nation | No. certificates issued 2024-Q4 | % Chg last year | % of Level 3 and above | Top Qualification |
|----------|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| England | 22,795 | 11% | 28% | IMI Level 1 Diploma in Automotive Maintenance |
| NI | 631 | -3% | 66% | OCN NI Level 2 Diploma in Motor Vehicle Skills |
| Scotland | 1,076 | 12% | 45% | Diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Principles at SCQF Level 5 |
| Wales | 935 | 18% | 20% | IMI Level 1 Diploma in Automotive Maintenance |

Most automotive qualification delivery still takes place in England. In Q3 2025, it accounted for 90% of all automotive certificates, unchanged from Q3 2023. The distribution across the other UK nations also remained broadly stable.

Northern Ireland recorded a small fall in total certificates (down 3%) but showed the strongest growth in higher-level provision. Certificates at Level 3 and above rose by 66%. The table above also shows that Scotland recorded 1,076 certificates and Wales recorded 935, while all three smaller nations increased the share of higher-level certificates.

Overall, growth in higher-level provision appears across the UK. The next section examines whether training volumes are keeping pace with the skills required for emerging vehicle technologies.



IMI TechSafe



Electric Vehicles

Technician forecasts - December 2025

71,942

qualified EV technicians in the UK

26%

of all technicians in the country are EV qualified

| | 2030 | 2031 | 2032 | 2033 | 2034 | 2035 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Technicians Required | 104,989 | 120,353 | 136,892 | 154,297 | 173,661 | 193,076 |
| Gap | | | | 13,373 | 28,737 | 44,152 |



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



ADAS

Technician forecasts - January 2026

27%

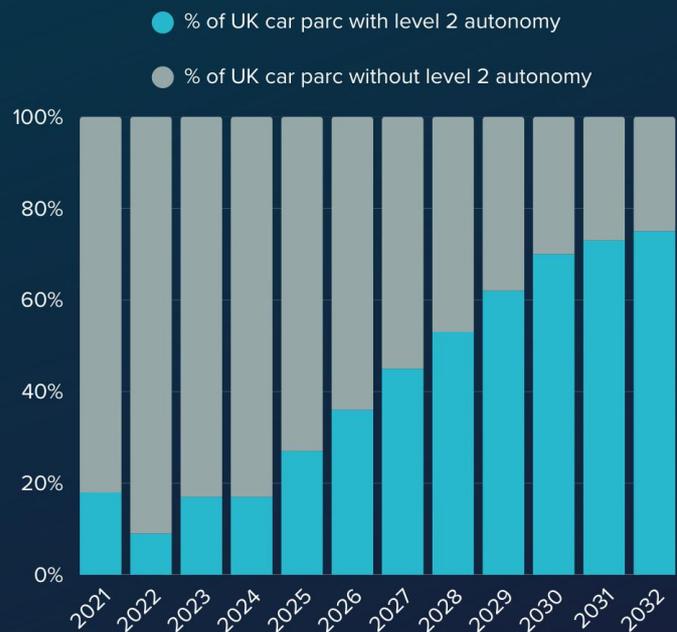
of UK cars have some degree of level 2 autonomy

11,518

ADAS TechSafe eligible qualified

4%

of all technicians in the country are ADAS qualified



Proportion of UK car parc with level 2 autonomy

TechSafe EV

EV qualification volumes continue to grow, but not fast enough to close the future skills gap.

In Q3 2025, 2,613 technicians gained an EV certification, including those with eligible IMI accreditations. That was 3% higher than the same period last year, although volumes remain below earlier peaks.

The UK now has 71,942 EV-qualified technicians. This represents around 26% of the technician workforce. The infographic on page 7 shows both figures clearly and sets them against projected demand.

The IMI expects around 2,580 additional certifications in Q4, which would take the total to about 74,500 by the end of 2025.

Projections suggest the number of EV-qualified technicians could reach around 137,000 by 2032 and 193,000 by 2035. Demand is likely to rise faster, however, leaving a projected shortfall of more than 44,000 technicians by 2035.

