



INSIGHTS BY
INSTITUTE OF THE
MOTOR INDUSTRY



UNDERSTANDING THE UK ACCIDENT & REPAIR WORKFORCE

WORKFORCE PROFILE, PIPELINE CHALLENGES, AND
EMERGING PRESSURES

The professional body for people working
and learning in automotive since 1920

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Foreword

The UK's automotive sector is undergoing profound transformation. As vehicle technologies evolve and customer expectations continue to rise, the role of the Accident & Repair workforce has never been more critical.

Yet, as this report from the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) shows, the sector is approaching a pivotal moment.

For too long, the Accident & Repair workforce has lacked clear definition within official data, limiting the industry's ability to fully understand its size, structure, and future needs. This report represents an important step forward, bringing together new analysis to provide a clearer, evidence-based picture of the workforce and the challenges it faces. What emerges is a sector under increasing pressure.

An ageing workforce, combined with insufficient and misaligned entry routes, is creating a growing gap between the number of people leaving the sector and those entering it. This is particularly acute in specialist roles such as paint, body repair and glazing, occupations that are essential to maintaining repair capacity across the UK.

This is not a distant or theoretical challenge. It is already beginning to impact employers, with increasing difficulty in recruiting skilled technicians and growing competition for talent. Left unaddressed, these pressures risk constraining repair capacity, increasing costs, and ultimately affecting motorists and businesses alike.

At the same time, the sector must also prepare for the future. The transition to new vehicle technologies, including electric and advanced driver systems, will place additional demands on skills and training. Ensuring the workforce is both sufficient in number and equipped with the right capabilities will be critical.

The IMI has long championed the need to attract new talent into the automotive sector, support the development of skills, and retain experienced professionals. This report reinforces the urgency of that agenda within Accident & Repair.

Addressing these challenges will require coordinated action across industry, education, and government. It will mean improving awareness of careers in the sector, strengthening pathways into employment, and ensuring that training provision is aligned with real-world demand.

The IMI stands ready to advocate on behalf of the sector to government to help drive this change.

This report is not just an assessment of the current workforce, it is a call to action to ensure that the Accident & Repair sector remains resilient, sustainable, and fit for the future.

Nick Connor, CEO



Executive Summary

The Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) estimates that the UK Accident & Repair (A&R) workforce comprises approximately 59,500 workers. Analysis of workforce flows indicates a clear and growing structural shortfall. Each year, an estimated 4,700 workers leave the sector, driven by retirement and wider labour market churn, while approximately 3,000 new entrants join. This results in a net annual gap of around 1,700 workers.

This shortfall is not evenly distributed across the workforce. It is most acute in specialist technical roles, particularly in paint, body repair, and glazing, where workforce ageing is most pronounced and entry pathways are least developed.

Workforce age profiles show that several of these occupations have a high concentration of older workers, increasing the likelihood of accelerated exits over the medium term. At the same time, the inflow of younger workers into these roles remains limited.

Analysis of the entry pipeline indicates two key challenges. First, the overall volume of new entrants is insufficient to offset workforce losses. Second, training activity is not aligned with areas of greatest demand. A significant proportion of qualification activity is concentrated in general Accident Repair pathways, while specialist roles facing the greatest workforce pressure receive a disproportionately small share.

Apprenticeship data reinforces this trend. There is no evidence of sustained growth in apprenticeship starts across key A&R pathways, and in some cases, volumes have declined. This limits the sector's ability to scale entry into shortage occupations.

Taken together, these factors point to a structural imbalance between workforce inflow and outflow, combined with a misalignment between training provision and labour market demand. Without intervention, this gap is expected to widen. The likely impacts include reduced repair capacity, increased competition for skilled labour, longer repair times, and rising costs across the automotive repair system.

The IMI identifies three priority areas for action:

- Increasing the volume of entrants into the sector, particularly into shortage occupations
- Improving alignment between training provision and workforce demand
- Strengthening retention and progression within the existing workforce



Addressing these challenges will be critical to ensuring the long-term sustainability and resilience of the UK Accident & Repair sector.

