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Apprenticeships Evaluation 2021 - Learners

Research report

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of the Apprenticeship Evaluation (AEvS) Learner Survey 2021. It is the seventh in the series, the first of which was published in 2012, with the previous survey taking place in 2018-19. It sits alongside the accompanying Employer report.

The research is intended to help monitor key progress indicators and to help shape future development of the apprenticeship programme. Specifically, it covers individuals' motivations for undertaking their apprenticeship, their experience of the training they received, their satisfaction with the apprenticeship both overall and in relation to specific elements, and the impact it has had on their career. The research is also used to investigate the impact of recent reforms such as the creation of new apprenticeship standards to replace frameworks. As of 1 August 2020, all new apprenticeship starts were on the standards model, which involves an End-Point assessment to evaluate the learner's job competency at the end of the programme.

In a change from previous reports, the 2021 research also investigates the experiences of learners who did not complete their apprenticeship standards including satisfaction with their apprenticeship and reasons for their non-completion. New questions were also added to the 2021 report to capture the impact of COVID-19 on apprenticeships.

Method and interpretation

The main learner research comprised 5,122 interviews with current apprentices and those that had completed an apprenticeship, as well as 541 interviews with learners on standards that did not complete their apprenticeship. Interviews were conducted between May 2021 and July 2021. The research covered apprenticeships at all levels, from Level 2 through those undertaking Degree apprenticeships at Level 6+.

Current apprentices interviewed were undertaking their apprenticeship at the time of interview. Those in the 'completer'¹ category had either completed their apprenticeship between March and December 2020 (termed 'recent completers') or between July 2019 and February 2020 ('longer-term completers' and comparable to the completer group from previous Learner surveys in the AEvS series). This allows the survey to capture views of apprentices at the time they experience their apprenticeship, while also capturing meaningful reflection after the apprenticeship and information on both short-

¹ The term 'completer' is used rather than achiever, as this group consists of apprenticeships with an actual end date on the IDBR, although they may not have reached an achieved status following an end-point assessment.

term and longer-term progression. Non-completers interviewed had withdrawn from their apprenticeship between September 2019 and December 2020.

For much of this report, the views of current and completer apprentices are combined into an overall figure, so it is important to note that, unless specified otherwise, findings for the 'learner survey' include both current apprentices and those who completed their apprenticeship in the timeframes outlined above. Results for non-completers are reported separately in [Chapter 10](#).

At the end of each chapter, where applicable, comparisons are made to findings in the 2018-19 and earlier surveys. As the 'recent-completer' and 'non-completer' groups are new to the 2021 survey, no comparisons are made between these groups and previous surveys. For this same reason, combined overall figures from the 2021 survey cannot be directly compared with previous waves. A number of changes to the methodology, including the sample and weighting approach, should be considered when comparing findings from 2021 with previous surveys. These changes are detailed further in the [introduction](#) and Technical Report. It is also important to note the context for the 2021 survey, most notably the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the report analysis is conducted by Sector Subject Area (SSA), in line with previous iterations of the AEVS Learner Study (this categorisation could be applied to both apprenticeship standards and apprenticeship frameworks, thus enabling combined sector subject analysis of these groups). Where we discuss 'Business' or 'Health' apprenticeships, for example, this refers to the subject being undertaken, not the sector of the employer.

Profile of apprentices

The profile of apprentices in this study represents a particular snapshot in time - those who were undertaking an apprenticeship at the time of fieldwork (between May and July 2021), those who completed between July 2019 and December 2020 and those who withdrew from their apprenticeship between September 2019 and December 2020. Figures will therefore vary slightly from official statistics on annual apprenticeship starts and achievements, however the profile of learners presented in this report accurately reflects the overall population of learners at the time of sampling.

Based on counts within the Individualised Learner Record (ILR), the population of the combined 'all apprentices' group for this survey comprised mostly current apprentices (65%) with a relatively even split between recent (17%) and longer-term completers (18%).

Level 3 apprentices remain the most common (making up 46% of all apprentices). However, there has been an increase in apprenticeships at higher levels. There has been

a substantial increase in degree apprenticeships (which make up 10% of current apprenticeships in 2021 vs. 2% in 2018-19).

Three subject areas accounted for the majority of apprenticeships: Business (28%), Health (24%), and Engineering (19%).² This reflects the overall apprenticeship population both at the time of sampling.³

Approaching half of apprentices were aged 25 and above (44%). Three in ten (31%) were aged between 19 and 24, and a quarter (26%) were aged under 19.

Survey data shows that the vast majority of apprentices were White (87%), with 13% in Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, though the latter had greater representation among current apprentices (15%).

Overall, 4% of apprentices identified as having a disability and 6% a learning difficulty (7% reported either).

Almost all (90%) current learners were on standards, compared to 56% of recent completers and 46% of longer-term completers.

Routes into apprenticeships and motivations

The majority (56%) of apprentices worked for their employer before starting their apprenticeship, with 44% having been recruited to their apprenticeship. There was no significant change in the proportion of current apprentices already working for their employer (56% vs. 58% in 2018-19 and 54% in 2017). However, in 2021 far fewer longer-term completers had already been working for their employer than in 2018-19 and in 2017 (53% vs. 65% in 2018-19 and 59% in 2017).

Older apprentices were much more likely to have already been working for their employer (82%, compared with 45% of those aged 19-24 and 25% of those under 19). Apprentices in Retail, Health and Business apprenticeships were most likely to have already been working for their employer (70%, 67%, 62% respectively).

Younger apprentices were much more likely to be new recruits (75% of those under 19 compared to only 18% of those 25 or older). Apprentices in IT, Engineering and Construction were more likely than other subject areas to be new recruits (62%, 61%, 58% respectively).

² Subject names are abbreviated throughout, for full subject names please see Table 1-1.

³ Further detail on the number of apprenticeships by sector can be found in the accompanying technical report.

Amongst apprentices who were new to their employer (i.e., recruited to the apprenticeship), most came either straight from school or college (43%) or were working for a different employer beforehand (38%); 10% were unemployed prior to starting their apprenticeship.

An apprenticeship was the first choice for almost half of all apprentices (47%, rising to 66% of those aged 18 or younger), and a similar proportion had no preference (45%). Those on frameworks were more likely than those on standards to say that an apprenticeship was their preferred choice (55% vs. 45%). This could be influenced by age, as those on frameworks were more likely to be under the age of 25. Few (7%) would have preferred to do something else (this was usually staying in the job they already had without doing the apprenticeship, working towards a qualification in a further education college or going to university). Apprentices on frameworks were much more likely than those on standards to say they would rather have worked towards a qualification in a further education college (36% vs. 16%).

The most cited main reason for undertaking an apprenticeship was a desire to enter into or progress in a specific career (34%), followed by wanting to develop work-related skills (19%) or to gain a qualification (15%). These were broadly consistent with 2018-19 findings, though among current apprentices there was an increase in the proportion that mentioned wanting to enter or progress in a specific career as a reason (36% vs. 29% in 2018-19).

Awareness of apprenticeships had increased, with the vast majority of current apprentices (91%) aware that their course or training was part of an apprenticeship, up from 86% in 2018-19, continuing an upward trend from 69% in 2015.

Impact of COVID-19 on delivery

Current apprentices and those who had recently completed were asked a number of questions to assess the impact of COVID-19 on their training.

Just over a quarter (27%) had their training paused at some point due to COVID-19. The same proportion (27%) were put on furlough during their apprenticeship; two-fifths (41%) either had their training paused due to COVID-19 and / or were furloughed.

Unsurprisingly there was overlap between these two groups; around half (48%) of apprentices who were furloughed had also experienced a pause in training.

People on lower-level apprenticeships were more likely to be impacted by both pauses and furloughs (among Level 2 apprentices 36% had their training paused and 37% had been furloughed). Engineering, Retail, Construction and Leisure apprentices were also more likely to be impacted by pauses in training or furloughs; for example around half of current apprentices and recent completers in these subject areas had been furloughed.

Those in London were less likely to have been impacted by pauses in training and furloughs (22% and 23% respectively).

A quarter (24%) of training pauses and 19% of furloughs lasted over six months. Only 7% of pauses and 9% of furloughs ended within a month. Longer pauses and furloughs of over six months were more likely for those affected in the Leisure subject area.

Overall, 1% of apprentices changed employer during their apprenticeship due to COVID-19, though overall 6% changed employers during their apprenticeship. Amongst those who had recently completed an apprenticeship 3% had been made redundant by their employer during their apprenticeship due to COVID-19.

At the time of research (May to July 2021), training remained paused due to COVID-19 for 4% of all current apprentices and furloughs remained in place for 2% of all current apprentices.

Quality and content of apprenticeships

Duration

The average intended duration of apprenticeships was reported as just under two years (22 months). Level 6+ apprenticeships were intended to last much longer (an average of 35 months), whilst the average for Level 2 apprenticeships was 16 months. All subject areas had average intended durations of at least 15 months.

A small proportion of all apprenticeships (2%) were not anticipated to last the minimum 12 months. This proportion was consistent across current, recent and longer-term completers (2%, 3% and 2% respectively). For longer-term apprenticeship completers, the proportion was lower than in previous years (2% vs. 7% in 2018-19). There was no change from 2018-19 in expected duration among current apprentices.

Those currently undertaking apprenticeships gave longer apprenticeship durations on average (24 months) compared to both recent and longer-term completers (19 and 18 months respectively). It was also the case that those undertaking, or who undertook, apprenticeship standards on average said their apprenticeship lasted two months longer than those doing apprenticeship frameworks. Compared to 2018-19 the average length had increased by two months amongst current apprentices and longer-term completers. These changes, a continuation of the trend for longer apprenticeships over recent years, are partly a reflection of the shift to higher level apprenticeships.

Four-in five apprentices (80%) felt the intended duration of their apprenticeship was about right to provide them with the required skills. Apprenticeship standards were less

likely to be thought too short (6% of current apprentices on standards, compared to 14% of current apprentices on frameworks).

Leisure and Health apprentices were particularly likely to perceive their apprenticeships to be too long (18% and 16%). This is despite Leisure apprentices being more likely to have a shorter apprenticeship duration (95% under 2 years, compared with 67% overall) and fewer hours (61% vs. 89% working more than 30 hours per week). Those who had completed apprenticeships standards were also more likely to perceive their apprenticeship duration as too long (17% compared to 13% of framework completers).

Compared with 2018-19, there were increases in the proportion of apprentices that felt the duration was appropriate (80% for both current and longer-term completers, compared with 77% and 76% respectively in 2018-19), though returning to similar levels as 2017.

Working hours

Just over three-quarters (77%) of apprentices had permanent contracts, dropping to 60% of those who had been recruited for apprenticeships and 62% among under 19s. There were no significant changes in the proportions of apprentices employed on permanent contracts since 2018-19, though the proportion had increased since 2017 among current apprentices (77% vs. 72% in 2017).

Most apprentices (89%) worked at least 30 hours a week, averaging 37 hours. Education and Leisure apprentices typically worked fewer hours, as did female and older apprentices.

Median Pay

Current apprentices reported a median gross hourly pay of £9.98 an hour. Pay increased with level, ranging from £8.23 an hour among current Level 2 apprentices to £15.11 an hour among Level 6+ non-degree apprentices. This may be in part related to the age of apprentices, with those aged 25 or over earning substantially more than their counterparts (median gross hourly pay of £12.23, compared with £9.52 among those aged between 19 and 24 and £6.58 among those aged under 19).

By sector subject area, pay was highest in Business (£12.73 an hour) and ICT (£11.64) and lowest in Leisure (£6.56). Those undertaking apprenticeship standards earned more than those on frameworks (£10.02 and £9.12 an hour respectively).

Maths and English

Three-quarters (77%) of apprentices had initial assessments to check both their English and maths abilities.⁴ Those on apprenticeships standards were more likely to have been assessed for both (79% vs. 72% of those on apprenticeships frameworks), as were those on Higher apprenticeships at Level 4 or 5 (82%). Those studying Construction were less likely to have been assessed for both English and maths (60%). Assessments were most commonly carried out solely by a training provider (for 63% of those assessed).

Overall, 13% of apprentices studied towards English qualifications and 16% towards maths qualifications during their apprenticeships. A third (33%) undertook Level 2 training in English or maths.

Level 2 apprenticeships were the most likely to involve study for English (19%) and / or maths qualifications (22%). Engineering, Retail and Agriculture apprentices were particularly likely to have studied either subject: English (17%, 17% and 19% respectively), maths (22%, 22% and 21% respectively).

Off-the-job training requirement

Overall, more than three-quarters (78%) of apprentices said that they were aware of the requirement for apprentices to spend at least 20% of their contracted hours on off-the-job-training. Awareness generally increased with level, ranging from 68% aware among Level 2 apprentices to 93% aware at Level 6 and above. By subject area, awareness was highest in Science and ICT (93% and 92% respectively) and lowest in Leisure and Retail (62% and 65% respectively).

Awareness of the 20% off-the-job training requirement has increased over time; 82% of current apprentices and 64% of longer-term completers were aware of it in 2021, compared with 77% and 55% respectively in 2018-19.

On average, 19% of an apprentice's working hours were spent on off-the-job training. Approaching half (46%) of apprentices reported receiving compliant levels of off-the-job training (i.e., at least 20% of contracted hours or more). Those in Education (33%), Health (38%) and Retail (38%) were least likely to report compliant levels of off-the-job training. The proportion of apprentices receiving the minimum 20% off-the-job training generally increased with level, with the exception that those at Level 4 were more likely than those at Level 5 to report compliant off-the-job training levels (54% vs. 41%). These results may be linked to the age of apprentices, given that apprentices aged 25 and over were less likely to report compliant levels of off-the-job training (40%, compared with 49%

⁴ Comparisons with 2018-19 findings are discussed in the [Changes Over Time](#) section in Chapter 5. Please note that due to differences in the question wording and survey routing, comparisons with previous years should be treated with caution.

of those aged 19 to 24 and 54% aged under 19), and made up a larger share of Level 5 apprentices than Level 4.

Results suggest that levels of compliance are increasing, with current apprentices and recent completers (49% and 46% respectively) more likely than longer-term completers (36%) to have met the 20% requirement.

End-point assessments

Seven in ten (71%) of current apprentices on standards rated their understanding of end-point assessments (EPAs) as 'good' (42%) or 'reasonable' (29%); 8% were not aware of them.

Amongst those with some understanding of EPAs (those who had completed an apprenticeship on standards or were currently on apprenticeship standards and aware of EPAs beyond the name), three-quarters (76%) were first made aware of EPAs within a month of starting their apprenticeship. Those in Health and Engineering were less likely to have been made aware in a within a month of first starting (69% and 71% respectively) as were those on longer apprenticeships.

Apprentices usually *first* heard about EPAs from their training provider (86%).

Nearly all apprentices said their training providers (97%) or employer (91%) had undertaken activities to help them prepare for the EPA. Training providers most commonly provided support through regular reviews of progress (90%) and / or familiarisation with assessment methods (80%). Employers most commonly allowed apprentices to complete different project types (77%), provided more on the job training opportunities (69%) and / or regular reviews of progress (68%).

Overall, 89% of apprentices found their training provider helpful and 72% their employer helpful in preparing for their EPA.

Learners were not asked about their experiences of receiving EPAs or their delivery by end-point assessment organisations.

Satisfaction with apprenticeships

The majority (84%) of apprentices were satisfied with their apprenticeship overall. Among the 8% who were dissatisfied, the main reasons were a lack of support or contact from the training provider, the apprenticeship being badly organised, and the poor quality of training received.

COVID-19 had a negative impact on overall satisfaction: those who experienced a pause in training were less satisfied (79% vs. 86% without a pause); as were those furloughed for more than 6 months (78%).

Current apprentices were the least satisfied of the three survey groups (82%, vs 90% of recent and 88% of longer-term completers).

Overall satisfaction among current apprentices is in line with 2018-19, however this is lower than reported in 2015 and 2017 (both 89%). The proportion 'very satisfied' has also continued its downward trend (57%, compared with 62% in 2018-19 and 74% in 2017).

Overall satisfaction among longer-term completers has stayed relatively stable, but as with current apprentices, the proportion 'very satisfied' continues a downward trend (65%, vs. 72% in 2015). This in part reflects the shift over time to a higher proportion of apprentices being older (aged 25 and over) and undertaking apprenticeships at Level 4+ (among both groups, satisfaction is lower than younger apprentices and those undertaking apprenticeships at Level 2 or 3).

Satisfaction levels varied by age of apprentices, with those aged under 19 more likely to be satisfied overall (90%, compared with 83% of those aged between 19 and 24 years old and 82% of those aged 25 and over).

In terms of level, Level 6+ non-degree apprentices were least satisfied (71%), whereas Degree apprentices were the most satisfied (91%). These two groups have a very different age profile, with Level 6+ non-degree apprentices particularly likely to be 19-24 (63% vs 35% of degree apprentices), and degree apprentices to be aged 25 plus (53% vs. 35% of Level 6+ non-degree apprentices), however the age profile does not in itself explain the difference in satisfaction between the two groups. By subject area, satisfaction was highest among Science (91%) and Engineering (88%) apprentices, whereas Education (77%) and Health (82%) apprentices reported the lowest levels of satisfaction.

Satisfaction was particularly high for certain elements of apprenticeships, namely 'enabling better job performance', and the 'quality of learning and the feedback received on progress' (85% satisfied with each). Those with compliant levels of off-the-job learning were more satisfied in these areas than those with non-compliant levels (85% vs. 76% on the amount of training received; 83% vs. 69% on the balance between learning and working).

Satisfaction was lower in 2021 than in 2018-19 (by two to five percentage points) among current apprentices and longer-term completers for: the way they were assessed on-the-job, the extent to which their employer supported their apprenticeship, and the balance between time spent learning and working.

Apprenticeship Outcomes

Virtually all (99%) apprenticeship completers gained skills during their apprenticeship. The main skills gained were related to their current or desired area of work (94%); skills that can be used across a range of jobs (92%); communication skills (88%) and collaboration (85%). A majority had improved their digital (69%), English (61%) and maths (53%) skills.

Compared with 2018-19, longer-term completers in 2021 were more likely to have gained skills related to their area of work (93% vs. 88%); communication skills (87% vs. 83%), working with others (85% vs. 80%) and digital skills (67% vs. 61%).⁵

Most apprenticeship completers were in work at the time of the interview (94%). The majority were in full-time work (83%), followed by part-time employment (6%) and self-employment (4%). Only 3% were unemployed and a further 2% were in education. Longer-term apprenticeship completers were more likely to be in full-time work than in previous years (81% vs. 74%-75% between 2015 and 2018-19).

Almost all (95%) of apprentices reported at least one positive impact on their job or career prospects since starting or completing their apprenticeship.

Four in ten (39%) completers had been promoted and two-thirds (65%) had received a pay rise since completing their apprenticeship. Predictably longer-term completers were more likely than recent completers to have been promoted (42% vs 36%) or received a pay rise (67% vs 62%).

Most apprentices that had received a promotion or a pay rise said that their apprenticeship had some influence on this (83% regarding their promotion and 72% regarding their pay rise). Results show that the proportion of longer-term completers receiving promotions or pay rises since their apprenticeship has increased over time; 42% said they had received a promotion in 2021, compared with 32% in 2015, and 67% said they had received a pay rise, compared with 48% in 2015.

Most (70%) current apprentices planned to carry on working for the same employer once they completed their apprenticeship. This was most common among those doing Level 6+ apprenticeships (78%) and in particular Degree apprenticeships (80%), and more likely than average among those doing Engineering apprenticeships (74%).

The majority of apprentices (91%) felt that their apprenticeship had prepared them well for what they wanted to do next, and almost half (46%) felt it had prepared them very well.

⁵ Note, in the 2018-19 survey this was referred to as 'IT skills'.

A majority (71%) of apprentices said they were aware of post apprenticeship training options; and the majority of completers said their employer had discussed further post-apprenticeship training with them (63%) and that their employer had supported their career development (81%).

Experiences of non-completers on apprenticeship standards

Reasons for non-completion

Four in ten non-completers (40%) reported that personal or domestic factors contributed to their non-completion, most commonly a job or career change (11% of all non-completers), mental health issues (9%) and caring responsibilities (8%).

The most common apprenticeship-related reasons that contributed to former apprentices not completing were: non-completers feeling they were not given enough time for learning / training (44% of all non-completers), training not being as good as they had hoped (43%) and the apprenticeship being badly run or poorly organised (41%).

Lack of time for learning and training as a reason for not completing was more common than average among those that had undertaken Business apprenticeships (51%) and those at Level 4+ (54%), while Retail apprentices were the most likely to say their training was not as good as they had hoped (53%).

The single most common main reason for not completing was being fired or made redundant (11%), followed by not getting on with employer (10%), not having enough time for learning (9%), a job or career change (9%), the apprenticeship being stopped or cancelled (7%) and no longer wanting to work in the field of the apprenticeship (7%).

Impact of COVID-19

Four in ten (42%) non-completers had training take place during COVID-19: most of these (58%) said that changes were made in their training as a result of COVID. These changes were far more likely to be viewed as having had a negative impact (43%) than a positive one (6%).

Apprenticeship experience of non-completers

Overall, non-completers were less likely than completers to say doing an apprenticeship was their preferred choice when they first considered it (34% vs. 47%). Among those that would have preferred to do something else (this applied to 12% of non-completers and 7% of completers), almost twice as many non-completers said they would have preferred to stay in the job they already had without doing an apprenticeship (37% vs. 20% completers). It is notable that non-completers were more likely to have worked for the

same employer before starting their apprenticeship than apprenticeship completers (67% vs. 56%).

The most common way the apprenticeship differed from expectations was apprentices being treated worse than expected by their provider or employer (15%), training not being as detailed as expected (8%) and not being taught the range of subject areas that they expected (7%).

Overall satisfaction was much lower among non-completers than completers. Around half (52%) of non-completers were satisfied with their apprenticeship overall compared to 88% of completers. Amongst those who were dissatisfied with their apprenticeship, the most common reason for this was a lack of support from provider, college or tutor (52%).

Two-thirds (65%) of all non-completers were satisfied with the quality of the training they received, again much lower than the level of completers who were satisfied with their training (85%).

Activity since leaving apprenticeship

The vast majority (83%) of non-completers continued in work immediately after leaving their apprenticeship, typically either at the same company (44%) or at a different employer (35%). One in eight (12%) became unemployed after leaving their apprenticeship.

Approaching half of non-completers (46%) said their level of interest in the line of work of their apprenticeship had not changed following their apprenticeship experience. Almost a third (30%) were *less* interested, whilst 22% were *more* interested.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings from the 2021 Apprenticeship Evaluation Learner Survey and sits alongside the accompanying Employer report. The research comprised 5,122 interviews with current apprentices and those that had completed their apprenticeship, as well as 541 interviews with those that did not complete their apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships remain a priority policy for government in England, supporting the government's vision to improve skills, build sustainable growth and stronger communities, and to enable individuals to succeed and progress in their careers. The Department for Education (DfE), acting through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), has overall accountability for the apprenticeship programme and all aspects of apprenticeships policy and strategy. This includes overall programme governance and operational management of the apprenticeship funding system. The DfE also works in partnership with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), and other government departments such as the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). There is an ongoing need to understand the programme from the point of view of current and recent apprentices and apprentice employers in order to monitor quality, customer satisfaction and likely social and economic impacts.

Background to survey

The Apprenticeship Evaluation Surveys, first undertaken in 2012, have been an integral part of the evaluation strategy for the Apprenticeships programme in England. The surveys enable robust time series monitoring of the programme, in particular with regard to quality, satisfaction, motivation, benefits, progression and post-apprenticeship retention.

The Apprenticeship Evaluation Surveys have helped both to shape and to monitor the impact of recent apprenticeship policy developments. These have included:

- **The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in May 2017.** The levy is paid by large employers (with an annual pay bill of over £3 million). The levy rate is set at 0.5% of the value of the employer's pay bill, minus an apprenticeship levy allowance of £15,000 per financial year. The government tops up the funds in the apprenticeship account by 10%. Levy funds can be used to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment up to a funding band maximum for each apprenticeship, above which the employer needs to fund the difference themselves.

The employer must agree a price with the provider for each individual apprentice,

including to account for any prior learning which the apprentice already has. If the employer does not have enough funds, they pay 5% of the outstanding balance and the government will pay the rest (up to the funding band maximum allocated to each specific apprenticeship). Up to 25% of an employer's unused levy funds can be transferred to a business of their choice. Funds that are not used by the employer expire 24 months after they enter the employer's account.

- **The introduction of a new 'co-investment' rate applying to non-levy paying employers whereby employers and government share the cost of training and assessing apprentices.** For new apprenticeships starting on or after 1 April 2019 the employer pays 5% towards the cost of apprenticeship training (with the government paying the rest, up to the funding band maximum). For apprenticeships that started before 1 April 2019 the co-investment rate was set at 10%.
- **A mandatory 20% minimum off-the-job training requirement for an apprenticeship to receive government funding.** This requirement was clarified in May 2017 to make clear that off-the-job training is a) about upskilling an individual to reach full occupational competency, not accrediting their existing skills, and b) must be for the purpose of achieving the apprenticeship, not training delivered for the sole purpose of enabling the apprentice to perform the work for which they have been employed.
- **All apprenticeships in England are now required to last at least 12 months** (previous exemptions for apprentices aged 19 and over with relevant prior experience were removed in 2017).
- **The creation of new apprenticeship standards to replace frameworks.** Frameworks were 'switched off' from 31 July 2020, so from 1 August 2020, all new apprenticeship starts were on the standards model.
 - One of the key changes in the transition from frameworks to standards was the **introduction of end-point assessments (EPAs)**. EPAs are an independent assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours which have been learnt throughout an apprenticeship standard, and tests the apprentices' ability to apply them in the workplace. Every apprentice is required to undertake an assessment at the end of their training to confirm that they have achieved occupational competence and completed the apprenticeship.
- **A payment to cover additional costs to both the employer and the training providers of £1,000 per apprentice recruited aged 16-18, or aged 19-24 if they have an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or have been in the care of their local authority.**

- The **Skills for Jobs white paper**,⁶ published in January 2021, set out plans to build on earlier reforms to improve quality further, and make apprenticeships more flexible so that they meet the needs of employers better.
- New quality measures include providing employers with tools, advice, and guidance to give their apprentices a high-quality experience, such as the roadmap.⁷ For providers, new initiatives include refreshing the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers⁸ with more stringent criteria and investing in a new national online Apprenticeship Workforce Development programme.⁹
- The government has also introduced changes to make the apprenticeship system more flexible for employers. It is supporting new flexi-job apprenticeships to enable apprentices to move between different host employers in a sector or region.¹⁰ This is alongside encouraging a greater proportion of off-the-job training being completed at the start of the apprenticeship (front-loading), so that apprentices can be productive more quickly in the workplace.
- Since September 2021, employers have been able to benefit from improvements to the transfers system. Large employers can now pledge unspent levy funds to employers in their supply chain, sector or region, helping to address local and regional skills needs.¹¹ An enhanced recruitment service will be developed in 2022, alongside a new return on investment tool for employers.
- Apprenticeships will also contribute to the new ‘Skills Mission’ set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, to increase the number of high-quality course completions annually by 200,000, by 2030.^{12,13}

⁶ Department for Education (2021). Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth. January 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth>

⁷ HM Government. The road to a quality apprenticeship. Accessed at: <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/employers/the-road-to-a-quality-apprenticeship>

⁸ Education and Skills Funding Agency (2021). Register of apprenticeship training providers. December 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-apprenticeship-training-providers>

⁹ The Education and Training Foundation. Apprenticeship Workforce Development – The ETF. Accessed at: <https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/professional-development/apprenticeships/>

¹⁰ Department for Education (2022). Flexible apprenticeships to boost jobs in key sectors. February 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/flexible-apprenticeships-to-boost-jobs-in-key-sectors>

¹¹ Education and Skills Funding Agency (2022). Transferring your apprenticeship levy to another business. February 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transferring-your-apprenticeship-levy-to-another-business>

¹² Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022). Levelling Up the United Kingdom. February 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

¹³ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022). Levelling Up the United Kingdom: missions and metrics Technical Annex. February 2022. Accessed at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1054767/Technical_annex_-_missions_and_metrics_accessible_version_.pdf

COVID-19 context

The year leading up to fieldwork saw significant disruption to the economy and to apprenticeships as a result of COVID-19. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) identified three main dimensions across which the economic shocks of COVID-19 will impact: the quantity of jobs, the quality of jobs (particularly wages and social protection) and the effects on specific groups who are more vulnerable to adverse labour market outcomes.¹⁴

COVID-19 brought a new set of challenges and reforms to the apprenticeship landscape. One impact was a substantial reduction in the number of apprenticeship starts: for the period 23 March to 31 July 2020, 58,160 apprenticeship starts were reported, a decrease of around half (46%) on the 107,750 reported at the same period in 2019.¹⁵

Recognising the disruption from COVID-19, DfE, IfATE and Ofqual introduced a number of new flexibilities to help apprenticeships continue where possible, including for example:

- EPAs running remotely rather than face-to-face
- Allowing breaks in learning (a change in policy meant that if the apprentice could not attend training for more than 4 weeks because of the coronavirus outbreak, their apprenticeship must be paused).

In addition to this, as part of the Government's Plan for Jobs, employers were also offered a cash payment for each new apprentice they hired under the age of 25 until 31 January 2022. This payment was first introduced in August 2020 and offered firms £2,000 for each new apprentice aged 16-24 and £1,500 for each new apprentice over the age of 25. This payment was subsequently increased to £3,000 for all new apprentices hired between 1st April and 30th September 2021. This new cash payment for employers was in addition to the existing £1,000 payment for new 16-18-year-olds (or 19-24-year-olds with an EHCP or previously in the care of their local authority).

The 2021 survey asked a series of questions to apprentices to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on their apprenticeship including whether training was paused at any point due to COVID-19, whether the apprentice was furloughed, and a number of specific impacts of COVID. The findings are discussed in [Chapter 4](#). Analysis is also carried out throughout the report to identify where there are differences between

¹⁴ International Labour Organisation (2020). COVID-19 and the world of work: Impact and policy responses Accessed at: [COVID19-ILOMonitor-1st-ed](#)

¹⁵ [Apprenticeships and Traineeships, England: October 2020](#). Although this data provides an insight to the potential impact of Covid-19 on apprenticeship starts, this data is provisional until final ILR data becomes available in November 2020. At this point it is unclear what the true number of starts in the affected period was or if the level of reporting at this point in the year has been affected by the lockdown.

apprentices who were furloughed or had their training paused due to COVID-19 and other apprentices.

More generally the impact of COVID-19 for the 2021 survey should be considered throughout when comparing results to the 2018-19 and earlier surveys.

Research aims

This research was commissioned to monitor indicators in line with the previous Apprenticeship Evaluation Surveys, to help develop the government's understanding of the apprenticeship programme, and to monitor the implementation of reforms such as the Apprenticeship Levy and minimum requirements for off-the-job training.

This report explores the profile of apprentices; their motivations for choosing apprenticeship training; their entry routes to apprenticeships; the nature and amount of training undertaken and the apprenticeship experience; satisfaction with apprenticeships and their impact on skills; and progression through and following their apprenticeships. New to the 2021 survey, the report investigates views and experiences of end-point assessment within standards, and reasons for non-completion of apprenticeship

Methodology

Given the need for key indicators to be measured consistently over time, the methodology remained as consistent as possible with previous studies conducted in 2018-19, 2017, 2015 and earlier in regard to sampling, questionnaire design, data collection and analysis.

However, it is important to note that a number of changes were made for the 2021 survey in terms of sampling, questionnaire content, analysis and reporting. These are summarised in the section [‘A note on comparability’](#) at the end of this chapter.

Sampling and weighting

The research involved interviews with a random stratified sample of 5,122 current apprentices and those that had completed their apprenticeship, and a further 541 interviews with withdrawn apprentices (non-completers). The sample of learners that were contacted for the survey covered:

- Current apprentices: those marked on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) as undertaking an apprenticeship as of 1 January 2021 (including apprentices whose learning had paused) excluding those who were expected have completed their apprenticeship by the start of survey fieldwork (according to information on their

planned end date on the ILR). It should be noted that those with a start date after the sample was drawn (i.e. after 1 January 2021) would not be included as current apprentices. Interviews with current apprentices aimed to capture views of those while on the programme.

- Apprentices marked on the ILR as having completed their apprenticeship between 1 March and 31 December 2020 (recent completers) and between 1 July 2019 and 29 February 2020 (longer-term completers), enabling an assessment of progression and the impact of the apprenticeship up to two years after completion.¹⁶ Please note, the 'longer-term completers' represents a similar sample window (i.e., the gap between completion and the fieldwork) to 'completers' in previous AEvS. See ['A note on comparability'](#) for further detail.¹⁷
- Apprentices on apprenticeship standards, according to the ILR, who had withdrawn from their apprenticeship between 1 September 2019 and 31 December 2020 and had not subsequently started another apprenticeship. Non-completers were administered a separate survey to find out their reasons for not completing their apprenticeship. This was the first time that non-completers have been included in the AEvS series.

In summary the groups of apprentices referenced in the report are:

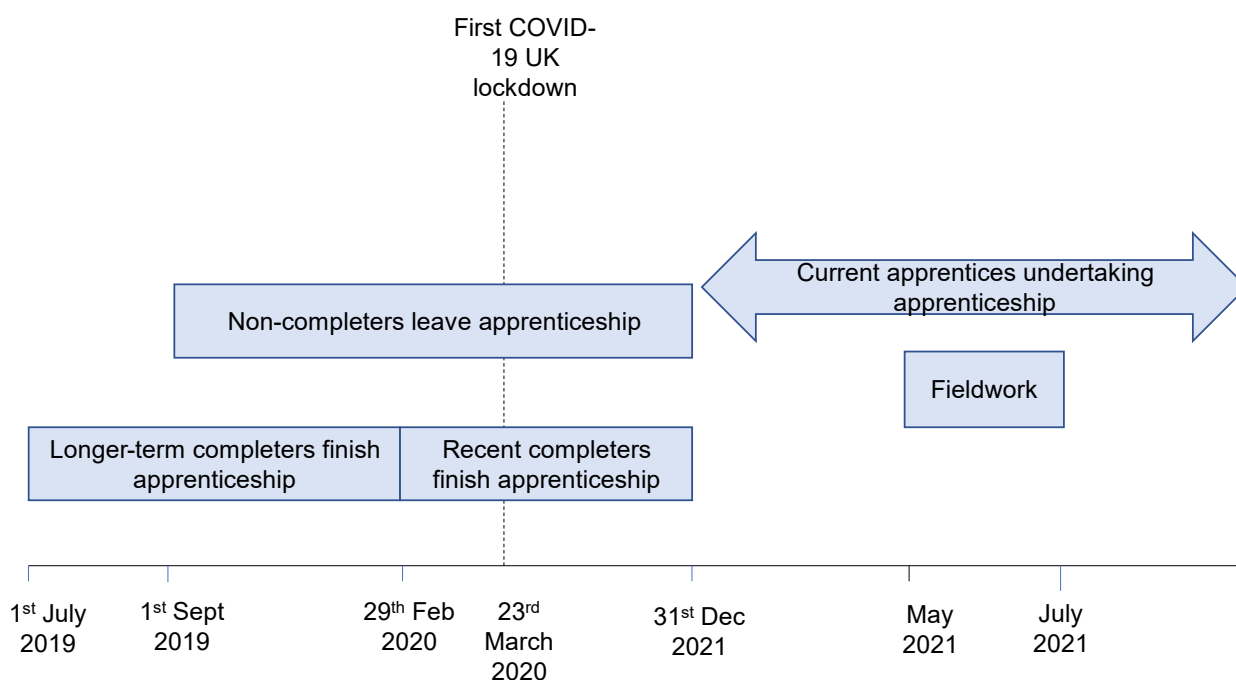
- **'Current apprentices'**: those who were undertaking an apprenticeship at the time of the fieldwork from May 2021 to July 2021 (3,047 interviews were conducted with current apprentices)
- **'Recent completers'**: those who had completed their apprenticeship between March to December 2020, hence approximately 5-16 months prior to the being interviewed (1,036 interviews were conducted with recent completers)
- **'Longer-term' completers**: those who had completed their apprenticeship between July 2019 and February 2020, hence approximately 15-24 months prior to the being interviewed (1,039 interviews were conducted with longer-term completers)
- **'Non-completers'**: those who withdrew from their apprenticeship (standards only) between September 2019 and December 2020 (541 interviews with non-completers were conducted).

¹⁶ The term 'completer' is used rather than achiever, as this group consists of apprenticeships with an actual end date on the IDBR, although they may not have reached an achieved status following an end-point assessment.

¹⁷ As mentioned in the earlier note on comparability, where results for longer-term completers are compared with completers from previous surveys, we have excluded from previous surveys those who 'switched' from being sampled as a current apprentice to saying they had completed by the time of interview, since in the 2021 survey such 'switching' was not included.

This represents a change from the 2018-19 and earlier surveys which sampled only current apprentices and long-term completers. This is discussed further in the section below covering [comparability between the two surveys](#).

Figure 1-1: Timeline of apprenticeship for sample groups



Sample was drawn from the Individualised Learner Record (ILR). Sample was drawn separately for each of the apprenticeship groups listed above, in each case based on a grid of apprenticeship level¹⁸ by Sector Subject Area (SSA Tier 1).¹⁹ Frameworks and standards were treated equally, with the resulting sample reflecting their proportion in the population.

Random Probability Sampling was used, in which no quotas were set, and all sample was called equally in terms of attempting to convert sample to interviews. The sample was drawn to achieve a desired distribution of interviews necessary for analysis. Further information on the sampling process can be found in the published Technical Report.

¹⁸ Apprenticeship levels range from Level 2 (lowest) up to Level 7 (highest). Level 2 (Intermediate) apprenticeships are equivalent to a GCSE level qualification; Level 3 (Advanced) are equivalent to an A-level qualification; Level 4 and above apprenticeships (Higher) are equivalent to a Foundation degree or above. Note that some Level 6 and 7 apprenticeships are undertaken as 'Degree apprenticeships', i.e. equivalent to a Bachelor's or Master's degree.

¹⁹ For current apprentices, length of apprenticeship was also taken into account, in order to oversample those on shorter apprenticeships, which would otherwise be under-represented due to the delay between the reference date of the ILR extract (in January 2021) and fieldwork (in May to July 2021).

The sector subject area classifications²⁰ used for sampling and reporting purposes are shown in the following table (Table 1-1), alongside the abbreviated form used throughout the report.

Table 1-1: Sector subject areas and abbreviations used for the report

Sector Subject Area (SSA) title	SSA Tier 1 code	Abbreviation
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	03	Agriculture
Arts, Media and Publishing	09	Arts
Business, Administration and Law	15	Business
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	05	Construction
Education and Training	13	Education
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	04	Engineering
Health, Public Services and Care	01	Health
Information and Communication Technology	06	ICT
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	08	Leisure
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	07	Retail
Science and Mathematics	02	Science

Source: Ofqual

The final datasets were weighted to be representative of the populations of apprentices on the January 2021 ILR release. Weighting was applied separately for each current apprentices, recent completers, longer-term completers (who received the ‘Learner survey’) and non-completers (receiving the ‘Non-completers survey’), using a grid of level and subject area,²¹ with additional calibration by age band. The weight was applied in three stages to take account of the Random Probability Sampling approach used: first a sampling weight, then a non-response weight, and finally a calibration weight. Learner survey results for current apprentices, recent completers and longer-term completers are combined into an ‘all apprentices’ measure throughout the report, with the exception of [Chapter 10](#) which solely covers the experiences of non-completers.

²⁰ The report uses ‘Sector subject areas’. These are described more fully in the [Ofsted Further education and skills sector subject areas publication \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

²¹ As well as, for current apprentices, length of apprenticeship.

Due to differences between methodologies for the 2021 survey and other surveys in the Apprenticeship Evaluation series, comparisons with previous waves are only reported for current apprentices and longer-term completers. More information on this can be found in the section [‘A note on comparability’](#) at the end of this chapter.

The Technical Report provides more details of the sampling and weighting approach employed, and the differences between the approach from the previous 2018-19 methodology.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork for current apprentices and those that completed their apprenticeship was conducted by telephone from 17 May to 29 July 2021; a total of 5,122 interviews were conducted. Fieldwork for the non-completer strand was also conducted by telephone, and a total of 541 interviews were completed between 27 May and 15 July 2021.

In a change from previous surveys telephone fieldwork was managed using Random Probability Sampling (RPS) in which a respondent, once selected, was called an agreed minimum number of times (ten for learners, eight for non-completers) and, unlike in previous surveys, sample was not withdrawn once various quota targets by level, sector subject area and apprenticeship status (current or completer) had been reached.

Most interviews were conducted with Level 2 or 3 apprentices (4,011 of 5,122 current and completer interviews). Overall, 1,111 interviews were conducted among current or apprentice completers at Level 4+, including 469 with those undertaking apprenticeships at Level 6+.

The following table (Table 1-2) shows the response rates based first on the issued sample and then based on ‘eligible’ sample (i.e., excluding unobtainable or wrong numbers and those where the respondent had no recollection of the learning, said they did not undertake the apprenticeship, or where they said they had completed or were still on the apprenticeship in contrast to what was indicated on the sample about them).

Table 1-2: Response rate based on issued and eligible sample

Survey	Issued sample	Number of achieved interview	Response rate (based on issued sample)	Response rate (based on eligible sample)
Learner	19,770	5,122	26%	29%
Non-Completer	2,160	541	25%	28%

Again, the Technical Report provides more details about the call outcomes and response rates.

Structure of the report

The report is structured to lead with figures for all apprentices overall combining current apprentices and recent and longer-term completers, followed by discussion of differences among subgroups. Apprenticeship type (whether 'current', 'recent completer' or 'longer-term completer') is treated as a key analysis variable throughout, along with sector subject area and apprenticeship level. Results for non-completers are reported separately in [Chapter 10](#). Each chapter begins with a summary of key findings and concludes with a short overview of key changes in 2021 from 2018/19 and earlier years (where relevant).

- [Chapter 2](#) presents an overview of the profile of apprentices in terms of level and sector subject area, and demographics such as age, gender and ethnicity. Further detail on the profile of apprentices can be found in Annex A.
- [Chapter 3](#) looks at routes into apprenticeships and motivations, including previous employment, reasons for undertaking their apprenticeship and whether it was their preferred choice).
- [Chapter 4](#) looks at the impact of COVID-19 on delivery, including pauses in training and furlough arrangements.
- [Chapter 5](#) covers the quality and content of apprenticeships, including duration, working hours, pay and training.
- [Chapter 6](#) focuses on the off-the-job training requirement, examining the percentage of off-the-job training hours apprentices receive per week.
- [Chapter 7](#) looks at end-point assessments (EPAs) including awareness among those on standards framework and support from employer and training provider.
- [Chapter 8](#) examines apprentices' satisfaction levels, both overall and with individual elements of the apprenticeship.
- [Chapter 9](#) looks at the outcomes of apprenticeships, including skills gained, employment status, impacts at work and on future careers, and plans for future training.
- [Chapter 10](#) details finding from the non-completer strand, investigating experiences, satisfaction and reasons for non-completion.
- [Chapter 11](#) outlines the conclusions to this report.