This gap is likely to widen from the early 2030s as EV adoption accelerates. With the ZEV mandate driving rapid growth in electric vehicle sales, the next few years will be critical.

Without faster growth in training, technician availability could become a constraint on the transition to electric vehicles.

TechSafe ADAS

ADAS capability is far below future need.

The UK has 11,518 technicians with an ADAS TechSafe-eligible qualification. That represents around 4% of the technician workforce. Certification volumes are rising, but only a few hundred technicians gain ADAS awards each quarter.

At the same time, manufacturers are fitting more vehicles with driver assistance systems. Around 27% of UK cars now include Level 2 driver assistance, and IMI forecasts suggest that share could rise to around 40% by the late 2020s. The chart on page 6 illustrates this growth in the car parc.

If certification continues at a similar pace, the number of ADAS-qualified technicians could reach around 30,000 by 2030 and 60,000 by 2035.

Projected demand is much higher. The sector may need around 205,000 technicians by 2030 and 240,000 by 2035.

If the gap widens, technician supply will fall further behind the growth of ADAS-equipped vehicles. Without faster uptake in training, the workforce will struggle to keep pace with new vehicle technologies.

Perception and future skills demand

The scale of the future skills gap is shaped by how automotive careers are perceived.

Separate IMI research shows that parents often associate digital, sustainability and advanced technology roles with sectors such as IT, engineering or business services rather than with automotive itself.⁵ Yet many of these roles already exist within the sector and are becoming increasingly important as vehicles become more electrified, connected and software-driven.

This perception gap matters because it shapes which sectors young people consider. If automotive is not recognised as a technology-driven industry, the sector risks losing entrants to industries more strongly associated with innovation and digital capability.

Closing this gap will be essential as demand for EV and ADAS skills continues to grow.

Apprenticeship Recruitment, England

Apprenticeship Starts academic year 2025/26

Automotive apprenticeships starts
first quarter 2025/6:

4,561

2025/6 to date

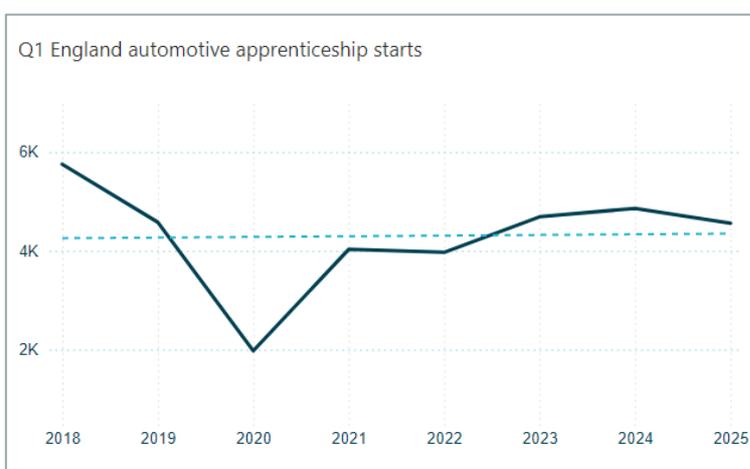
Automotive apprenticeship starts fell sharply after 2019/20 and then settled at a lower level. Although recent starts have fluctuated, they remain around 20 to 25% below the levels recorded between 2016 and 2019.

This suggests recruitment has reset to a lower baseline rather than returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Automotive apprenticeship recruitment has stabilised.

In the first quarter of the 2025/26 academic year, employers started 4,561 automotive apprenticeships. That was 6% lower than Q1 2024/25 and 3% lower than Q1 2022/23.

Across all sectors, apprenticeship starts rose by 2% year on year, meaning automotive underperformed the wider market.