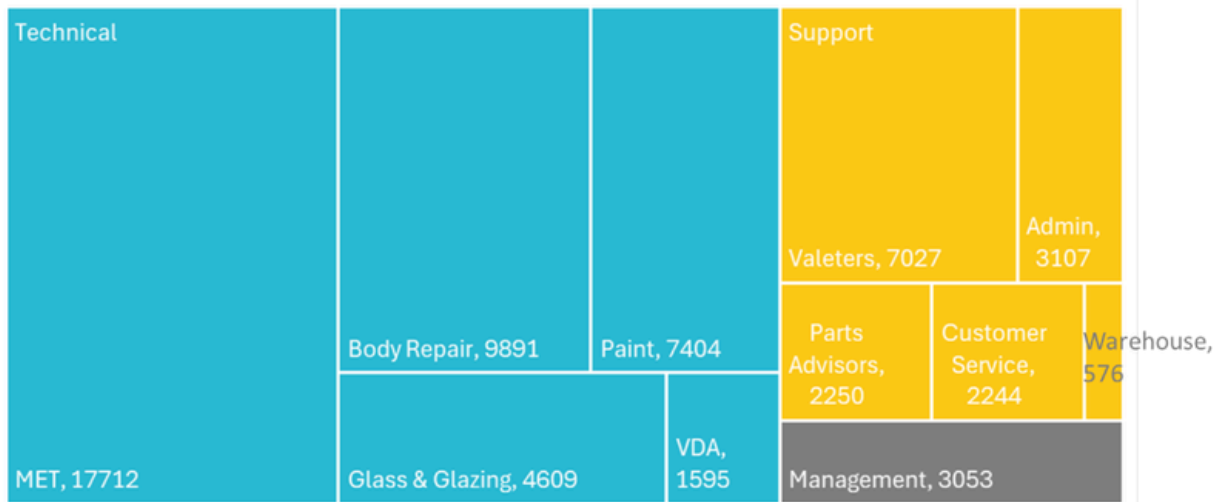
Workforce size and structure

The Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) estimates that the UK Accident & Repair (A&R) The UK Accident & Repair workforce is estimated at approximately 59,500 workers, based on a combined industry and occupation modelling approach.

While the sector is often characterised as highly technical, the workforce is more diverse than this suggests. Around 70% of roles are technical, including body repair, paint, and glazing occupations, but a substantial proportion, over 15,000 roles, sit in non-technical functions such as administration, customer service, and management.

This broader occupational mix is important when considering workforce dynamics. Recruitment and retention challenges are not confined to technical roles alone, and the effective functioning of the sector depends on both specialist and support functions working in tandem.

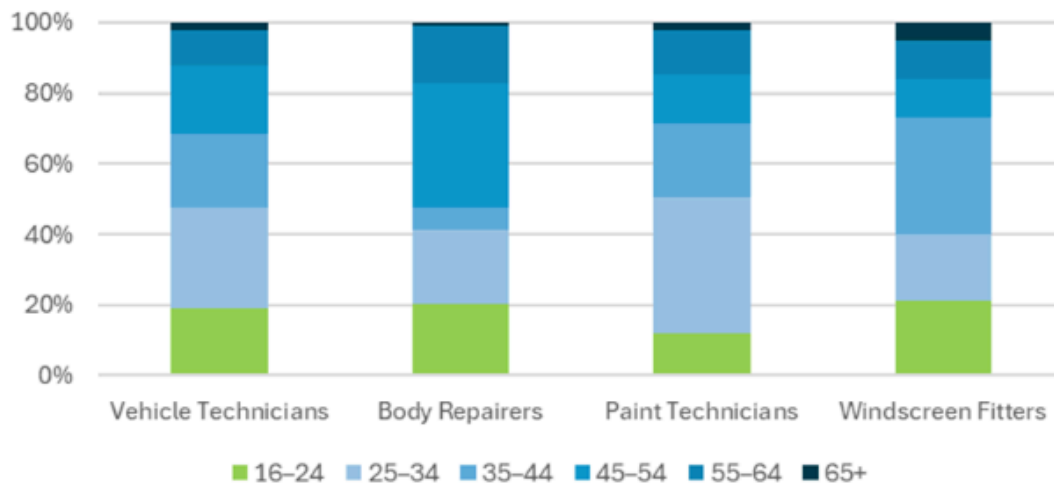
The UK Accident & Repair Workforce (~59,500 people)



Workforce age profile and replacement pressure

The age profile of the workforce highlights uneven but significant replacement pressures across Accident & Repair roles.