Reporting conventions

For Learner Survey results, the report leads with figures for ‘all apprentices’ by combining results for current apprentices, recent completers and longer-term completers (though some questions were not asked of all three groups). This is followed by discussion of differences among subgroups. The key subgroups that are analysed include the three sample groups (current apprentices, recent completers, and longer-term completers), apprenticeship level and Sector Subject Area. Where it is important to the narrative, differences are also commonly explored by demographics, such as age, gender, and ethnicity status, and whether apprentices had undertaken apprenticeship standards or apprenticeship frameworks.

When percentages are provided in the text for sub-groups, such as by completion status and sector, this indicates that the proportion of this sub-group that gave an answer is statistically significantly different to the average of those not in this sub-group, at the 95% confidence level. The phrasing “most likely”, “more likely than average” or “particularly likely” etc. is used as a shorthand for this.

Unless explicitly noted, all findings are based on weighted data. Unweighted bases (the number of responses from which the findings are derived) are displayed on tables and charts as appropriate to give an indication of the robustness of results. Please note that, unless explicitly stated the minimum base size for reporting was $n=50$ and base sizes lower than this have been suppressed in all charts.

Throughout the report, the term ‘training provider’ is used to refer to any organisation (external to the business employing the apprentice) which delivers the training element of an apprenticeship.

A note on comparability

At the end of most chapters of this report (those where comparable data exists), comparisons are made with the previous 2018-19 Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey, as well as 2015 and 2017 survey results where applicable. For the 2018-19 survey, fieldwork took place between 22 February and 15 April 2017, and interviews were conducted with 5,825 apprentices, split evenly between current apprentices and those that had completed their apprenticeship between 13-21 months prior to being interviewed, broadly equivalent to longer-term completers in the current survey in terms of the time interval between completing and the survey interview.

There is no 2018-19 comparison group for recent completers or non-completers.

Consistency with the 2018-19 methodology was largely maintained for the 2021 survey. However, a number of key differences in methodology mean that direct comparisons

should be made with caution. These are summarised below and detailed further in the Technical Report.

- 1. Overlap between apprenticeship types.** For the 2018-19 survey, learners who were currently undertaking an apprenticeship when the sample was drawn and who had also completed an apprenticeship in the appropriate timeframe for completers were classed as current apprentices for the purpose of sampling, prioritising their most recent experience. In 2021, those learners falling into multiple groups (between current apprentices, recent completers and longer-term completers) were given an equal chance of selection as other records for each group (if they were drawn in more than one category, they were selected for one only at random).
- 2. Changes in status between the survey and the time of sampling.** In the 2018-19 survey, if a learner sampled as a current apprentice stated at the time of survey that they had completed, they were interviewed as a completer. In the 2021 survey a change in status was not allowed; if a respondent sampled as a current apprentice said they were no longer on the apprenticeship they were screened out. In the 2021 survey, the only change in status allowed was between recent- and longer-term completer, and vice versa.
- 3. Inclusion of paused apprentices.** In 2018-19 anyone saying their current apprenticeship had been paused would have been excluded whereas in 2021 they were included. In 2018-19 they were far fewer in number and the key reasons for pausing an apprenticeship would be expected to include personal and health reasons. Pausing of apprenticeships increased substantially through 2020 and 2021 due to the impact of COVID-19 and furlough, and it was of interest to understand the experience of these apprentices.
- 4. Inclusion of 'recent completers' in 2021.** The 2018-19 survey covered current apprentices and a group equivalent to the longer-term completers described earlier in this chapter. Recent completers – those completing approximately 5-16 months prior to the being interviewed - as well as non-completers, were new to the 2021 study. In 2021, recent completers are included in 'all learner' percentages. For this reason, overall ('all learner') figures from 2021 cannot be compared to all learner figures from previous years. Only current and longer-term completer subgroups are compared in any reported time series.
- 5. Weighting.** The weighting approach taken in 2021 was different to 2018-19, in that it was based on an RPS sampling approach. In 2018, a simpler weighting approach was used, calibrating the responses received to population figures derived from the ILR. In previous years the overall weights for current apprentices and longer-term completers were arbitrarily set to give the two groups equal prominence in any combined results. In 2021, a three-stage weighting process was used, involving a

sampling weight, a non-response weight and a final calibration. Unlike in previous years, the weighting grossed-up each sample group to its relative population. The overall result of these processes is similar, but the 2021 process – like the sampling and fieldwork process – should provide an upgrade to the quality of the survey’s representation of the population of apprentices.

2. An overview of the profile of apprentices

There were four types of apprentice included in the 2021 research: current apprentices, recent completers, longer-term completers and non-completers of apprenticeship standards. For the purposes of reporting, current apprentices, recent and longer-term completers have often been combined into a single 'all apprentices' measure. This means **the population profile of this group will therefore not match official statistics on apprenticeship starts. Instead, this survey represents a particular snapshot in time of both current and completed apprentices.**

Full detail of the sample profile for current apprentices, recent and longer-term completers can be found in [Annex A](#). However, key points to note are:

- According to the ILR, the population of the combined 'all apprentices' group covered by this survey comprised mostly of current apprentices (65%) with a relatively even split between recent (17%) and longer-term completers (18%)
- The largest subject areas were Business (28%); Health (24%) and Engineering (19%), whereas Arts and Science each made up 1% of apprenticeships.
- Level 3 apprenticeships remain the most common (making up 45% of all apprenticeships), however there has been an increase in apprenticeships at higher levels, the most substantial increase occurring in degree apprenticeships (10% vs. 1% of current apprenticeships in 2018-19).
- Approaching half of apprentices were aged 25 and above (45%). Three in ten (30%) apprentices were aged between 19 and 24 years old and a quarter (25%) were aged under 19.
- The vast majority of apprentices were White (87%), with 13% in Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, though the latter had greater representation among current apprentices (15%).
- Overall, 4% of apprentices identified as having a disability and 6% a learning difficulty (7% reported either).²²
- Across the three apprentice groups surveyed, a quarter (24%) were on apprenticeship frameworks and three-quarters (76%) were on standards.

The profile for non-completers is covered at the start of [Chapter 10](#).

²² [Administrative data](#) show that 11.7% of apprenticeship starts in 2018/19 were by apprentices who identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and/or health problems. The inclusion of 'health problems' is a likely reason why the figure from administrative data is higher than the figure from this survey. Additionally, this survey only asked apprentices if they had a disability or learning difficulty if this was already recorded on the ILR sample file.

Comparisons between sample groups

Throughout the report, comparisons are made between current apprentices, recent completers and longer-term completers. It is important to be aware of underlying differences in the profiles of these three groups which may drive some differences in experience and opinion. Based on available information from the ILR, longer-term completers were more likely to be on Level 2 apprentices (44% vs. 36% of recent completers and 24% of current apprentices). Longer-term apprentices were also slightly more likely to be younger (30% under the age of 19, compared with 24% of current apprentices). Full detail of comparisons between current, recent and longer-term completers can be found in [Annex A](#). Another key profile difference to note is that among those surveyed almost all (90%) of current apprentices were on standards, compared with 56% of recent completers and 46% of longer-term completers.

Comparisons with previous survey profiles

Throughout the report, comparisons are made with results from the apprenticeship evaluation learner surveys conducted in 2015, 2017 and 2018-19. It should be noted that for each of these surveys, results were weighted to the apprenticeship population at the time of sampling. This means results are not weighted to the same population each year.

It is also important to recognise there are some differences in the profile of apprentices taking part each survey. For example, based on ILR data, apprenticeships at Level 4 and above were more common in 2021 than they were in 2018-19 (31% of current learners in 2021 vs. 14% of current learners in 2018-19). Another key difference to note is that, among those surveyed, the proportion on apprenticeship standards increased from 49% of current apprentices in 2018-19 to 90% in 2021.

3. Routes into apprenticeships and motivations

This chapter examines how apprentices came to undertake their apprenticeship, looking at recruitment, prior employment, awareness that they were undertaking an apprenticeship, reasons for becoming an apprentice and any alternatives considered.

Key findings

- **More than half (56%) of learners were already employed by their apprenticeship employer before the apprenticeship commenced** (44% were 'new recruits').
- **As found in the 2018-19 survey, older apprentices were much more likely to have already been working for their employer** (82%, compared with 45% of those aged 19-24 and 25% of those under 19).
- **Apprentices in Retail, Health and Business apprenticeships were most likely to have already been working for their employer** (70%, 67%, 62% respectively).
- **An apprenticeship was the first choice for almost half of apprentices** (47%, rising to 66% of those aged under 19), and a similar proportion had no particular preference (45%).
- **Among the 7% of apprentices who would rather have done something else** the most common preferences were staying in the job they already had without doing the apprenticeship (20%), working towards a qualification in a further education college (19%) or going to university (19%).
- **The most commonly cited main reason for undertaking an apprenticeship was a desire to enter into or progress in a specific career** (34%), followed by wanting to develop work-related skills (19%) or to gain a qualification (15%).
- Awareness of apprenticeships increased from previous years, with **the vast majority (91%) aware that their course or training was part of an apprenticeship in 2021**. This reflects a consistent increase in awareness year on year since 2015 (69% of current apprentices aware compared to 86% in 2018-19 and 91% in 2021).

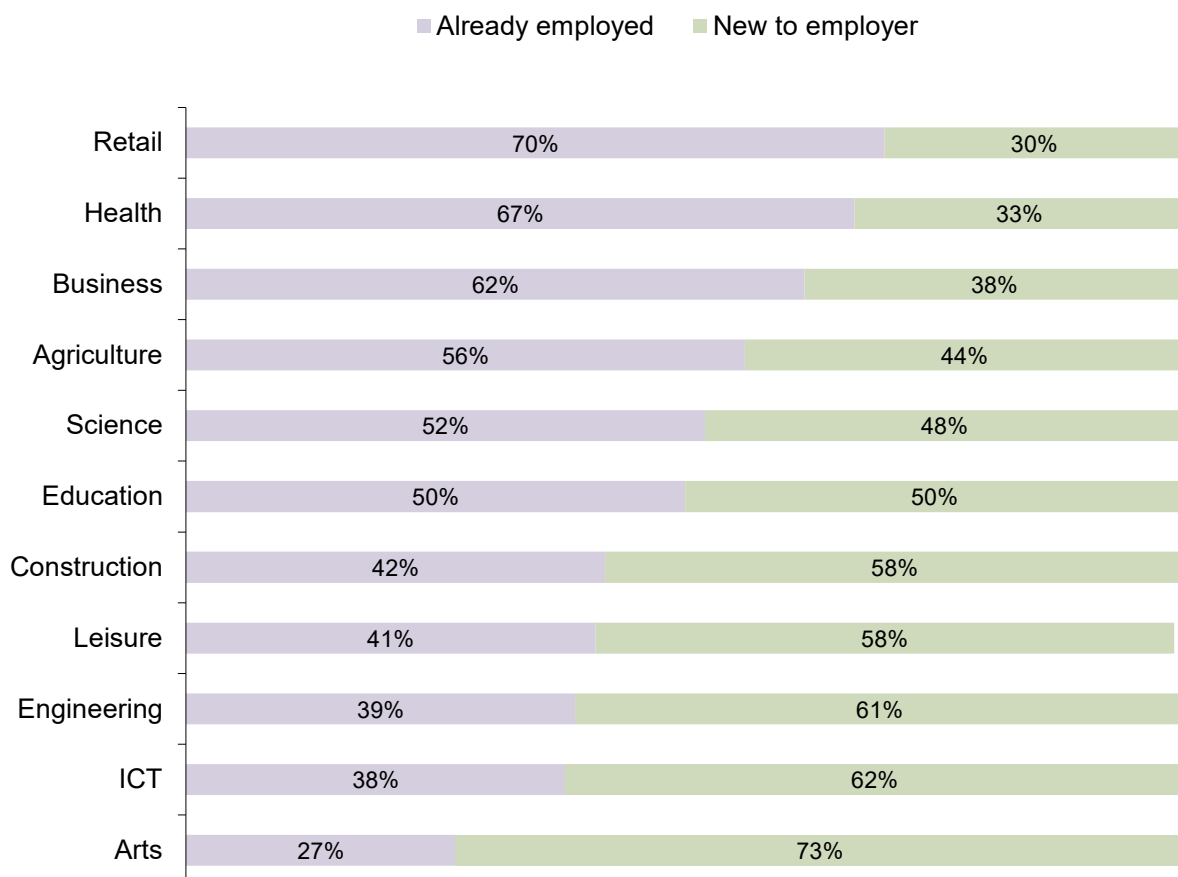
Activity prior to apprenticeships

More than half of apprentices (56%) were already employed by the employer with whom they undertook their apprenticeship before it commenced. Most of these (40% of all apprentices) had worked for the employer for at least 12 months prior to their apprenticeship. The remainder (44% of all apprentices) were new recruits.

Level 4 and Level 5 apprentices were particularly likely to have been working for their employer prior to starting the apprenticeship (65% and 90% respectively compared to 48% among Level 2, and 55% among Level 3 and Level 6 apprentices).

As shown in Figure 3-1, there was variation by subject area, with those doing Retail, Health and Business apprenticeships more likely than apprentices overall to have been working for their employer prior to starting the apprenticeship (70%, 67%, 62% respectively) and those doing Arts apprenticeships least likely (27%). There was a strong correlation by age, with apprentices aged 25 or over more likely than younger apprentices to have already been working for the employer (82%, compared with 45% of those aged 19-24 and 25% of those under 19).

Figure 3-1: Whether apprentices were already employed by the apprenticeship employer, by subject area



Base: All apprentices (5,122); Health (811); Retail (523); Education (331); Business (1,006); Agriculture (313); Engineering (732); Leisure (297); Construction (438); ICT (377); Science (72); Arts (190).

There were also gender differences, with female apprentices more likely than male apprentices to have already been working for their employer (62% vs. 50%). This relates to age and sector subject area differences described above, with female apprentices far more likely than males to be in categories associated with higher prevalence of working for the employer before the apprenticeship. Namely, female apprentices were more likely to be aged 25 plus (53% vs. 36%) and to be undertaking or to have completed apprenticeships in Business (34% vs. 22%), Health (39% vs. 10%) and Retail (12% vs. 7%).

Apprentices without a disability or learning difficulty were more likely to already be working for their employer before the apprenticeship (57%), compared to those with a disability (49%) or learning difficulty (47%).

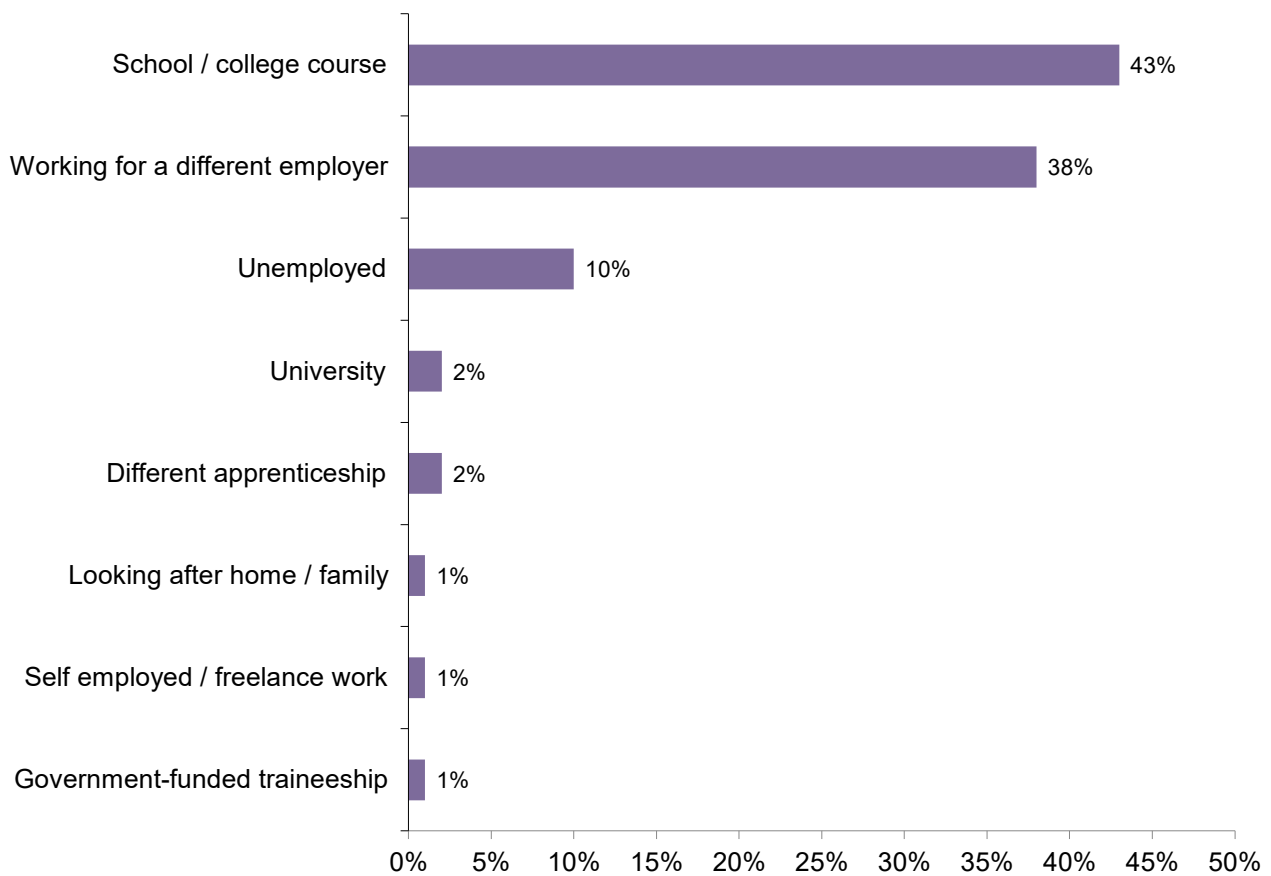
The groups that were more likely to have already been working for their employer prior to starting the apprenticeship were also more likely to have worked there for longer. Among *those working for their employer prior to starting their apprenticeship*, the following groups were more likely than average to have been working there for 12 months or more:

- Those on Business apprenticeships (83% vs. 71% overall)
- Level 4+ apprentices (85% vs. 65% among lower levels)
- Apprentices aged 25+ (82% vs. 60% of those aged 19-24 and 30% of those under 19)
- Female apprentices (77% vs. 64% male)
- Apprentices without a disability or learning difficulty (72%, compared to 56% of those with).

Apprentices who were new to their employer

Amongst apprentices who were new to their employer (i.e., recruited to the apprenticeship), most came either straight from school or college (43%) or were working for a different employer (38%), as shown in Figure 3-2.

Figure 3-2: Main activity prior to starting apprenticeship



Base: Apprentices new to their employer (2,471).

Predictably age was a key driver of results on this question: under 19s that were recruited to the apprenticeship were particularly likely to have come straight from school or college (72% vs. 28% of 19-24s and just 3% of over 24s). On the other hand, being taken on from another employer increased with age band (from 17% of under 19s, to 48% of 19-24s and 67% of over 24s).

These differences by age largely determined differences by sector subject area. Apprentices in Leisure, Construction and Engineering (all with a high prevalence of under 19s) that were recruited to the apprenticeship were particularly likely to have been taken on straight from school or college (57%, 51% and 51% respectively), whereas in Health and Education (which both had an older than average age profile) only around a third of those recruited to the apprenticeship were taken on straight from school or college (31% and 34% respectively).

Among those new to the employer, one in ten (10%) had been unemployed prior to starting their apprenticeship. This was more common for:

- Those aged 19 and over (13% vs. 6% among under 19s)
- Those doing Arts (25%) and IT apprenticeships (21%)
- Those with a disability or learning difficulty (18%).

Small proportions had been recruited to the apprenticeship from a different apprenticeship (2%), a university course (2%), looking after home or family (1%), freelance work (1%), or a government-funded traineeship at a college or training provider (1%).

Among those recruited from another apprenticeship (a low base of 73 respondents) this was usually in a different occupational area (59% vs. 38% in same area) and at the same (47%) or a lower level (45%).

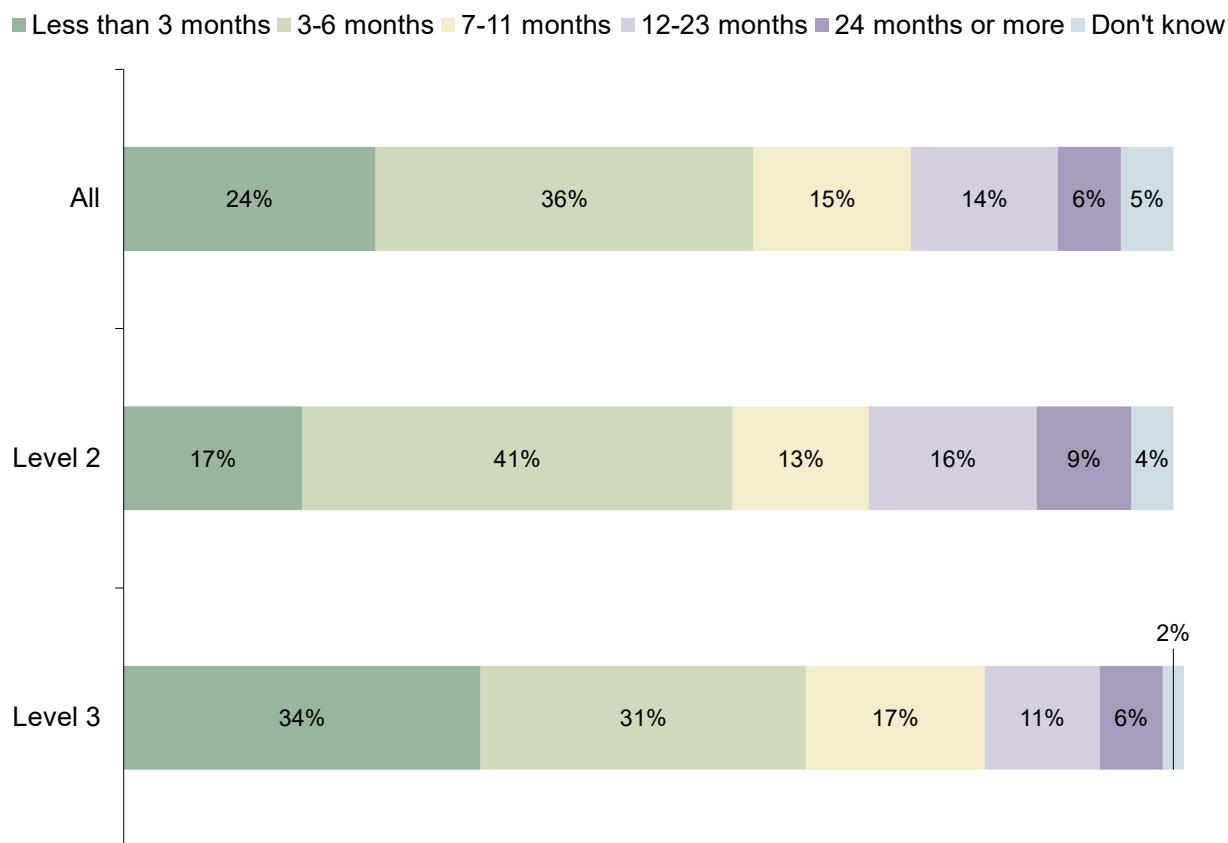
Main activity prior to starting apprenticeship for younger apprentices

Among younger apprentices (aged under 25) who had already been employed by their employer before starting their apprenticeship, though for a period of less than 12 months, prior activities were similar to those just discussed among apprentices who were recruited to immediately start an apprenticeship. Approaching half (44%) had been at school or college before being recruited, and two-fifths (40%) had been working for a different employer. One in ten (10%) had been unemployed. Few had been recruited from a different apprenticeship (2%), or government funded traineeship (2%).

Younger apprentices (aged under 25) who were considered not in employment, education or training,²³ were asked how long this had been the case prior to the start of their apprenticeship. Around a quarter (24%) had been neither employed nor in education or training for less than three months. Overall, for seven in ten the period had been for 3 months or more (71%, rising to 79% among Level 2 apprentices), and for around a third (35%) it had been for more than 6 months.

²³ This was defined in the survey as learners who were aged under 25 and said that immediately before their apprenticeship they were either unemployed, looking after home or family, unable to work due to illness, or unable to work due to pregnancy.

Figure 3-3: Length of time NEET prior to starting the apprenticeship



Base: Apprentices not in employment immediately before apprenticeship and aged 16-24 at the time of enrolment (226).

Awareness of apprenticeships

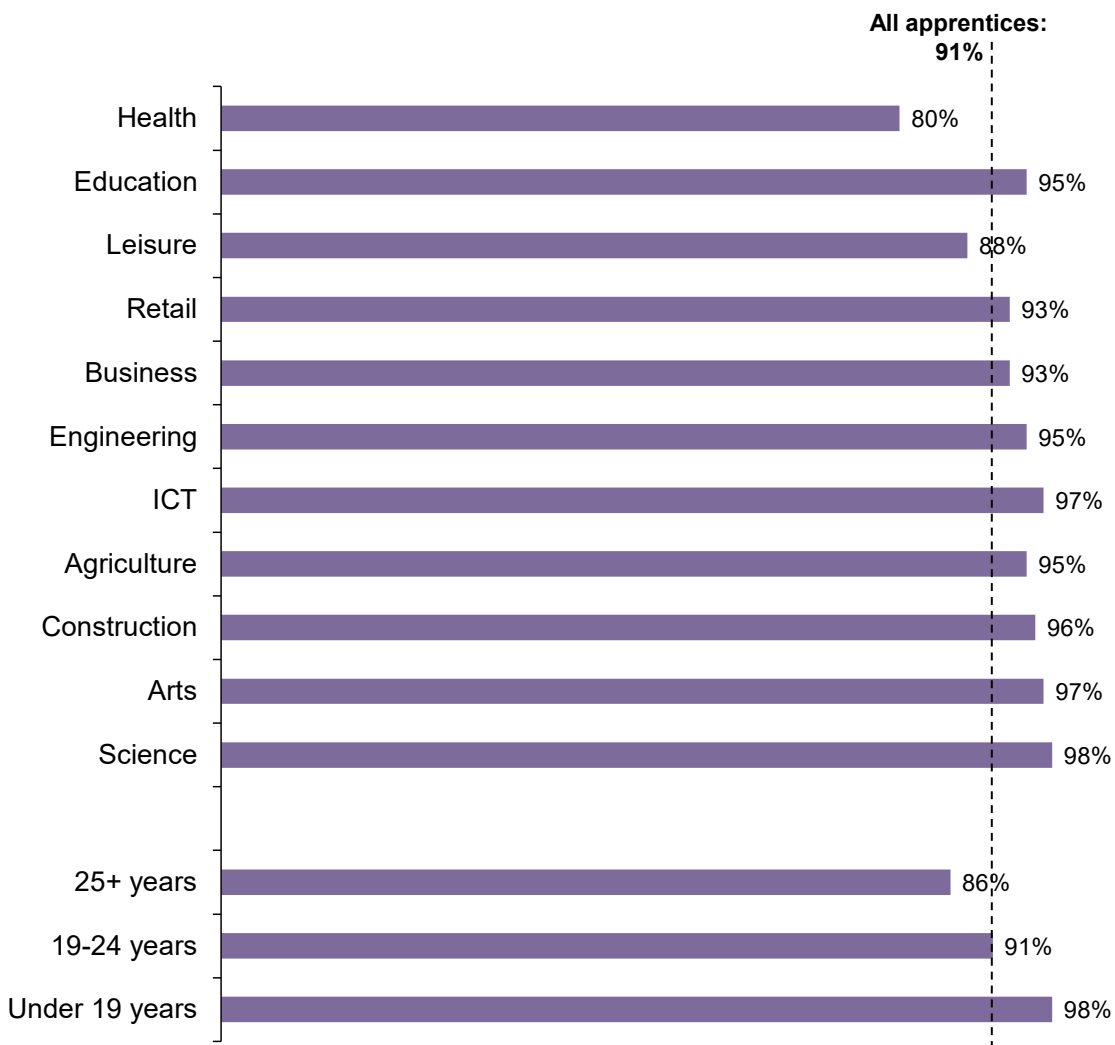
The vast majority of apprentices (91%) were aware that their course or training was part of an apprenticeship, 6% were not aware and the remaining 3% were unsure. The level of awareness was slightly but statistically significantly higher for current apprentices and recent completers (both 91%) than longer-term completers (87%). This represents an increase from the 2018-19 survey in which 86% of current apprentices and 87% of longer-term completers were aware their training was an apprenticeship. [The Changes Over Time](#) section provides further detail on this.

In the 2021 survey, awareness was almost universal among those on Level 6 or higher apprenticeships (99%) and was higher than average among Level 4 apprentices (94%).

Awareness was lower than average among the following groups:

- Those undertaking Health apprenticeships (80%)
- Level 5 apprentices (86%)
- Those aged 25 plus (86%)
- Females (88%)
- Those saying the planned apprenticeship duration was less than two years (88% vs. 97% among longer apprenticeships).

Figure 3-4: Those aware that they are / were on an apprenticeship



Base: All apprentices (5,122); Under 19 (1486), 19-24 (1575), 25+ (2061); Agriculture (313); Arts (190); Business (1006); Construction (438); Education (331); Engineering (732); Health (811); ICT (377); Leisure (297); Retail (532); Science (72).

Awareness was almost universal among apprentices who started their apprenticeship at the same time as joining their employer (97%, compared to 86% among those working for the employer before starting their apprenticeship).

Reason for choosing apprenticeships

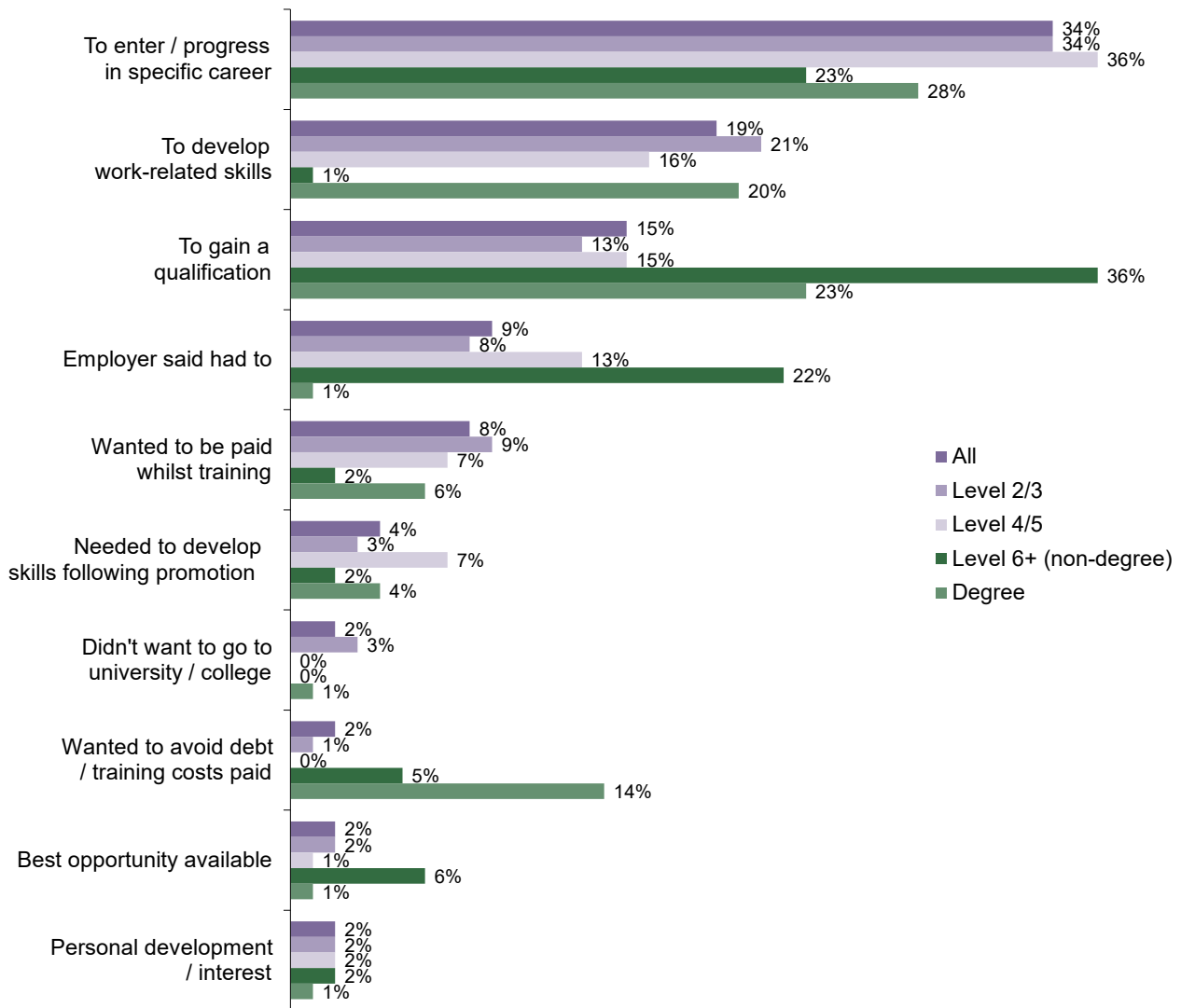
Respondents were asked the main reason for doing an apprenticeship. The most common response was a desire to start or progress in a specific career (mentioned by 34%). This was more common among current apprentices (36%) than longer-term (25%) and recent completers (30%). Other frequently cited reasons were wanting to develop work-related skills (19%) or to gain a qualification (15%).

Around one in ten (9%) said their main reason for undertaking the apprenticeship was that the employer said they had to do it for their job. This was more often cited as a reason by those on Level 5 or 6+ non-degree apprenticeships (15% and 22% respectively), in Health (14%), those aged 25 plus (14%) and those working for their employer prior to starting the apprenticeship (13%).

Around one in twelve (8%) cited wanting to receive pay whilst they trained as the core reason for starting an apprenticeship.

Results are summarised in Figure 3-5, which shows differences by level. Level 6+ degree apprentices were more likely than average to be influenced by wanting to gain a qualification (23%) or to avoid student debt/ have their training costs paid (14%). Level 6+ non-degree apprentices were more likely than average to have undertaken to gain a qualification (36%) and because their employer said they had to do it for their job (22%; only 1% of degree apprentices gave this as a reason).

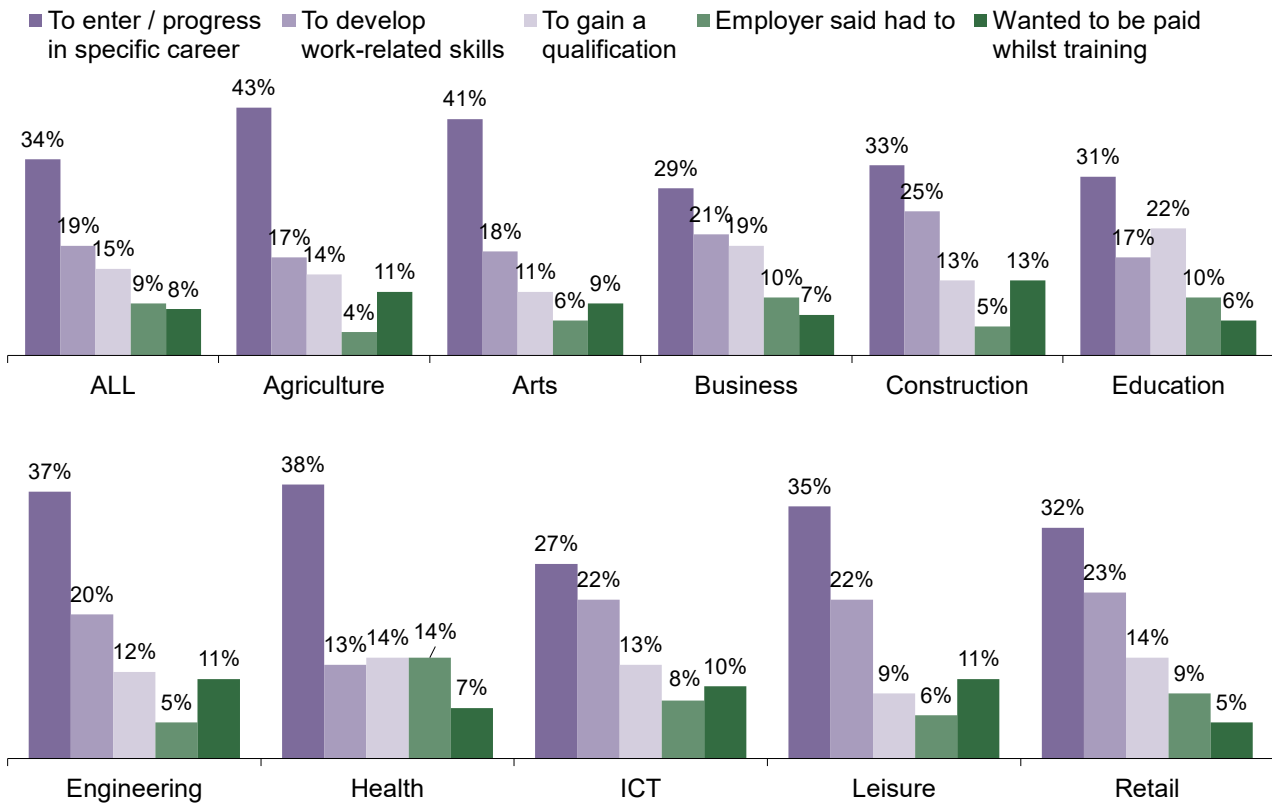
Figure 3-5: Main reason for deciding to undertake an apprenticeship, by level (unprompted)



Base: All apprentices (modularised) (2,696); Level 2/3 (2,123); Level 4/5 (326); Level 6+ (non-degree) (52); Degree (195). Figures only shown if 2% or higher amongst all apprentices.

Motivations also varied by subject area, as shown below in Figure 3-6.

Figure 3-6: Main reason for deciding to undertake an apprenticeship, by subject area (unprompted)



Note: Figures shown only if 7% or higher amongst all apprentices. Only reason given by 7% or over within any subject area not listed: 13% of Science apprentices – ‘Did not want to go to university/ college’.

Base: All apprentices (modularised) (2,696); Agriculture (164); Arts (85); Business (520); Construction (255); Education (174); Engineering (380); Health (447); ICT (187); Leisure (153); Retail (279). Science not shown (base <50).

Apprentices in Agriculture (43%) and Health (38%) were more likely than average to have undertaken an apprenticeship to enter or progress in a career, and those in Business (29%) less likely than average.

Apprentices in Construction were more likely to have chosen an apprenticeship primarily to develop work-related skills (25%). Wanting a qualification was particularly likely to be the main reason for apprentices in Education (22%) and Business (19%); by contrast only 9% of apprentices on Leisure apprenticeships cited this as their main reason. Apprentices in Health were more likely than average to have been required by their employer to do the apprenticeship (14%).

Apprentices under the age of 19 were less likely to have started an apprenticeship mainly to gain a qualification (11%, compared to 16% of 19 to 24-year-olds and 17% of those aged 25+). Cost was more of a motivator for apprentices under the age of 19, with 19% starting the apprenticeship so they could be paid while training (compared with 9% of those aged 19-24 and 2% of those aged 25+). Younger apprentices were also more likely to have started primarily because they thought an apprenticeship was a good way to develop work-related skills (23% of those under 19, compared with 19% aged 19-24 and 18% aged 25+).

Apprentices who were not previously working for the employer when they started their apprenticeship were more likely to have started the apprenticeship so they could be paid while working (13% vs. 5% of those who already worked for employer).

Gaining a degree was important in the decision to undertake a degree apprenticeship for nearly all degree apprentices (93%), with the majority saying it was 'very important' (65%).

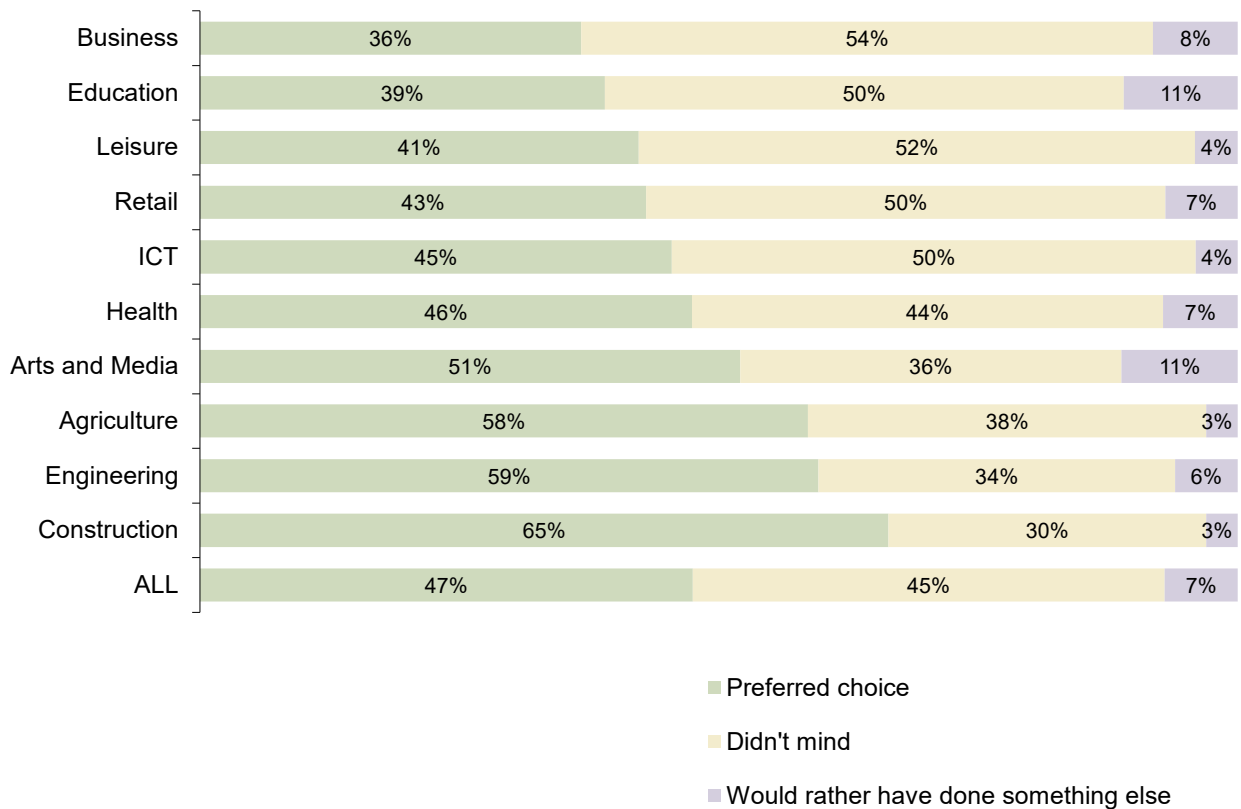
Whether apprenticeships were a preferred choice

For almost half (47%) of apprentices their apprenticeship was their preferred choice at the time they first considered an apprenticeship. Few (7%) would have preferred to do something else, although approaching half (45%) had no particular preference.