Understanding the recruitment challenge

Recent IMI research offers additional insight into why apprenticeship recruitment remains below historic levels.⁵

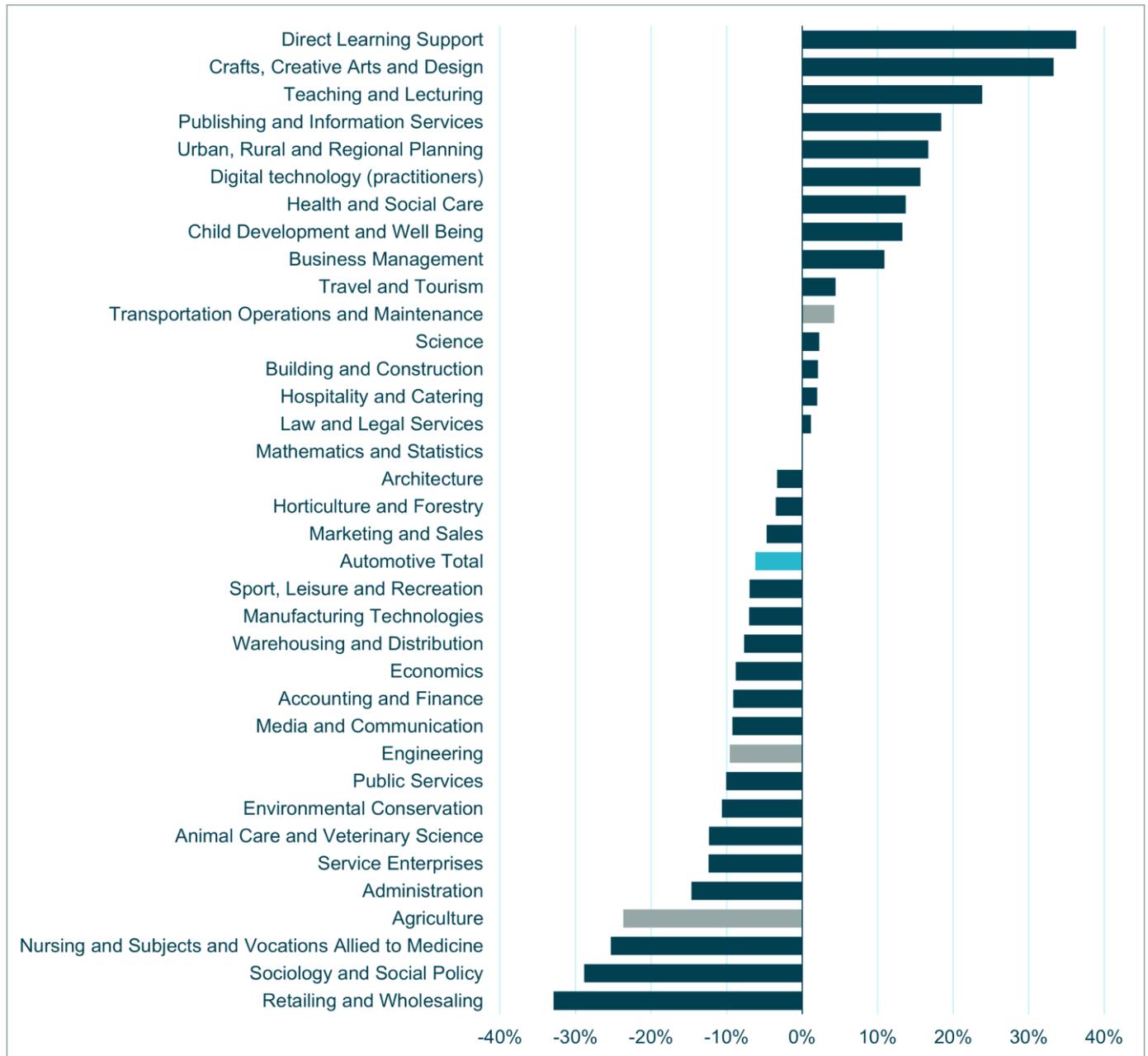
Survey evidence shows that apprenticeships are widely supported by parents as a pathway into employment. Around 90% of parents of children aged 14 to 17 say they would consider an apprenticeship route for their child. However, support drops significantly when parents consider specific sectors. Only 41% say they would consider an automotive apprenticeship.

This gap suggests that automotive is not competing against apprenticeships themselves. Instead, it is competing against other sectors that parents more readily associate with modern, professional and future-facing careers.