Age profile varies significantly across key Accident & Repair roles



Body repair occupations stand out as having the oldest workforce profile, indicating a higher likelihood of retirement-driven exits in the near term. In contrast, some pathways, such as autoglazing, show relatively stronger representation among younger workers, suggesting a more established entry pipeline.

However, this variation is not sufficient to offset overall trends. In several key roles, particularly paint and body repair, low levels of younger entrants coincide with an ageing workforce, creating a clear risk of future shortages.

Role	Under 25 (Pipeline)	65+ (Immediate Risk)
Body Repair	20%	1%
Paint	12%	2%
Windscreen	21%	5%

These patterns indicate that workforce pressure is not uniform across the sector. Instead, it is concentrated in specific occupations where replacement demand is highest and pipeline strength is weakest.

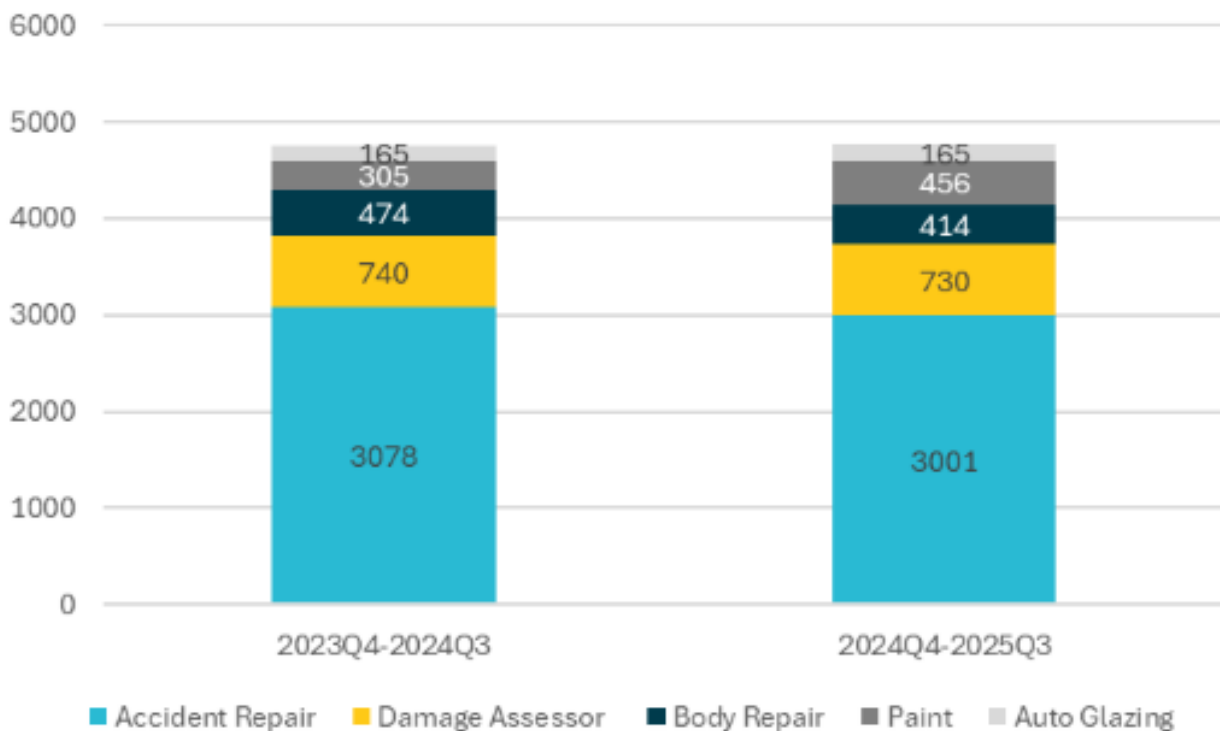


The entry pipeline: scale and alignment

At first glance, qualification data suggests a relatively active pipeline into Accident & Repair roles. However, closer analysis indicates that this overstates the number of new entrants.