Level 5 and 6+ apprentices were less likely than average to have actively wanted to do an apprenticeship (both 38%, compared with 49% of Level 2, 50% of Level 3 and 42% of Level 4 apprentices).

As shown below in Figure 3-7, there were also differences by subject area. An apprenticeship was more likely to have been the preferred choice for those undertaking apprenticeships in Construction (65%), Engineering (59%) and Agriculture (58%).

Figure 3-7: Whether an apprenticeship was their preferred choice when first considered, by subject area



Base: All apprentices (modularised) (2,696); Agriculture (164); Arts (85); Business (520); Construction (255); Education (174); Engineering (380); Health (447); ICT (187); Leisure (153); Retail (279). Science not shown (<50).

The following groups were also more likely to have specifically wanted to undertake an apprenticeship (as their preferred choice):

- Under 19s (66%, compared with 43% of 19 to 24s, and just 38% of those 25 or older). Those aged 25 plus were far more likely to say they had no particular preference (52% vs. 29% among under 19s)
- Those on frameworks compared to those on standards (55% vs. 45%). Note, this could be influenced by age, as those on frameworks were more likely to be under the age of 25
- Those recruited to the apprenticeship (53% vs. 42% among those who were already employed by their employer).

Alternatives to apprenticeships

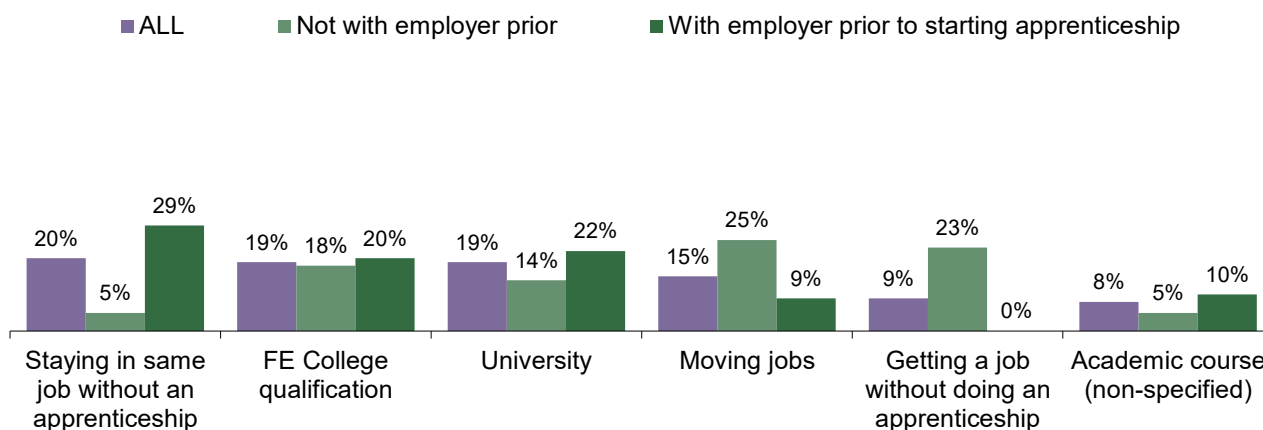
The seven per cent of apprentices who would rather have done something else, were asked what they would have preferred to do. The most commonly cited preferences were staying in the job they already had without doing the apprenticeship (20%), working towards a qualification in a further education college (19%) or going to university (19%) – as shown in Figure 3-8.

Current apprentices were more likely to have wanted to stay in their job without doing the apprenticeship (25%, compared to 16% of recent completers and just 4% of longer-term completers), and less likely to have wanted to work towards a qualification in further education (15%, compared with 26% of recent completers and 31% of longer-term completers).

Some variation could be seen by level, with Level 2 apprentices more likely to have wanted to get a job without being involved in an apprenticeship (16% vs. 9% overall). Level 6+ apprentices were more likely to have wanted to go to university (56% vs. 19% overall), although this difference was not statistically significant. Those in Health were more than twice as likely than average to have rather stayed in their job without doing the apprenticeship (42% vs. 20% overall).

Apprentices on frameworks were more much more likely than those on standards to cite they would rather have worked towards a qualification in a further education college (36% vs. 16%).

Figure 3-8: What apprentices would have preferred to have done instead of an apprenticeship (unprompted)



Base: All apprentices who would rather have done something else (modularised) (165); With employer prior to starting apprenticeship (97); Not with employer prior to starting apprenticeship (68)

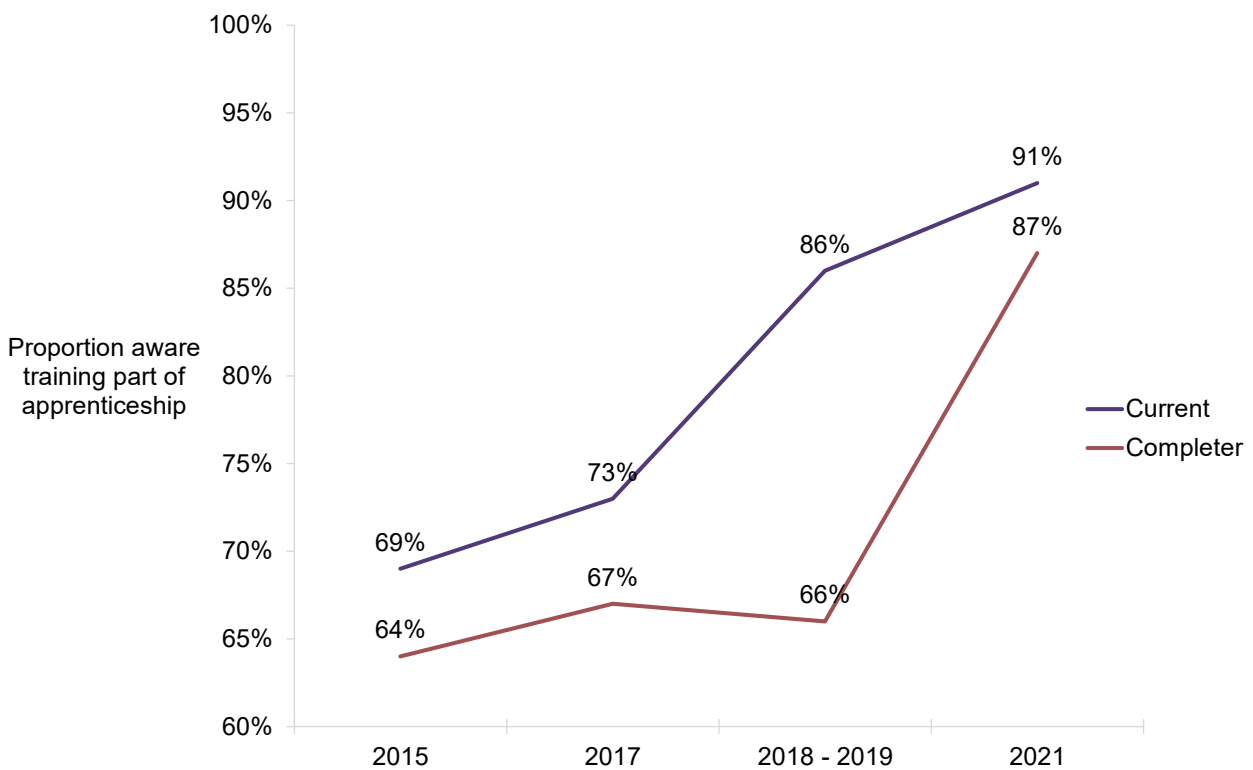
Changes over time

There was no significant change in the proportion of current apprentices working for their employer before they started the apprenticeship (56% vs. 58% in 2018-19 and 54% in 2017). However, in 2021 far fewer longer-term completers had already been working for their employer than in 2018-19 or in 2017 (53% vs. 65% in 2018-19 and 59% in 2017).

Among those recruited to start an apprenticeship, the routes into their apprenticeship have remained largely unchanged since 2015, with most coming straight from school or college, or working for another employer. Among current apprentices recruited to the apprenticeship, in 2018-19 43% came from school or college and 37% had been working for another employer, in line with the proportions seen in 2021 (42% and 39% respectively).

As shown in Figure 3-9, awareness that they were undertaking an apprenticeship has increased significantly in 2021. Among current apprentices 91% were aware that their course or training was part of an apprenticeship, up from 86% in 2018-19 and reflecting a steady increase in awareness year on year from 2015 (when 69% of current apprentices were aware). This pattern was also reflected among longer-term completers (87% aware that they were undertaking an apprenticeship vs. 66% in 2018-19).

Figure 3-9: Changes in proportion aware of apprenticeship over time



Base: All current apprentices (2015; 2033, 2017; 2,427, 2019-19; 2355, 2021; 3047), All longer-term completers (2015; 2,736, 2017; 2767, 2018-19; 1,580, 2021; 1039).

Increases in awareness were particularly large among current apprentices undertaking Level 5 apprenticeships (85% vs. 73% in 2018-19); apprenticeships in the Education (96% vs. 80%), Health (80% vs. 66%) and Leisure (89% vs. 77%) subject areas; and among those aged 25 and over (87% vs. 75%).

The most commonly cited main reasons for undertaking an apprenticeship were broadly consistent with 2018-19 findings. Wanting to start or progress in a specific career remained the most common reason in 2021, though more current apprentices cited this in 2021 (36%) than in 2018-19 (29%).

Similarly, the proportion for whom an apprenticeship was their preferred choice has remained just under a half since 2015. In 2018-19, 49% of current apprentices and 44% of longer-term completers said that apprenticeship was their preferred choice - in 2021 47% and 45% respectively said the same. However, in 2021 a slight increase was seen in the percentage of current learners who would rather have done something else (7% vs. 5% in 2018-19).

In 2021, those on frameworks were more likely than those on standards to say undertaking the apprenticeship was their preferred choice (55% and 45% respectively). The results for current apprentices were similar to the overall picture though not statistically significant (54% vs. 46%), however this still signifies a longer-term change since 2017, when those doing apprenticeship standards were more likely to say an apprenticeship was their preferred choice (62% vs. 49% of those on frameworks). There was no difference between the two groups in 2018-19 (each 47%).

4. Impact of COVID-19 on delivery

This chapter explores the impacts that COVID-19 has had on apprenticeship delivery, including pauses in training, the use of the furlough scheme, changes in employer and redundancies. The impact of COVID-19 is also discussed, where relevant, throughout other chapters in this report – most notably [Chapter 8](#) (Satisfaction with apprenticeships) and [Chapter 10](#) (Experience of apprentices who did not complete their apprenticeship).

Key findings

Amongst current apprentices and those who had recently completed apprenticeships:

- **Just over a quarter (27%) had their training paused at some point due to COVID-19. The same proportion (27%) were put on furlough during their apprenticeship.** Overall, 41% had experienced either.
- **Lower level apprenticeships were more likely to be impacted by both pauses and furloughs** - 36% / 37% of those on Level 2 had their training paused / were furloughed compared to only 14% / 10% of those on Level 6 or above.
- **Engineering, Retail, Construction and Leisure apprentices were more likely to be impacted** by pauses in training or furloughs.
- **Apprentices who were younger, male, White and / or low earners were also particularly likely to have been impacted** by pauses in training and furloughs. This relates to differences by subject area – apprentices in Engineering, Construction and Leisure were more likely than average to be male and under 19.
- **Apprentices in London were also less likely to have been impacted** by pauses in training or furloughs.
- Almost a quarter (24%) of pauses in training and 19% of furlough lasted over six months. Only 7% of pauses and 9% of furloughs ended within a month. **Longer pauses and furloughs of over six months were more likely for those affected in the Leisure subject area.**
- **Apprentices were most commonly furloughed for all of their working hours** (84% of those furloughed). **Around a third (31%) of those furloughed had been on a flexible or alternating basis** for at least some of the furlough period. Flexible or alternating furlough was more common amongst those groups less likely to be furloughed (e.g., on higher apprenticeship levels) as well as amongst Leisure and Retail apprentices.
- **One percent of apprentices changed employers during their apprenticeship due to COVID-19**, though overall 6% changed employers.

- **Amongst recent completers 3% had been made redundant by their employer during their apprenticeship due to COVID-19**
- Overall, **29% of current apprentices reported training had been paused at some point due to COVID-19** (vs. 21% of recent completers). Current apprentices also reported longer pauses in training (26% of current apprentices paused over 6 months vs. 13% of recent completers).

The COVID-19 pandemic will have impacted current and recent apprentices in a multitude of ways including the delivery of their apprenticeships, employment during the apprenticeship and the job market for those completing.

Flexibilities and restrictions were introduced so that apprentices could continue to train and be assessed during the pandemic but in a safe manner. Learning could be paused, those who took a formal break of 4 weeks or longer had to then re-set their planned end-date. Employers could furlough apprentices in the same way as other employees. Apprentices on furlough could continue their off the job training remotely, but this may not have been possible for some. Some apprentices had their learning paused but were not placed on furlough (they may have been redeployed within the organisation or able to work remotely but not train remotely).²⁴

The chapter looks at the impact on two groups

- Current apprentices at the time of research (May to July 2021), who were sampled from the ILR as having started their apprenticeship before September 2020. All would have experienced the second and third lockdowns as apprentices, but possibly not the first. They will have experienced between ten and 12 months as an apprentice since the pandemic started.
- Recent completers who had completed their apprenticeship between March and December 2020 - most would have experienced at least part of the first lockdown as apprentices, but many may have finished their apprenticeship before the later lockdowns. They will have experienced between one and ten months as an apprentice during the pandemic (i.e., they may not have been as heavily impacted during their apprenticeship as current apprentices).

The experiences of longer-term completers, who had finished their apprenticeship between July 2019 and February 2020, are not included in this chapter.

²⁴ [Providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/providing-apprenticeships-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic)

As well as it being important to understand the experiences of apprenticeships in terms of furloughs and pauses it is also worth bearing in mind, as we discuss in [Chapter 8](#), that these experiences can impact satisfaction levels. For example, those whose apprenticeship had paused during their apprenticeship were notably less satisfied overall than average (79% vs. average of 84%).

Pauses in training due to COVID-19

Overall, 27% of current apprentices and recent completers reported that their training was paused at some point during their apprenticeship due to COVID-19. This was more common amongst current apprentices (29%) than recent completers (21%).

Pauses due to COVID-19 were more common on lower levels (36% of Level 2 apprenticeships compared with 14% of Level 6+ apprenticeships, and on Engineering (45%), Retail (43%) and Construction (42%). Least likely to have experienced a pause due to COVID-19 were those on Science (4%), ICT (12%) and Education (12%) apprenticeships.

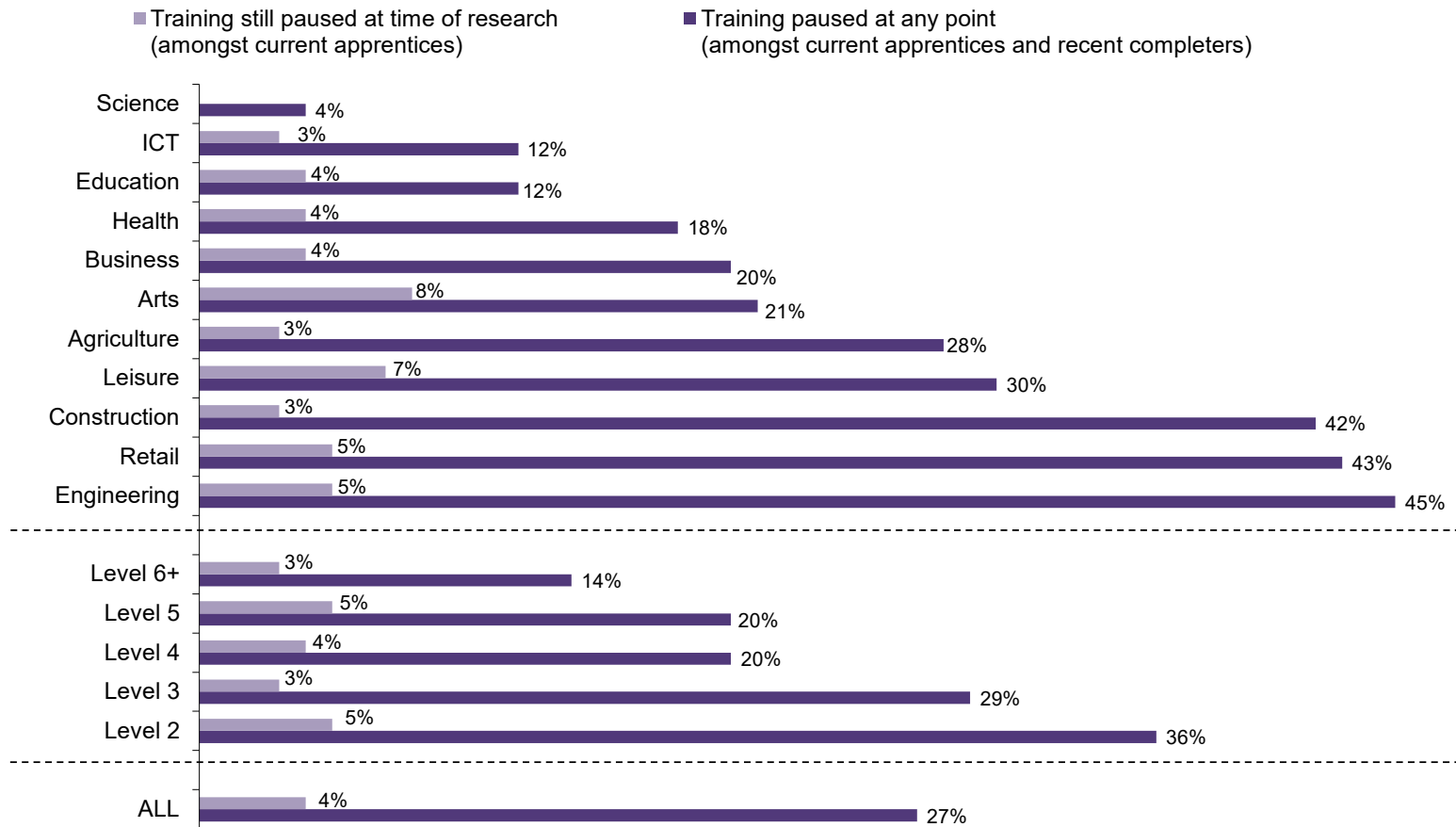
Reflecting the fact that those currently undertaking apprenticeship frameworks were far more likely than those currently undertaking apprenticeship standards to be doing Level 2 apprenticeships (38% vs. 22% respectively) and Engineering apprenticeships (45% vs. 17% respectively), those on frameworks were far more likely to have experienced a pause due to COVID than those currently on standard apprenticeships (48% vs. 27%).

Results are summarised in Figure 4-1, which also shows the proportion of current apprentices that indicated their training was paused at the time of the interview (4%).

Apprentices were particularly likely to have experienced pauses if they fell into the following groups.

- Low earners on less than £9 per hour (35% compared to 24% of those on higher wages)
- Male (33% compared to 22% of female)
- Under 19 years old (33% compared to 25% of older apprentices)
- In the East Midlands (33%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (32%), compared to London (only 22%).

Figure 4-1: Apprenticeships with training paused due to COVID-19, by level and subject area



Base: Current apprentices and recent completers (4,083) / current apprentices (3,047). Level 2 (1,238/859), Level 3 (1,836/1,356), Level 4 (288/225), Level 5 (277/213), Level 6+ (444/394). Engineering (582/458), Retail (392/299), Construction (361/290), Leisure (227/167), Agriculture (254/198), Arts (144/99), Business (807/568), Health (673/503), Education (262/184), ICT (294/197), Science (55/52).

Pauses in apprenticeships were more common among those that had been furloughed at any point during their apprenticeship (48%). This was more common among Level 2 apprentices that had been furloughed (56%) and those undertaking Engineering (60%), Construction (58%) and Retail (56%) apprenticeships.

Half of training pauses among current apprentices and recent completers lasted at least four months (24% over six months and 27% between four and six months). The remainder largely lasted for between one and three months (39% of pauses). Overall, 7% of those experiencing any pausing of their apprenticeship reported this lasted for less than a month (breaks of less than four weeks were not formally recorded as part of the flexibilities introduced due to COVID-19).

Current apprentices were more likely to have experienced longer training pauses of over six months (26% compared to 13% amongst recent completers).

Amongst those who had experienced a pause in training there were no notable subgroup differences in length of pause by level, but the following groups were more likely to have experienced a longer pause of at least six months.

- Leisure apprentices (35%)
- Those in the East Midlands (33%)
- Apprentices aged over 25 (32% compared to 16% of those under 19)
- Earned over £9 per hour (29% compared to 16% of those on lower wages)
- Those that had worked for the employer prior to starting their apprenticeships (28% compared to 18% of those specifically hired).

When considering groups impacted by pauses and furlough, it is important to note the relationship between demographics and sector. Apprentices in Engineering, Construction and Leisure were more likely than average to be male and under the age of 19.

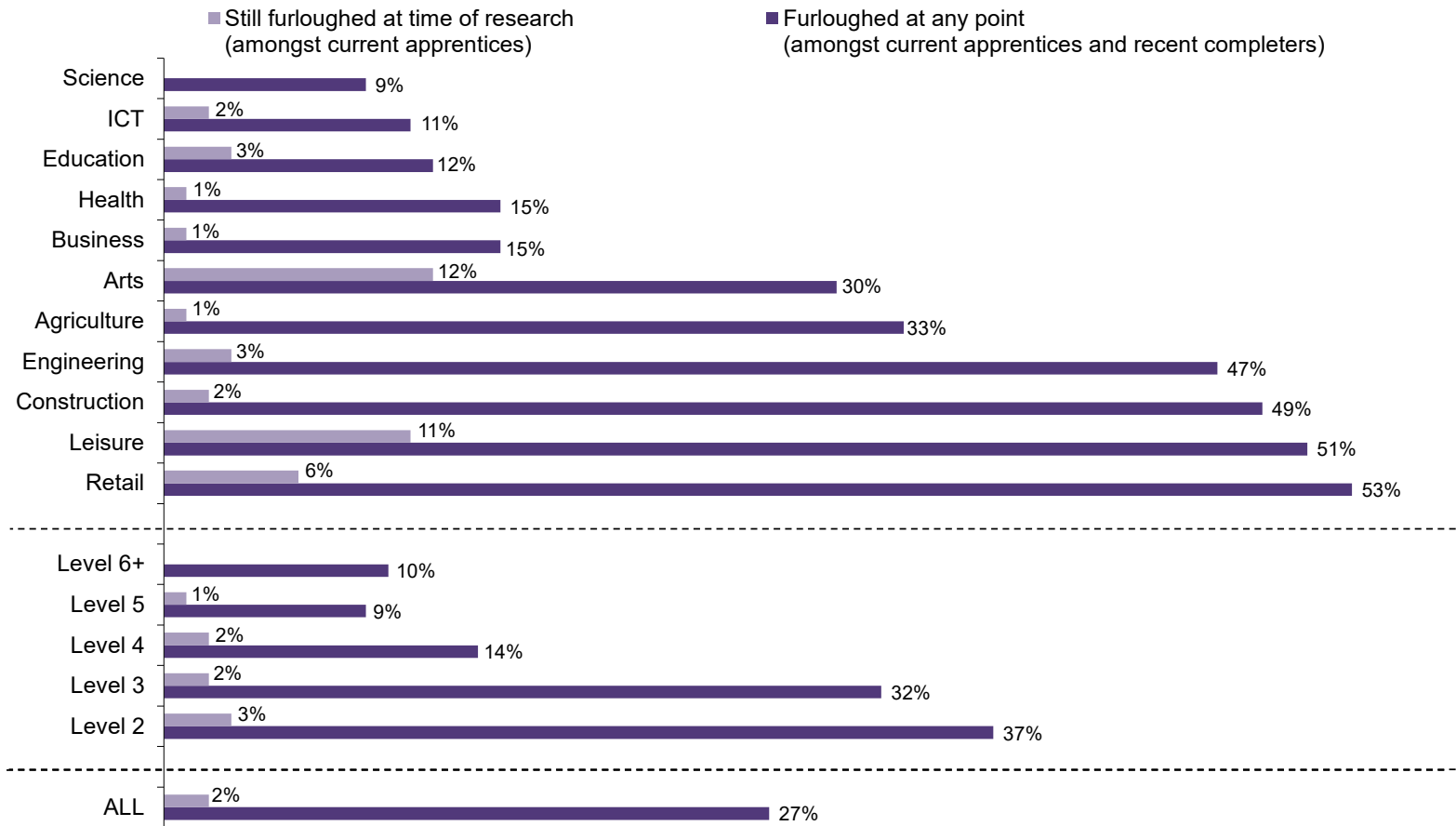
By the time of research (May to July 2021) the vast majority (93%) of current apprentices were training and only 4% still had their training paused due to COVID-19. The following groups of current apprentices were all more likely to report their apprenticeship was still paused at the time of the interview: those on furlough at the time of the interview (19%), BAME apprentices (8% compared to 3% White), those aged over 25 (6% compared to 2% of younger apprentices) and those on Arts apprenticeships (8%).

Furlough arrangements

Approaching three in ten current apprentices (27%) and recent apprenticeship completers (29%) reported that they had been furloughed at some point during their apprenticeship.

As with the pattern for apprenticeships being paused, being furloughed was more common amongst those on lower level apprenticeships (37% of those on Level 2 vs. 10% among Level 6+ apprenticeships), those undertaking Retail (53%), Leisure (51%), Construction (49%) and Engineering (47%) apprenticeships (compared with around only one in ten of Science, ICT and Education apprentices), and those on apprenticeship frameworks (40% vs. 25% of those that were currently on or had recently completed apprenticeship standards).

Figure 4-2: Apprentices furloughed by level and subject area



Base: Current apprentices and recent completers (4,083) / current apprentices (3,047). Level 2 (1,238/859), Level 3 (1,836/1,356), Level 4 (288/225), Level 5 (277/213), Level 6+ (444/394). Retail (392/299), Leisure (227/167), Construction (361/290), Engineering (582/458), Agriculture (254/198), Arts (144/99), Business (807/568), Health (673/503), Education (262/184), ICT (294/197), Science (55/52).

Apprentices were particularly likely to have been furloughed if they fell into the following groups, many of which mirror those likely to have experienced a pause:

- Under 19 years old (44% compared to 30% of those aged 19 to 24 and 16% of those 25 or older)
- Had a learning difficulty (40%)
- Those who were recruited specifically for their apprenticeship (31% compared to 24% who worked for the employer before starting)
- Those earning less than £9 per hour (40% compared to 18% of those on higher wages)
- In the South West (35% compared to only 23% in London)
- Male (32% compared to 22% of female)
- White (28% compared to 19% of BAME apprentices).

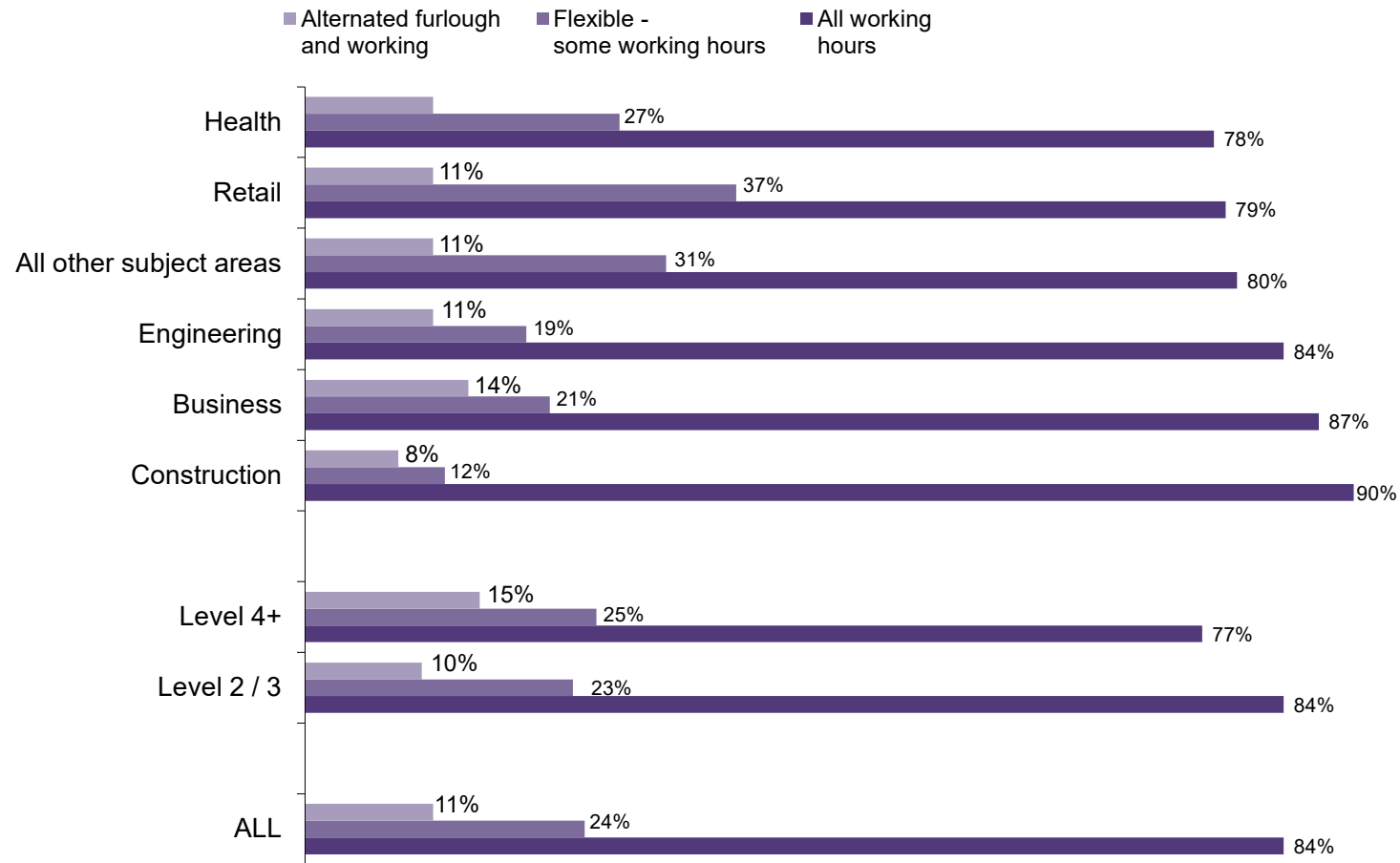
At the time of interview, only 2% of current apprentices remained on furlough. Rates were higher amongst those on Arts (12%), Leisure (11%) or Retail (6%) apprenticeships.

Apprentices who were Black or Black British (5%) or of mixed ethnicity (7%) were particularly likely to remain on furlough compared to 2% of White and 1% of Asian or Asian British apprentices. Unlike the pattern with pauses in training there were no differences by age.

Apprentices were most commonly furloughed for all of their working hours (84% of those furloughed), as shown in Figure 4-3. A third (31%) were furloughed on a flexible or alternating basis; this included being furloughed for only some of their working hours (24%) and / or alternating between periods on furlough and working (11%).²⁵ Some apprentices were furloughed for all their hours at some point and flexibly or on an alternating basis at other points. Those who remained on furlough at the time of fieldwork were particularly likely to be doing so on a flexible basis (66% compared to 20% of those who had been in furlough but were no longer).

²⁵ It was possible for respondents to say that they had both periods where they were furloughed for some of their working hours and periods where they alternated between being furloughed and working. Therefore the proportion that experienced either of these (31%) is not the sum of the corresponding 24% and 11% figures.

Figure 4-3: Extent of furlough by level and broad subject area

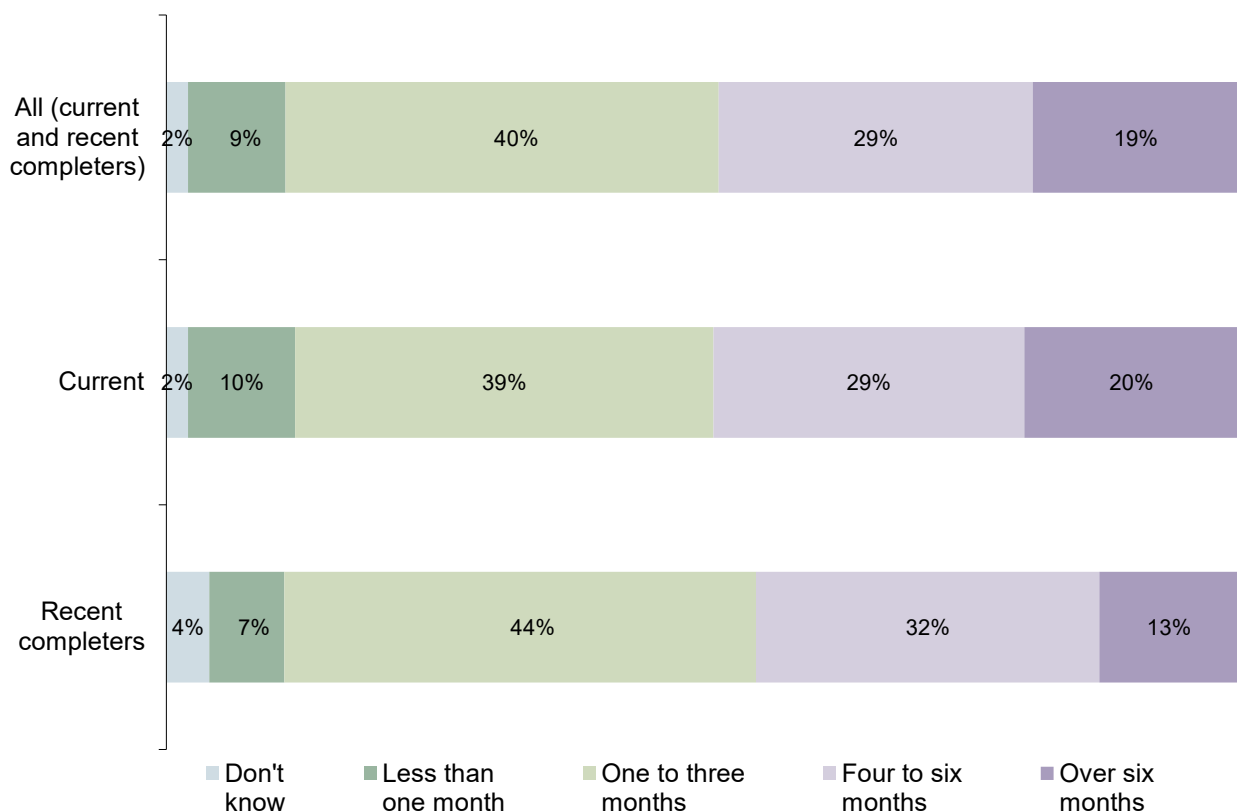


Base: Current apprentices and recent completers who were furloughed at some point during apprenticeship (1,114). Level 2 / 3 (994), Level 4+ (120). Construction (165), Business (119), Engineering (236), other subject areas (304), Retail (195), Health (95). Subject areas in order of likelihood to have been furloughed for all working hours.

Amongst those who were furloughed, the following were all particularly likely (above the 31% average) to have been furloughed on an alternating or flexible basis: those who were older (39% of those 25 or older), those who were BAME (41%), those with a disability (42%) and those earning more than £9 per hour (37%).

Nearly half of all furloughs lasted three months or less (40% one to three months, 9% less than a month). In comparison almost a fifth (19%) were over six months, as shown in Figure 4-4. Amongst those on furlough at the time of research, half (51%) had been on furlough for over six months.

Figure 4-4: Length of furlough



Base: Current apprentices and recent completers who were furloughed at some point during apprenticeship (1,114). Current (821), recent completers (293).

There was little difference in length of furlough by apprenticeship level, but furloughs for Leisure, Retail and Arts apprenticeships were particularly likely to be over six months (37%, 40% and 42% respectively). Engineering and Construction, subjects which were

also particularly likely to have seen apprentices furloughed, were much less likely to have long furloughs over six months (only 14% and 10% respectively of those furloughed).

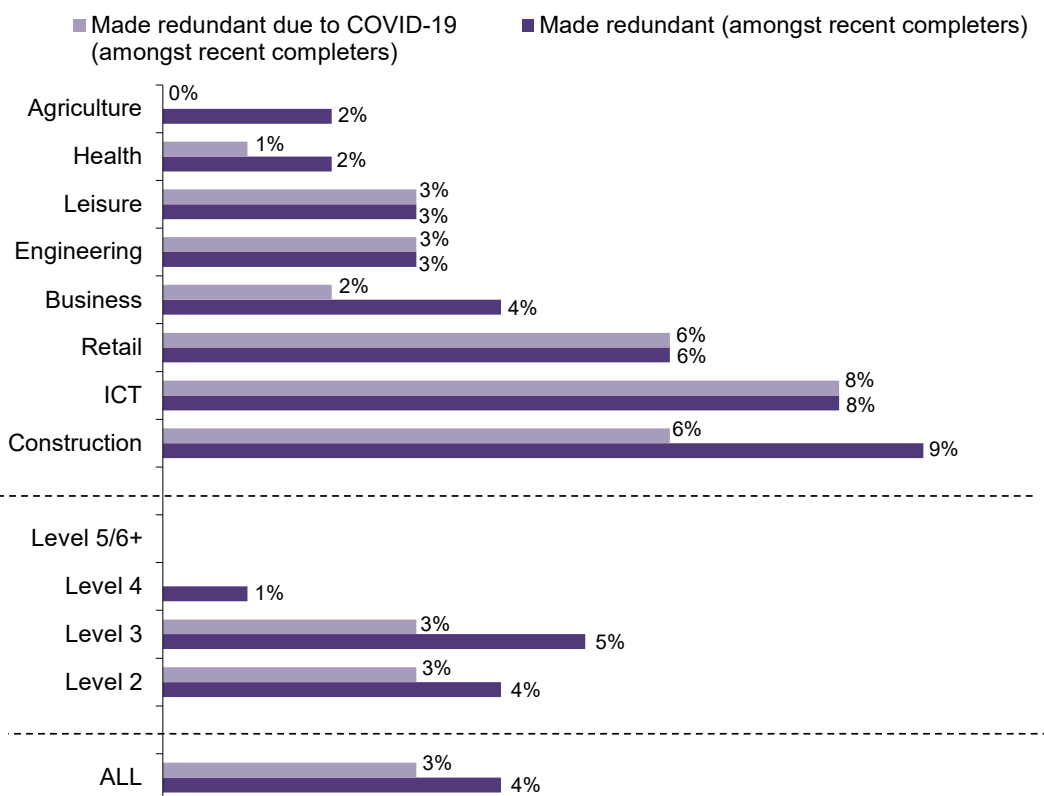
Furloughs over six months were more common amongst current apprentices who had been furloughed (20% compared to 13% of those furloughed who had recently completed). Female apprentices who were furloughed were more likely to be so for over six months (25% compared to 15% of male).

There is of course overlap between those experiencing being on furlough and those saying their apprenticeship was paused at any point, and almost half (48%) of those furloughed at some point said their apprenticeship had been paused. Taken together, two-fifths (41%) of current apprentices and recent completers in this survey either had their training paused or were furloughed.

Employer changes and redundancies

This section largely focusses on redundancies and changing employers due to COVID-19. For further context, Figure 4-5 shows the proportion of apprentices made redundant for any reason, and the proportion made redundant specifically due to COVID-19.

Figure 4-5: Apprentices made redundant during apprenticeship by level and subject area



Base: Recent completers (1,036). Level 2 (379), Level 3 (480), Level 4 (63), Level 5 (64), Level 6+ (50). Construction (71), ICT (97), Arts (45), Retail (93), Business (239), Engineering (124), Leisure (60), Health (170), Agriculture (56). *Base for Arts and Science recent completers <50 so not shown in chart. Education less than 1% on all measures so not shown.

Overall, 3% of those who had recently completed their apprenticeship had been made redundant by their former employer during their apprenticeship due to COVID-19, and 4% had been made redundant during their apprenticeship for any reason. Level 4+ apprenticeship completers had very rarely been made redundant due to COVID-19 (less than 1%, compared with 3% of Level 2 or 3 recent completers).

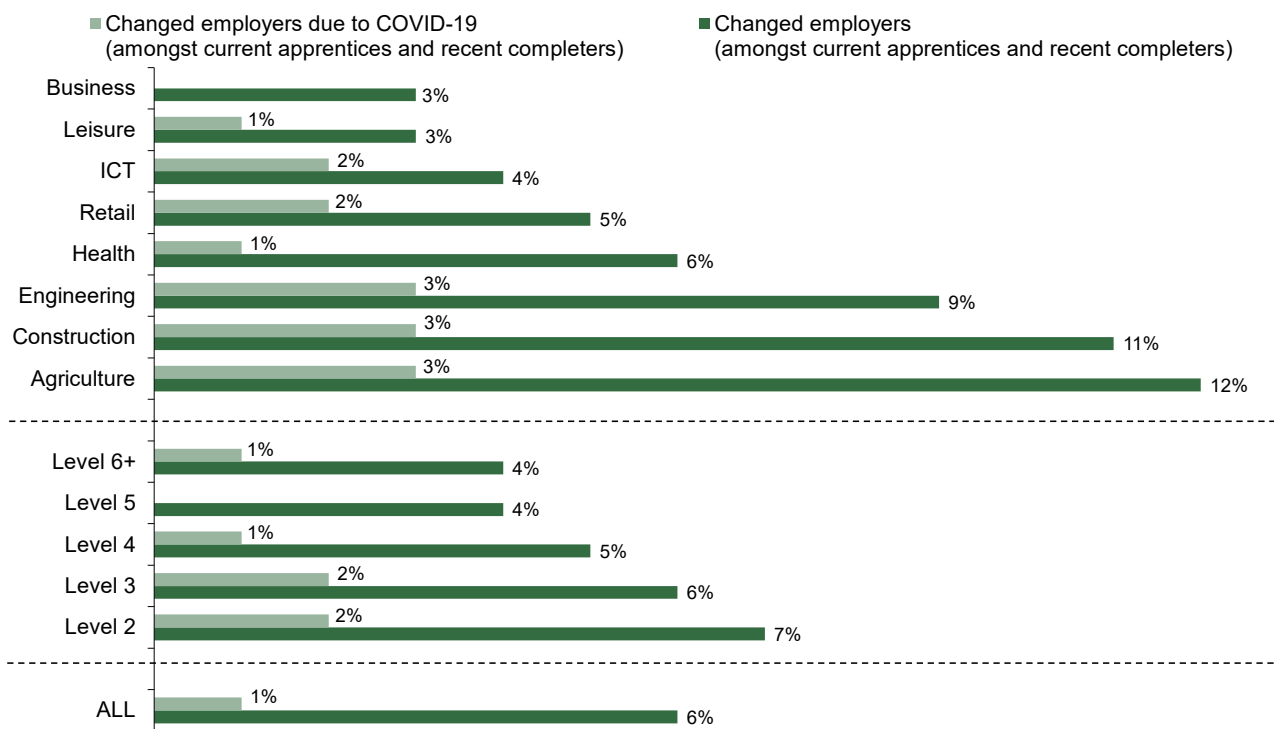
Being made redundant during an apprenticeship due to COVID-19 was more common amongst those who had recently completed ICT apprenticeships (8%).