Research indicates that many parents simply do not include automotive in their “mental shortlist” of careers to encourage. This exclusion often reflects limited familiarity with the sector and reliance on outdated assumptions about the types of roles available.

As a result, automotive apprenticeships may lose potential entrants by default rather than through deliberate rejection.

Comparison of Apprenticeship Subject Areas



Automotive apprenticeship starts fell by 6% year on year, but the sector still recruits at comparatively high volume. Among 38 subject areas, automotive ranked 11th by total apprenticeship starts. That places it in the upper third of the subject areas.

Several related technical subjects recorded larger declines over the same period. Agriculture fell by 24% and engineering fell by 10%, while transportation, operations and maintenance grew by 4%. The chart above shows that automotive sits near the middle of a wider mixed picture across subject areas.

Automotive has not become a small apprenticeship area. The issue is that a relatively large sector still recruits below its former level.

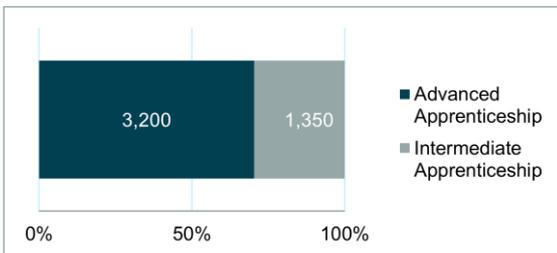
Apprenticeship starts level

Automotive apprenticeship starts first quarter 2025/6:

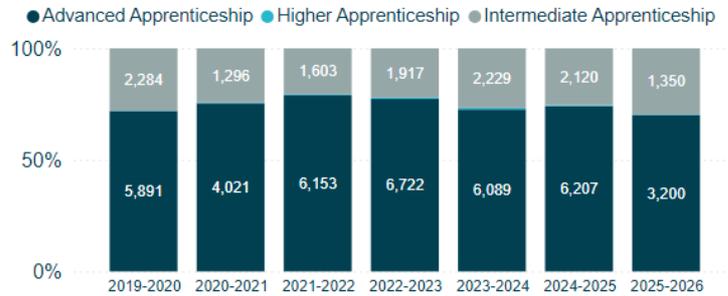
70%

Advanced apprenticeship

In the first quarter of 2025/26, 70% of automotive apprenticeship starts, or 3,200 starts, were at advanced level.



That is well above the 40% average across all sectors. However, the proportion fell from 74% a year earlier as the share of intermediate starts rose by 4%.



This pattern confirms that automotive continues to rely on Level 3 training as its main apprenticeship route.

Apprenticeship age profile

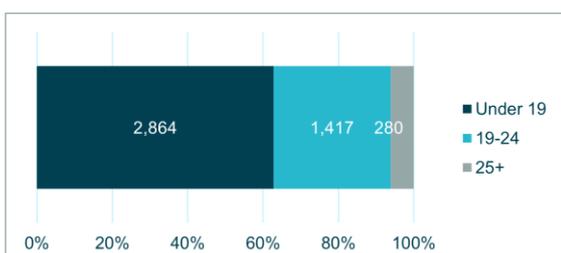
Automotive apprenticeship starts first quarter 2025/6:

63%

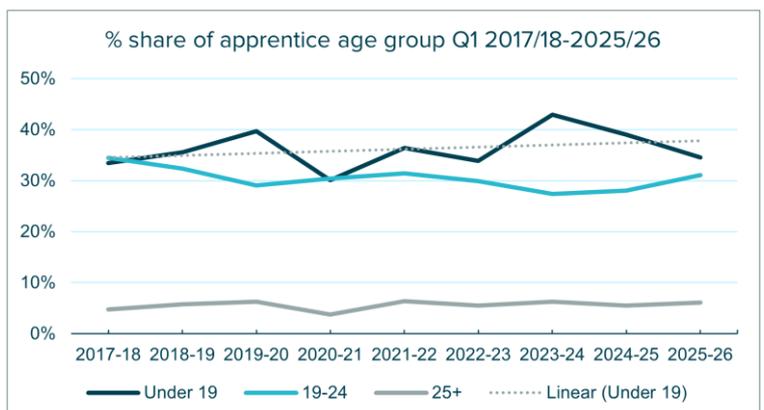
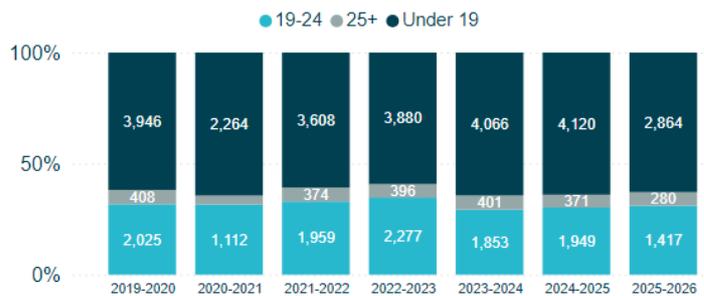
Under 19

63% of automotive apprenticeship starters were aged under 19. That was down four percentage points from 2024/25, but it was still above the all-sector average of 27%.

The proportion aged 19 to 24 rose by three percentage points to 31%, while starters aged over 25 increased by 1%.



Overall, the trend remains stable. The age profile has broadened slightly, but apprenticeships still depend heavily on younger entrants.



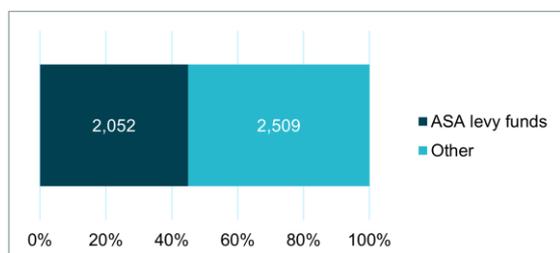
Apprenticeship funding profile

Automotive apprenticeship starts first quarter 2025/6:

45%

Levy-funded

In the first quarter of 2025/26, 45% of automotive apprenticeship starts were levy-funded. That was 7% lower than in both 2024/25 and 2023/24, and 18% below the all-sector average of 63%.



Although levy-funded starts declined, they remain broadly in line with post-pandemic funding levels.



Employer funding still plays a major role in the sector. The pattern suggests continued reliance on a mix of levy-supported large employers and non-levy SME recruitment.

Automotive apprenticeships starts by framework

| Apprenticeship Standard | Q1 2024/25 | Q1 2025/26 | % Change |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Motor Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician - Light Vehicle | 1,834 | 1,675 | -9% |
| Autocare Technician | 1,050 | 1,135 | 8% |
| Heavy Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician | 777 | 814 | 5% |
| Lift Truck and Powered Access Engineering Technician | 103 | 220 | 114% |
| Land-Based Service Engineer | 203 | 215 | 6% |
| Bus and Coach Engineering Technician | 140 | 124 | -11% |
| Vehicle Damage Paint Technician | 142 | 114 | -20% |
| Vehicle Damage Panel Technician | 93 | 76 | -18% |
| Vehicle Damage Mechanical, Electrical and Trim (MET) Technician | 49 | 49 | 0% |
| Accident Repair Technician | 33 | 45 | 36% |
| Land-Based Service Engineering Technician | 338 | 27 | -92% |
| Motorcycle Technician (Repair and Maintenance) | 44 | 24 | -45% |
| Heritage Engineering Technician | 19 | 17 | -11% |
| Automotive Glazing Technician | 13 | 15 | 15% |
| Vehicle Damage Assessor | 23 | 11 | -52% |
| Total | 4,861 | 4,561 | -6% |

Automotive apprenticeship starts remain heavily focused on a small number of core standards, while specialist pathways recruit at much lower levels.

In Q1 2025/26, the Motor Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician standard recorded 1,675 starts, accounting for 37% of all automotive apprenticeship starts. This remained the largest pathway, although starts were 9% lower than in Q1 2024/25.