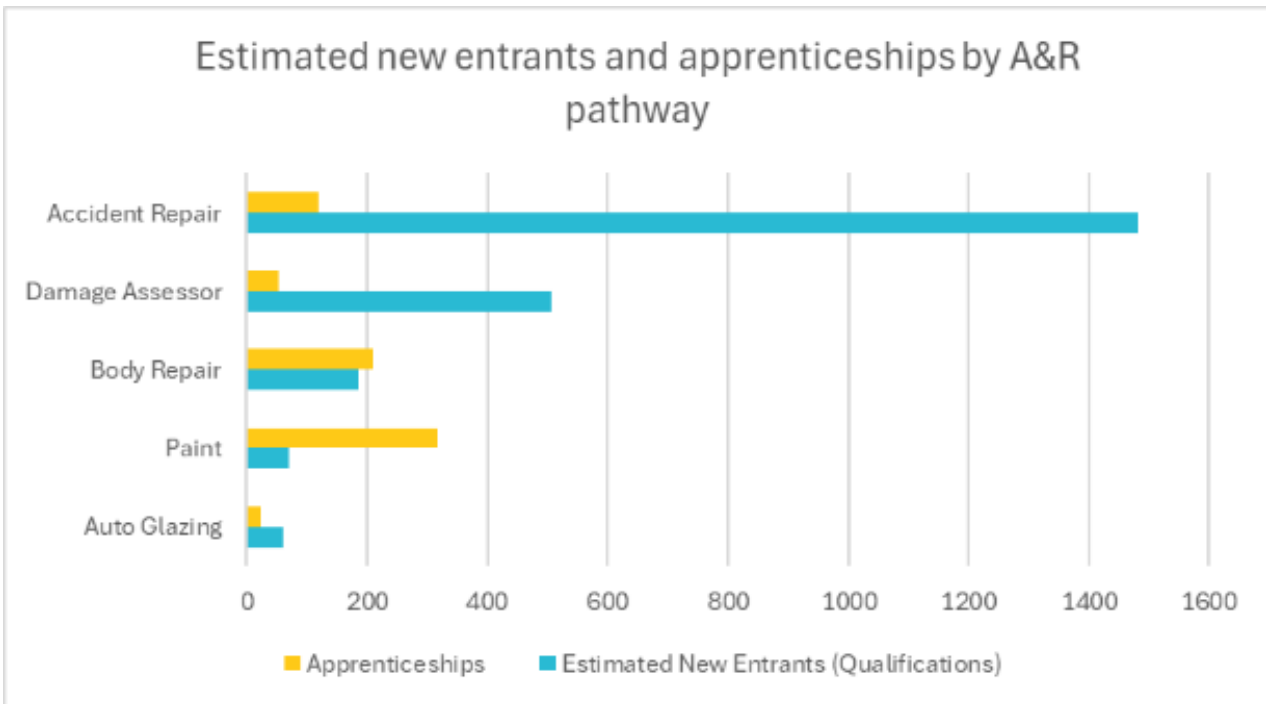
A significant proportion of qualification activity reflects existing workers undertaking upskilling or accreditation, rather than individuals entering the sector for the first time. When this is accounted for (alongside age-based proxies for new entrants) the effective inflow into the workforce is considerably smaller.

Distribution of qualification activity across A&R pathways



There is also a clear imbalance in how training is distributed across pathways. The majority of qualification activity is concentrated in general Accident Repair routes, while specialist pathways such as paint, body repair, and glazing receive a much smaller share, despite facing the greatest workforce pressure.