Apprentices who experienced a pause in their training due to COVID-19 or were put on furlough were more likely to have also been made redundant due to the pandemic (5% and 7% respectively compared to 2% and 1% of those who did not have these impacts).

Just 1% of current apprentices and recent completers changed employers during their apprenticeship due to COVID-19, though overall 6% changed employers.

As proportions were so low there was little variation in likelihood to change employer due to COVID-19 between sub-groups, though there were some statistically significant differences. Two per cent those on Level 2 or 3 changed due to COVID-19 compared to less than 1% of those on Level 4+. Those on Engineering, Construction and Agriculture apprenticeships were all more likely to change employer due to COVID-19 (3% each area).

Figure 4-6: Apprenticeships who changed employer by level and subject area



Base: Current apprentices and recent completers (4,083). Level 2 (1,238), Level 3 (1,836), Level 4 (288), Level 5 (277), Level 6+ (444). Construction (361), ICT (294), Arts (144), Retail (392), Business (807), Engineering (582), Leisure (227), Health (673), Agriculture (254). *Base for Arts and Science recent completers <50 so not shown in chart. Education less than 1% on all measures so not shown.

5. Quality and content of apprenticeships

This chapter examines indicators of quality in apprenticeships, such as the duration, the employment status and hours worked by apprentices. It reports whether apprentices were initially assessed in English and maths, and if they studied towards English and maths qualifications during their apprenticeship.

This chapter also covers the types of training apprentices received and who delivered this.

Key findings

- **On average learners reported that their apprenticeships were intended to last just under two years (22 months).** The intended length varied by level; Level 6+ apprenticeships were due to last almost three years (35 months), whereas Level 2 apprenticeships, compared with 16 months for Level 2 apprenticeships.
- A small proportion of all apprenticeships (2%) were reported as not intended to last the minimum 12 months. There was no significant difference between apprentices on frameworks and standards (3% and 2%)
- **Current apprenticeships were typically longer than those which had completed (24 months, compared with 18 months on average). The new apprenticeship standards were on average two months longer than framework apprenticeships.** Compared to 2018-19 the average length had increased by two months amongst current apprentices and three months amongst longer-term completers. These changes, a continuation of the trend for longer apprenticeships over recent years, is partly a reflection of the shift to higher level apprenticeships which are typically longer.
- **Four-in five apprentices (80%) felt the intended duration of their apprenticeship was about right to provide them with the required skills.** Those currently undertaking apprenticeship standards were less likely to think that the length was too short (6% compared to 14% of current framework apprenticeships).
- **Leisure and Health apprentices were particularly likely to perceive their apprenticeships to be too long (18% and 16%), as were those who had completed the new standard apprenticeships (17% compared to 13% of framework completers).**
- **Just over three-quarters (77%) of apprentices had permanent contracts,** dropping to 60% of those who had been recruited for apprenticeships and 62% of those under 19 years old.

- **Most apprentices (89%) worked at least 30 hours a week during their apprenticeship, averaging 37 hours.** Level 2 and 3 apprentices were three times as likely to work particularly low or high hours (under 30 or over 40) than those on other levels. Education, Leisure, female and older apprentices typically worked fewer hours.
- **For both current apprentices and longer-term completers, the average number of hours worked has increased since 2015.** Both groups saw their average hours increase from 35 hours per week to 37 hours per week in 2021.
- **Three-quarters (77%) of apprentices had initial assessments to check both their English and maths abilities.** This was higher among those on standards (79%) than frameworks (72%), and among those doing Higher apprenticeships at Level 4 or 5 apprenticeships (82%, compared to 74% doing Level 6+ apprenticeships and 77% at Level 2 or 3). Those studying Construction were less likely to have been assessed for both (60%). Assessments were most commonly carried out solely by a training provider (for 63% of those assessed).
- **Overall, 13% of apprentices studied towards English qualifications and 16% towards maths qualifications during their apprenticeships.** A third (33%) said they undertook Level 2 learning or training in English or maths.
- **The proportion of apprentices studying for English and maths qualifications had markedly dropped amongst both current apprentices and longer-term completers.**²⁶ In 2021, only 16% of longer-term completers studied for an English qualification in 2021 compared to 31% in 2018-19. While reductions amongst current apprentices may reflect difficulties accessing such learning (and the suspension of requirements) during COVID-19, longer-term completers had finished before these changes.
- **Level 2 apprenticeships were most likely to involve study for English (30%) and / or maths qualifications (35%).** Apprentices in Retail and Health were particularly likely to have studied towards English (28% and 27%) and / or maths (38% and 33%) qualifications.
- **Four-fifths (81%) of apprenticeships involved training or learning delivered by employers within normal working hours.** Learning or training from a college or external provider within normal working hours was also common (undertaken by 70%).

²⁶ It should be noted that there was a change to the base definition for this question in 2021 which means any comparisons should be treated with caution. This is discussed in further detail in the [Changes Over Time](#) section.

Duration of apprenticeships

Apprentices were read the intended apprenticeship duration as indicated on the ILR and asked if this was correct, and if not were asked what the intended duration was. It should be noted there is a mandatory requirement for apprenticeship training to last at least 12 months. This section is based on the time the apprenticeship was meant to take, not (for completers) the time it actually took to complete it.

On average apprenticeships were expected to last 22 months. A third (33%) of apprenticeships were expected to last two years or longer.

Expected duration increased with apprenticeship level, from 16 months on average at Level 2, to 20 to 23 months at Levels 3-5 and 35 months at Level 6+ (30 months for non-degree and 37 months for Degree apprenticeships), as shown in Table 5-1.

Reflecting the variation in intended duration by level, current apprentices (who were more likely to be doing higher level apprenticeships, as reported in [Chapter 2](#)) expected their apprenticeships to be longer (a 24 month average) than either recent or longer-term completers (19 and 18 months respectively). This is not due to any pauses in training amongst current apprentices, indeed those who experienced a pause had a shorter expected duration of 19 months on average.²⁷

Similarly, Science (36 months average) and Engineering apprentices (31 months) apprentices (who were also more likely than average to be doing higher level apprenticeships, as reported in [Annex A](#)) reported the longest intended durations. Around half of Science (52%) and Engineering (46%) apprenticeships were expected to last over three years. Apart from Construction (29 months average) and Agriculture (23 months) apprenticeships in all other sectors had average durations of between 15 and 19 months, with at least 70% expected to last over one year but less than two.

²⁷ Pauses due to COVID-19 should not affect the intended duration figures. Learners were asked to report how long their apprenticeship was 'officially meant to take', not how long it actually took or will take to complete.

Table 5-1: Average intended duration of apprenticeships by level and subject area

	Average length (months)	Less than 12 months (%)	12 to 23 months (%)	24 to 35 months (%)	More than 35 months (%)	Base (all who gave a duration)
ALL	22	2	64	19	15	5,112
Level 2	16	4*	79*	16*	1*	1,691
Level 3	23	2	66	12*	20*	2,311
Level 4	20	1	72*	23*	4*	334
Level 5	21	<0.5*	63	33*	4*	307
Level 6+ (non-degree)	30	0	19*	44*	37*	95
Degree	37	<0.5*	10*	42*	48*	374
Science	36	0	20*	28	52	72
Engineering	31	1	30*	23*	46*	728
Construction	29	1	33*	40*	26*	438
Agriculture	23	2	58*	31*	9*	313
Business	19	2	71*	20	7*	1,005
ICT	19	2	80*	8*	10*	377
Health	18	2	80*	14*	3*	810
Education	17	1	88*	10*	0*	328
Retail	16	5*	83*	10*	1	523
Arts	16	1	89*	7*	3*	190
Leisure	15	4*	91*	5*	<0.5*	296

* highlights where proportional results are significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

The newer apprenticeship standards had a slightly, but statistically significant, longer durations than apprenticeship frameworks (22 months versus 20): 16% of apprenticeship standards were expected to last at least 36 months compared to 11% of apprenticeship frameworks. This reflects that the apprenticeships frameworks were more likely to be at lower levels as reported in [Annex A](#).

Male apprentices were more likely to report longer apprenticeships (an average expected duration of 24 months compared to 19 months for female apprentices), partly reflecting their likelihood to have undertaken traditional apprenticeships such as Construction or Engineering which typically last longer.

Older apprentices typically had shorter apprenticeships than younger (19 months average for those aged 25 or above, 23 months for those aged 19-24, and 25 months for those under 19). Linked to this, those who worked for the same employer before starting their apprenticeship also typically had shorter apprenticeships (20 months average compared to 24 months for those who were recruited to do the apprenticeship). These differences are despite older apprentices and those who were already with their employer being more likely to be doing or to have done Higher or Degree Apprenticeships which are usually longer.

Overall, 2% of apprentices indicated that their apprenticeship was intended to last less than the required minimum of 12 months. No information was collected in the survey for reasons why these apprenticeships were not meeting the 12 month requirement. The percentage that indicated their apprenticeship was intended to last less than 12 months was consistent across current apprentices, recent and longer-term completers, as well as those on standards and those on frameworks (all 2-3%). Apprenticeships which did not meet the minimum duration standard of 12 months were on average expected to run for eight months. Less than 1% reported an intended duration of under six months. Shorter intended durations of under 12 months were more commonly reported at Level 2 (4%) and for Retail (5%) and Leisure (4%) apprenticeships. Those whose apprenticeship was paused at the time of research (7%) and / or had their training paused for more than six months at some point (6%) were also particularly likely to report an expected duration of under 12 months.

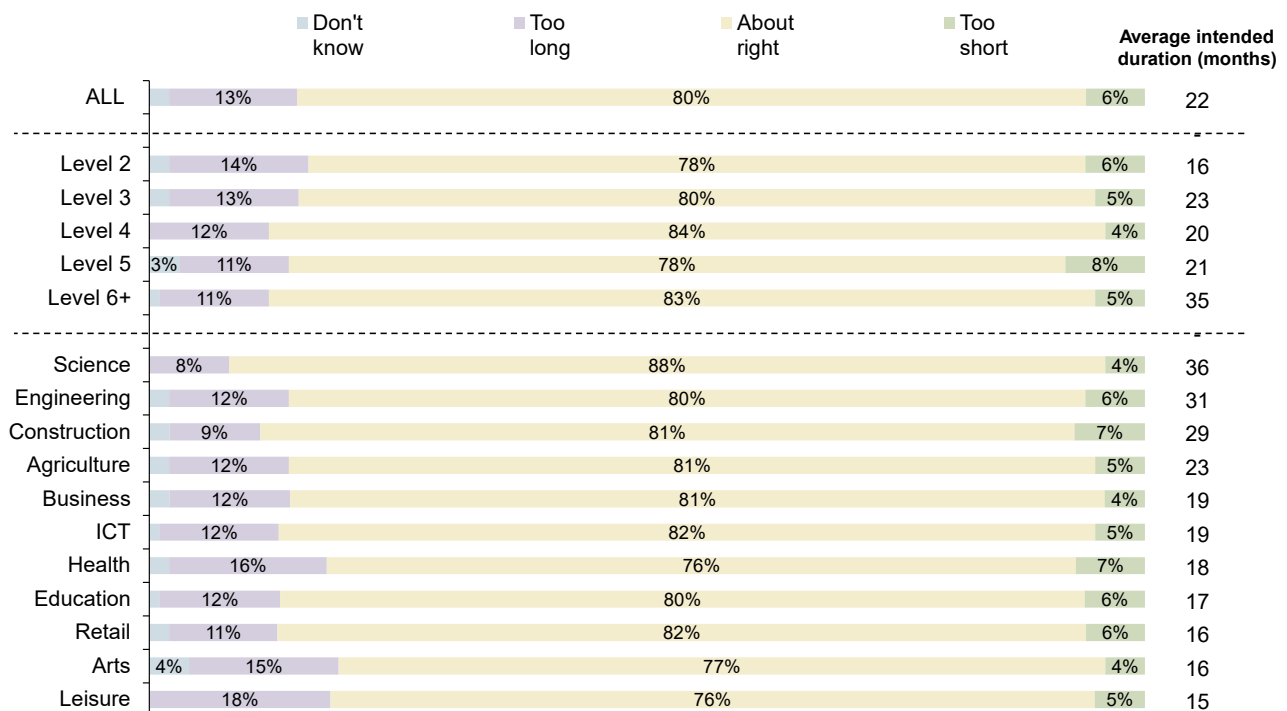
Appropriateness of duration

The majority of apprentices (80%) who were able to confirm the expected duration of their apprenticeship felt the intended duration of their apprenticeship was about right to acquire the skills they needed. Only 6% felt it was too short, whilst 13% felt it was too long.

Apprenticeships expected to last 36 months or longer were more likely to be thought about the right length (84%, whereas only 2% felt this length too short). Amongst those reporting an apprenticeship expected to last less than 12 months 13% (twice the average level) felt them too short.

Despite the variation in duration by apprenticeship level and subject area reported above, there was relatively little divergence in views based on these factors – the level of skills needed to achieve each level appeared generally well-matched to the duration. Leisure and Health apprentices were the most likely to feel their apprenticeships were too long (18% and 16% compared to 13% overall) despite these apprenticeships having shorter durations than average (15 and 18 months respectively), as shown in Figure 5-1.

Figure 5-1: Whether intended duration is sufficient to acquire required skills by level and subject area



Base All apprentices for whom the intended length of apprenticeship is known (4,950): Level 2 (1,627), Level 3 (2,237), Level 4 (330), Level 5 (302), Level 6+ (454), Science (72), Engineering (701), Construction (427), Agriculture (304), Business (980), ICT (367), Health (778), Education (323), Retail (504), Arts (183), Leisure (280). Subject areas in order of average intended duration.

Amongst current apprentices, those on an apprenticeship framework were more likely to feel they were too short than those on an apprenticeship standard (14% compared to 6%), despite having the similar average durations (both 24 months).

Those whose apprenticeship was paused at the time of research were more likely to feel it was too short compared to those who had not experienced any pauses (15% and 5% respectively). This also reflects that those with paused apprenticeships reported shorter durations on average.

Apprentices with a disability or learning difficulty were more likely to feel their apprenticeship was too short (11% compared to 5% of other apprentices). As they were no more likely to have undertaken shorter apprenticeships this may signal the need for additional support or time for these learners to reach the required skill levels.

The typically longer apprenticeships standards were more likely to be thought too long amongst completers (17% compared to 13% of framework completers), though the majority (78%) considered them about right.

Older apprentices were more likely to report their apprenticeship too long (15% of those aged 25 or above and 13% of 19-24-year-olds, compared with 9% of under 19s). This is despite older age groups typically doing shorter apprenticeships.

Employment status during apprenticeships

Almost all apprentices (95%) recalled having a written contract of employment with their employer. There was no difference in prevalence of written contracts between those who were existing employees for their employer prior to their apprenticeship and those who were not.

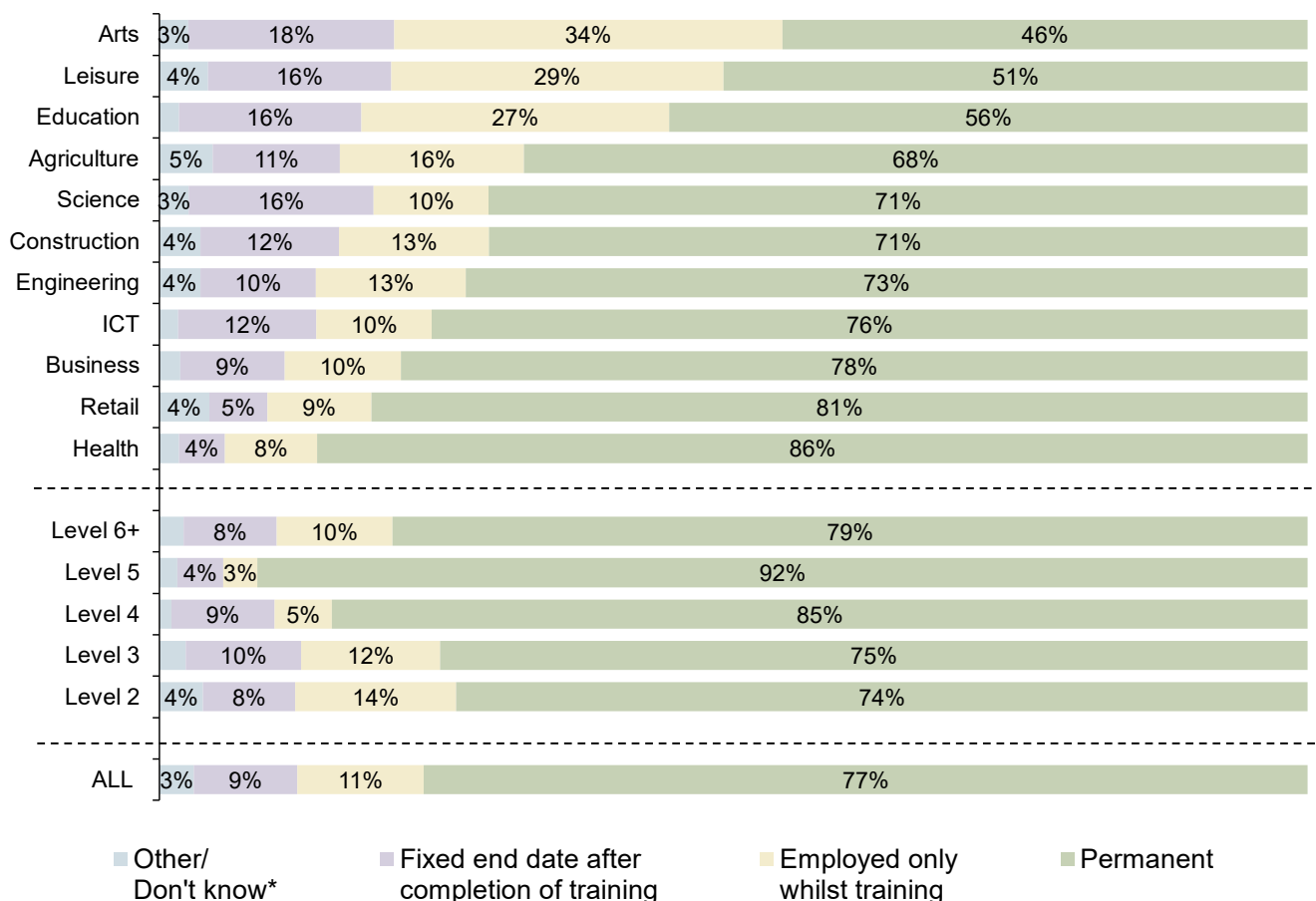
Written contracts were less common for apprentices at Level 2 (92% compared to at least 96% of those at higher levels), those under the age of 19 (92%), and those doing apprenticeships in Agriculture (90% of apprentices), Construction (91%) or Retail (91%).

Amongst current apprentices, those earning less than £9 an hour were less likely to have written contracts (92%), as were those who had changed employers during the apprenticeship (88%).

Around three-quarters (77%) of apprentices were employed on a permanent basis with no fixed end point during their apprenticeship. The remainder were relatively evenly split between those who had a fixed end date for their employment after the date they expected to complete their training (9%) and those who were employed for the duration of their training only (11%). Permanent contracts were more common amongst those who had been working for the same employer before starting their apprenticeship (91% compared to 60% of those who had not).

Permanent contracts were particularly likely for Level 4 and 5 apprenticeships (88%, compared to 75% of Level 2 and 3, and 79% of Level 6+ apprenticeships), as shown in Figure 5-2.

Figure 5-2: Contract type during apprenticeship by level and subject area



Base All apprentices (5,122): Level 2 (1,695), Level 3 (2,316), Level 4 (334), Level 5 (308), Level 6+ (469), Health (811), Retail (523), Business (1,006), ICT (377), Engineering (732), Construction (438), Science (72), Agriculture (313), Education (331), Leisure (297) Arts (190). Subject areas in order of those most likely to have a permanent contract.

There was considerable variation by subject area. Those undertaking Arts, Leisure and Education apprenticeships were more likely to have been employed only for the duration of their training (34%, 29%, and 27% respectively)

Older apprentices aged 25 or above were far more likely to have a permanent contract (91% compared to 71% of those aged 19 to 24 and 62% of those under 19). A fifth (20%) of those under 19 were employed only for the duration of their training.

Apprentices with a disability or learning difficulty were less likely to have a permanent contract (67%, compared to 78% with neither of these). Those who had been classed as NEET prior to their apprenticeship were half as likely as average to have a permanent contract (39%).

Amongst current apprentices, the likelihood of a permanent contract increased with pay. From 49% of those who earned less than £4.30 per hour to 85% of those who earned at least £9 per hour.

Working hours during apprenticeships

Apprentices were contracted to work (or if they did not have a written contract, usually worked) an average of 37 hours per week. This included time spent learning or training onsite or off-site during the hours they were usually paid for, but excludes meal breaks and paid overtime. Almost nine out of ten (89%) apprentices worked more than 30 hours a week. There was little difference in working hours between current apprentices, recent or longer-term completers and those on either standard or framework apprenticeships.

Longer duration apprenticeships tended to involve working more hours, a mean of 39 hours for those expected to last three years or more compared to 37 hours for those expected to last less than two years. Only 5% of those with apprenticeships which were expected to last two years or longer worked 30 hours or under per week on average compared to 13% of those with shorter actual or expected apprenticeship durations.

Average mean working hours were consistent across all levels, as shown in Table 5-2. However, this hides the fact that Level 2 and 3 apprentices were more likely to work particularly low or high hours – 13% worked less than 30 hours (compared to 4% of those on higher levels) whilst 11% worked over 40 hours (again compared to 4% of those on higher levels). Nearly all (92%) of those on Level 4 or above typically worked 31 to 40 hours a week compared to three-quarters (76%) of those at Level 2 or 3.

Apprentices who undertook Engineering, Construction or Agriculture apprenticeships typically worked the most hours (means of 40, 39 and 39 hours respectively per week), with 14% in each subject area working over 40 hours. Education (average 34 hours) and Leisure (33 hours) apprenticeships involved fewer working hours. Part-time roles are common in the Leisure sector and COVID-19 restrictions in tourism and hospitality jobs may have impacted hours available. Ten per cent of Leisure apprentices worked 20 hours or less on average per week, and 2% had zero hours contracts.

Table 5-2: Average hours contracted or usually worked during apprenticeships by level and subject area

	Average hours (per week)	Zero hours contract (%)	11 to 20 hours (%)	21 to 30 hours (%)	31 to 40 hours (%)	More than 40 hours (%)	Base (all who gave hours)
ALL	37	<0.5	2	8	80	9	4,970
Level 2	37	1*	4*	13*	71*	11*	1,640
Level 3	38	<0.5	2	8	79	10*	2,244
Level 4	38	0	1*	2*	92*	5*	327
Level 5	38	0	1	4*	90*	5*	303
Level 6+ (non-degree)	37	0	<0.5	0*	100*	<0.5*	90
Degree	38	0	0*	5*	92*	3*	366
Engineering	40	0	<0.5*	1*	84*	14*	711
Construction	39	<0.5	0*	1*	85*	14*	427
Agriculture	39	0	0*	8	78	14*	303
Science	38	0	0	6	90*	3	72
ICT	38	0	<0.5*	2*	95*	3*	368
Business	37	0	1*	6*	88*	5*	983
Arts	36	0	4*	12	79	4*	187
Health	36	1*	4*	15*	72*	9	794
Retail	36	1	6*	19*	60*	13*	506
Education	34	0	3	22*	74*	1*	318
Leisure	33	2*	10*	27*	56*	5*	269

* highlights where proportional results are significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

Older apprentices were more likely work to 30 hours or less: 15% of those 25 or older worked these hours compared with 6% of those aged 19 to 24, and 8% of those under 19. Overall though there was little difference by age in the mean hours worked per week (37 to 38 hours for each of these age groups).

Female apprentices were similarly more likely to work 30 hours or fewer (17% compared to 4% of male apprentices). On average female apprentices worked 36 hours per week compared to 39 for males.

Pay during apprenticeships

Current apprentices reported a median gross hourly pay of £9.98 an hour.²⁸ As Table 5-3 shows, pay increased with the level of apprenticeship, ranging from £8.23 an hour among Level 2 apprentices, to £13.84 among Degree apprentices and £15.11 an hour among Level 6+ non-degree apprentices. This may be in part related to the age of apprentices, with those aged 25 or over earning substantially more than their counterparts (median gross hourly pay of £12.23, compared with £9.52 among those aged between 19 and 24 and £6.58 among those aged under 19).

By sector subject area, pay levels were highest in Business (£12.73 an hour) and ICT (£11.64) and lowest in the Leisure sector (£6.56). Those undertaking apprenticeship standards reported higher pay levels than those undertaking apprenticeship frameworks (£10.02 an hour vs. £9.12).

A slight majority reported earning £9 or more an hour (54%) and a third (34%) earned less than £9 an hour (the remaining 12% could not provide an exact or banded pay figure.²⁹ More information on apprenticeship pay, including further analysis of the AEvS data, can be found in the Low Pay Commission's report [here](#).³⁰

²⁸ Results are based on those for whom it was possible to derive gross hourly pay data (1,957 respondents). A specific pay weight was applied to this data to account for non-response. More information about how this figure was calculated can be found in the Technical Report.

²⁹ In contrast with the median gross hourly pay data above, this also included respondents who were unable to provide the required data to calculate an exact gross hourly pay figure, but were able to choose from a set of banded pay options. The standard survey weight is applied to this data as it is based on all current apprentices.

³⁰ Comparisons cannot be made with the previous Apprenticeship Pay Surveys due to differences in the methodology between the two surveys. Median pay results in the Low Pay Commission's report also differ from those reported in this report, due to the Low Pay Commission excluding cases where the respondent used a payslip before April 2021 to give their pay information.

Table 5-3: Gross hourly pay among current apprentices, by subgroup

	Base	Median gross hourly pay
All	1,957	£9.98
Level 2	493	£8.23
Level 3	878	£9.09
Level 4	151	£12.51
Level 5	148	£13.00
Level 6+ (non-degree)	55	£15.11
Level 6+ (Degree)	232	£13.84
Agriculture	116	£8.00
Arts	66	£8.70
Business	369	£12.73
Construction	191	£8.96
Education	112	£8.83
Engineering	313	£9.12
Health	315	£9.46
ICT	137	£11.64
Leisure	89	£6.56
Retail	188	£9.09
White	1,679	£9.89
BAME	277	£10.83
Disability or learning difficulty	158	£9.36
Neither a disability nor learning difficulty	1,797	£10.00

Base: All of those for whom it was possible to derive a gross hourly pay figure. Note – Science is not shown due to a low base size (36).

Initial assessments undertaken of learners prior to starting their apprenticeships

Around seven in eight apprentices (86%) were initially assessed, 79% to check their ability in maths, 78% in English, 46% for other relevant prior qualifications and 24% for other relevant prior learning. The majority (79%) of those who were assessed for other relevant prior *learning* were also assessed for other relevant prior *qualifications*.

Overall, just over three-quarters (77%) were assessed to check both their English and maths abilities. Current apprentices and recent completers were more likely than longer-term completers to have received assessments in both English and maths (79% and 77% vs. 72%). Apprenticeship standards were more likely to have involved both English and maths being assessed than framework apprenticeships (79% compared to 72%). This represents a fall from the percentages studying maths and English qualifications in 2018-19, discussed in further detail in the [Changes over Time](#) section below.

Those who were doing Higher apprenticeships were more likely to have received assessments in both English and maths (82% compared to 74% of Level 2, 78% of Level 3 and 73% of Level 6+ apprentices).

Health apprentices were the most likely to have had both their English and maths abilities assessed (84%), whilst Construction apprentices were the least likely (60%). Between 72% and 78% of apprentices in all other subject areas were assessed in both English and maths.

Demographically, those apprentices less likely to have been assessed in both English and maths were

- Younger (70% of those under 19 and to 73% of those aged 19 to 24 compared to 84% of those aged 25 or above).
- Male (75% compared to 80% of females)
- White (76% compared to 85% of BAME apprentices)
- Those with a learning difficulty (69% compared to 77% overall).

Table 5-4: Assessment of English, maths and other relevant prior learning or qualifications by level, subject area and age

<i>Row percentages</i>	Any assessment (English or maths abilities, other relevant prior learning or qualifications)	Assessment of English and maths abilities	<i>Base (all)</i>
ALL	86	77	5,112
Level 2	84*	74*	1,695
Level 3	86	78	2,316
Level 4	93*	83*	334
Level 5	91*	81	308
Level 6+ (non-degree)	87	76	95
Degree	84	71*	374
Health	92*	84*	811
Business	89*	78	1006
Agriculture	86	76	313
Arts	85	76	190
Education	85	72*	331
Leisure	84	77	297
Retail	84	75	523
Engineering	83*	75	732
ICT	83	77	377
Science	82	74	72
Construction	73*	60*	438
Aged under 19	81*	70*	1,486
Aged 19 to 24	85*	73*	1,575
Aged 25 or older	90*	84*	2,061

* highlights where proportional results are significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

Assessments were usually carried out solely by the training provider (for 63% of those assessed); a further 27% said their assessments had been carried out by both employer and training provider. A small minority (8%) reported they had only been assessed by their employer.

Amongst those who had been assessed there were some differences in approach by subject area: Retail apprentices were particularly likely to have been assessed only by a training provider (72% compared to 63% overall), Science apprentices were particularly likely to have been assessed by both their employer and a training provider (42% compared to 27% overall), whilst Engineering apprentices were particularly likely to have been assessed only by their employer (13% compared to 8% overall).

English and maths qualifications

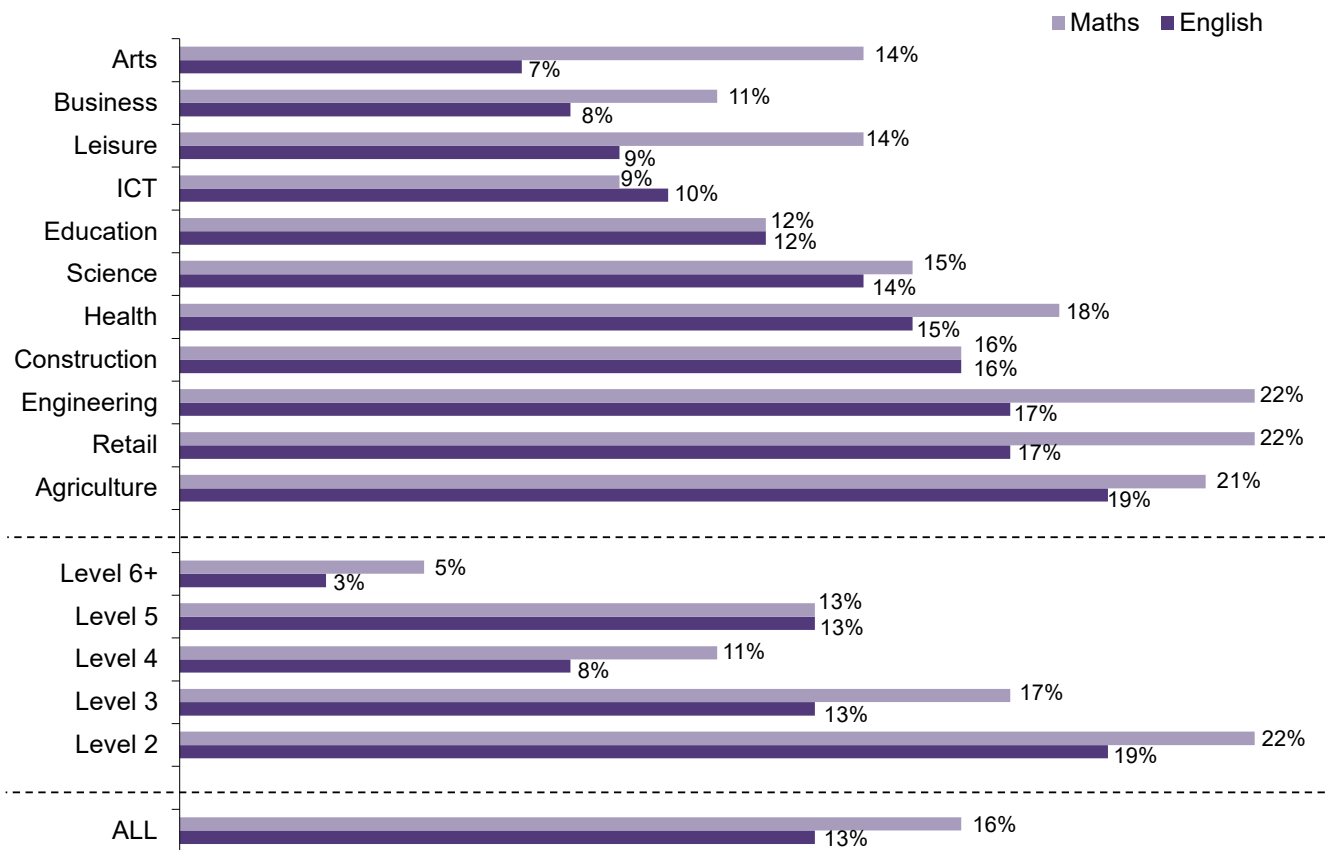
Apprentices were asked if they had or were currently studying for an English or maths qualification as part of their apprenticeship.

Among completers, around one in six had studied English (16%) and maths (18%) with no significant difference between recent and longer-term completers. In comparison, slightly fewer current apprentices said they were studying for an English (12%) or maths qualification (15%) as part of their apprenticeship. This may partly reflect the fact that the requirement for Level 2 apprentices to work towards Level 2 English and maths was temporarily suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic, to allow apprentices to concentrate on achieving a Level 1 in these subjects and the occupational requirements of the apprenticeship.

Among all apprentices (i.e., combining current and completers), 13% had or were currently studying an English qualification as part of their apprenticeship and 16% had or were studying a maths qualification, as shown in Figure 5-3. Likelihood decreased with level: for English from 19% of Level 2 apprentices to 3% of Level 6+, for maths from 22% of Level 2 to 5% of Level 6+ apprentices.

Engineering, Retail and Agriculture apprentices were particularly likely to have studied either subject: English (17%, 17% and 19% respectively), maths (22%, 22% and 21% respectively). Business (8% English and 11% maths) and ICT (10% English and 9% maths) were lower than average for both subjects, Arts was lower than average for English (7%) and Education lower for maths (12%).

Figure 5-3: Proportion of apprenticeships which involved study towards English and / or maths qualifications



Base: All apprentices (5,122): Level 2 (1,695), Level 3 (2,316), Level 4 (334), Level 5 (308), Level 6+ (469), Agriculture (313), Retail (523), Engineering (732), Construction (438), Health (811), Science (72), Education (331), ICT (377), Leisure (297), Business (1,006), Arts (151). Subject areas in order of those most likely to have studied towards an English qualification.

Those on the apprenticeship standards were less likely to have studied for either subject than those on apprenticeships frameworks: this applies both for completers and particularly current apprentices. Among current apprentices on frameworks, 19% were studying for an English qualification and 22% for a maths qualification, higher than the proportion among those on apprenticeship standards 11% and 15% respectively).

Apprentices who worked for their employer before starting their apprenticeship were more likely to have studied towards English and / or maths qualifications (16% English and 18% maths compared to 10% and 14%).

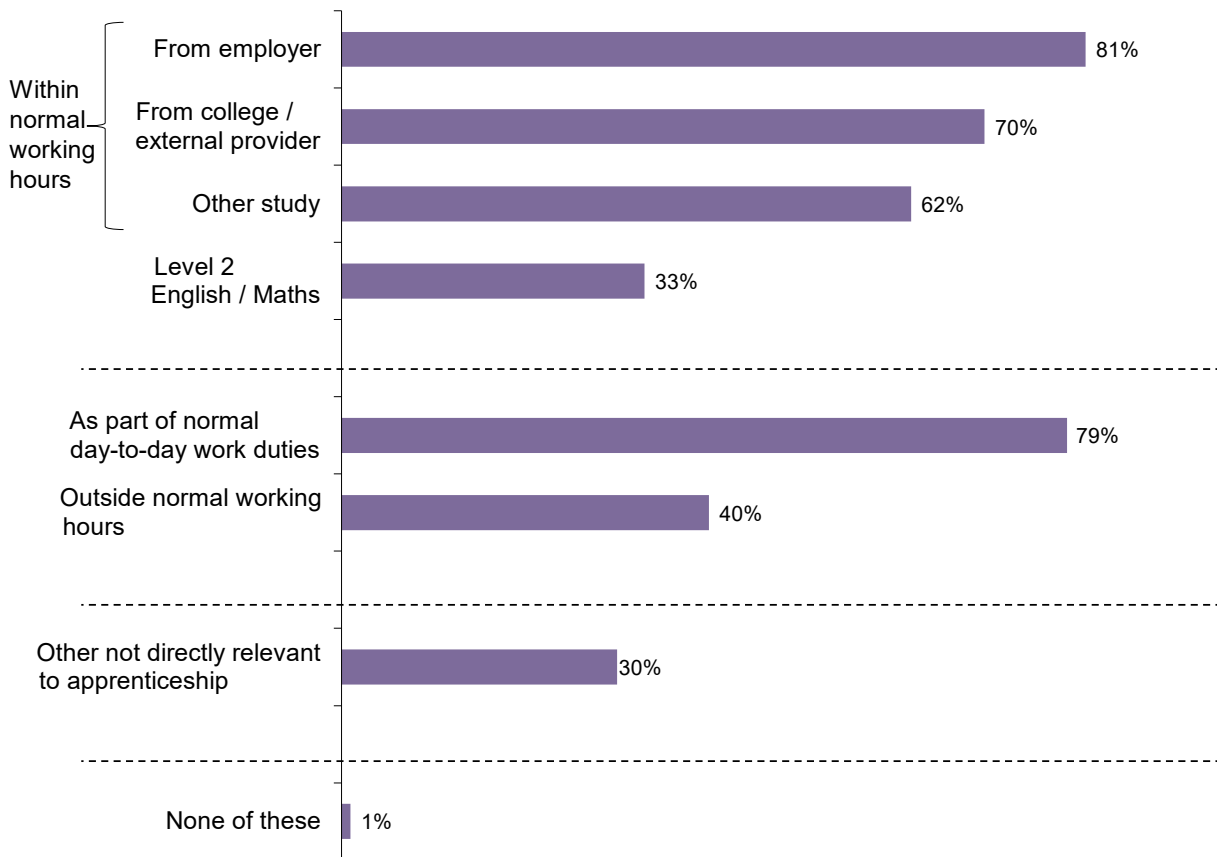
In terms of demographics, the apprentices who were more likely to have studied towards English and / or maths qualifications included those who were:

- Black or Black British (22% English and 24% maths)
- Aged 25 or above (18% English and 21% maths, compared to 8% / 11% of those aged 19 to 24 and 11% / 16% of those under 19)
- With a disability or learning difficulty (19% English and 21% maths)
- In London (17% studying for an English qualification).

The types of training received during apprenticeships

Apprentices were asked about the types of training they had received during their apprenticeship. The categories of training covered differed somewhat from those used in the 2018-19 study and focussed on those needed to assess off-the-job learning hours as defined for the 20% minimum off-the-job training requirement (see [Chapter 6](#) for these results). These categories covered both who delivered the training (a college or training provider, or the employer), whether it took place in normal working hours or not, whether any was not directly relevant to the apprenticeship, and whether or not it took place as part of normal day-to-day work duties. Figure 5-4 summarises results.

Figure 5-4: Type of training and learning undertaken during apprenticeship (prompted)



Base: All apprentices (5,122). Don't know excluded, less than 1%.

Given that some forms of training may not have taken place for current apprentices, it might be expected that they would have been less likely to have undertaken specific forms of training. However differences between current apprentices and completers were and where they existed, training was more often reported by current learners than completers. The one exception was Level 2 maths or English learning or training, reported by more completers (36%) than current apprentices (31%).

The training or learning most commonly undertaken during apprenticeships (by 81%) was delivered by employers within normal working hours including training sessions, job shadowing or mentoring.

Learning or training from a college or training provider such as classes, workshops, lectures, or webinars and undertaken within normal working hours was also common (undertaken by 70%).

Most apprentices (62%) had also had study or learning time during their working hours, such as assignments, self-assessments or exam revision.

Level 6+ apprenticeships were more likely than average to have involved learning or training in their normal working hours from the employer (87%) or training provider (86%), or other study or learning time (79%), and less likely to have involved receiving Level 2 maths or English learning (10%). This pattern was even more prominent amongst Level 6+ non-degree apprentices. Almost all (92%) Level 6+ non-degree apprentices received training from their employer and from their training provider (90%), compared with 84% and 86% respectively for degree-level apprentices. Level 6+ non-degree apprentices were also much less likely to have received Level 2 maths or English learning (4% vs. 12% of degree apprentices).

The reverse pattern was true for Level 2 apprentices: they were less likely than average to have received learning or training from the employer (79%) or training provider (63%), or other study or learning time (52%), but far more likely to have received Level 2 maths or English learning (43%).

There were also wide differences by sector subject area, particularly in relation to learning or training from a college or training provider (that takes place in normal working hours). Around four-fifths of those undertaking apprenticeships in Construction (83%), Engineering (82%), Agriculture (81%), Arts (79%) and ICT (79%) had received such training, compared with around three-fifths in Education (62%), Leisure (60%), Retail (59%) and Health (55%).

Table 5-5: Main types of learning and training undertaken during apprenticeships, by level

<i>Row percentages</i>	Within normal working hours: From employer	Within normal working hours: From college / training provider	Within normal working hours: Other study	Level 2 English / maths	Base (all)
ALL	81	70	62	33	5,112
Level 2	79*	63*	52*	43*	1,695
Level 3	82	70	62	34	2,316
Level 4	79	78*	69*	26*	334
Level 5	79	72	66	25*	308
Level 6 (non-degree)	90*	92*	76*	4*	95
Degree	86*	84*	80*	12*	374

* highlights where proportional results are significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

Male apprentices were more likely to have undertaken learning or training with a college or training provider (76% compared to 64% of females). This relates to sector subject area as male apprentices comprised the vast majority of some subject areas where college and external training was more common (particularly Construction and Engineering), and a low proportion of some subject areas where this training was less common (especially Health and Education).

Younger apprentices were more likely to have received training or learning from their employer (86% of under 19s and 82% of those 19 to 24, compared to 77% of those aged 25 or above) and / or from a college or training provider (78% of those under 19 and 74% of those 19 to 24 vs. 63% of those aged 25 or above).

Black or Black British apprentices were particularly likely to have received training from their employer (88% compared to 81% of White apprentices), whilst Asian or Asian British apprentices were particularly likely to have received training from a training provider (78% compared to 71% of White apprentices and just 58% of Black or Black British apprentices).

There were no differences between those on apprenticeship standards or frameworks in terms of receiving training or learning from their employer or a training provider but those on standards were more likely to have been given time for other study or learning (63% compared to 56% among those on frameworks), and less likely to have received Level 2 maths or English training (31% vs. 38% respectively).

A third (33%) had studied for Level 2 English or maths. This was more common for lower level apprentices (43% of Level 2 and 34% of Level 3 apprentices), Retail and Health apprentices (47% and 42%) and older apprentices (41% of over 25s).