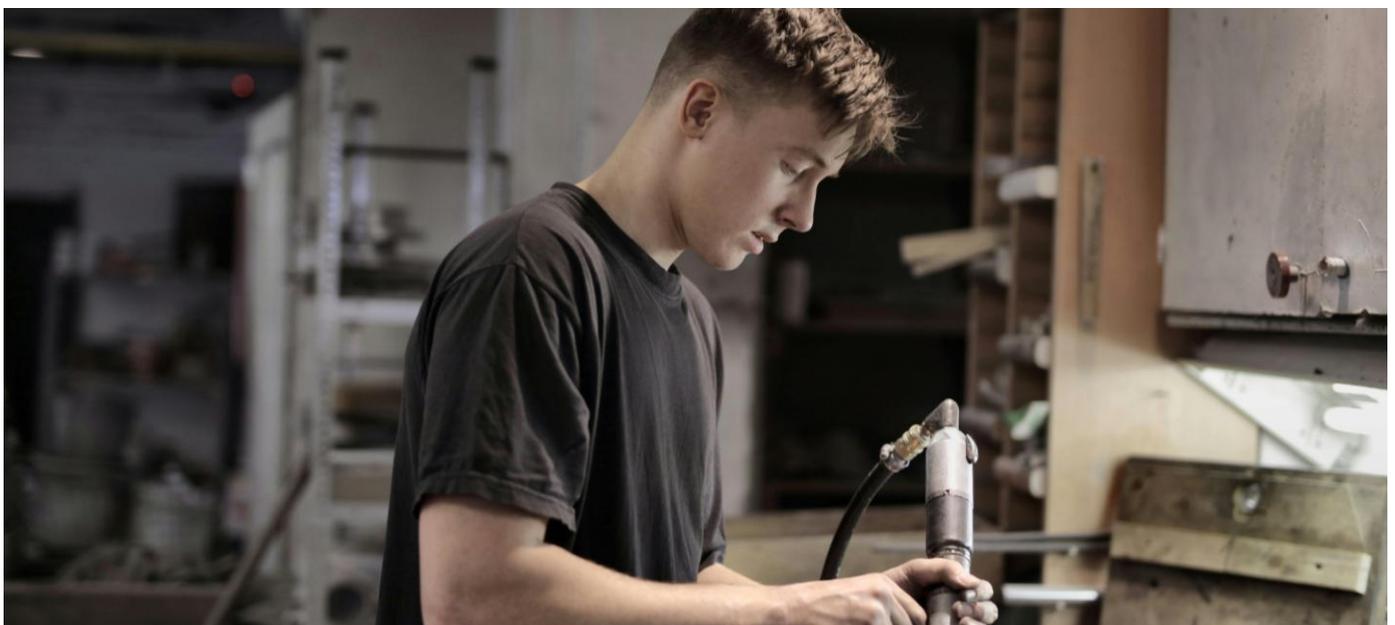
Several other core standards saw modest growth. Autocare Technician starts rose by 8%, while Heavy Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician increased by 5%.

Lift Truck and Powered Access Engineering Technician recorded the fastest growth, with starts rising by 114%, although from a low base. This standard remains small in overall volume. The latest version of the pathway received a small funding increase in 2023, which may have supported growth.⁷

Vehicle damage apprenticeship starts continue to fall, with paint, panel and assessor routes all declining year on year.

The decline appears to reflect training pipeline constraints rather than weaker demand. Rising technical complexity increases training costs, while sector consolidation limits the number of body shops able to support apprentices.⁸

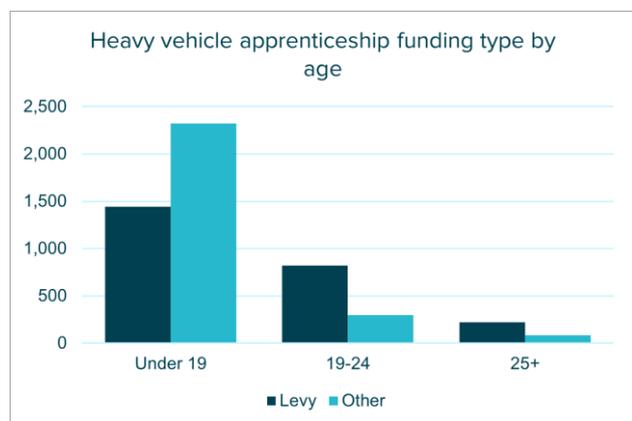
Land-Based Service Engineering Technician recorded the largest decline, with starts falling by 92% over the same period. The pathway's funding band was reduced in May 2025, which likely explains much of this fall.⁹



Heavy vehicle and the wider apprenticeship pattern

Heavy vehicle training offers a useful example of how funding and age profiles vary across the sector.