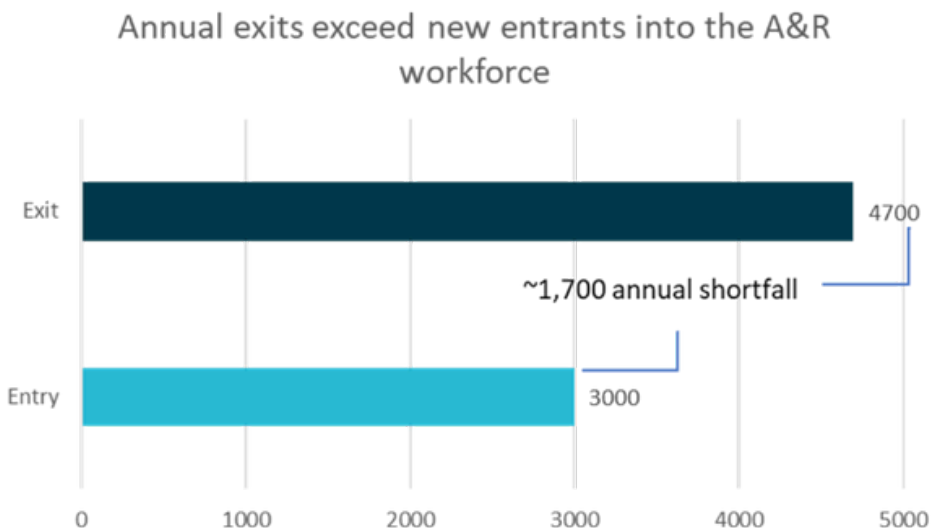


Apprenticeship trends reinforce this picture. There is no evidence of sustained growth in apprenticeship starts across key A&R pathways, and in some cases, volumes have declined. Compared to the wider automotive sector, Accident & Repair appears to be lagging behind in expanding this critical entry route.

Taken together, these factors point to a pipeline that is not only limited in scale, but also misaligned with the areas of greatest demand.

Workforce inflow and outflow

Bringing together workforce stock, age profile, and pipeline data allows for an estimate of overall workforce flows. Current analysis suggests that approximately 4,700 workers leave the sector each year, driven by a combination of retirement and wider labour market churn. Over the same period, around 3,000 new entrants join the workforce. This results in a net annual shortfall of approximately 1,700 workers.



Importantly, this gap is not evenly distributed. It is most pronounced in specialist roles, particularly paint and autoglazing, but is evident across multiple areas of the workforce.

Role	Entry	Exit	Gap
Body Repair	394	455	-61
Paint	388	836	-448
Auto Glazing	82	419	-337

Without a change in inflow, these shortages are likely to accumulate over time, increasing pressure on employers and reducing overall sector capacity.

Implications and priorities for action

The evidence presented in this report points to a structural workforce challenge within the Accident & Repair sector, rather than a short-term fluctuation.

In the near term, this is likely to result in increasing difficulty for employers in recruiting and retaining skilled staff, alongside growing competition for a limited talent pool. Over time, sustained workforce shortages are likely to place pressure on repair capacity, contribute to longer repair times, and increase costs across the system.

More fundamentally, the current trajectory raises questions about the sector's ability to maintain service levels and respond to future demand, particularly as vehicle technologies and repair requirements continue to evolve.

Addressing these challenges will require a more coordinated and targeted approach across attraction, training, and retention.

Strengthening entry into the sector will be critical. This includes increasing awareness of Accident & Repair careers, improving transitions from education into employment, and ensuring that entry routes extend beyond traditional pathways where necessary.

There is also a clear need to better align training provision with workforce demand. Current activity is not sufficiently focused on the occupations facing the greatest pressure, particularly within specialist roles such as paint, body repair, and glazing.

Finally, maximising the existing workforce will remain essential. This includes supporting progression, enabling movement into shortage roles, and improving retention in occupations where churn is high.

Without more targeted intervention, the workforce gap identified in this report is likely to widen, increasing pressure on employers and constraining the sector's ability to operate effectively.



Conclusion

This report provides a clearer, evidence-based view of the UK Accident & Repair workforce and the pressures it now faces.

The analysis identifies a structural imbalance between workforce inflow and outflow, driven by an ageing workforce in key specialist roles and an entry pipeline that is both limited in scale and misaligned with demand. This is not a future risk, it is a challenge that is already emerging across the sector.

Without targeted intervention, the gap between workforce supply and demand is expected to widen. The implications are significant: increasing pressure on repair capacity, longer repair times, rising costs, and growing constraints on the sector's ability to meet current and future demand.

Addressing this challenge will require coordinated action across industry, education, and government. Strengthening entry into the sector, improving the alignment of training provision, and supporting the retention and progression of the existing workforce will all be critical.

The Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) will continue to work with partners across the automotive ecosystem to support this effort, providing insight, driving collaboration, and advocating for the changes needed to ensure a sustainable and resilient Accident & Repair workforce.

The evidence is clear, and the direction of travel is established. The priority now is to act.



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