Four out of five apprentices (79%) reported receiving training as part of their normal day-to-day work duties. Its likelihood increased with level, from 74% of Level 2, 78% Level 3 and 81% of Level 4 apprentices, to 87% Level 5 and 86% of Level 6+ apprentices. This on-the-job training was particularly common for those undertaking Arts (83%), Agriculture (83%), Health (82%), Science (82%) or Business apprenticeships (81%), but less common for those on Leisure apprenticeships (69%).

A sizeable minority of apprentices undertook other learning or training not directly relevant to their apprenticeship (30%) and / or undertook learning or training outside of their working hours (40%). Both were less common among Level 2 apprentices (22% and 37% respectively).

Only 1% of apprenticeships reported not undertaking any of the types of training discussed, rising to 3% of current framework apprenticeships and 4% of Leisure apprenticeships. Flagging potential quality issues, 5% of apprentices whose apprenticeship was expected to last less than the minimum 12 months and 10% of those

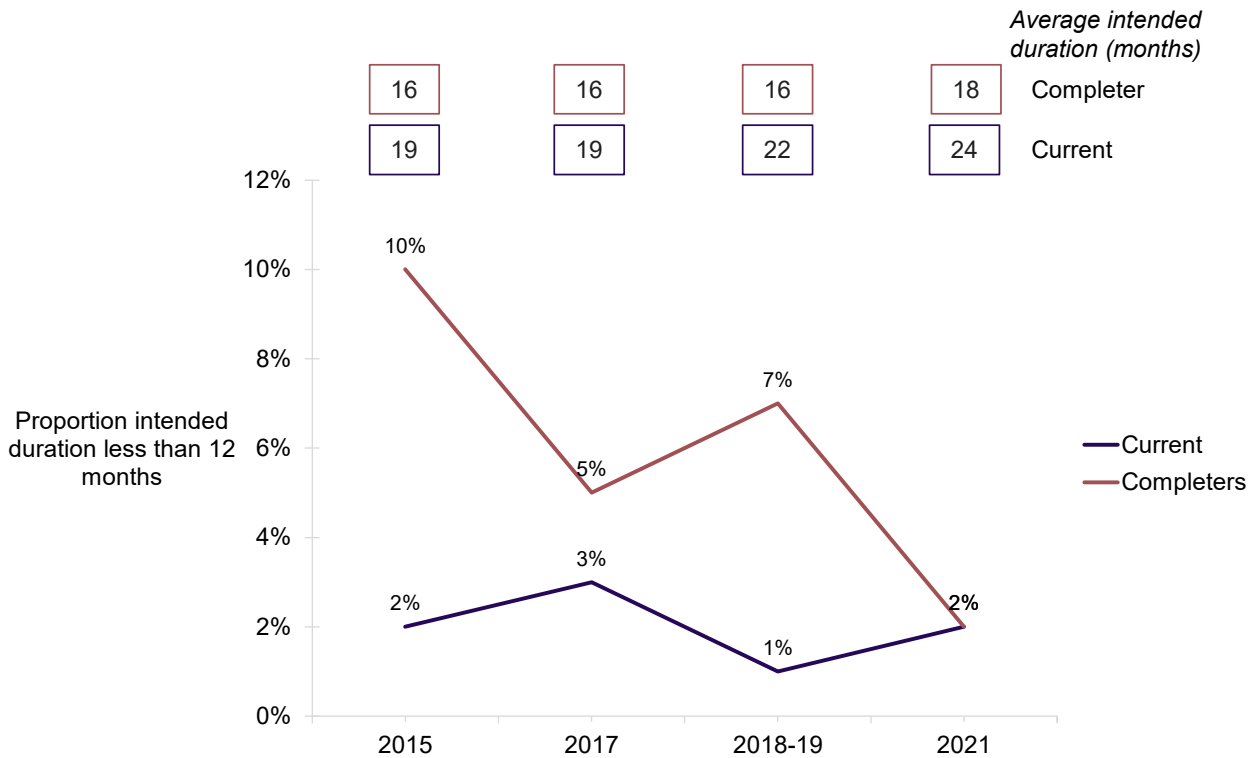
unemployed at the time of research reported their apprenticeship had not involved any training activities.

Changes over time

As shown in Figure 5-5, in 2021 the average intended apprenticeship duration had increased from previous years for both current apprentices (24 months vs. 22 months in 2018-19) and longer-term completers (18 months vs. 16 months in 2018-19). The proportion of completed apprenticeships with an intended duration of less than 12 months has decreased since 2018-19 (2% vs. 7%), though there was no significant change among current apprentices where the proportion reporting this remained at low levels. Going back to 2015, 10% of longer-term completers had an expected apprenticeship duration of less than 12 months.

A significant reduction was seen in the proportion of framework completers with an intended duration of less than 12 months (7% in 2018-19 vs. 3% in 2021). The proportion of current apprentices on frameworks with a duration of less than 12 months has remained stable (2% in 2018-19 and 2021), whereas the proportion of current apprentices on standards with an intended duration of less than 12 months has risen slightly from <0.5% 2018-19 to 2% in 2021.

Figure 5-5: Changes over time in average intended duration of apprenticeships and proportion under 12 months



Base All apprentices for whom intended length of apprenticeship was known: Completed (2015, 2455; 2017, 2760; 2018-19 1575; 2021, 1039), Current (2015, 1885; 2017, 2424; 2018-19, 2353; 2021, 3039)

In 2021, apprentices were more likely than in the previous 2018-19 survey to think that the intended duration of their apprenticeship was appropriate to provide the required skills (80% of both current apprentices and longer-term completers, compared to 77% and 76% respectively in 2018-19). This was due to fewer apprentices feeling the apprenticeship was too long, with a fall of three percentage points between 2018-19 and 2021 for both current apprentices (11% vs. 14%) and longer-term completers (16% vs. 19%). This represents a return in 2021 to the level of satisfaction seen in 2017 (when 82% of current and 79% of longer-term completers felt the length of apprenticeship was adequate to acquire the skills needed).

In 2021, current apprentices on standards were *more* likely than those on frameworks to feel the intended duration was adequate (80% vs. 73%), a change from the 2018-19 survey in which current apprentices on standards were *less* likely think the duration was adequate (75% vs. 79% of those on frameworks).

There were increases in the proportion of apprentices with a written contract compared with previous years (95% of both current apprentices and longer-term completers in 2021, compared with 91% and 92% respectively in 2018-19, and 90% and 89% respectively in 2017). In 2018-19, current apprentices on standards were significantly more likely to have a written contract than those on frameworks (93% vs 89%); this difference was no longer seen in 2021 (95% vs. 94%).

There were no significant changes in the proportions of apprentices employed on permanent contracts since 2018-19, though the proportion had increased since 2017 among current apprentices (77% vs. 72% in 2017 and 74% in 2015).

The average number of hours worked a week among current apprentices in 2021 was unchanged from 2018-19 at 37 hours per week and had risen slightly from 36 to 37 hours a week amongst longer-term completers. However, this reflects an increase in hours worked across both groups from 2015 when both current learners and completers reported working an average of 35 hours per week.

In 2021, 72% of current learners and 70% of longer-term completers received an initial assessment in maths or English, compared with 77% of both current apprentices and longer-term completers in 2018-19. Furthermore, 70% of current apprentices and 66% of longer-term completers received assessments in both English and maths (vs. 74% of current apprentices and longer-term completers in 2018-19). However, it is important to note that there were changes to the question wording and the group of respondents asked this question.³¹ Given these changes, direct comparisons between years should be treated with caution.

The proportion of apprentices who studied towards an English qualification had decreased amongst both current apprentices (12% compared to 20% in 2018-19) and longer-term completers (16% compared to 31% in 2018-19). The pattern is similar for maths qualifications (15% of current apprentices in 2021 compared to 23% in 2018-19, and 19% of longer-term completers in 2021 compared to 32% in 2018-19).

Among both current apprentices and longer-term completers the reductions were most marked among Level 2 and 3 apprentices, those on standards and those who already worked for their employer. While for current apprentices these changes will at least partly reflect the suspension of English and maths study requirements (and difficulties continuing such study) during the COVID-19 pandemic, longer-term completers should

³¹ In the 2021 survey all apprentices were asked, “when you started your apprenticeship, did you receive any initial assessment to check...[list read out]”, whereas in 2018-19 this question was routed just to those who received training from a college or training provider and the question text was “when you started your Apprenticeship, did your *training provider* do an initial assessment to check...[list read out]”. In order to derive a comparable base, the results reported for the 2021 survey in this subsection were first filtered on those who went on to say these assessments were undertaken by a training provider, and then rebased to all respondents.

have completed their apprenticeship by February 2020 before any impact from COVID-19.

It is important to note changes to the survey in 2021 when interpreting these results on studying towards maths and English qualifications. Although the question text remained the same, the base ('all who receiving training from a college or training provider') is derived via different routes, with different definitions in the two surveys.³² Due to these differences, changes between the 2018-19 and 2021 survey should be treated with caution. It is also important to recognise there are some differences in profile between apprentices in 2018-19 and 2021 which may influence likelihood of study; most notably there are fewer current apprentices on Level 2 or 3 in 2021 compared to 2018-19 (69% vs. 79%), who tend to be more likely to study towards maths and English qualifications (though as noted, incidence has fallen among these groups too over time).

³² In 2018-19, the base was derived from a combination of three questions, including those who said they had received training at a training provider; received training from a training provider at their workplace that took place away from usual work activities; or received training from a training provider at their workplace that took place during their usual work activities. In contrast, in 2021, only one question was asked to derive this group (whether had undertook learning or training *from a college or external provider that took place in your normal working hours*). The 2018-19 did not specify that the training needed to take place during normal working hours. In both cases the final results are rebased to all apprentices.

6. Off-the-job training requirement

This chapter specifically examines awareness of the 20% of-the-job training requirement, the amount of off-the-job learning undertaken, and how compliance with the off-the-job training requirement varies by different types of apprenticeship.

Key findings

- Awareness of the minimum 20% off-the-job training requirement has improved over time; 82% of current apprentices and 64% of longer-term completers were aware of it in 2021, compared with 77% and 55% respectively in 2018-19.
- Awareness generally increased with level, ranging from 68% aware among Level 2 apprentices to 93% aware at Level 6 and above.
- By subject area, awareness was highest in Science and ICT (93% and 92% respectively) and lowest in Leisure and Retail (62% and 65% respectively).
- Approaching half (46%) of apprentices reported receiving compliant levels of off-the-job training; those in Education (33%), Health (38%) and Retail (38%) were least likely to report this. On average, 19% of an apprentice's working hours were spent on off-the-job training.
- Results suggest compliance levels are increasing, with current apprentices and recent completers (49% and 46% respectively) both more likely than longer-term completers (36%) to have met the minimum 20% requirement.
- Despite compliance generally increasing with level, apprentices at Level 4 were more likely than those at Level 5 to report compliant off-the-job training levels (54% vs. 41%).

Awareness of the minimum 20% off-the-job training requirement

As outlined in DfE guidance documents, the apprenticeship funding rules state that to be eligible for government funding, at least 20% of an apprentices' normal working hours over the planned duration of the training period must be spent on off-the-job training.³³

To qualify as 'off-the-job training', training must:

- Be directly relevant to the apprenticeship standard or framework
- Teach new knowledge, skills and behaviours
- Take place within the apprentice's normal working hours
- Take place away from the apprentice's normal work duties (though it may take place at the workplace), and
- Exclude Level 2 English or maths training.³⁴

Overall, more than three-quarters (78%) of apprentices said that they were aware of the requirement for apprentices to spend at least 20% of their contracted hours on off-the-job training. Current apprentices (82%) were more likely to be aware than both recent and longer-term apprenticeship completers (76% and 64% respectively). Growing awareness is also shown by the higher awareness in the current survey of apprentices than in 2018-19, when 77% of current apprentices and 55% of longer-term completers were aware of the requirement. By subject area, among current apprentices, the largest increases in awareness compared with the 2018-19 survey were seen among apprentices in Education (89% vs. 75% in 2018-19) and Health (81% vs. 70%).

Those undertaking apprenticeship standards were more likely to be aware than those undertaking apprenticeship frameworks (81% and 68% respectively); though this is largely influenced by dominance of current apprentices in the apprenticeships standards group (76% vs. 27% of frameworks). However, this pattern still held true, though to a lesser extent, when considering current apprentices alone: 83% of current apprentices on standards were aware of the requirement, compared with 77% on frameworks.

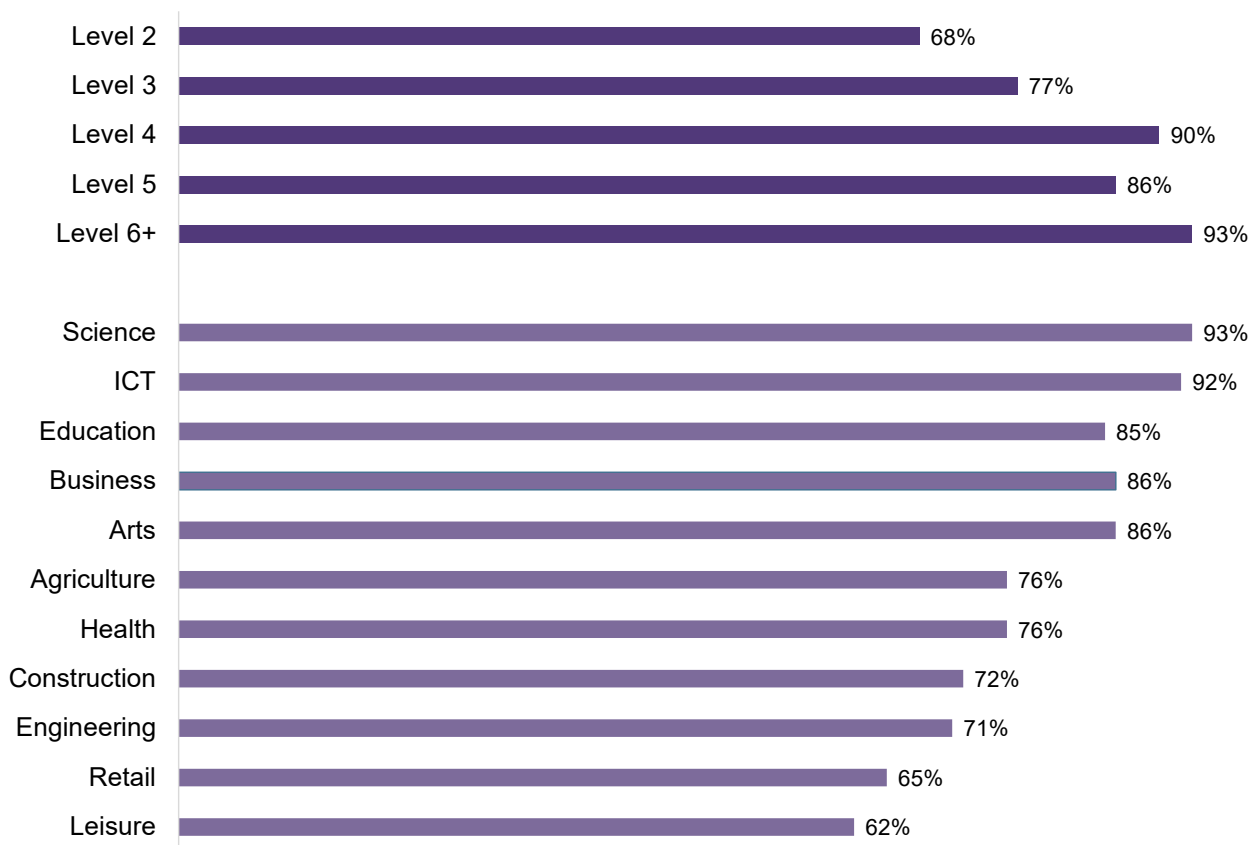
Awareness of the 20% off-the-job training requirement generally increased with level, ranging from 68% among Level 2 apprentices to 93% aware among apprentices at Level 6 and above. There was also wide variation by subject area, as shown in Figure 6-1. Awareness of the 20% requirement was highest in Science (93%), ICT (92%), Business

³³ DfE 2021, [Apprenticeship funding rules](#)

³⁴ National Apprenticeship Service 2019, [Off-the-job training: steps to help you determine whether an activity counts as off-the-job training](#); [Off-the-job training mythbusters](#)

(86%) and Arts (86%). In comparison, only 62% of Leisure and 65% of Retail apprentices were aware of the requirement.

Figure 6-1: Proportion of apprentices aware of the 20% off-the-job training requirement



All apprentices (5,122); Level 2 (1,685); Level 3 (2,316); Level 4 (334); Level 5 (308); Level 6+(469); Science (72); ICT (377); Education (331); Business (1,006); Arts (190); Agriculture (313); Health (811); Construction (438); Engineering (732); Retail (523); Leisure (297).

Demographic factors also affected awareness of the 20% off-the-job requirement. Awareness levels were higher among:

- Female apprentices (81% vs. 75% of male apprentices)
- Apprentices under the age of 19 (81% vs. 77% aged 19 and over), and
- Apprentices based in the East of England (83%).

As well as male apprentices and those aged 19 or over, awareness was lower among:

- Black apprentices (71%) and
- Apprentices based in Yorkshire and The Humber (74%).

Off-the-job training hours undertaken

The survey collected information on the number of off-the-job training hours per week during their apprenticeship. Combined with data provided on the number of contracted / working hours undertaken per week, it was possible to derive the proportion of worked hours spent on off-the-job training in order to assess the extent to which the 20% off-the-job training requirement is being met.

These were a challenging series of questions, due to the various criteria that determine whether training counts towards the 'off-the-job' requirement and the need to convey this simply to respondents.³⁵

Of the 5,112 apprentices interviewed, 3,617 gave a valid exact figure for both the number of off-the-job training hours undertaken and their working hours, hence data in the remainder of the section is based on 71% of apprentices in the survey.³⁶

Overall, 46% of apprentices able to provide the relevant data on their off-the-job training and working hours reported compliant off-the-job training hours, meaning the majority (54%) were not meeting the government funding rules. The mean average proportion of worked hours spent on off-the-job training was 19%.

As shown in Table 6-1, there was a great deal of variation by subject area in terms of compliance with the 20% requirement. Apprentices in Education (33%), Health (38%)

³⁵ The questions were adapted in the early stage of fieldwork. In the original version of the question, after giving their original response to the off-the-job training hours question, each apprentice was asked a follow-up question to check all of the necessary inclusions (e.g. that the training was undertaken during their normal working hours) and exclusions (e.g. training undertaken as part of normal day-to-day work duties) had been made. However, following interviewer feedback that respondents were struggling to retain all of the relevant information on inclusions and exclusions, the questions were simplified so that the check question only checked that all of the necessary inclusions were factored into the response (given that all required exclusions were explicitly mentioned in the original question). Other simplification of the question wording was also implemented. Overall, of the 3,617 respondents that provided usable data, 816 answered the first version of the off-the-job training questions and 2,801 answered the adapted version. More information on these questionnaire changes is included in the technical report. For analysis purposes, results from both versions of the question have been combined.

³⁶ The profile of those giving an answer differed slightly to the profile of all apprentices. The main differences were a greater proportion of Business apprentices among those able to give an exact figure (30% vs. 27% among all apprentices) and fewer Engineering apprentices (17% vs. 19%). By age, there was a slightly higher proportion of those aged 25 and over among those giving a figure (26% vs. 25% among all apprentices) but fewer aged under 19 (25% vs. 26%). Given that Engineering apprentices had higher than average levels of compliance and those aged 25 and over lower levels of compliance, these differences may drive down the overall compliance levels.

and Retail (38%) were far less likely than average to report meeting this requirement. In contrast, compliance levels were much higher Construction (64%), Engineering (55%) and ICT (54%); these were the only subject areas where the majority of apprentices were receiving compliant levels of off-the-job training. Construction apprentices reported the highest mean average percentage of hours spent on off-the-job training (23.9).

Table 6-1: Percentage of working hours spent on off-the-job learning or training

<i>Row percentages</i>	Base	None	<5%	5-9.99%	10-19.99%	20%+	Mean (%)
All	3,617	15%	4%	10%	25%	46%	18.6
Agriculture	209	15%	5%	9%	28%	43%	17.5
Arts	136	11%	2%	8%	30%	50%	19.7
Business	803	11%*	5%	10%	29%*	45%	17.7
Construction	284	9%*	3%	6%*	19%*	64%*	23.9
Education	255	17%	7%*	14%*	29%	33%*	15.1
Engineering	461	14%	2%	10%	18%*	55%*	21.5
Health	590	24%*	3%	10%	25%	38%*	17.1
ICT	221	5%*	3%	9%	29%	54%*	20.5
Leisure	202	15%	4%	11%	26%	43%	18.3
Retail	404	17%	5%	17%*	22%	38%*	16.6

* highlights where proportional results are significantly different from the average of the rest of sample. Bold indicates proportions which are significantly higher.

Note – results for Science are not shown due to a low base size (35). Data is based on those who gave an exact figure at both the off-the-job training hours questions and the working hours questions. Data excludes those who said they had not accounted for block release in their response.

By level, apprentices at Level 6 and above were the most likely to have undertaken 20% or more of their contracted hours on off-the-job training (63%, rising to 66% among degree apprentices). Level 2 apprentices were least likely to have met the 20% off-the-job requirement (39%). The proportion of apprentices meeting the 20% requirement generally increased with level, with the exception that those at Level 4, who were more likely than those at Level 5 to report compliant off-the-job training levels (54% vs. 41%).

Current apprentices (49%) and recent completers (46%) were both more likely than longer-term completers (36%) to have met the 20% requirement, indicating that compliance levels have improved over time. There was however no significant difference in results between those on apprenticeship standards and those on frameworks.

There is a relationship between awareness of the requirement and compliance; half (50%) of apprentices aware of the 20% off-the-job training requirement were also meeting the requirement, compared with only a third (33%) of those who were unaware. This pattern holds true specifically among current apprentices (52% vs. 33%).

Table 6-2: Percentage of working hours spent on off-the-job learning or training

<i>Row percentages</i>	Base	None	<5%	5-9.99%	10-19.99%	20%+	Mean (%)
All	3,617	15%	4%	10%	25%	46%	18.6
Level 2	1,199	20%*	5%*	13%*	23%	39%*	16.7
Level 3	1,657	16%	3%	10%	25%	46%	18.8
Level 4	249	8%*	6%	9%	24%	54%*	18.8
Level 5	198	16%	4%	8%	30%	41%	17.9
Level 6+	314	5%*	1%*	6%*	25%	63%*	23.9
<i>Level 6+ non-degree</i>	66	3%*	0%	8%	34%	55%	21.6
<i>Level 6+ degree</i>	248	6%*	1%*	5%*	22%	66%*	24.8
Current	2,151	15%	3%*	9%*	24%	49%*	19.5
Recent completers	757	14%	4%	10%	25%	46%	18.5
Longer-term completers	709	18%*	6%*	14%*	26%	36%*	15.6

* highlights where proportional results are significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

Matching their high levels of awareness, apprentices aged under 19 were more likely to have received the minimum proportion of off-the-job training (54%), than those aged 19 to 24 (49%) and 25 and above (40%). However, despite the higher awareness among

female apprentices, they were less likely to have received compliant levels of off-the-job training (43% vs. 49% of male apprentices).

Those who were recruited to their apprenticeship were more likely to have received a suitable amount of off-the-job training than those who were already working for their employer (53% v. 41%). However, those who were NEET prior to their apprenticeship were less likely to be meeting the 20% requirement (36%).

A sizeable minority of apprentices (15%) said none of their contracted hours were spent doing off-the-job training. This was more common among longer-term completers (18%), those that had done Level 2 apprenticeships (20%) and those on Health apprenticeships (24%). Apprentices on apprenticeship standards were more likely than those on apprenticeship frameworks to have not done any off-the-job training (19% vs. 14%).

7. End-point assessments

End-point assessments (EPA) are an assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours acquired throughout apprenticeship standards. To be certified as having achieved the apprenticeship, those on apprenticeship standards must pass their EPA, as well as any requirements in English, maths and any other mandatory qualifications. EPAs are conducted and certified by independent end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs), who should be appointed by the employer at the start of the apprenticeship (the employer might also seek support from the training provider in selecting the EPAO). What is assessed varies for each apprenticeship standard and can include practical assessments, interviews, projects, written tests and / or presentations. EPAs replace the apprenticeship framework assessment method based on passing recognised qualifications.

This chapter therefore covers the experiences of those undertaking or who completed apprenticeship standards. The first section explores awareness of EPAs among current apprentices. The rest of the chapter, which explores such issues as the support received from employers and training providers in preparing apprentices for their EPA, includes those that completed an apprenticeship standard along with current apprentices that were aware of EPAs beyond merely the name.

Key findings

Amongst all currently on apprenticeship standards:

- **Seven in ten (71%) had good (42%) or reasonable (29%) knowledge of EPAs** but 8% were not aware of them. **Knowledge was lower than average amongst current Level 6+ non-degree, Health and Engineering apprentices.**
- Amongst those on standards with some understanding of EPAs (completers, or current apprentices aware of EPAs beyond the name), **three-quarters (76%) were first made aware of EPAs within a month of starting their apprenticeship.** However, this had not happened until at least six months into the apprenticeship for 10%. Level 6+ non-degree apprentices and those in Health and Engineering were less likely to have been made aware in a timely manner, as were those on longer apprenticeships.
- **Training providers were the usual initial source of information about EPAs (86%).** The majority of those who heard about EPAs within the first month had heard about them only via their training provider (58%).
- **Nearly all apprentices said their training providers (97%) or employer (91%) had undertaken activities to help them prepare for the EPA.**

- **Training providers most commonly provided support through regular reviews of progress** (90%) and / or familiarisation with assessment methods (80%). **Employers most commonly allowed apprentices to complete different project types** (77%), provided more on the job training opportunities (69%) and / or regular reviews of progress (68%).
- **Overall, 89% of apprentices found their training provider helpful and 72% their employer helpful in preparing for their EPA.** This was lower for Level 6+ non-degree apprentices.

Awareness of EPAs

Awareness amongst current apprentices

The majority of those currently undertaking apprenticeship standards reported a good (42%) or reasonable (29%) understanding of EPAs and what they involve. Almost one in five (17%) had heard of them but knew nothing more about them, while a further 3% had a poor knowledge of EPAs and what they involve. Eight per cent of current apprentices had not heard of EPAs.

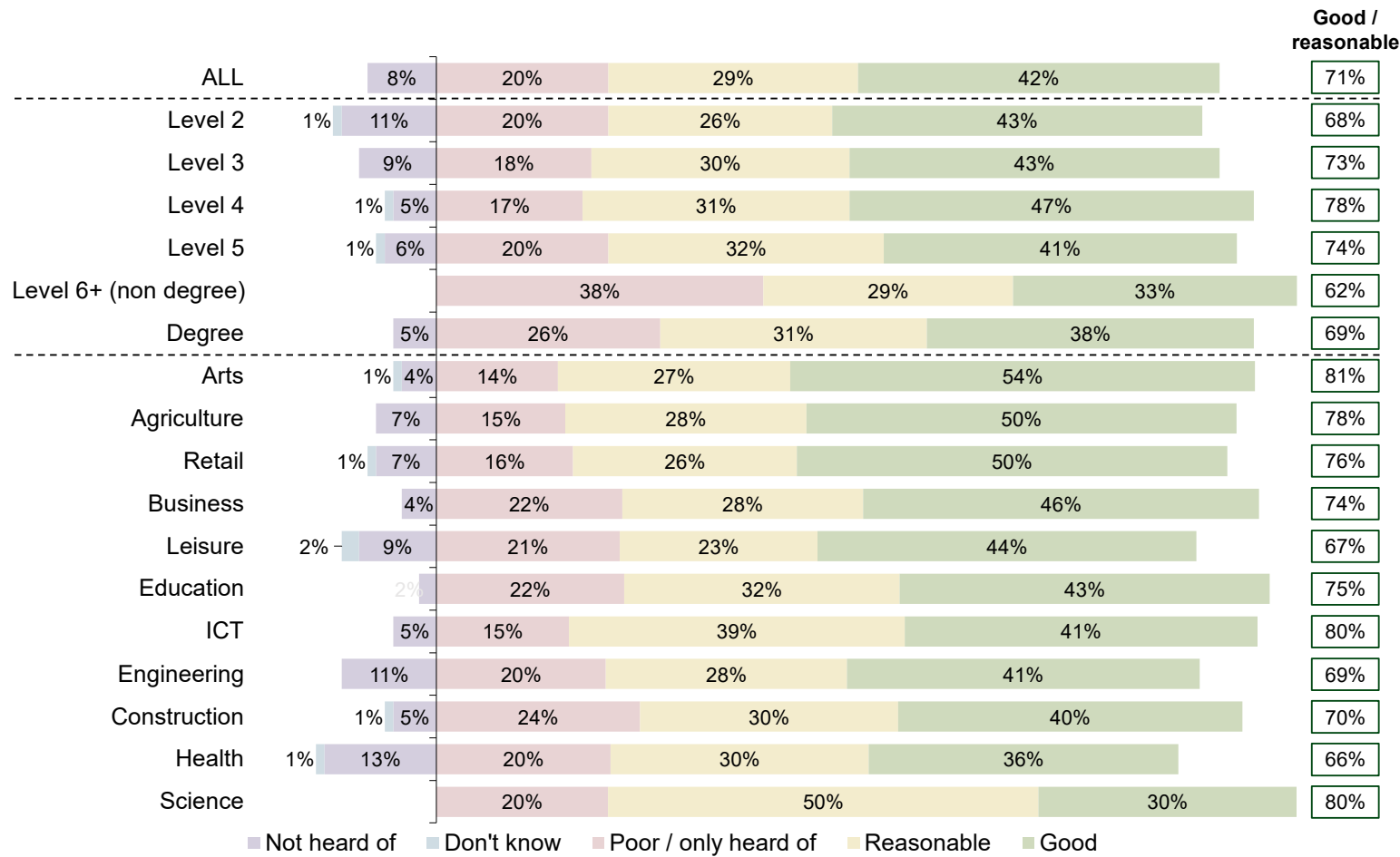
By level, apprentices on Level 4 standards were more likely than average to have good or reasonable understanding of EPAs (78%), while those on Level 2 (68%) and Level 6+ standards (67%) were significantly less likely than average to feel that they had a good or reasonable understanding. As shown in Figure 7-1. Arts and ICT apprentices were particularly likely to have a good or reasonable knowledge of EPAs (81% and 80%).

The following groups of apprentices were more likely than average not to have heard of EPAs: Level 2 apprentices (11%), those undertaking Engineering (11%) or Health standards (13%), BAME apprentices (12%), those based in the South East (12%) and those who were furloughed or whose apprenticeship was paused at the time of the interview (each 15%).

Similarly, while overall just over a quarter (28%) of those currently undertaking apprenticeship standards had poor or no knowledge of EPAs, this was higher among the following groups: those undertaking apprenticeships in Health (33%), Level 6+ apprentices (33%), those aged 19-24 (31%), BAME apprentices (36%) and those with a disability or learning difficulty (38%), and those whose apprenticeship was currently paused (51%).

It is, however, important to note that some EPAs are integrated into existing qualifications, potentially making it harder for the learner to differentiate them from other assessments. This may explain why apprentices in certain subjects, such as Health and Engineering, were less likely to be aware of EPAs.

Figure 7-1: Understanding of EPAs and what they involve



Base: Those currently on standard apprenticeships (2,707). Level 2 (697), Level 3 (1,230), Level 4 (196), Level 5 (190), Level 6+ non degree (76), Level 6+ Degree (318). Arts (94), Agriculture (167), Retail (294), Business (543), Leisure (146), Education (134), ICT (168), Engineering (367), Construction (236), Health (474), Science (52). Subject areas in ascending order of 'good' awareness.

When made aware of EPAs and who first told apprentices about it

All subsequent sections in this chapter cover the views those who had completed an apprenticeship on the newer standards, and those currently on an apprenticeship standard who were aware of EPAs beyond merely the name. They are referred to as 'apprentices with some knowledge of EPAs'. It excludes current apprentices who were unaware of EPAs or had only heard of them but knew nothing more.

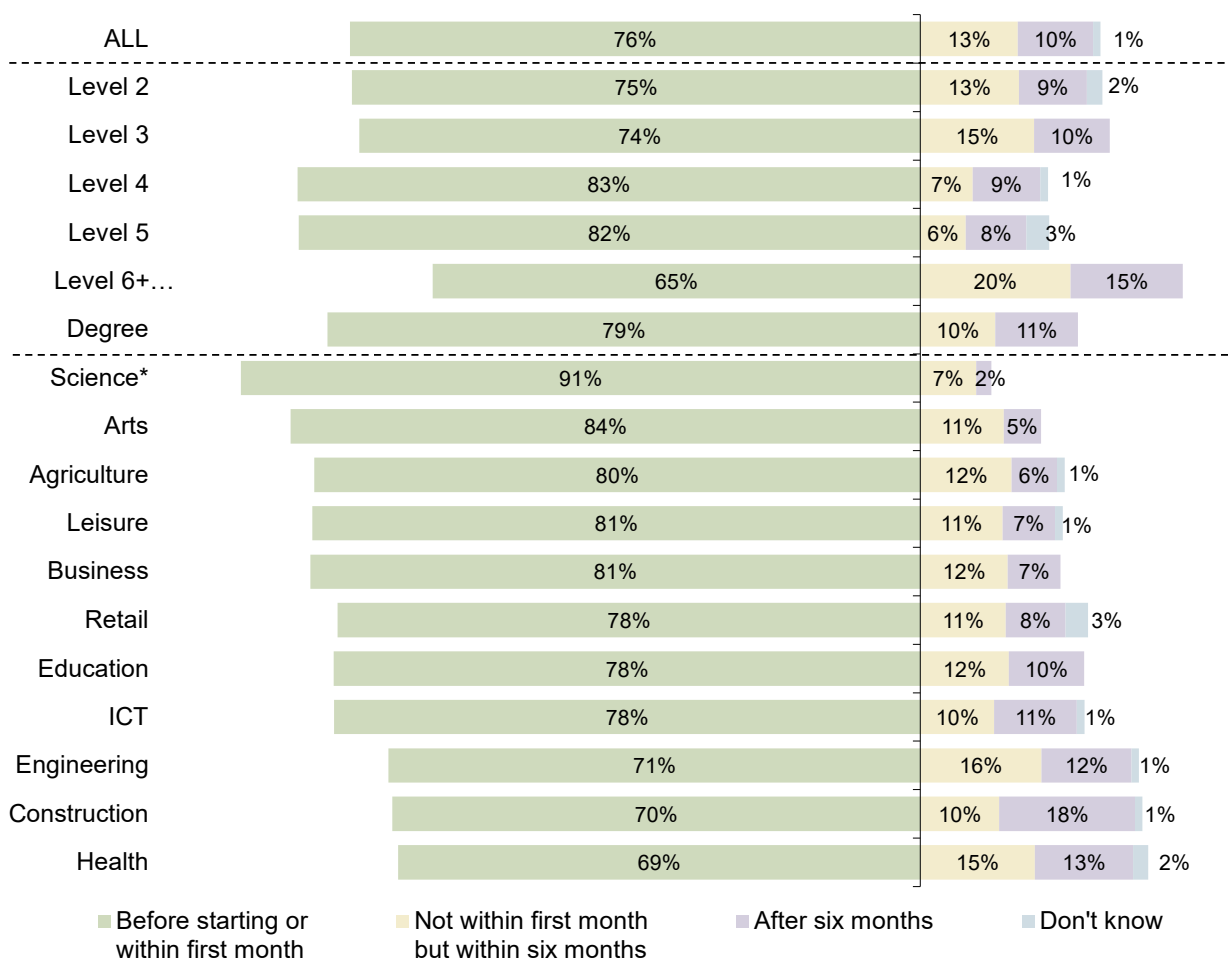
Most apprentices with some knowledge of EPAs were first made aware of them quite early in their apprenticeship: 76% said this occurred by the end of their first month, though only around a third (32%) had first heard about them before they started.

A tenth of apprentices with some knowledge of EPAs (10%) first became aware of them when they had spent six months or longer as an apprentice. Among completers only 2% reported they were told about them less than a month before their assessment.

There was little difference in when current apprentices, those who had recently completed and those who had completed longer ago were first made aware of EPAs, suggesting there has been no change over time as to when those on standards are being told about EPAs.

Apprentices with some knowledge of EPAs on Levels 4 or 5 standards were most likely to have been made aware of EPAs before the end of their first month (83% and 82%), as shown in Figure 7-2. This compared to only around two-thirds (65%) of Level 6+ non-degree apprentices with some knowledge of EPAs.

Figure 7-2: When apprentices were first told about EPAs



Base: Those currently on standard apprenticeships who were aware beyond name and all completers of apprenticeship standards (3,027). Level 2 (796), Level 3 (1,428), Level 4 (217), Level 5 (213), Level 6+ non degree (73), Level 6+ Degree (300). Science (46), Arts (135), Agriculture (166), Leisure (124), Business (705), Retail (409), Education (140), ICT (236), Engineering (349), Construction (209), Health (486). Subject areas in descending order of awareness within first six months. Note: base for Science is low (46) and findings should be treated with caution.

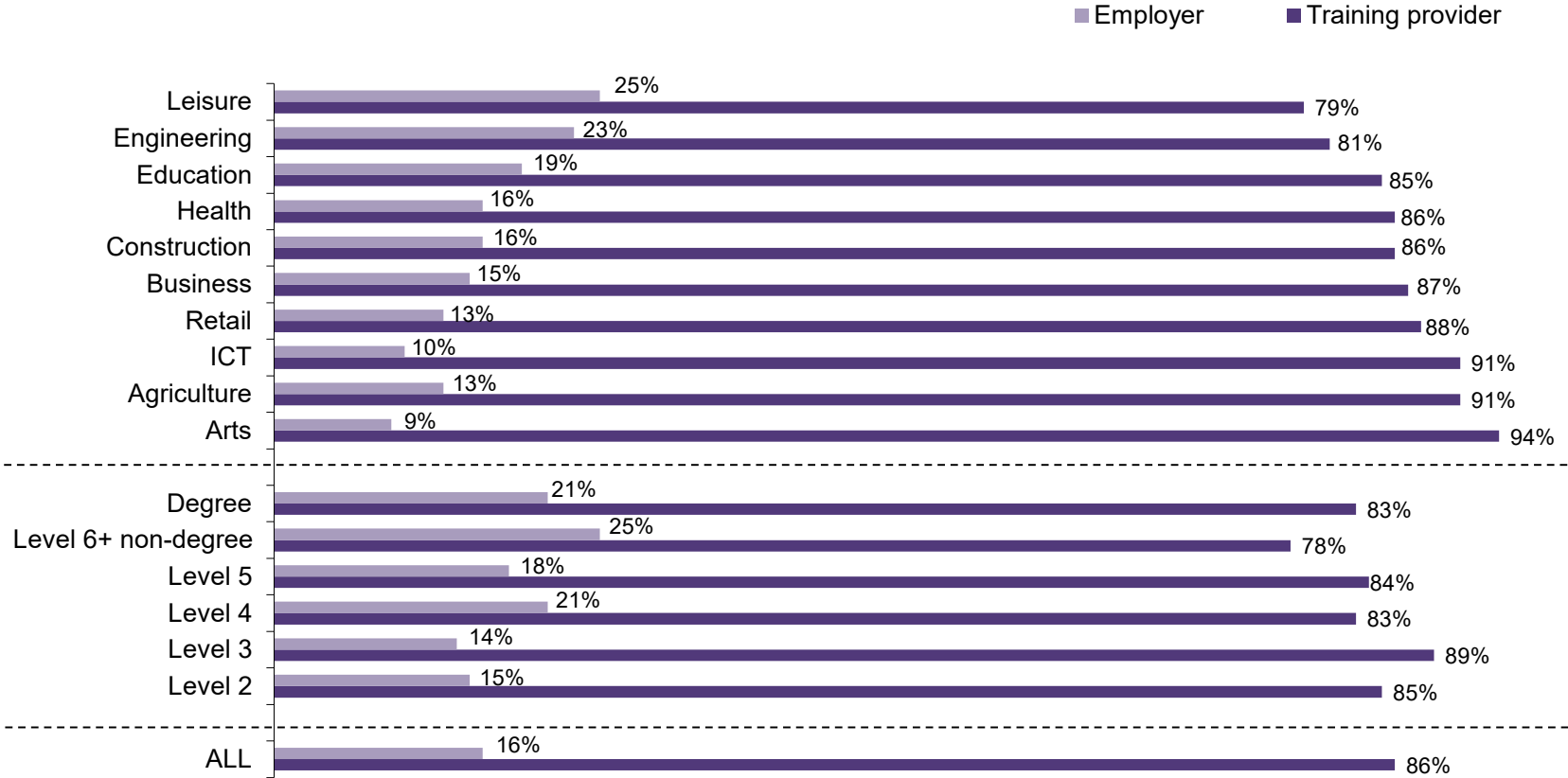
Arts and Business apprentices with some knowledge of EPAs were significantly more likely than average to have been made aware of them by the end of the first month (84% and 81% respectively), while Health and Engineering apprentices were less likely (69% and 71% respectively). This means that Health and Engineering apprentices are not only more likely than average not to have heard of EPAs, but those that have heard of them tend to hear about them later than other apprentices.

Those with some knowledge of EPAs on apprenticeships expected to last three years or more were particularly likely to only have become aware of EPA after at least six months of their apprenticeship (18% compared to 9% of those expected to be shorter).

Apprentices with some knowledge of EPAs were most likely to have first been told about them by their training provider (86%). Around one in six (16%) were first told about EPA by their employer (hence clearly some first heard from both at the same time). Other sources were rare, just 1% were first informed by a colleague and 1% by someone else.

Figure 7-3 shows differences by level and sector subject area. Among all groups, training providers are the main source first source of information about EPAs. Though relatively speaking employers play more of a role in first informing apprentices undertaking Level 6+ non-degree apprentices (25%), those undertaking Leisure and Engineering apprentices (25% and 23%), and those on apprenticeships expected to last a minimum of three years (21%).

Figure 7-3: Who first informed apprentices about EPAs



Base: Those currently on apprenticeship standards and completers of apprenticeship standards who were aware beyond name (3,020). Level 2 (792), Level 3 (1,426), Level 4 (217), Level 5 (213), Level 6+ non degree (73), Level 6+ Degree (299). Arts (135), Agriculture (166), ICT (236), Retail (409), Business (704), Construction (208), Health (481), Education (140), Engineering (349), Leisure (124). Subject areas in descending order of made aware by training provider.

Support from employers and training providers to help prepare for EPA

Apprentices with some knowledge of EPAs were read a number of types of support (listed in Figure 7-4) and asked which, if any, they had received from either their training provider or employer to help them prepare for their EPA.