Heavy Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician is one of the largest apprenticeship standards in automotive, with nearly 3,500 starts across the first quarter of the last five academic years.



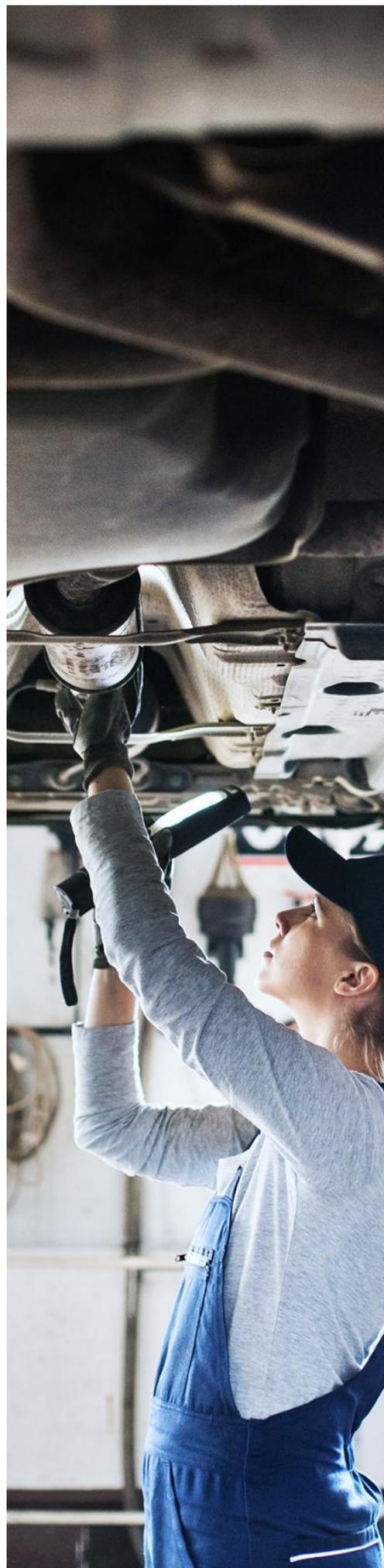
Over that period, 71% of heavy vehicle apprentices were levy-funded, compared with 51% across all motor trade apprenticeships. Heavy vehicle is the second most levy-funded apprenticeship standard in the sector, after Bus and Coach Engineering Technician at 88%.

The age profile is youth-dominated, with almost 60% of apprentices starting before age 19, although the share of adult entrants is slightly higher than in other automotive technician roles.

More broadly, automotive apprenticeship provision remains concentrated in a small number of servicing occupations and still focuses mainly on younger starters. Training volume centres on three core pathways:

- Light vehicle technician
- Autocare technician
- Heavy vehicle technician

The challenge facing the automotive workforce is not only training capacity but recognition of the sector as a modern technical profession. Meeting future demand for EV, software and advanced diagnostic skills will require expanded training and stronger awareness of automotive careers among parents, educators and young people.



Data Sources

1. Ofqual, *Vocational And Other Qualifications Quarterly Statistics: Quarter 3 2025*.
2. Scottish Qualifications Authority. *Quarterly Statistical Report: Q2 (July-September 2025)*.
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5. Institute of the Motor Industry. *The Apprenticeship Mindshift Report*. February 2026.
6. Department for Education. *Apprenticeships and Traineeships Statistics*. 29 January 2026.
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9. Skills England. *Land-Based Service Engineering Technician Standard*. Version 1.2. 14 July 2025.

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