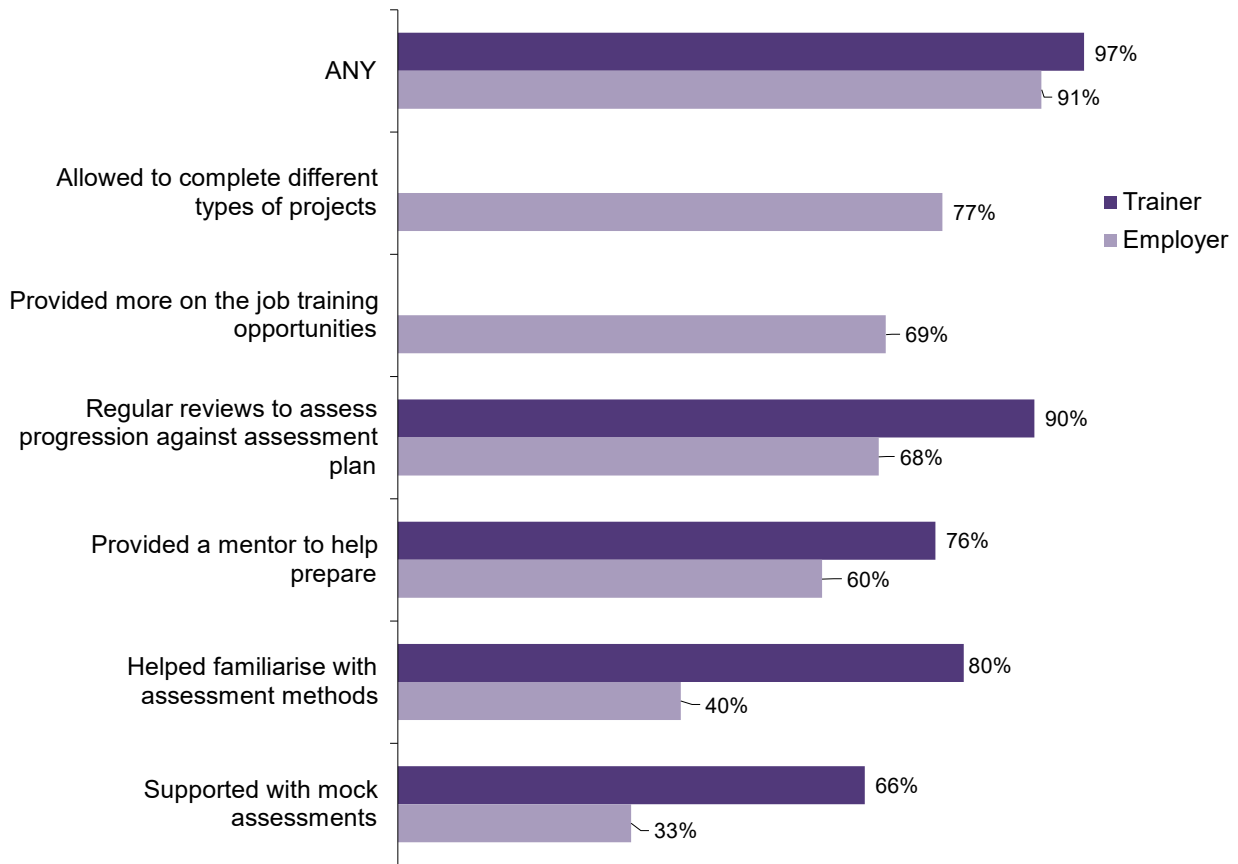
Virtually all (97%) apprentices on standards with some knowledge of EPAs said their training provider had helped them prepare in at least one of the ways.

A slightly lower proportion (91%) reported that their employer had helped them prepare. Those in Leisure (98%) and Construction (96%) were more likely than average to indicate that their employer had helped them prepare for the EPA in at least one of the listed ways; while still high, those on Level 2 apprenticeships (89%) and in Health or Retail (both 87%) were less likely than average to report this.

Those with training paused at the time of research (80%) and / or with training paused for over six months (80%) were less likely to have had support from their employer with EPAs than other apprentices (91% of those who had not experienced a pause).

Results on the nature of the support provided by training providers and employers is shown in Figure 7-4.

Figure 7-4: Support provided by training providers and employers to help prepare learners for EPAs (prompted)



Base: Those currently on apprenticeship standards and completers of apprenticeship standards who were aware beyond name (3,020).

The most common form of help to prepare them for EPAs from training providers was regular reviews throughout training to assess progression against the assessment plan (reported by 90% of those with some understanding of EPAs). Just over two-thirds (68%) reported this from their employer.

Two-thirds or more were helped to prepare by their training provider through familiarisation with assessment methods (80%), mentors (76%) and / or mock assessments (66%). These types of support were less often provided by employers (familiarisation with assessment methods 40%, mentors 60%, and / or mock assessments 33%).

Employers most commonly helped apprentices to prepare for their EPA by allowing them to complete different types of projects and by providing more on-the-job training opportunities (77% and 69% respectively).

Apprentices could also report any other ways in which training providers or employers had helped them prepare. The main ones mentioned were regular meetings and catch ups from training providers (8%), extra time off work for study from employers (6%), and support with coursework from training providers and employers (6% and 3% respectively).

Helpfulness of employers and training providers in preparing apprentices for their EPA

Overall, nine in ten (89%) apprentices on apprenticeship standards with some knowledge of EPAs found their training provider very (57%) or quite (32%) helpful in preparing for their EPA. This is shown in Figure 7-5. Approaching three-quarters (72%) found their employer helpful, including 36% that found them very helpful, as shown in Figure 7-6.

More than two-thirds (68%) of apprentices on apprenticeship standards found both their employer and training provider helpful in preparing them for their EPA. More than nine in ten (94%) of those that found their employer helpful also found their training provider helpful. In contrast, fewer than eight in ten (77%) that found their training provider helpful in preparing for their EPA also found their employer helpful in preparing.

Positively, those who had completed their apprenticeship (and so experienced their EPA) were more likely to report their training provider was very helpful (69% compared to 52% of current apprentices). Recent completers were more likely than current apprentices to say their employer had been very helpful (41% compared to 35%).

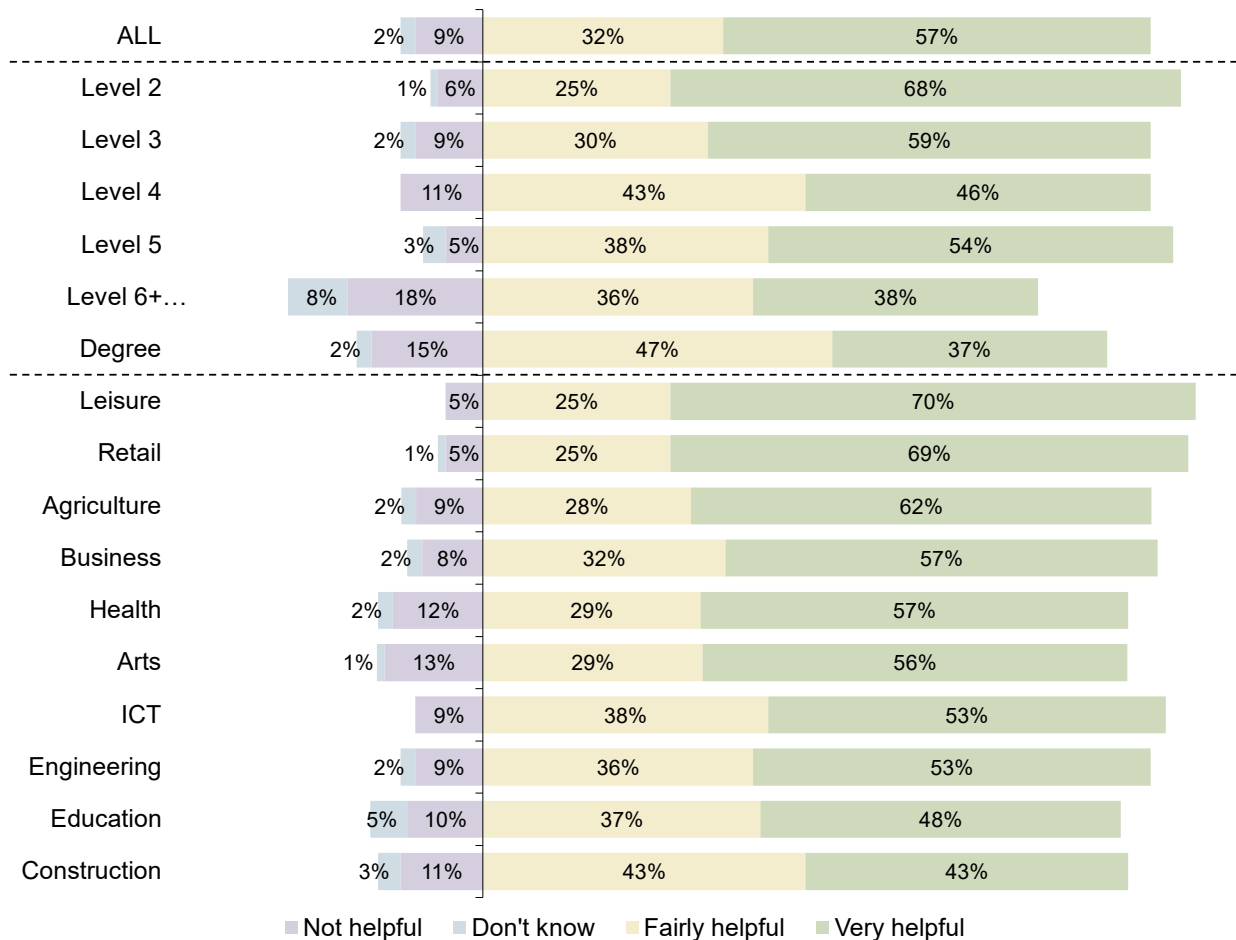
Lower level apprentices were generally more likely to say providers and employers had been very helpful in preparing them for the EPA (68% of Level 2 apprentices found training providers very helpful and 45% said the same for employers, both around 10 percentage points higher than the average).

Leisure and Retail apprentices on apprenticeship standards with some knowledge of EPAs were particularly likely to find their training provider very helpful for preparing them for the EPA (70% and 69% respectively). Fewer than half of those in Education and Construction felt the same (48% and 43% respectively).

Leisure apprentices were also the most likely to describe the support from their employer as very helpful for preparing them for the EPA (55%). This was the only sector subject area where the majority of apprentices thought employers had been very helpful.

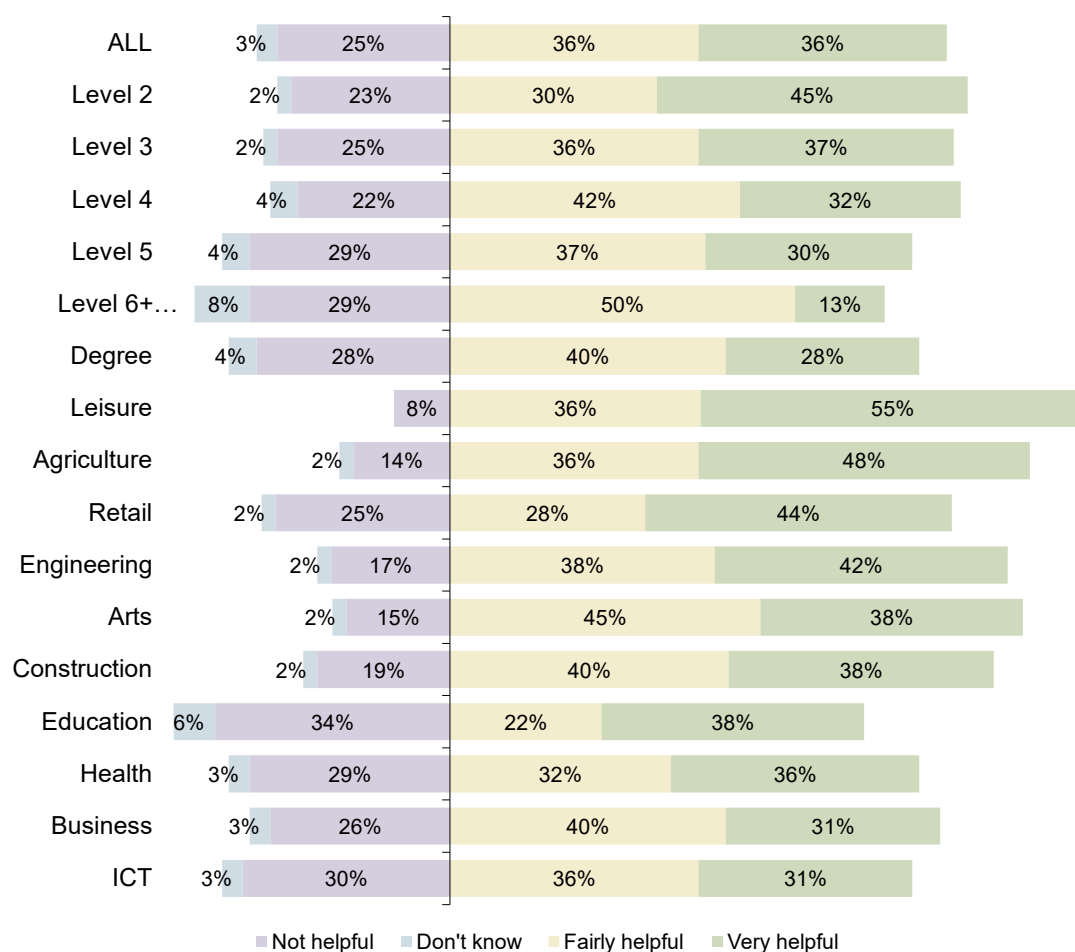
Education and Health apprentices were especially likely to feel find employer had not been at all helpful, (17% and 14% respectively).

Figure 7-5: Helpfulness of training providers in preparing apprentices for EPAs



Base: Those currently on standard apprenticeships and completers of apprenticeship standards who were aware beyond name (3,020). Level 2 (792), Level 3 (1,426), Level 4 (217), Level 5 (213), Level 6+ non degree (73), Level 6+ Degree (299). Arts (135), Agriculture (166), ICT (236), Retail (409), Business (704), Construction (208), Health (481), Education (140), Engineering (349), Leisure (124). Subject areas in descending order of made aware by training provider. Science not shown due to low base size. 'Not very helpful' and 'Not at all helpful' answer merged into 'Not helpful' as low percentages.

Figure 7-6: Helpfulness of employers in preparing apprentices for EPAs



Base: Those currently on standard apprenticeships and completers of apprenticeship standards who were aware beyond name (3,020). Level 2 (792), Level 3 (1,426), Level 4 (217), Level 5 (213), Level 6+ non degree (73), Level 6+ Degree (299). Arts (135), Agriculture (166), ICT (236), Retail (409), Business (704), Construction (208), Health (481), Education (140), Engineering (349), Leisure (124). Subject areas in descending order of made aware by training provider. Science not shown due to low base size (46). 'Not very helpful' and 'Not at all helpful' answer merged into 'Not helpful' as low percentages.

Apprentices aged 19 to 24 were particularly unlikely to find either their employer or training provider very helpful (30% employer / 50% training provider). These results are lower in comparison to both older (35% / 59%) and younger (46% / 59%) apprentices.

Apprentices with a disability or learning difficulty were more likely to have found their employer not at all helpful in preparing them for the EPA (17% compared to 10% of those without).

8. Satisfaction with apprenticeships

This chapter examines levels of overall satisfaction, and the degree to which apprentices were satisfied with individual elements of their apprenticeship, including how apprenticeships were managed in relation to COVID-19. It also investigates the impact of COVID-19 on overall satisfaction with apprenticeships.

Key findings

- **84% of apprentices were satisfied and 8% dissatisfied overall with their apprenticeship.** The main reasons for dissatisfaction were a lack of support or contact from the training provider, the apprenticeship being badly organised, and the poor quality of training received.
- **COVID-19 had had a negative impact on overall satisfaction:** those who experienced a pause in training were less satisfied (79% vs. 86% without a pause); as were those furloughed for more than 6 months (78%).
- **Current apprentices were the least satisfied of the three survey groups** (82%, vs 90% of recent and 88% of longer-term completers).
- **Overall satisfaction among current apprentices is similar to 2018-19 (83%), but lower than in 2015 and 2017** (both 89%). The proportion very satisfied has also continued its downward trend (57% vs. 62% in 2018-19 and 74% in 2017).
- **Overall satisfaction among longer-term completers has stayed relatively stable,** but like with current apprentices, the proportion 'very satisfied' continues a downward trend (65%, vs. 72% in 2015).
- **Level 6+ non-degree apprentices were least satisfied (71%), whereas Degree apprentices were the most satisfied (91%).** By subject area, satisfaction was highest among Science (91%) and Engineering (88%) apprentices. Education (77%) and Health (82%) apprentices reported the lowest levels of satisfaction.
- For specific elements of apprenticeships, **satisfaction was highest for it enabling better job performance, and the quality of learning and the feedback received on progress (85% satisfied with each).** Those with compliant levels of off-the-job learning were more satisfied in these areas than those with non-compliant levels (85% vs. 76% on the amount of training received; 83% vs. 69% on the balance between learning and working).
- **Satisfaction was lower in 2021 than in 2018-19 among current apprentices and longer-term completers for:** (figures show results among current apprentices) **the way they were assessed on-the-job** (77% vs. 82% in 2018-19); **the extent to**

which their employer supported their apprenticeship (81% vs. 86%) and the balance between time spent learning and working (74% vs. 77%).

Overall satisfaction

The vast majority of apprentices (84%) were satisfied with their apprenticeship overall (giving a score between 6 and 10, on a 0-10 scale).³⁷ Three-fifths (60%) were 'very satisfied' (giving a score of 8 to 10), while 8% were dissatisfied (giving a score of 0 to 4).

Current apprentices reported lower levels of overall satisfaction (82%) than both recent (90%) and longer-term completers (88%). Similarly, current apprentices were less likely to be 'very satisfied' (57%) than recent and longer-term completers (both 65%).

Apprentices undertaking apprenticeship frameworks (either current or completer) were more likely than those undertaking apprenticeship standards to be satisfied overall (87% vs. 83%). However, as those involved with standards were far more likely to be current apprentices than those on frameworks (76% and 27% respectively), this may in part be due to the trend of current apprentices being less satisfied, as discussed above. Indeed, when comparing current apprentices on apprenticeship standards with current apprentices on frameworks, there were no differences in overall satisfaction (82% and 81% respectively). Aside from this, subgroup patterns for current apprentices were generally consistent with the overall population.

Table 8-1: Overall satisfaction by survey group

<i>Row percentages</i>	Base	ANY SATISFIED (6-10)	Very satisfied (8-10)	Fairly satisfied (6-7)	ANY DIS-SATISFIED (0-4)	Mean score
All	5,122	84%	60%	24%	8%	7.6
Current apprentices	3,047	82%*	57%*	25%	10%*	7.4
Recent completers	1,036	90%*	65%*	25%	6%*	7.9
Longer-term completers	1,039	88%*	65%*	22%	6%*	7.9

* highlights where figure is significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

³⁷ Apprentices were asked to give their satisfaction with 0 being that they are very dissatisfied and 10 that they are very satisfied. For analysis purposes, scores have been grouped into the following categories for analysis purposes: 'any satisfied' (a score between 6 and 10), further broken down as 'very satisfied' (8 to 10) or 'fairly satisfied' (6-7), and 'any dissatisfied' (0-4).

There was little variation in overall satisfaction by level below Level 6, however Level 6+ non-degree apprentices reported by far the lowest levels of satisfaction (71%; 16% were dissatisfied). In contrast, Degree apprentices were the most likely to be satisfied with their apprenticeship overall (91%). This may be due to the fact that degree apprentices were made up of a larger proportion of apprentices aged under 19 who are more likely to be satisfied with their apprenticeships (shown later in this chapter in Table 8-4).³⁸ Level 2 apprentices, however, were most likely to say they were ‘very satisfied’ with their apprenticeship (64%).

Table 8-2: Overall satisfaction by level

<i>Row percentages</i>	Base	ANY SATISFIED (6-10)	Very satisfied (8-10)	Fairly satisfied (6-7)	ANY DIS-SATISFIED (0-4)	Mean score
All	5,122	84%	60%	24%	8%	7.6
Level 2	1,695	85%	64%*	21%*	8%	7.7
Level 3	2,316	84%	61%	23%	9%	7.5
Level 4	334	84%	54%*	30%*	9%	7.4
Level 5	308	82%	58%	24%	10%	7.5
Level 6+ (non-degree)	95	71%*	43%*	29%	16%*	6.4
Degree apprentices	374	91%*	56%	35%*	5%*	7.6

* highlights where proportional results are significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

By subject area, satisfaction was highest among Science (91%) and Engineering (88%) apprentices, and lowest in Education (77%) and Health (82%).³⁹

³⁸ In the ILR population, 10% of Degree apprentices were aged under 19, vs. 4% of Level 6+ non-degree apprentices.

³⁹ Due to a relatively low sample size of 72 respondents, the result for Science is not a statistically significant difference from the average, but reported here as an indicative result.

Table 8-3: Overall satisfaction by subject area

<i>Row percentages</i>	Base	ANY SATISFIED (6-10)	Very satisfied (8-10)	Fairly satisfied (6-7)	ANY DIS-SATISFIED (0-4)	Mean score
Science	72	91%	65%	25%	8%	7.8
Engineering	732	88%*	61%	26%	7%	7.6
Leisure	297	87%	68%*	20%	4%*	7.9
ICT	377	85%	56%	30%*	8%	7.5
Business	1,006	85%	59%	26%*	8%	7.5
Agriculture	313	85%	67%*	18%*	10%	7.8
Arts	190	85%	54%	31%*	8%	7.5
Retail	523	84%	66%*	18%*	8%	7.8
Construction	438	83%	58%	25%	10%	7.4
Health	811	82%*	60%	22%*	10%*	7.5
Education	331	77%*	56%	21%	9%	7.4

* highlights where proportional results are significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

Results show that there is a link between the amount of off-the-job training apprentices receive and satisfaction levels. Those with compliant levels of off-the-job training (i.e., where this made up 20% or more of their contracted or worked hours) were more likely to be satisfied than those with non-compliant levels of off-the-job training (87% vs. 82%).

There were also notable differences by demographic subgroups. Younger apprentices were more likely to be satisfied; nine in ten (90%) of those aged under 19 were satisfied compared with 82% of those aged 19 and over. There was no difference between male and female apprentices in terms of overall satisfaction, however female apprentices were more likely to be 'very satisfied' (62% vs. 58% of male apprentices). There were few regional differences in terms of the overall proportion satisfied with their apprenticeship, with the exception of the North East where a higher proportion were satisfied (89%).

Apprentices with either a disability (78%) or learning difficulty (79%) were less likely to be satisfied overall than apprentices without (85%).

Table 8-4: Satisfaction by age, gender, and whether learner had a disability or learning difficulty

<i>Row percentages</i>	Base	ANY SATISFIED (6-10)	Very satisfied (8-10)	Fairly satisfied (6-7)	ANY DIS-SATISFIED (0-4)	Mean score
All	5,122	84%	60%	24%	8%	7.6
Age under 19	1,486	90%*	68%*	22%*	6%*	7.9
Age 19-24	1,575	83%*	55%*	27%*	9%	7.3
Age 25+	2,061	82%*	59%	23%	9%	7.5
Male	2,686	84%	58%*	26%*	9%	7.4
Female	2,436	85%	62%*	23%*	8%	7.7
Disabled	194	78%*	51%*	27%	17%*	6.8
Learning difficulty	313	79%*	53%*	26%	13%*	7.2
Neither a disability nor learning difficulty	4,721	85%*	61%*	24%	8%*	7.6

* highlights where proportional results are significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

Higher pay among apprentices did not appear to have an influence on satisfaction levels. In fact those earning less than £9 an hour were more likely to be satisfied than those earning £9 or more an hour (85% vs. 81%).

Apprentices who were new to their employer when they started their apprenticeship were more likely to be satisfied than those who worked for their employer before starting (86% vs. 83%). However, continuity with the employer after the apprenticeship led to higher levels of satisfaction; nine in ten (90%) apprentices who had completed their apprenticeship and were still with the same employer were satisfied overall, compared with 83% who had completed but were now with a different employer.

Positive outcomes following the apprenticeship were also unsurprisingly linked to higher levels of satisfaction with the apprenticeship. The following groups were all more likely than average to be satisfied with the apprenticeship:

- Those that felt more secure in their job (90%)
- Those that had been given or taken on more responsibilities (88%)
- Those now better at their job (89%)
- Those that felt their career prospects had improved (89%)
- Apprenticeship completers that had been promoted or received a pay rise since completing their apprenticeship (89% and 90% respectively).

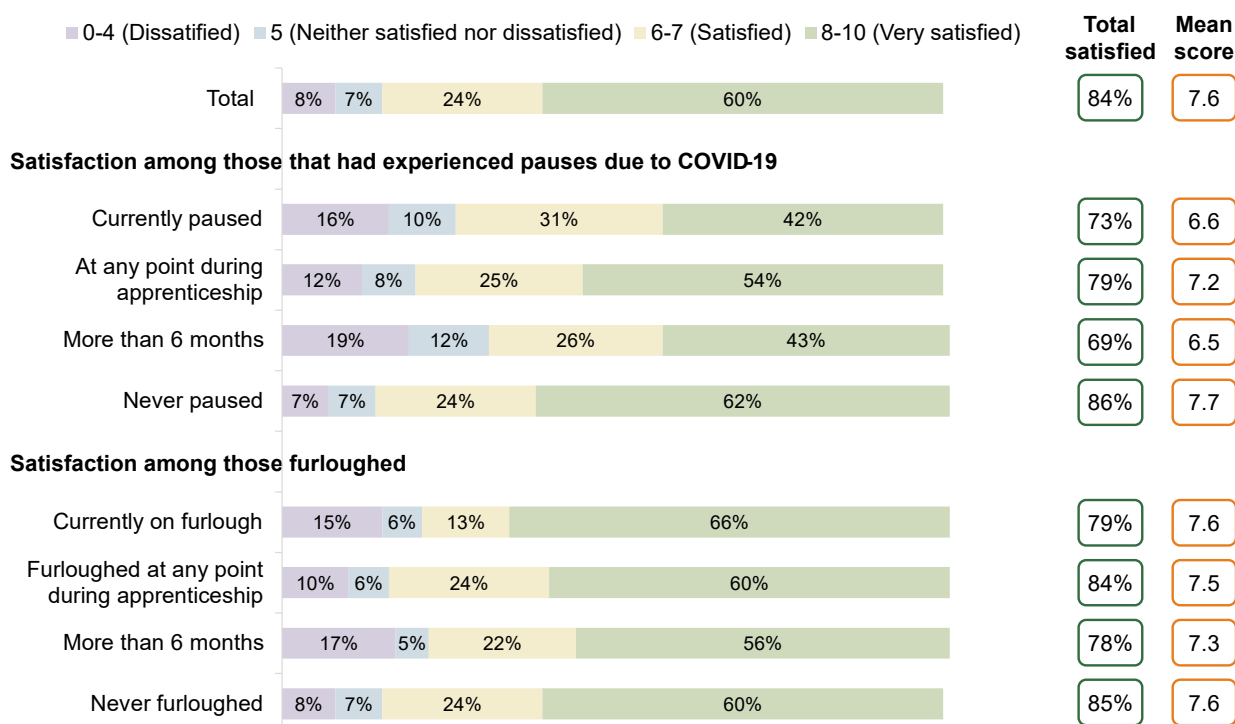
Impact of COVID-19 on overall satisfaction

Apprentices that had experienced a pause in training due to COVID-19 at any point in their apprenticeship reported lower levels of satisfaction than those that had never experienced a pause (79% vs. 86%). Satisfaction was particularly low among those whose apprenticeship was paused at the time of interview (73%; 16% were dissatisfied) and those who reported having had their apprenticeship paused for more than 6 months (69% satisfied, 19% dissatisfied).

The impact of furlough on satisfaction levels was not as acute. The proportion satisfied among those that had been furloughed at any point during their apprenticeship was no different from the average (84%), however satisfaction was lower among those who had been furloughed for more than 6 months (78%).

The impact of COVID-19 is further evidenced by the fact that current apprentices and recent completers who were satisfied with the way their apprenticeship was managed in relation to COVID-19 were more than twice as likely to be satisfied overall than those who were dissatisfied with this aspect of their apprenticeship (91% vs. 42%). This is discussed in the [‘Learner satisfaction with individual elements of their apprenticeships’](#) section.

Figure 8-1: The impact of COVID-19 on satisfaction with apprenticeships



Base: All apprentices (5,122); Currently paused due to COVID-19 (98); Paused at any point due to COVID-19 (977); Paused for more than 6 months due to COVID-19 (207); Never paused due to COVID-19 (4,145); Currently furloughed (80); Furloughed at any point (1,114); Furloughed for more than 6 months (220); Never furloughed (4,008). 'Don't know' responses are not shown in the chart.

Reasons for dissatisfaction

Overall, 8% of apprentices were dissatisfied with their apprenticeship. The most common reasons for being dissatisfied were a lack of support or contact from the training provider (54%); the apprenticeship being badly organised (41%); the poor quality of training (33%); problems with the timeframe and management (22%); problems with the employer (22%) and an overall lack of training (21%). Although it was not one of the main reasons mentioned, 13% of apprentices mentioned some form of disruption due to COVID-19 being a cause of their dissatisfaction.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Note, this question was unprompted. The 13% figure comprises of those who were coded to 'COVID-19 disrupted the provision of training' and/or 'COVID-19 has meant the apprenticeship has gone on for much longer than expected'. This includes those who were back-coded to these responses using verbatim collected at the 'other (specify)' option. It is possible that other responses may have been influenced by the experiences of COVID-19.

Apprentices at Level 6 and above were less likely than average to mention a lack of support or contact from their training provider (27%). However they were more likely to mention the course not being relevant (35% vs. 16% average).

There were differences by age in terms of reasons for dissatisfaction. Those aged under 19 were far more likely to mention problems with their employer (41% vs. 17% of those aged 19 and over). Those aged 19 to 24 were more likely to mention the poor quality of training (44% vs. 27% of those aged under 19 and 28% of those aged 25 and above) and problems with the timeframe / time management (32% vs. 15% among under 19s and 19% among over 24s). In contrast, those aged 25 and over were more likely to mention the course being irrelevant (20% vs. 12% of those aged under 25).

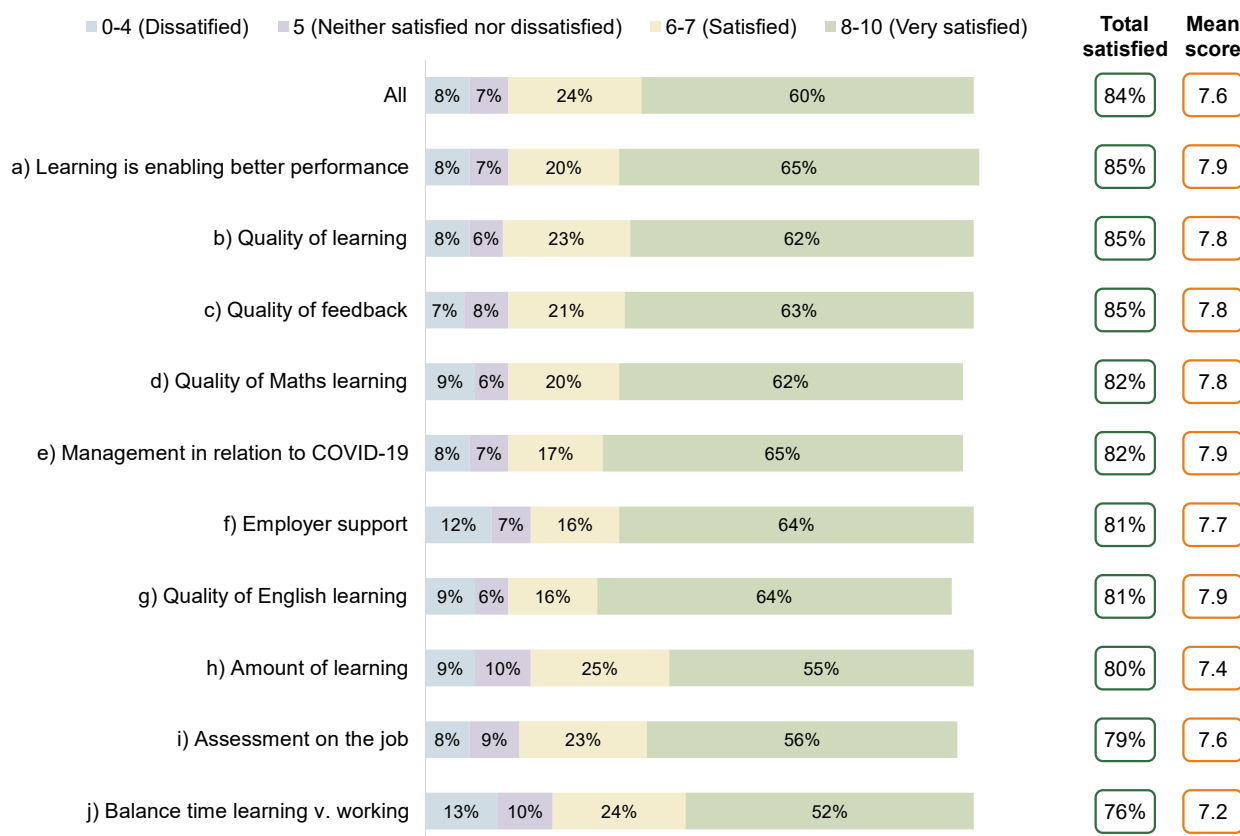
As expected, apprentices that had experienced a pause in their apprenticeship due to COVID-19 were more likely than average to be dissatisfied due, at least in part, to COVID disruption (22%). They were also more likely to mention a lack of support or contact from their training provider (69%) and a lack of training (27%).

Learner satisfaction with individual elements of their apprenticeships

Apprentices were asked how satisfied they were with specific elements of their apprenticeship (as listed in Figure 8-2). On most aspects 80% - 85% of apprentices were satisfied, and 7% - 9% were dissatisfied. The elements apprentices were most satisfied with were: the learning enabling them to do a better job; the quality of learning received from their college or training provider; and the quality of feedback they received on their progress (85% were satisfied with each of these aspects).

There were two elements of the apprenticeship where more than one in ten apprentices were dissatisfied: the balance of time between learning and working, and the support provided by the employer (13% and 12% respectively).

Figure 8-2: Satisfaction with specific aspects of apprenticeships



Base: All apprentices (5,122) – applies to rows c, f, and i; Base: All apprentices that received training (5,012) – applies to rows a, h, j; Base: All that received training from a training provider (3,614) – applies to row b; Base: All who received English training (682) – applies to row g; Base: All who received maths training (833) – applies to row d; Base: All recent completers and current apprentices (4,083) – applies to row e.

As with overall satisfaction, current apprentices were generally less satisfied with most of the different aspects of their apprenticeship than completers. As Table 8-5 shows, they were least likely to be satisfied with the feedback they have received on progress (83%); the amount of learning they received each week (79%); that learning was improving their job performance (84%); the balance of time between learning and working (74%); the way they were assessed on the job (77%); and the quality of both English (76%) and maths (78%) learning.

Current apprentices were, however, more likely than recent completers to be satisfied with the way their apprenticeship was managed in relation to COVID-19 (83% vs. 78%). One potential reason for this could be that current apprentices took part in the survey at a time when some COVID-19 restrictions were being eased (May to July 2021).

Longer-term completers were least satisfied with the level of support from their employer (78%), but most satisfied with various other aspects including the way they had been assessed (85%) and the quality of English (87%) and maths (90%) learning.

Table 8-5: Percentage satisfied with different aspects of apprenticeships, by survey group

<i>Column percentages</i>	ALL	Current	Recent completer	Longer-term completer
<i>Base: all receiving training from a college or training provider</i>	3,614	2,160	738	716
Quality of learning received	85%	84%	86%	86%
<i>Base: all receiving training</i>	5,012	2,980	1,016	1,016
Training enabling better job performance	85%	84%*	88%*	86%
Amount of learning each week	80%	79%*	83%*	82%
Balance between time learning and working	76%	74%*	80%*	77%
<i>Base: all</i>	5,122	3,047	1,036	1,039
Feedback on progress	85%	83%*	88%*	86%
Employer support	81%	81%	82%	78%*
Assessment on the job	79%	77%*	84%*	85%*
<i>Base: all receiving English training (modularised)</i>	682	345	160	177
Quality of English learning received	81%	76%*	86%*	87%*
<i>Base: all receiving maths training (modularised)</i>	833	450	187	196
Quality of maths learning received	82%	78%*	87%	90%*
<i>Base: all current apprentices and recent completers</i>	4,083	3,047	1,036	-
The way apprenticeship was managed in relation to COVID-19	82%	83%*	78%*	-

* highlights where figure is significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

Table 8-6: Percentage satisfied with different aspects of apprenticeships, by level

<i>Column percentages</i>	ALL	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6+ (non-degree)	Degree
<i>Base: all receiving training from a college or training provider</i>	3,614	1,090	1,638	257	234	81	314
Quality of learning received	85%	87%*	84%	84%	87%	89%	80%*
<i>Base: all receiving training</i>	5,012	1,656	2,255	330	306	94	371
Training enabling better job performance	85%	86%	84%	86%	86%	84%	84%
Amount of learning each week	80%	79%	81%	78%	75%*	83%	82%
Balance between time learning and working	76%	78%*	76%	71%	66%*	72%	79%
<i>Base: all</i>	5,122	1,695	2,316	334	308	95	374
Feedback on progress	85%	86%	84%	87%	87%	76%*	84%
Employer support	81%	80%	81%	84%	77%	84%	85%*
Assessment on the job	79%	83%*	79%	80%	69%*	75%	79%
<i>Base: all receiving English training (modularised)</i>	682	317	283	*	*	*	*
Quality of English learning received	81%	84%	84%*	*	*	*	*
<i>Base: all receiving maths training (modularised)</i>	833	365	366	*	*	*	*
Quality of maths learning received	82%	81%	88%*	*	*	*	*
<i>Base: all current apprentices and recent completers</i>	4,083	1,238	1,836	288	277	90	354
The way apprenticeship was managed in relation to COVID-19	82%	81%	80%*	84%	84%	89%	87%*

* highlights where figure is significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

Beyond these differences by sample group, there were various differences by level including:

- Level 2 apprentices were more likely than average to be satisfied with the quality of learning from their college or training provider (87%), whereas Degree apprentices were least satisfied in this respect (80%). Level 2 apprentices were also most likely to be satisfied with the way they were assessed on the job (83% vs. 79% overall).
- Level 5 apprentices were less likely than average to be satisfied with the amount of learning they received each week (75% vs. 80% overall); the balance between the time spent learning and working (66% vs. 76%); and the way they were assessed on the job (69% vs. 79%)
- Level 6+ non-degree apprentices were least satisfied in terms of the feedback they received on progress (76% vs. 85% overall).

By subject area, Construction and Engineering were more likely than apprentices overall to be satisfied with the amount of learning they received (each 85%) and the balance between learning and working (each 83%); they were also the sectors that received the most off-the-job learning (discussed in [Chapter 6](#)). Overall, those with compliant levels of off-the-job learning were more satisfied with these aspects of their apprenticeship than those not meeting the 20% off-the-job learning requirement (85% vs. 76% on the amount of training received; 83% vs. 69% on the balance between learning and working). In contrast, apprentices in Education and Health, with lower levels of off-the-job learning, reported comparatively low levels of satisfaction with the balance between learning and working (70% in both Health and Education). Health apprentices were also less likely than average to be satisfied with the amount of training received (77%; 10% were dissatisfied).

Table 8-7: Percentage satisfied with different aspects of apprenticeships, by subject area

<i>Column percentages</i>	ALL	Agriculture	Arts	Business	Construction	Education	Engineering	Health	ICT	Leisure	Retail	Science
<i>Base: all receiving training from a college or training provider</i>	3,164	255	151	727	364	206	604	445	285	178	314	59
Quality of learning received	85%	87%	78%*	87%	80%*	78%*	86%	84%	83%	89%	88%	87%
<i>Base: all receiving training</i>	5,012	303	183	977	428	327	716	804	371	287	512	72
Training enabling better job performance	85%	90%	83%	84%	84%	87%	87%	86%	80%*	90%*	86%	82%
Amount of learning each week	80%	78%	80%	78%	85%*	77%	85%*	77%*	79%	82%	77%	89%
Balance between time learning and working	76%	76%	79%	73%*	83%*	70%*	83%*	70%*	82%*	82%*	74%	77%
<i>Base: all</i>	5,122	313	190	1,006	438	331	732	811	377	297	523	72
Feedback on progress	85%	85%	81%	87%*	84%	82%	81%*	84%	84%	90%*	87%	87%
Employer support	81%	86%*	81%	80%	86%*	80%	85%*	77%*	85%	87%*	75%*	86%
Assessment on the job	79%	86%*	77%	77%*	82%	74%*	80%	80%	83%	88%*	78%	85%
<i>Base: all receiving English training (modularised)</i>	682	51	**	91	68	**	124	126	**	**	95	**
Quality of English learning received	81%	73%	**	72%*	83%	**	83%	83%	*	**	92%*	**

<i>Column percentages</i>	ALL	Agriculture	Arts	Business	Construction	Education	Engineering	Health	ICT	Leisure	Retail	Science
<i>Base: all receiving maths training (modularised)</i>	833	59	**	128	71	**	151	155	**	**	122	**
Quality of maths learning received	82%	75%	**	84%	88%	**	89%*	75%*	**	**	80%	**
<i>Base: all current apprentices and recent completers</i>	4,083	254	144	807	361	262	582	673	294	227	392	55
The way apprenticeship was managed in relation to COVID-19	82%	79%	81%	84%*	78%*	81%	78%*	80%	89%*	85%	87%	89%

* highlights where figure is significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher). ** indicates figure has been suppressed due to low base size.

There were some other statistically significant differences between specific subject areas and apprentices overall, with the following apprentices **less satisfied** than average:

- Arts apprentices with the quality of learning they received (78%)
- Education apprentices with the quality of learning they received) and the way they were assessed (78% and 74% respectively) Health apprentices with the support they received from their employer (77%)
- Engineering apprentices with the feedback on their progress (81%)
- ICT apprentices that their learning had enabled them to do a better job (80%).

In terms of demographics, female apprentices, who were less likely to receive compliant levels of off-the-job training, were less likely to be satisfied with associated aspects of their apprenticeship. They reported lower levels of satisfaction than their male counterparts with the amount of time spent learning (78% vs. 82% among male apprentices); the balance between time spent learning and working (73% vs. 78%); and the level of support they received from their employer (78% vs. 83%); and the quality of maths learning they received (79% vs. 85%).

There were similar patterns too for those aged 25 and over, who were also less likely to receive compliant levels of off-the-job training. They were less satisfied than their younger counterparts with the amount of time spent learning (76% vs. 83% among those aged under 25); the balance between time spent learning and working (71% vs. 79%); and the level of support they received from their employer (77% vs. 84%).

Table 8-8 shows the differences in satisfaction levels across different aspects of apprenticeships between apprentices on standards and those on frameworks. However, as discussed earlier in this report ([Chapter 2](#)), due to the timing of the reforms, a much larger proportion of current apprentices are undertaking standards than was the case for apprenticeship completers. Given that current apprentices generally report lower levels of satisfaction, a 'fairer' assessment would be to compare those doing standards vs. frameworks among current apprentices only.

Among current apprentices, those doing standards were more likely than those on frameworks to be satisfied with the way their apprenticeship was managed in relation to COVID-19 (84% vs. 70%) and the feedback they received on progress (84% vs. 76%). On the other hand, those doing frameworks were more likely to be satisfied with the way they were assessed on the job (82% vs. 76%) and the extent to which their employer has supported their apprenticeship (86% vs. 81%).

Table 8-8: Satisfaction with different aspects of apprenticeships, standards vs. frameworks

<i>Column percentages</i>	ALL	Standards	Frameworks	Current Standards	Current Frameworks
<i>Base: all receiving training from a college or training provider</i>	3,614	2,602	1,012	1,923	237
Quality of learning received	85%	85%	84%	85%	81%
<i>Base: all receiving training</i>	5,012	3,615	1,397	2,650	330
Training enabling better job performance	85%	85%	85%	85%	81%
Amount of learning received each week	80%	79%	83%*	78%	80%
Balance between time learning and working	76%	75%	78%*	74%	76%
<i>Base: all</i>	5,122	3,691	1,431	2,707	340
Feedback received on progress	85%	85%	84%	84%	76%*
Extent to which employer supported the apprenticeship	81%	80%	84%*	81%	86%*
Assessment on the job	79%	78%	85%*	76%	82%*
<i>Base: all who received English training (modularised)</i>	682	433	249	294	51
Quality of English learning	81%	79%	84%	76%	75%
<i>Base: all who received maths training (modularised)</i>	833	557	276	391	59
Quality of maths learning	82%	80%	86%	78%	74%
<i>Base: all current apprentices and recent completers</i>	4,083	3,256	827	2,707	340
The way apprenticeship was managed in relation to COVID-19	82%	84%	74%*	84%	70%*

* highlights where figure is significantly different from the average of the rest of sample.

This chapter has already discussed how pauses in learning due to COVID-19 were associated with lower levels of overall satisfaction with apprenticeships. This was also true in terms of satisfaction with most specific aspects of the apprenticeship. The largest difference in satisfaction between those who had experienced a pause and those who had not was in relation to the way their apprenticeship was managed in relation to COVID-19 (73% vs. 85%). They were also far less likely to be satisfied with the amount of learning received (74% and 82%).

Those who worked for their employer before starting their apprenticeship were less satisfied than those new to their employer across a number of key aspects. Following similar patterns to other groups who received non-compliant levels of off-the-job training, those already working for their employer were far less likely than their counterparts to be satisfied with the balance between learning and working (72% vs. 80% of those who were recruited to start their apprenticeship immediately), the extent to which their employer supported their apprenticeship (78% vs. 84%) and the amount of learning received (78% vs. 83%). They were also less satisfied with the way they were assessed on the job (80% vs. 84%).

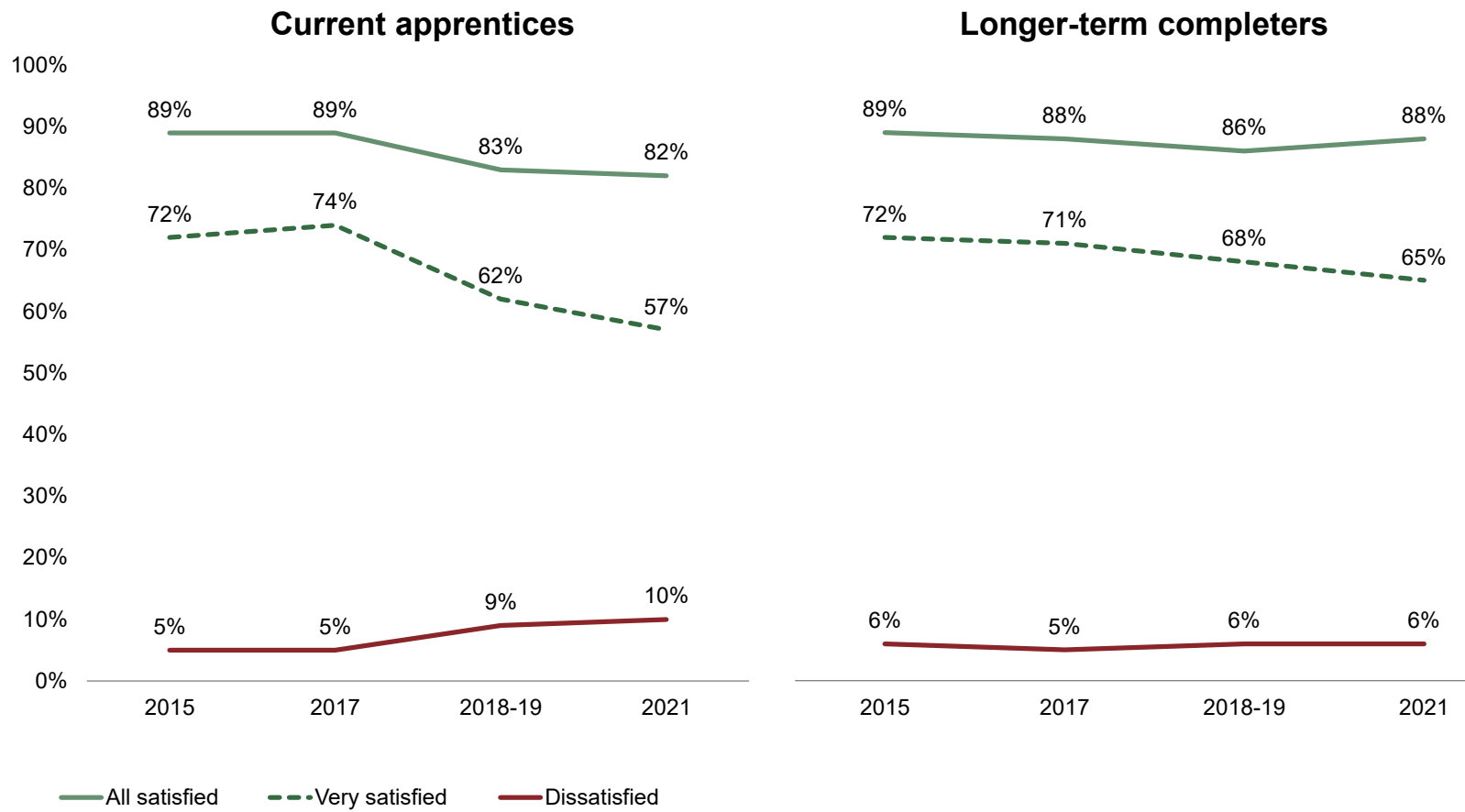
Apprentices who were dissatisfied with the quality of learning they received from their college or training provider (8% of those receiving this type of training) were asked why this was the case. Most commonly, they mentioned their tutors had not provided enough support (66%), that learning was irrelevant (35%, rising to 59% among Level 6+ apprentices) and knowledge gaps or inexperience among tutors (24%). A fifth (20%) also mentioned not enough time being spent on learning; this was less common among those with compliant levels of off-the-job training (13%).

Changes over time

Figure 8-3 shows how satisfaction levels have changed over time among current apprentices and longer-term completers. In 2021, more than four-fifths (82%) of current apprentices were satisfied with their apprenticeship, in line with 2018-19 (83%). However, the proportion satisfied overall has continued to decrease from around nine in ten apprentices (89%) who were satisfied in 2015 and 2017. The proportion of current apprentices very satisfied with their apprenticeship in the 2021 survey has also decreased to 57% (compared with 62% in 2018-19 and 74% in 2017). This in part reflects the shift over time to a higher proportion of apprentices being older (aged 25 and over) and undertaking apprenticeships at Level 4+ (among both groups, satisfaction is lower than younger apprentices and those undertaking apprenticeships at Level 2 or 3). As discussed earlier in this chapter, COVID-19 has had a large impact on satisfaction among this group; by excluding those who, to date, either experienced a pause or were furloughed, the overall satisfaction figure would increase to 84%.

Among longer-term completers, the proportion satisfied with their apprenticeship has remained much more stable over time. However there has also been a downward trend in the proportion that were very satisfied with their apprenticeship, falling from 72% in 2015 to 65% in 2021.

Figure 8-3: Satisfaction over time, by sample group



Base: Current apprentices: 2015 (2,033); 2017 (2,427); 2018-19 (2,355); 2021 (3,047).
 Base: Longer-term completers: 2015 (2,736); 2017 (2,767); 2018-19 (1,580); 2021 (1,039).

There were very few changes over time by level among current apprentices. The notable exception was an increase in overall satisfaction among Level 5 apprentices; close to four-fifths (79%) of these apprentices were satisfied in 2021, compared with just two-thirds (66%) in 2018-19. There were no statistically significant differences from 2018-19 in terms of subject area among current apprentices or when comparing those undertaking apprenticeship frameworks and standards with their 2018-19 counterparts.

Current apprentices aged 19 to 24 were less likely to be satisfied with their apprenticeship than they were in 2018-19 (80% vs. 84%). There were no differences in satisfaction compared with 2018-19 in terms of sex, ethnicity or disability status.

Among longer-term completers, there were no statistically significant changes from 2018-19 in terms of overall satisfaction by level, subject area or other key demographics, with the exception that those aged 25 and over were more satisfied in 2021 than they were in 2018-19 (91% vs. 85%).

Considering the specific elements where satisfaction was lower in 2021 than in 2018-19, there was a significant reduction in satisfaction among current Level 2 and 3 apprentices with the way they were assessed on the job (77% in 2021 vs. 84% in 2018-19) and the extent to which their employer supported their apprenticeship (81% vs. 86% in 2018-19).

Table 8-9 shows how levels of satisfaction with different aspects of apprenticeships has changed over time among current apprentices and longer-term completers.⁴¹ In 2021 fewer current apprentices and longer-term completers than in 2018-19 were satisfied with the way they were assessed on the job, the extent to which their employer supported their apprenticeship, and the balance between the time spent learning and working. The proportion of each group satisfied with these aspects in 2021 was between two and five percentage points lower than in 2018-19. Longer-term completers were however more satisfied with the amount of training received in 2021 (82%) than in 2018-19 (79%).

Considering the specific elements where satisfaction was lower in 2021 than in 2018-19, there was a significant reduction in satisfaction among current Level 2 and 3 apprentices with the way they were assessed on the job (77% vs. 84% in 2018-19) and the extent to which their employer supported their apprenticeship (81% vs. 86% in 2018-19).

⁴¹ Note, some minor wording changes were made to the aspects of apprenticeships covered in the 2021 survey. This included, in almost all cases, amending references of 'training' to 'learning'. The exception to this was the text previously worded as 'the quality of training received from your college or training provider'; in this case, 'training' was replaced with 'teaching'.

Table 8-9: Satisfaction with different aspects of apprenticeships among current apprentices and longer-term completers (2018-19 vs. 2021)

<i>Column percentages</i>	Current 2018-19	Current 2021	Longer- term completer 2018-19	Longer- term completer 2021
<i>Base: all receiving training from a college or training provider</i>	2,084	2,160	1,363	716
Quality of learning received	86%	84%	89%	86%
<i>Base: all receiving training</i>	2,277	2,980	1,503	1,016
Training is enabling better job performance	85%	84%	85%	86%
Amount of learning received each week	77%	79%	79%	82%*
Balance between time learning and working	77%	74%*	81%	77%*
<i>Base: all</i>	2,355	3,047	1,580	1,039
Feedback received on progress	83%	83%	86%	86%
Employer support for the apprenticeship	86%	81%*	82%	78%*
Assessment on the job	82%	77%*	87%	85%*
<i>Base: all who received English training (modularised)</i>	235	345	465	177
Quality of English learning received	82%	76%	86%	87%
<i>Base: all who received maths training (modularised)</i>	312	450	484	196
Quality of maths learning received	76%	78%	86%	90%

* highlights where figure is significantly different from 2018-19 result.

9. Apprenticeship outcomes

This chapter looks at the outcomes resulting from apprenticeships, starting with employment status, skills gained and changes to pay and promotion. Following this it looks at the impacts of apprenticeships on apprentices' jobs and future careers, their likelihood of continuing with their employer or within the same line of work, and whether they had any plans for further learning and training.

Key findings

- **99% of apprenticeship completers reported gaining skills during their apprenticeship.** The main skills gained were related to their current or desired area of work (94%); skills that can be used across a range of jobs (92%); communication skills (88%) and collaboration / team working (85%). A majority had improved their digital (69%), English (61%) and maths (53%) skills.
- **Most apprentice completers were in work at the time of the interview (94%).** The majority were in full-time work (83%), followed by employed part-time (6%) and self-employment (4%); 3% were unemployed and 2% were in education.
- **Almost all apprentices reported at least one positive impact on their job or career prospects since starting or completing their apprenticeship (95%).**
- **Among completers, two-fifths (39%) had since been promoted and two-thirds (65%) had received a pay rise. A third (34%) had received both;** this was predictably higher among longer-term completers (38% vs. 31% of recent completers). The following completers were all more likely to have received a pay rise: Level 6+ (79%) and Level 4 (75%) apprentices and those studying in Construction (80%) and ICT (79%).
- **Most apprentices that had received a promotion or a pay rise felt their apprenticeship had some influence in this** (83% for their promotion and 72% regarding their pay rise; in each case around a quarter felt was a direct result of the apprenticeship).
- **Most (70%) current apprentices planned to carry on working for the same employer once they completed their apprenticeship.** This was most common among those doing Level 6+ (78%) and specifically Degree apprenticeships (80%).
- **The majority of apprentices (91%) felt that their apprenticeship had prepared them well for what they wanted to do next.** Approaching half (46%) said it had prepared them very well.

- **A majority of apprentices were aware of post apprenticeship training options (71%),** had discussed further post-apprenticeship training with their employer (63%) and felt their employer supported their career development (81%).
- **There are positive signs of continuing increases in skills gained compared with earlier Apprenticeship Evaluation Surveys.** Virtually all longer-term completers (99%) in 2021 had gained skills during their apprenticeship, a slight but significant increase from 2018/19 (97%). They were more likely to report improved: Skills related to their area of work (93% vs. 88%); Communication skills (87% vs. 83%); Ability to work with others (85% vs. 80%); and Digital skills (67% vs 61% in 2018-19 for IT skills).
- **More longer-term completers in 2021 were working full-time at the time of interview (81%) than in the 2015, 2017 and 2018-19 surveys (each 74%-75%).**

Skills gained during apprenticeships

Recent and longer-term completers were asked which of a number of skills they had gained as a direct result of their apprenticeship. Virtually all (99%) felt they had acquired or improved skills during their apprenticeship, both in relation to their desired area of work (94%) but also skills and knowledge that could be used across a range of jobs and industries (92%). Almost nine in ten (88%) had improved their communication skills (88%) and / or skills related to working with others (85%).

In addition, a majority had improved their digital (69%), English (61%) and maths (53%) skills. Learners who undertook maths or English qualifications with a college or training provider as part of their apprenticeship were much more likely to say those skills had improved than average (83% of those who undertook English qualifications said their English skills improved, and 81% of those who undertook maths qualifications said their maths skills had improved).

Among recent completers, those that had undertaken apprenticeship frameworks were more likely to say they had gained or improved the following skills:⁴²

- Their ability to work with others (88% vs. 83%),
- Skills and knowledge useful across a range of jobs and industries (96% vs. 92%),
- Maths skills (58% vs. 49%).

⁴² In this section, differences in results between those doing apprenticeship standards and apprenticeship frameworks are usually analysed separately within the recent and longer-term completers to minimise any bias in terms of when apprenticeships standards and frameworks tended to be completed (given that apprenticeship standards are a newer form of apprenticeship).

Among longer-term completers, those undertaking apprenticeship frameworks were also more likely to say maths skills had improved (58% vs. 49% on standards). They were also more likely to say their English had improved (63% vs. 57%). Those on apprenticeship standards were however more likely to say they had gained management and leadership skills as a result of their apprenticeship (8% vs. 3% on frameworks).⁴³

As can be seen in Table 9-1 learners completing Level 2 apprenticeships were more likely to have gained communication skills (90%), skills that meant they were better able to work with others (88%), and to have improved their English (64%) and maths (59%).

Level 6+ apprentices were less likely than average to have gained each of the skills listed in Table 9-1 (though for digital skills and English the difference was not statistically significant).

Skills that could be used across a range of sectors were more commonly acquired by Level 5 apprentices (98%; in comparison just 76% of Level 6+ apprentices felt they had benefited in this way).

Table 9-1: Skills gained as a result of the apprenticeship (prompted), by level

<i>Row percentages</i>	Base	Skills related to current or desired area of work	Skills that can be used across a range of jobs	Communication	Better able to work with others	Digital skills	English	Maths
All	2,075	94%	92%	88%	85%	69%	61%	53%
Level 2	836	93%	92%	90%	88%	69%	64%*	59%*
Level 3	960	94%	93%	87%	84%	69%	59%	51%*
Level 4	109	95%	91%	87%	76%*	66%	59%	47%
Level 5	95	98%	98%*	86%	84%	61%	57%	47%
Level 6+	75	83%*	76%*	78%*	70%*	65%	56%	40%*

* highlights where figure is significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

⁴³ Note, management and leadership skills was not a prompted option in the survey, but coded using respondent verbatim.

Table 9-2: Skills gained as a result of the apprenticeship (prompted), by subject area

<i>Row percentages</i>	Base	Skills related to current or desired area of work	Skills that can be used across a range of jobs	Communication	Better able to work with others	Digital skills	English	Maths
Engineering	274	93%	93%	91%	86%	71%	60%	68%*
Leisure	130	94%	92%	89%	88%	62%	60%	50%
ICT	180	96%	94%	91%	87%	92%*	59%	39%*
Business	438	91%*	93%	89%	83%	66%	58%	43%*
Agriculture	115	96%	86%*	89%	86%	69%	59%	49%
Arts	91	89%	89%	87%	86%	83%*	62%	34%*
Retail	224	91%	89%*	87%	87%	67%	63%	58%
Construction	148	97%	95%	88%	90%	57%*	61%	69%*
Health	308	97%*	92%	85%*	83%	68%	64%	54%
Education	147	95%	90%	87%	82%	73%	63%	53%

Science was not included due to a low base size (20). * highlights where figure is significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

There were also differences by subject area. Gaining skills for their current or desired area of work was more commonly reported by those completing Health apprenticeships (97%), digital skills by those in Arts (83%) and particularly ICT (92%), and maths skills by those completing Construction (69%) and Engineering (68%) apprenticeships.

Younger apprentices aged under 19 were more likely to report the skills listed in the previous table:

- Communication skills (96% vs. 84% of those aged 25+)
- Working with others (93% vs. 78% of those aged 25+)
- Digital skills (77% vs. 63% of those aged 25+)

- English (68% vs. 58% of those aged 25+)
- Maths (61% vs. 48% of those aged 19-24).

This does not include skills related to the current or desired area of work and those that can be used across a range of different jobs and sectors. This is because these results were equally high across all age bands.

Apprentices who were new to their employer when they started their training had a much younger profile than those already employed by their employer. Hence consistent with the findings by age, just discussed, these apprentices were more likely to have acquired skills including being better able to work with others (89% vs. 81% of existing employees), improved communication skills (92% vs. 85%) and improved digital skills (72% vs. 65%).

Black / Black British apprentices were also more likely than average to have gained communication skills (96%), digital skills (88%) and improved their English (82%) and maths (78%).

There were no differences in the skills gained by gender or by whether the apprentice had a learning difficulty or disability or not.

In addition to being read a list of skills (those shown in Table 9-1 and Table 9-2) and being asked if they had developed any of these as a direct result of their apprenticeship, completers were asked if they had gained any other skills. Overall, 9% spontaneously mentioned enhanced personal development (higher among Level 5 (14%) and Health apprentices (12%)); 6% mentioned gaining management and leadership skills (higher among Level 4 and 5 apprentices, 12% and 21%; and also those aged 25+, 10%); 5% mentioned improved organisational and time management skills (rising to 7% of those aged 19-24); and 2% spontaneously mentioned customer service skills.

Current employment status of completers

The vast majority of completers (94%) were in work at the time of the interview, with most (83%) in full-time work. Six percent were employed part-time, 4% were self-employed, and 1% were on zero-hours contracts. Two per cent were in education. Only 3% were unemployed.

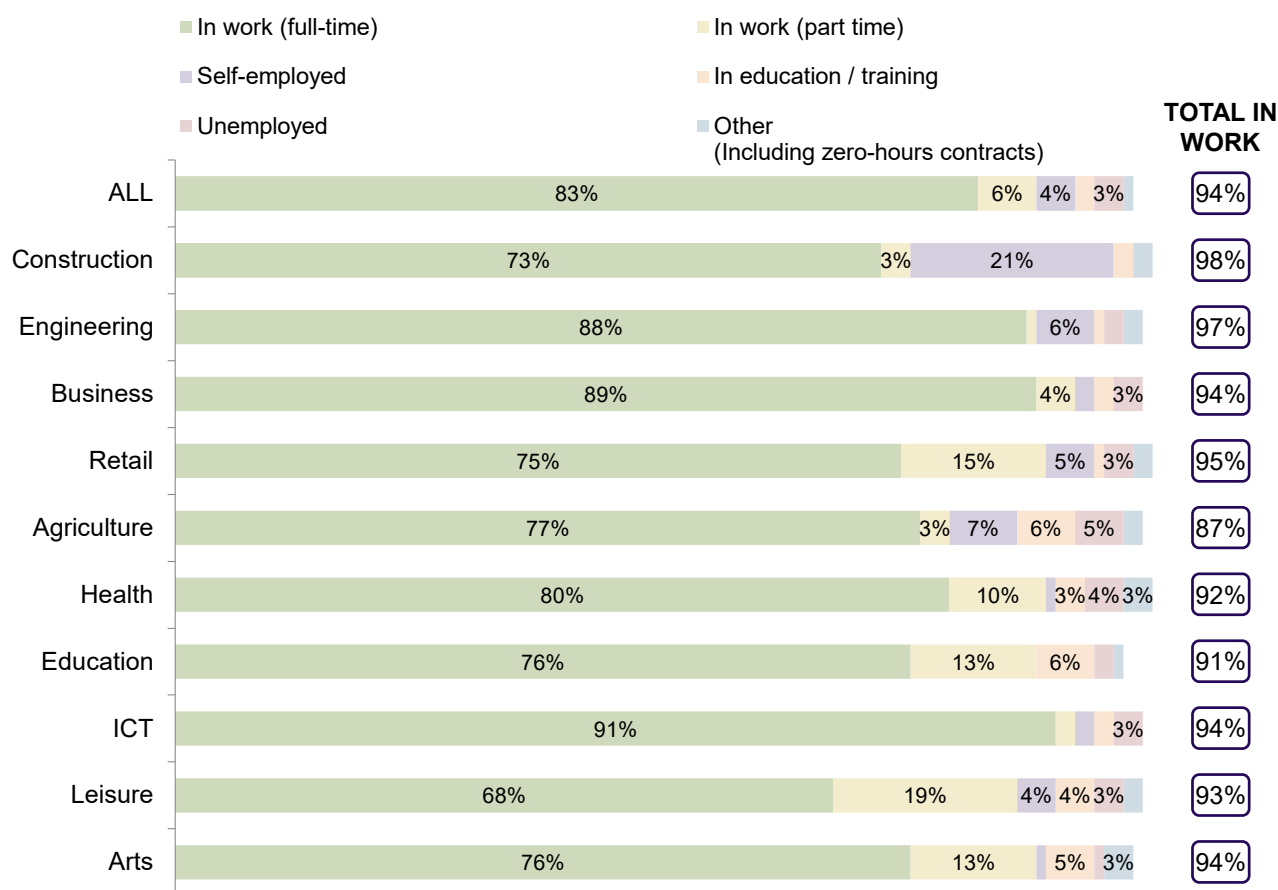
Recent completers were more likely than long-term completers to be in full-time work (86% vs. 81%) but less likely to be self-employed (3% vs. 5%) or in education (2% vs. 3%).

There were no substantial differences in current employment status between recent completers that had undertaken frameworks with those that had undertaken standards. However, longer-term completers that had undertaken standards were more likely to be employed full-time (84% vs. 78% on frameworks), while those that had undertaken frameworks were more likely to be self-employed (8% vs. 1% on standards). There was no difference in the proportion 'in work' overall.

Although there was little difference by level in terms of whether they were currently employed or not, there were differences in the type of employment. Level 2 completers were much less likely to be working full-time (79%; far lower than the 95% among Level 6+ and 99% among Level 4 completers) and more likely to be part-time (9%) or self-employed (5%).

There were also differences by subject area as can be seen in Figure 9-1. Those who undertook Engineering apprentices were most likely to be in work (97%), whereas those who did Agriculture were more likely than average to be engaged in education (6%). Those in Construction were particularly likely to be self-employed (21%), though this was also higher than average in Agriculture and Engineering (7% and 6% respectively).

Figure 9-1: Employment status of completed apprentices, by subject area



All apprenticeship completers (2,075), Construction (148), Engineering (274), Business (438), Retail (224), Agriculture (115), Health (308), Education (147), ICT (180), Leisure (130), Arts (91). Science not shown due to low base size (20).

Subject area data labelled for categories 3% or more.

Employment outcomes varied by age, gender and ethnicity, with apprentices who were younger, female and BAME less likely than average to be in work at the time of the survey. Specifically:

- Among under 19s, 92% were in work compared to the 94% average, and at 96% among those aged 19-24
- 93% of females were in work compared to 96% of males. Females were also less likely than males to be employed full-time (80% vs 87%) and to be self-employed (2% vs 5%), though they were more likely to be employed part-time (10% vs 2%)
- 91% of BAME apprentices were in work at the time of the survey compared to 95% of white completers. White completers were also slightly more likely to be self-employed than BAME completers (4% vs 1%).

There were no differences in employment outcomes among those with disabilities or learning difficulties.

Completers who were NEET prior to the apprenticeship were more than twice as likely than those who were not to be unemployed at the time of the survey (8% vs 3%). Around nine in ten (89%) completers who were NEET prior to their apprenticeship were in work at the time of the survey and 3% were in education, though these results were not significantly different from the average.

There were some regional differences: completers in the South East were more likely to be in work (97% compared to the 94% average), completers in the North East were more likely to be in education or training (5% compared to the 2% average), and those in the West Midlands were more likely to be unemployed (5% compared to the 3% average).

Whether still employed by the apprenticeship employer

Overall, seven in ten (69%) completers were still employed by the same organisation with whom they completed their apprenticeship. Unsurprisingly, this was higher among recent completers (74%) than longer-term completers (65%). It was also higher among those that had already been employed by their employer before starting the apprenticeship (72%) than those recruited to the apprenticeship (66%).

Among longer-term completers, those undertaking apprenticeship standards were more likely to still be employed by the same organisation with whom they completed their apprenticeship, compared to those on frameworks (72% vs. 59%). There were no differences between the two groups among recent completers.

By level, those who undertook Level 4 or 5 apprenticeships were the most likely to still be with the same employer (82% compared with 65% of Level 2, 70% of Level 3 and 71% Level 6+ apprentices).

There were also differences by subject area, with completers in Leisure (50%), Construction (55%), Agriculture (58%), Arts (58%) and Retail (61%) least likely to have remained with their employer.

The likelihood of remaining with the same employer increased with age, ranging from just under two-thirds (63%) among those under 19 to three-quarters (75%) of those aged 25 and over.

Among completers who left the employer that they did their apprenticeship with, seven in ten (69%) remained in the same broad line of work. This was less likely for those who undertook Level 2 apprenticeships (63%), apprenticeships in Retail (55%) and those undertaking apprenticeship standards (64% vs. 73% on frameworks). Those doing

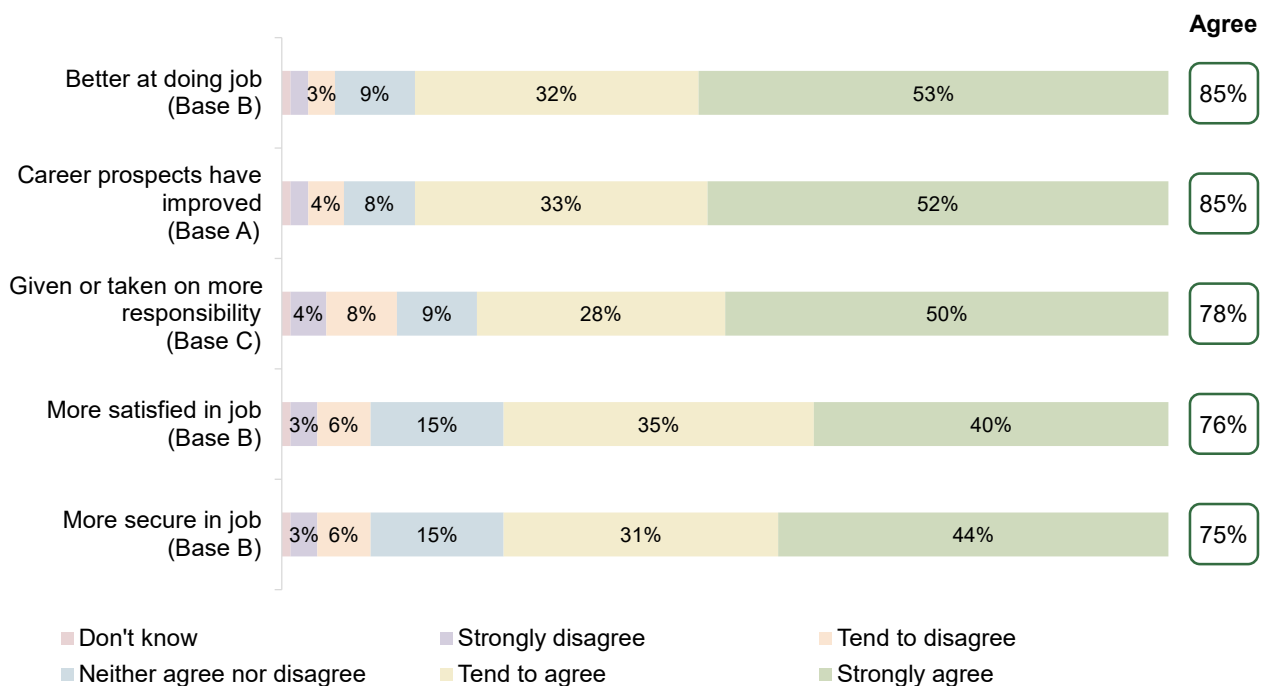
Construction and Health apprenticeships were more likely than average to have stayed in the same broad line of work (both 83%).

Impacts at work and on career prospects

All current apprentices and apprentice completers were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with up to five statements in relation to jobs and careers. These included, for example whether their job prospects had improved, and for those employed whether they were better at doing their job or more satisfied at work. The full list is shown in Figure 9-2.

Almost all apprentices (95%) reported at least one positive impact on their job or career prospects since starting or completing their apprenticeship. A slight majority (56%) reported that all five positive outcomes applied. Apprentices were most likely to agree they were better at doing their job (85%) and that their career prospects had improved (85%). Around three-quarters agreed they had been given or taken on more responsibility (78%), were more satisfied with their job (76%), and felt more secure in their job (75%)

Figure 9-2: Impacts at work since starting apprenticeship (prompted)



Base A – all apprentices (5,122); Base B – apprentices in work (4,933); Base C – apprentices in work excluding self-employed (4,917).

Current apprentices were more likely than completers to acknowledge all five positive impacts (59% current vs. 51% longer-term completers and 53% of recent completers).

Among recent completers, those that undertook apprenticeship frameworks were more likely than those that did standards to report all five positive outcomes (57% vs. 49%). There was no difference between these two groups among longer-term completers on the same measure.

Among recent completers, those that had completed apprenticeship frameworks were more likely to:

- Feel more secure in their job (79% vs. 73% among those completing standards)
- Have been given or taken on more responsibilities (82% vs. 74%)
- Say their career prospects had improved (91% vs. 85%).

Among longer-term completers, those that had completed apprenticeship frameworks were more likely to:

- Be more satisfied with their job (77% vs. 70%)
- Feel better at doing their job (87% vs. 82%).

The number of positive impacts realised was also influenced by both level and subject area. Apprentices at Level 2 and 3 were more likely than those at Level 4 and above to have benefitted from all five positive impacts (59% vs. 47%). More specifically, since starting or completing their apprenticeship Level 2 and 3 apprentices were more likely than Level 4+ apprentices to be satisfied with their job (78% vs. 69%); feel more secure in their job (78% vs. 67%); have taken on more responsibilities in their job (79% vs. 74%); feel they were better at doing their job (86% vs. 81%); and feel their job prospects have improved (86% vs. 83%).

Apprentices in Agriculture (69%), Construction (67%) and Engineering (69%) were more likely than average to have benefited in all five ways. They were more likely to agree they were now: more satisfied with their job (85%, 86% and 85% respectively); more secure in their job (81%, 83% and 84%), taking on more responsibility (88%, 89% and 85%); better at their job (93%; 92% and 92%), and to feel their career prospects had improved (93%, 93% and 90%).

ICT apprentices also more likely than average to report being satisfied with their job (81% vs. the 76% average) and that their career prospects had improved (89% vs. the 85% average).

Apprentices that had not worked for the employer before starting the apprenticeship were more likely to report all five positive outcomes than those who had (66% vs. 48%).

Demographic factors including region, age, sex, disability, and NEET status also affected whether positive outcomes had been achieved. The following groups were more likely to report all five of the positive job and career outcomes than the 56% average:

- Younger apprentices (73% of under 19s vs. 59% of 19-24s and 44% of those aged 25 plus)
- Male (59% vs. 53% of females)
- Apprentices who were NEET prior to their apprenticeship (65% vs. 56% who were not NEET).
- Apprentices in the East of England (61%; apprentices in London were significantly less likely to report all five (51%)).

Apprentices with a disability were less likely to report all five positive outcomes (44%) than apprentices with no disability or learning difficulty (57%). Apprentices with no disability or learning difficulty were significantly more likely to agree with each individual positive impact except for job satisfaction.

Promotions and pay rises

Four in ten (39%) completers had been promoted at work since completing their apprenticeship, as can be seen in Figure 9-3. Two-thirds (65%) had received a pay rise and one-third (34%) had received both a pay rise and a promotion. As might be expected given the longer time period over which the change could occur, longer-term completers were more likely than recent completers to have been promoted (42% vs. 36%), received a pay rise (67% vs. 62%) and to have both occur (38% vs. 31%).

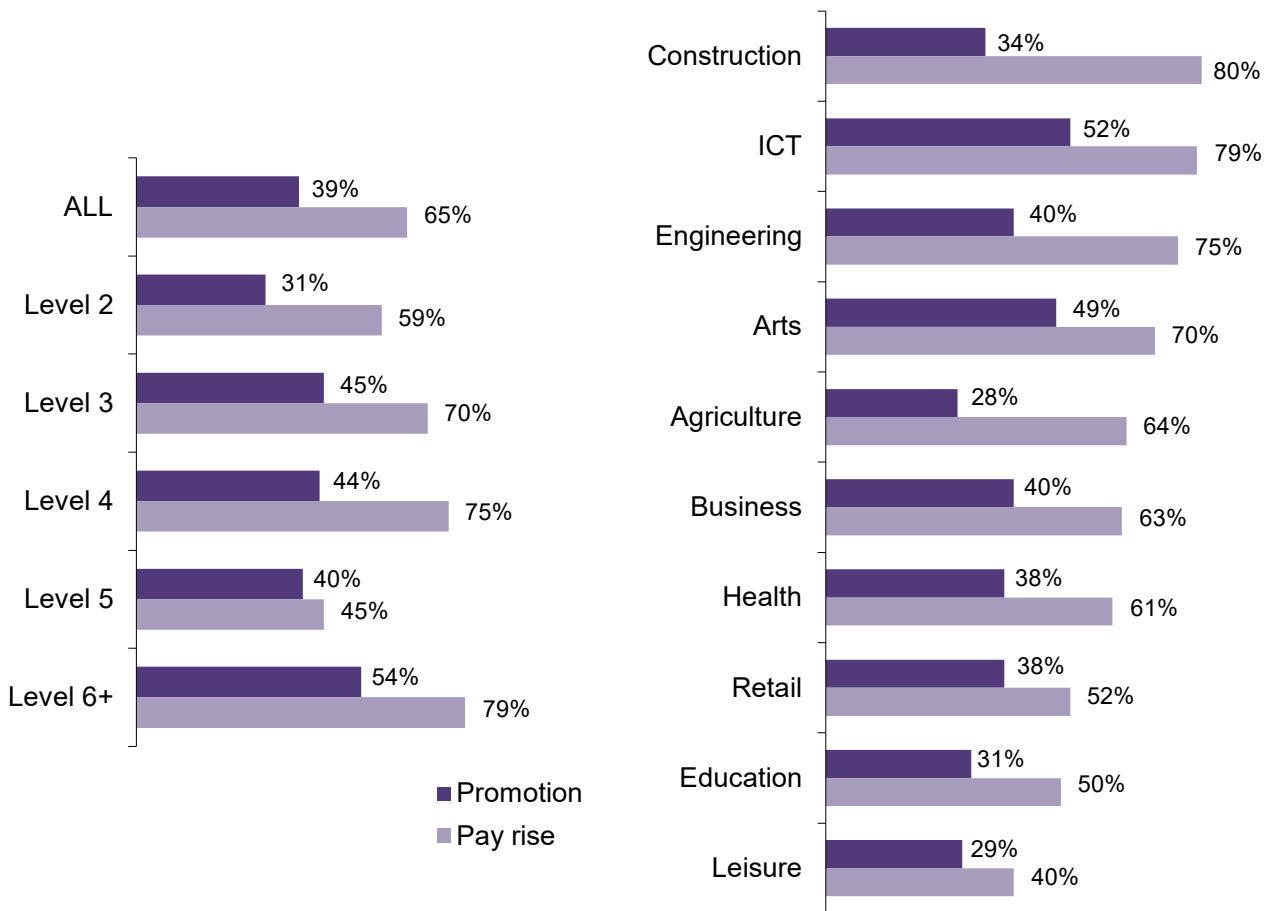
Among recent completers, there were no significant differences between those that had completed apprenticeship frameworks and those that had completed standards in regard to whether a pay rise or promotion had been received. However, among longer-term completers, those on apprenticeship standards were more likely to have received a promotion (48% vs. 37% on frameworks).

There were some differences in impacts on pay and progression by level of apprenticeship and by subject area. Those completing lower-level apprenticeships were less likely to have received promotion or a pay rise: 31% of those who undertook Level 2 apprenticeships had been promoted at work and 59% had received a pay rise, whereas among Level 6+ apprentices 54% had been promoted and 79% had received a pay rise. The pattern was not linear by level. For example, those who completed Level 3 apprenticeships were more likely than average to have been promoted (45%) and to have received a pay rise (70%), while Level 5 apprenticeships were the least likely to

have received a pay rise (45%) and the most likely to have received neither positive impact (44%).

ICT apprenticeship completers were the most likely to have received a promotion (52%) and among those most likely to have received a pay rise (79%) alongside Construction (80%) and Engineering (75%) apprentices.

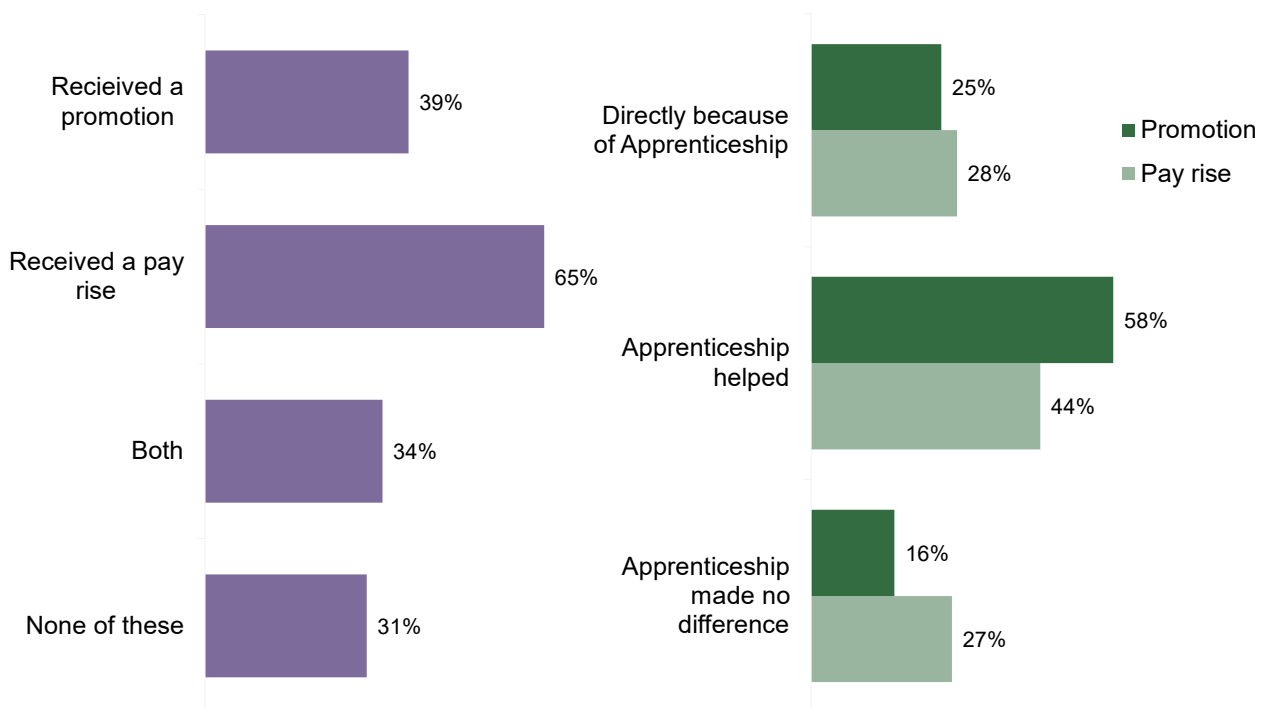
Figure 9-3: Impact on pay and progression among apprenticeship completers, by level and subject area



Base: All apprenticeship completers (2,075), Level 2 (836), Level 3 (960), Level 4 (109), Level 5 (95), Level 6+ (75). Construction (148), ICT (180), Engineering (274), Arts (91), Agriculture (115), Business (438), Health (308), Retail (224), Education (147), Leisure (130). Science not shown due to low base size (20).

Around a quarter thought their pay rise (28%) or promotion (25%) was a direct result of the apprenticeship. Most of the remainder thought the apprenticeship helped achieve these outcomes. Apprenticeship completers (longer-term and recent) were more likely to feel their pay rise would have happened anyway without the apprenticeship (27%) than thought this about their promotion (16%).

Figure 9-4: Whether received a promotion and / or pay rises and whether these were due to the apprenticeship or not



Base: Left hand chart all completed apprentices (2,075); Right hand chart completers who received a promotion (807) and completers who received a pay rise (1,328).

A number of groups were particularly likely to say their promotion was at least in part due to their apprenticeship, as follows:

- Black / Black British apprentices (98%)
- Level 5 completers (97%, compared to just 65% of Level 6+ apprentices)
- Construction apprentices (96%)
- Those aged 25+ (89%).

A different group of apprentices were more likely to say their apprenticeship had some influence on their pay rise:

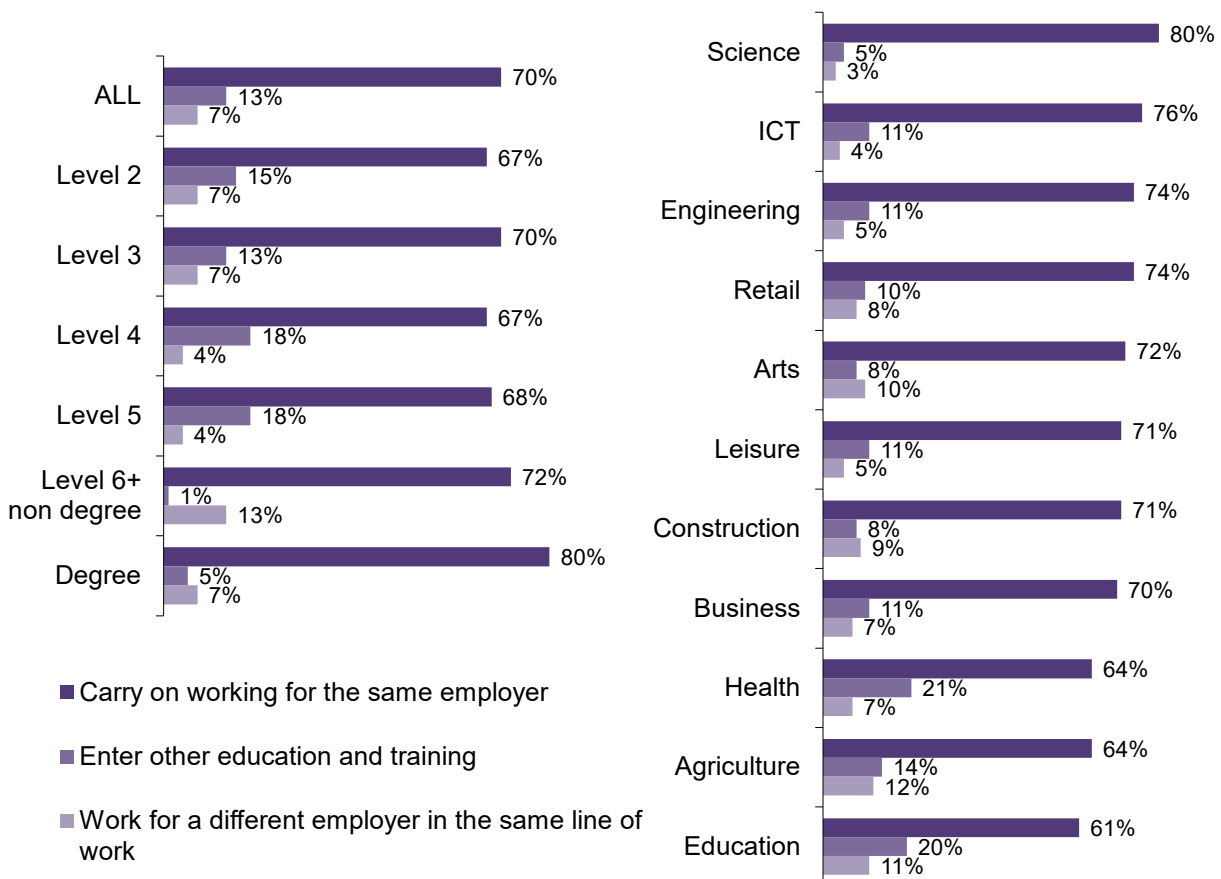
- Construction and Engineering apprentices (83% and 80% respectively; it was lower than average in Business (68%) and Retail (58%))
- Those in the South West (79% vs. just 64% in London)
- Those completing frameworks (77% vs. 67% of those on standards; this was true among both recent and longer-term completers)
- Level 3 apprentices (76%)
- White apprentices (73%).

Post apprenticeship plans

Current apprentices were asked about their future plans and the role that their apprenticeship has played in their planning. Seven in ten (70%) current apprentices planned to carry on working for the same employer, one in ten (9%) planned to work for a different employer (7% in the same line of work, 3% in a different line of work) and 1% planned to go self-employed. Quite a large proportion (13%) planned to enter other education and training. Overall, 6% were unsure of their future plans.

Figure 9-5 shows the most common future plans of current apprentices by level and subject area. Those who were undertaking higher level apprenticeships were most likely to plan to continue working for the same employer (Level 6+, 78%), with those who were undertaking lower-level apprenticeships least likely (Level 2, 67%). Those who were doing Level 4 or 5 apprenticeships were most likely to be planning on entering other education or training (18%).

Figure 9-5: Most common post-apprenticeship plans (prompted)



Base: All current apprentices (3,047); Level 2 (859), Level 3 (1,356), Level 4 (225), Level 5 (213), Level 6+ non-degree (76); Degree (318). Science (52), ICT (197), Engineering (458), Retail (299), Arts (99), Leisure (167), Construction (290), Business (568), Health (503), Agriculture (198), Education (184).

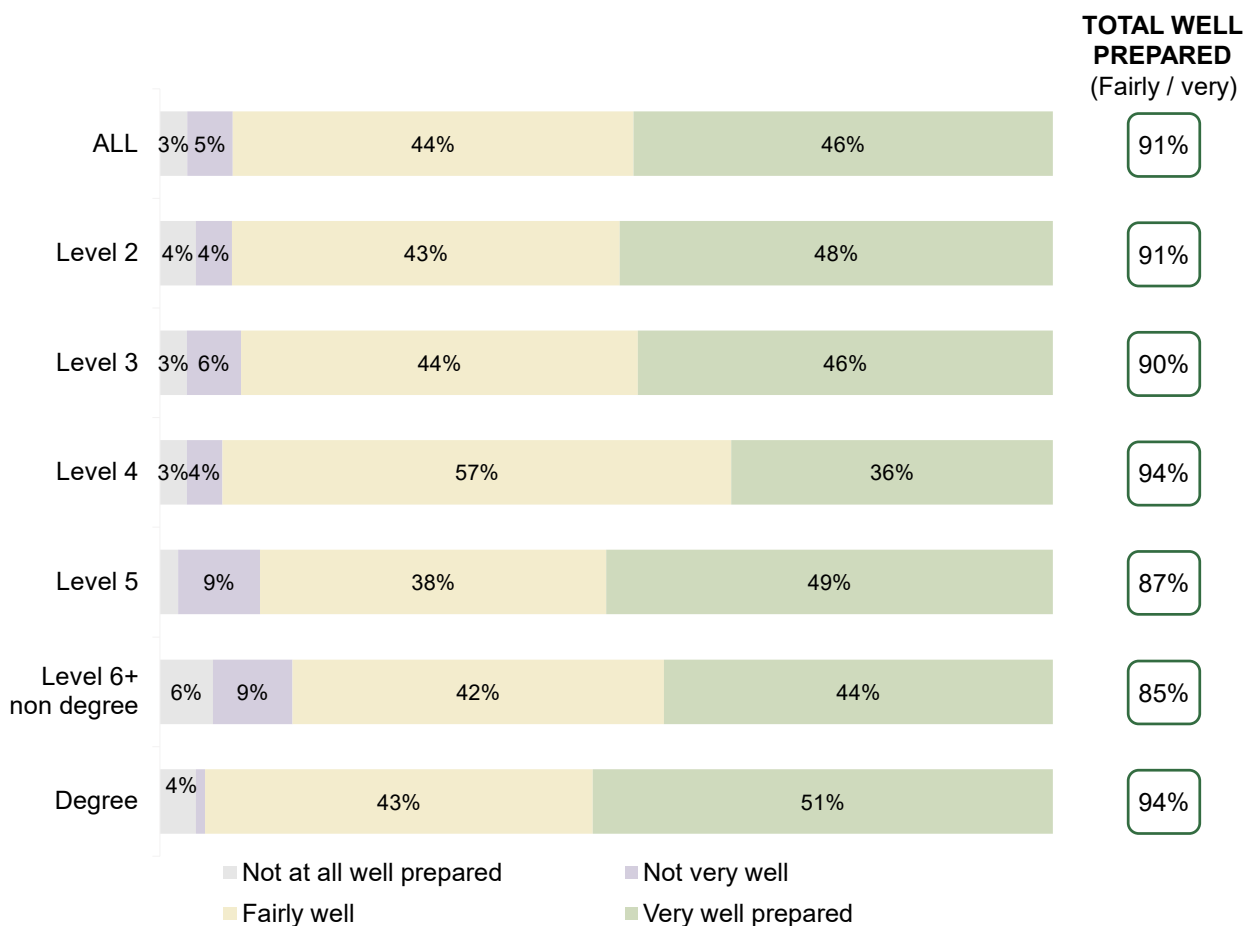
Engineering apprentices were more likely than average to plan to work for same employer (74%), whereas those doing apprenticeships in Education were more likely to plan to move into other education or training (20%) or work for another employer in the same line of work (11%). Agriculture apprentices were also more likely than average to plan to work for another employer in the same line of work (12%).

There were some differences by gender, ethnicity, and disability. Planning to carry on working for the same employer was more common among males (72%), white apprentices (71%), and apprentices with no learning difficulty or disability (71%). Alternatively, plans to enter other education and training was more common among females (15% vs. 11% among males) and BAME apprentices (18% vs. 12% of white apprentices). Apprentices with a learning difficulty were more likely than average to plan to change employer though in the same line of work (15%), but the majority (58%) planned to stay with their current employer.

The vast majority of apprentices (91%) felt that their apprenticeship had prepared them well for what they wanted to do next, with close to half (46%) feeling that it had prepared them very well (Figure 9-6). There was a small, but significant, difference between current apprentices and completers, with completers more likely to agree that their apprenticeship had prepared them well (92% vs. 90% of current apprentices).

Differences by level and subject were relatively slight. Level 4 apprentices were less likely than average to feel the apprenticeship had prepared them very well for what they want to do after their apprenticeship (36%). Business apprentices were the least likely to feel the apprenticeship had prepared them very well (41%), while those studying Health were the most likely to report this (50%). Female apprentices (49%) and under 19s (51%) were also more likely to feel the apprenticeship had prepared them very well for their next step.

Figure 9-6: Extent to which apprenticeship had prepared apprentices for their desired post-apprenticeship activity



Base: All apprentices (modularised) (2,426); Level 2 (813), Level 3 (1,075), Level 4 (165), Level 5 (151), Level 6+ non degree (222), Degree (179). Note: Data labels <3% removed.

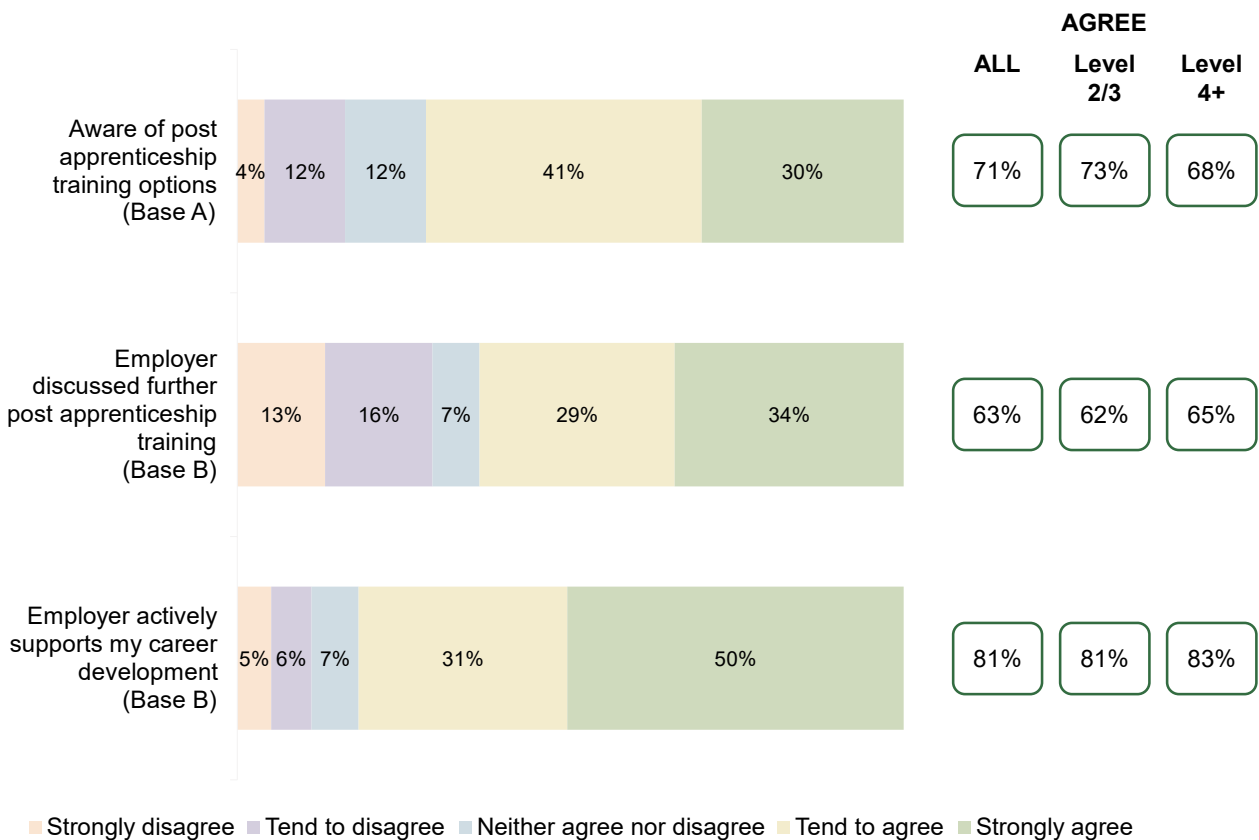
Virtually all current apprentices felt they were likely to complete their apprenticeship (97% with 2% reporting that were not likely to complete). The following groups were more likely to say they were unlikely to complete than overall: those undertaking Level 2 (4%) and Retail (5%) apprenticeships, BAME apprentices (5% vs. 2% of white apprentices) and those whose training was currently paused due to COVID-19 (9%).

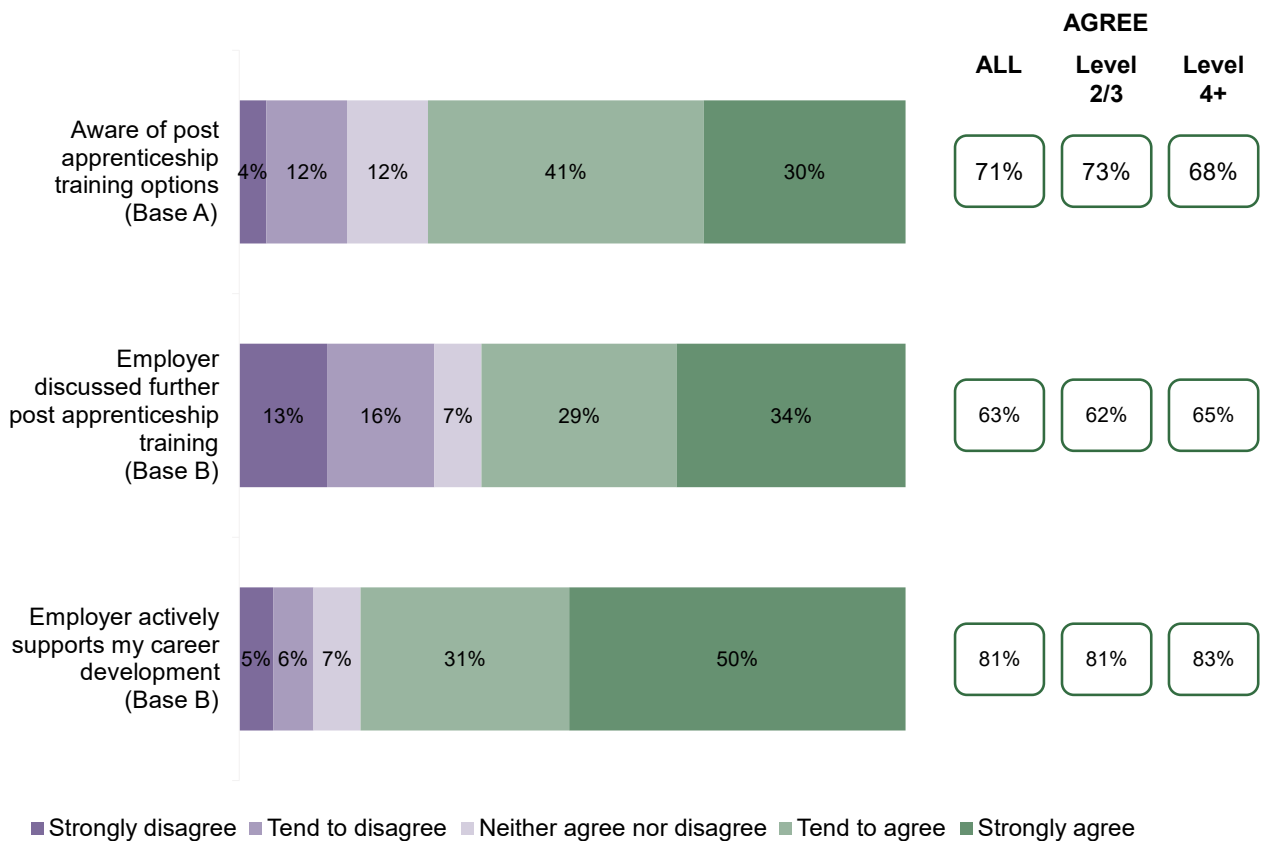
Only a small number of respondents (27) were unlikely to complete their apprenticeship. The main reasons given when asked why included not having enough support from their employer; not having time to do it, and that it was too difficult to balance work and training.

Plans for future training

As shown in Figure 9-7, seven in ten (71%) current apprentices and completers in work agreed that they were aware of post-apprenticeship training options. Similarly approaching two-thirds (63%) of employed completers agreed that their employer had discussed further post-apprenticeship training, and four-fifths (81%) that their employer actively supported their career development (50% strongly agreed that this had been the case).

Figure 9-7: Awareness of future training options and employer support with future training





Base A: Apprentices in work (modularised); All (2,362), Level 2/3 (1,830), Level 4+ (532).
 Base B: Apprenticeship completers with employer, excluding zero hours contracts / self-employed (modularised); All (888), Level 2/3 (764), Level 4+ (124).

Level 2/3 apprentices (73%) and Engineering apprentices (79%) were more likely than average to be / have been aware of post-apprenticeship options. The reverse was true of Level 4+ apprentices (68%) and those in Education (60%) and Business (67%).

ICT apprentices (74%) were most likely to agree that their employer had discussed post-apprenticeship options with them, whereas Arts (40%) and Retail apprentices (52%) were least likely to agree. Retail apprentices were also least likely to agree that their employer actively supported their career development (72%).

There were some demographic differences in level of agreement with the statements, particularly by region. Apprentices from London and the West Midlands were least likely to agree that that their employer had discussed further training options (53% and 51%). Apprentices from London, the West Midlands and the South East were the least likely to be aware of post-apprenticeship training options (62%, 64% and 67% respectively).

Alternatively, apprentices in the North of England were more likely to agree that they were aware of post-apprenticeship training options (83% North East and 78% North

West). Apprentices from the South West (90%) were most likely to agree that their employer actively supported their career development and apprentices from the East of England were least likely to agree (72%).

As well as regional differences there were also differences by gender, age and ethnicity:

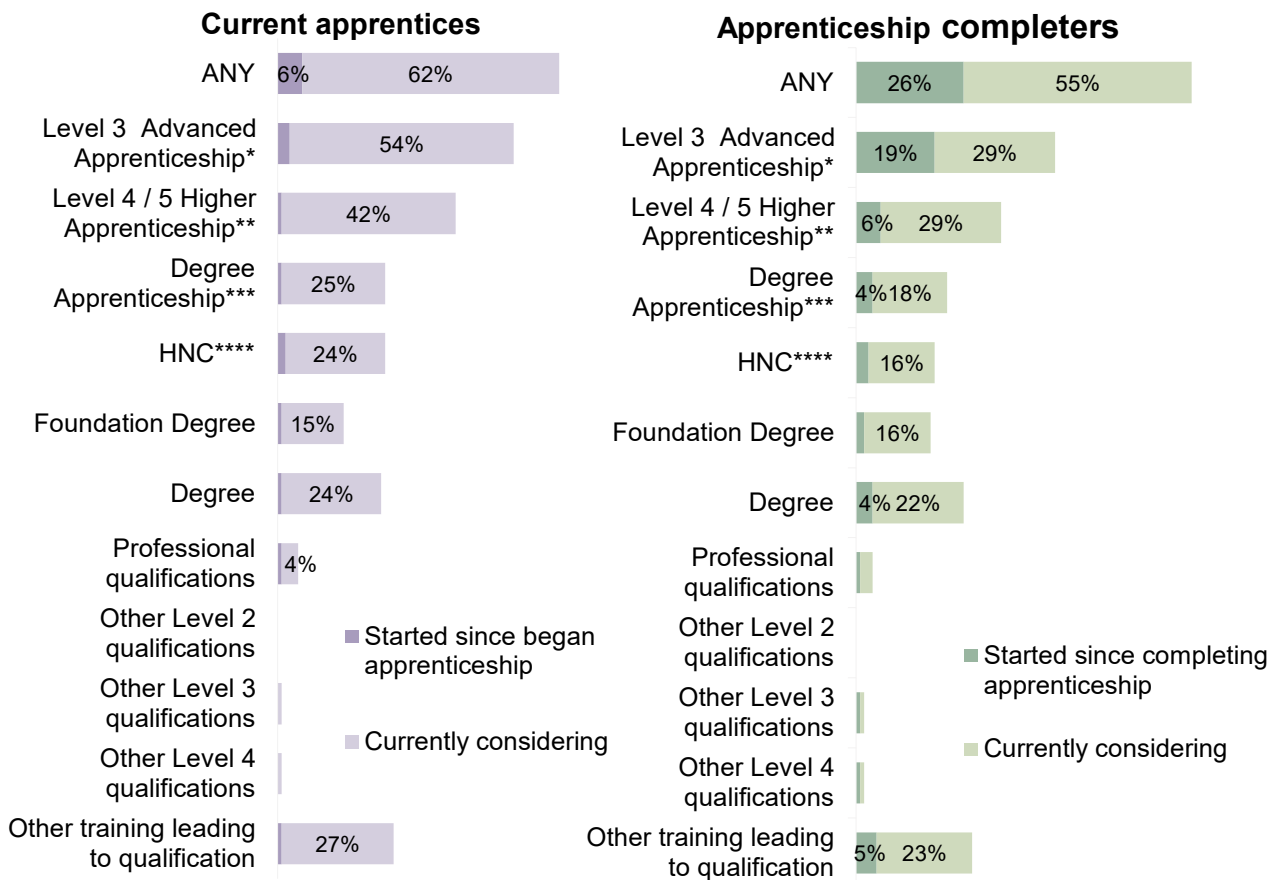
- Male apprentices were more likely than female apprentices to agree that they were aware of post-apprenticeship training options (73% vs 69%) and that their employer actively supported their career development (84% vs 78%)
- Under 19s were more likely than over 25s to agree that they were aware of post-apprenticeship training options (83% vs 65%)
- White apprentices were more likely than BAME apprentices to agree that they were aware of post-apprenticeship training options (72% vs 64%).

There were also some differences by apprenticeship type, with those on frameworks more likely than those on standards to agree that their employer had discussed further training with them (66% vs. 60%) and that they were aware of post apprenticeship training options (77% vs. 70%).

As can be seen in Figure 9-8, a quarter (26%) of those who have completed their apprenticeships had started a new qualification, and 6% of those still undertaking their apprenticeship had begun an additional qualification alongside. More than half of completers (55%) and current apprentices (62%) were considering a further qualification.

Two in ten (19%) Level 2 completers had started a Level 3 apprenticeship and three in ten (29%) were considering it. In comparison, only 6% of Level 2 and 3 apprenticeship completers had progressed to a Level 4 or 5 apprenticeship, though three in ten (29%) were considering it. One in twenty-five (4%) Level 2 to 4 apprenticeship completers had started a degree apprenticeship and approaching one in five (18%) were considering it.

Figure 9-8: Further qualifications started or being considered among current apprentices and apprenticeship completers



Base: Current / completed apprentices (modularised) (1,442 / 984). *Level 2 only (403 / 410), **Levels 2-4 only (1,145 / 908): ***All except Degree apprentices (1,285 / 962), **** Levels 2-3 only (1,035 / 853). Data labelled for categories accounting for 4% and over.

Changes over time

Virtually all longer-term completers (99%) in the 2021 study had gained skills during their apprenticeship, a slight but significant increase from 2018/19 (97%) though similar to 2015 and 2017 levels (both 98%).

Compared with 2018-19, longer-term completers in 2021 were more likely to have gained:

- Skills related to their area of work (93% vs. 88%)
- Communication skills (87% vs. 83%)
- Ability to work with others (85% vs. 80%)
- Digital skills (67% vs 61% - although in 2018-19 it was referred to as IT skills).

Table 9-3 shows how there has been small but significant improvement in all skill areas over time, with the exception of English and maths.

Table 9-3: Skills gained as a direct result of the apprenticeship (prompted), 2015-2021

<i>Column percentages</i>	2015	2017	2018-19	2021
Have more appropriate skills / knowledge for area of work	88%	90%	88%	93%*
Skills / knowledge for a range of jobs / industries	88%	88%	90%	91%
Communication skills	-	-	83%	87%*
Better able to work with others	81%	82%	80%	85%*
Digital skills~	59%	60%	61%	67%*
English skills	61%	61%	62%	60%
Maths skills	58%	59%	54%	54%
<i>Base: all longer-term completers</i>	<i>2,736</i>	<i>2,767</i>	<i>1,580</i>	<i>1,039</i>

~Prior to 2021 digital skills was referred to as IT skills. Communication skills results not shown for 2015 and 2017 as this option was previously unprompted. * highlights where figure is significantly different from 2018-19 result.

There was no significant change in the proportion of completers in each cohort in work at the time of the survey with 93% in both 2021 and 2018-19 as can be seen in Table 9-4. However, there were more apprentice completers working full-time in 2021 than there were in 2018-19 and earlier years (81% vs. 74%-75%) and fewer working part-time.

Table 9-4: Employment status of apprenticeship completers, 2015-2021⁴⁴

<i>Column percentages</i>	2015	2017	2018-19	2021
In work (full-time)	74%	74%	75%	81%*
In work (part-time)	15%	14%	11%	7%*
Self-employed	3%	4%	5%	5%
In education / training	2%	2%	3%	3%
Unemployed	5%	5%	4%	4%
Other (including zero hours contracts)	1%	2%	3%	1%
IN WORK	92%	91%	93%	93%
<i>Base: all (long-term) completers</i>	3,748	3,398	1,580	1,039

* highlights where figure is significantly different from 2018-19 result.

For impacts at work and on career prospects (listed in Table 9-5 below), among current apprentices there were no significant differences between 2021 and 2018-19. A similar proportion were more satisfied with their job (76% vs 76%); more secure in their job (75% vs 75%); given or taken on more responsibilities (78% vs 79%); better at their job (85% vs 87%); and had their career prospects improve (84% vs 86%). However current apprentices on apprenticeship standards were more likely to say they felt more secure in their job than in 2018-19 (74% vs. 70%). There were no other significant differences between those doing either apprenticeship frameworks or apprenticeship standards and their 2018-19 counterparts.

Results among current apprentices have generally been consistent over time, with the exception that in 2017 current apprentices were more likely than current apprentices in 2021 to be satisfied with their job (82% vs. 76%), feel more secure in their job (80% vs. 75%), feel they were performing better in the job (89% vs. 85%) and to perceive that their career prospects had improved (88% vs. 84%).

Among longer-term completers there were some larger differences compared with 2018-19. There was an increase in the proportion of apprentices who have been given or taken on more responsibility (78% in 2021 vs 72% in 2018-19); those who felt they were better at doing their job (85% vs. 81%); and those whose career prospects improved (86% vs.

⁴⁴ Note – there are differences across the four surveys in the gap between completion and the time of interview, which may underlie some of the differences. In 2021 and 2018-19 the interval was 15-25 months, compared with 13-22 months for the 2017 survey and 12-20 months in 2015.

79%). Additionally, longer-term completers in 2021 were more likely than completers in 2018-19 to have had any positive outcome from their apprenticeship (95% vs. 91%).

Table 9-5: Impacts at work and on career prospects, 2015 to 2021

<i>Column percentages</i>	Current 2015	Current 2017	Current 2018-19	Current 2021	Completers 2015	Completers 2017	Completers 2018-19	Completers 2021
More satisfied with job	78%	82%	76%	76%	71%	75%	72%	74%
More secure with in job	76%	80%	75%	75%	68%	74%	71%	75%
Better at doing job	85%	89%	87%	85%	80%	84%	81%	85%*
<i>Base: all current and completers employed (including self-employed)</i>	2,033	2,427	2,355	3,047	2,407	2,511	1,444	961
Been given or taken on more responsibility	76%	80%	79%	78%	70%	75%	72%	78%*
<i>Base: all current and completers employed~</i>	2,033	2,427	2,355	3,047	2,407	2,511	1,372	914
Career prospects improved	86%	88%	86%	84%	80%	82%	79%	86%*
ANY POSITIVE OUTCOMES	94%	96%	95%	94%	91%	92%	91%	95%
<i>Base: all</i>	2,033	2,427	2,355	3,047	2,736	2,767	1,580	1,039

~Prior to 2018-19, this included self-employed individuals. * highlights where figure is significantly different from 2018-19 result.

There was no significant difference in the proportion of 2021 longer-term completers and 2018-19 completers to have been promoted at work (42% vs 39%), although this remained higher than in 2017 and 2015 (35% and 32% respectively). Among those who were promoted, more apprentices in 2021 than in 2018-19 said their promotion was a direct result of their apprenticeship (25% vs 18%), also reflecting a longer-term trend, as shown in Table 9-6. Additionally, more completers from 2021 had received a pay rise than completers from 2018-19 (67% vs 58%) and attributed their pay rise to their apprenticeship (27% vs. 21%).

Table 9-6: Impacts on progression and pay, 2015 to 2021⁴⁵

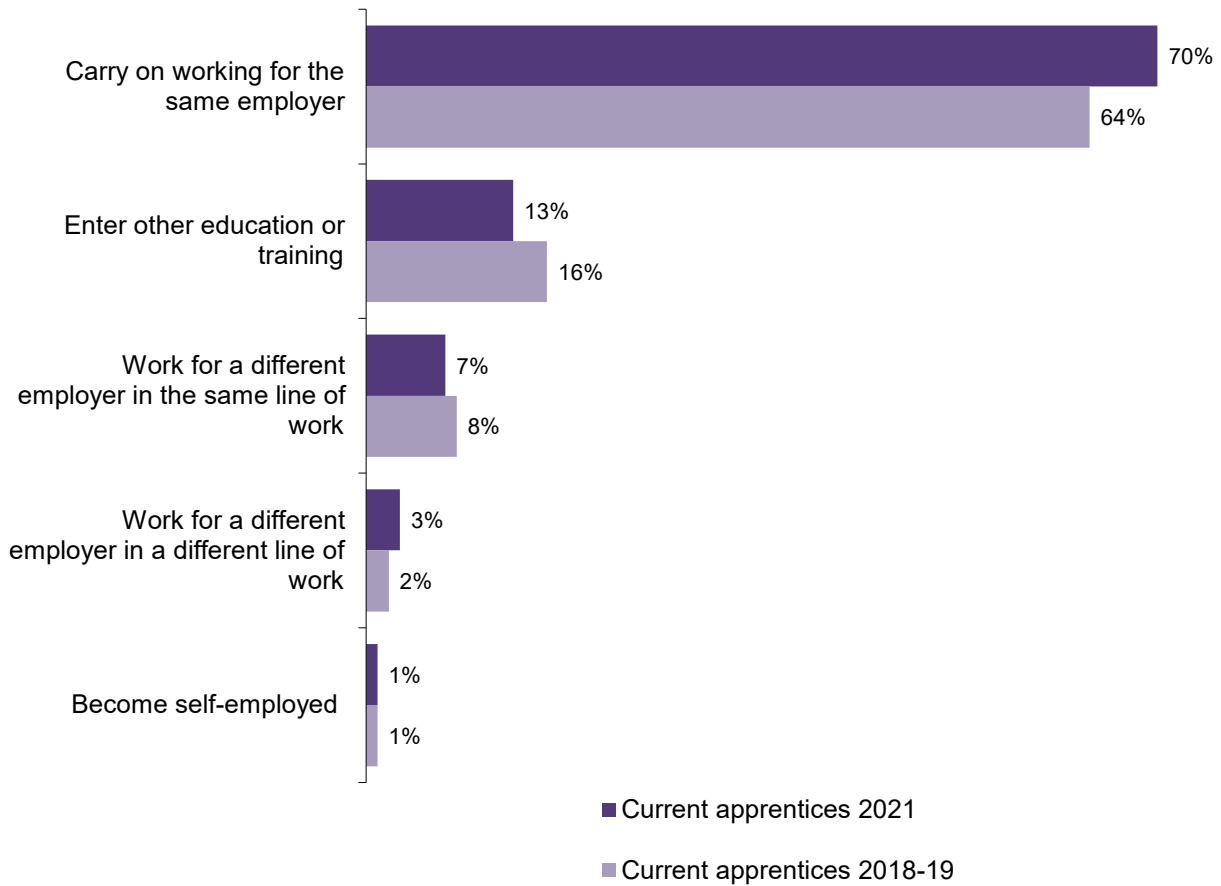
<i>Column percentages</i>	2015	2017	2018-19	2021
Received a promotion	32%	34%	39%	42%
Received a pay rise	48%	51%	58%	67%*
<i>Base: all longer-term completers</i>	2,736	2,767	1,580	1,039
Promotion a direct result of apprenticeship	19%	22%	18%	25%*
<i>Base: all longer-term completers who were promoted since completing</i>	852	916	608	438
Pay rise a direct result of apprenticeship	27%	28%	21%	27%*
<i>Base: all longer-term completers who received a pay rise since completing</i>	1,297	1,347	901	687

* highlights where figure is significantly different from 2018-19 result.

As can be seen in Figure 9-9, more current apprentices in 2021 planned to carry on working for the same employer after completing than in 2018-19 (70% vs 64%), and were less likely than in 2018-19 to plan on entering education or training (13% vs 16%). These changes from 2018-19 were evident among current apprentices on apprenticeship standards in particular (70% working for the same employer vs. 64% in 2018-19; and 13% in other education vs. 18% in 2018-19), however there were no significant changes among those who were on apprenticeship frameworks.

⁴⁵ Note – there are differences across the four surveys in the gap between completion and the time of interview, which may underlie some of the differences. In 2021 and 2018-19 the interval was 15-25 months, compared with 13-22 months for the 2017 survey and 12-20 months in 2015.

Figure 9-9: Plans after completing apprenticeship for current apprentices (2021 vs. 2018-19) (prompted)



Base: Current apprentices 2021 (3,047) and 2018-19 (2,355).

Longer-term completers were more likely to say their apprenticeship had prepared them well for what they wanted to do next than in 2018-19 (95% vs. 88%). There was no significant change among current apprentices, nor was there any change over the same period for current apprentices on standards or those on frameworks specifically.

A higher proportion of current apprentices in 2021 (97%) felt they were likely to complete their apprenticeship than current apprentices in 2018-19 (95%). The difference was in the proportion thinking this quite likely (17% vs 15%); in both years four-fifths (80%) thought this very likely. There were no significant changes from 2018-19 when distinguishing between those on apprenticeship standards and apprenticeship frameworks.

10. Experiences of standards apprentices who did not complete their apprenticeships

This chapter covers the results of the survey of 541 non-completers, who left an apprenticeship before completing between 1 September 2019 and 31 December 2020 (unless they subsequently started another apprenticeship).⁴⁶ The survey includes responses of people who dropped out right at the beginning of their apprenticeship through to those who dropped out at any point up until during their EPA. Respondents are referred to as non-completers, where appropriate their responses are compared to those who *completed* their apprenticeship from the learner survey who will be referred to as completers.⁴⁷

The chapter starts with a brief summary of the profile of non-completers, before focusing on the point at which non-completers left their apprenticeship and the reasons why they did not complete their apprenticeship.

We then look at the impact that COVID-19 had on the delivery of those who undertook some of their training during the pandemic and compare it to the impact that it had on those who completed their apprenticeship at some point after March 2020 when the impact of the pandemic was first felt.

Following this we look at satisfaction levels among non-completers and compare them to the satisfaction levels of completers. The chapter concludes with what non-completers had done since they finished their apprenticeship and where appropriate compare it to what completers had done.

Key findings

- **Four in ten (40%) reported that personal or domestic factors contributed to their non-completion**, most commonly a job or career change (11% of all non-completers), mental health issues (9%) and caring responsibilities (8%).
- The most common apprenticeship-related reasons that contributed to apprentices not completing were: **not enough time for learning / training (44%), training not being as good as they had hoped (43%) and the apprenticeship being badly run or poorly organised (41%)**.

⁴⁶ All non-completers sampled were on apprenticeship standards.

⁴⁷ Comparisons are made with completer group only, and not with current apprentices, as it is possible some current apprentices will eventually become non-completers. Comparing non-completers with completers allows for investigation of potential reasons for the two different outcomes.

- **The single most common *main* reason for not completing was being fired or made redundant (11%),** followed by not getting on with employer (10%), not having enough time for learning (9%), a job or career change (9%), the apprenticeship being stopped or cancelled (7%) and no longer wanting to work in the field of the apprenticeship (7%).
- **Four in ten (42%) non-completers had training that took place during COVID-19.** These non-completers were more likely than recent completers to have been made redundant by their employer (19% vs 4%), changed their employer (20% vs 7%) or had their training paused (33% vs 21%).
- Approaching six in ten (58%) **apprentices whose apprenticeship took place during the COVID-19 pandemic said that changes to the training were made as a result.** These changes were far more likely to be viewed as having had a negative impact (43%) than a positive one (6%), though more than half (53%) said the changes made no difference to how they felt about the apprenticeship.
- Around four in ten (43%) non-completers said their apprenticeship was as expected. The most common ways the apprenticeship differed from expectations was **apprentices being treated worse than expected by their training provider or employer (15%), training not being as detailed as expected (8%) and not being taught the range of subject areas that they expected (7%).**
- The **mean number of months non-completers spent on their apprenticeship was 9 months.** Slightly more than a quarter (27%) completed 12 months or more.
- **Overall satisfaction was much lower among non-completers than completers:** 52% of non-completers were satisfied overall with their apprenticeship compared to 88% of completers.
- **The most common reason for dissatisfaction was a lack of support from the training provider, college or tutor (52%).**
- **Two-thirds (65%) of non-completers were satisfied with the quality of the training they received,** much lower than found among completers (85%).
- The most common reasons for being dissatisfied with the quality of training received from **the training provider was that the tutors did not provide enough support or were unhelpful or disorganised (68%).**
- **83% of non-completers continued in work immediately on after leaving their apprenticeship (44% with their apprenticeship employer).**

Profile of non-completers

Unlike the main survey, all non-completers surveyed were on standards.⁴⁸ Table 10-1 shows the level and subject area profile of non-completers according to the ILR population. Non-completers were predominantly Level 2 and Level 3 and concentrated in the Business, Health and Retail subject areas.

Table 10-1: Apprenticeship level and subject area profile of non-completers, according to population information from ILR

<i>Column percentages</i>	% of population
Level 2	32%
Level 3	46%
Level 4	8%
Level 5	8%
Level 6+	3%
Agriculture	1%
Arts	<0.5%
Business	37%
Construction	4%
Education	1%
Engineering	9%
Health	23%
ICT	5%
Leisure	2%
Retail	17%
Science	<0.5%
Other	<0.5%

Base: All apprentices that had not completed their apprenticeship (89,760). Source: Individualised Learner Record

⁴⁸ Understanding the reasons that apprentices on standards did not complete was a priority. Previous research into research for non-completion had focussed on frameworks, which have since been phased out.

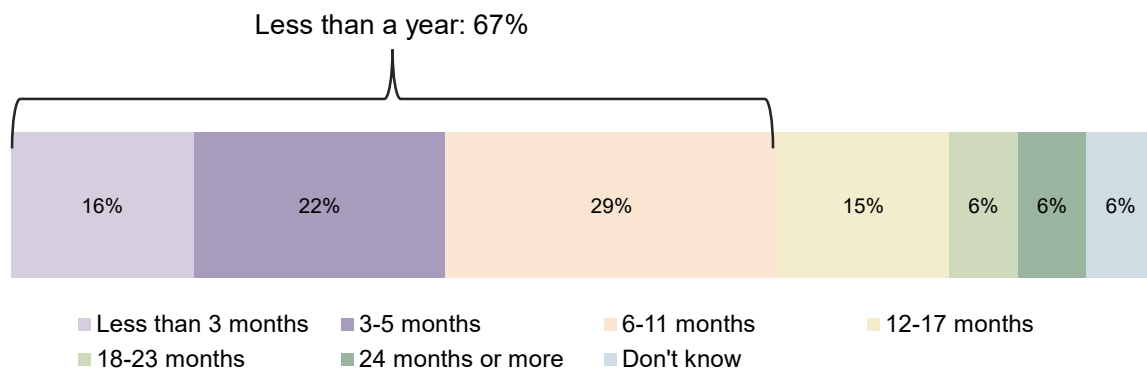
Around a fifth of non-completers were aged under 19 when they started their apprenticeship, a quarter (26%) were aged between 19 and 24 years old, leaving more than half (55%) in the 25 and over age band. This reflects a slightly older population than the completer sample (40% over the age of 25).

Among those surveyed, there was fairly even split between male and female apprentices (51% vs. 49%). Non-completers were predominantly White (81%), though 19% were BAME which was higher than among current apprentices, recent completers or longer-term completers. The proportion of non-completers with either a disability or learning difficulty (9%) was higher than among both longer-term (5%) and recent completers (7%).

Point at which learners left their apprenticeship

Figure 10-1 shows the proportion of non-completers to have dropped out by the number of months they had completed of their apprenticeship (6% were unsure when they left, which explains why the figure only reaches 94%). One in six (16%) dropped out within the first three months, two-thirds (67%) dropped out in the first 12 months, leaving just over a quarter (27%) completing at least 12 months. The average number of months of the apprenticeship completed before leaving was nine.

Figure 10-1: Proportion of non-completers leaving by number of months of apprenticeship completed



Base: All non-completers (541).

Apprentices in Business (33%) and Engineering (42%) were more likely than average to have done a year or more before they dropped out, whereas apprentices in Retail (17%) and Health (19%) were less likely to have completed at least a year. Level 2 apprentices were more likely than average not to have completed 12 months (73% vs. the 67% average).

There were also some demographic differences: white apprentices were more likely to have completed less than 12 months (70% vs. 54% among BAME apprentices, while males were more likely to have completed a year or more (32%) than females (22%).

Reasons for not completing

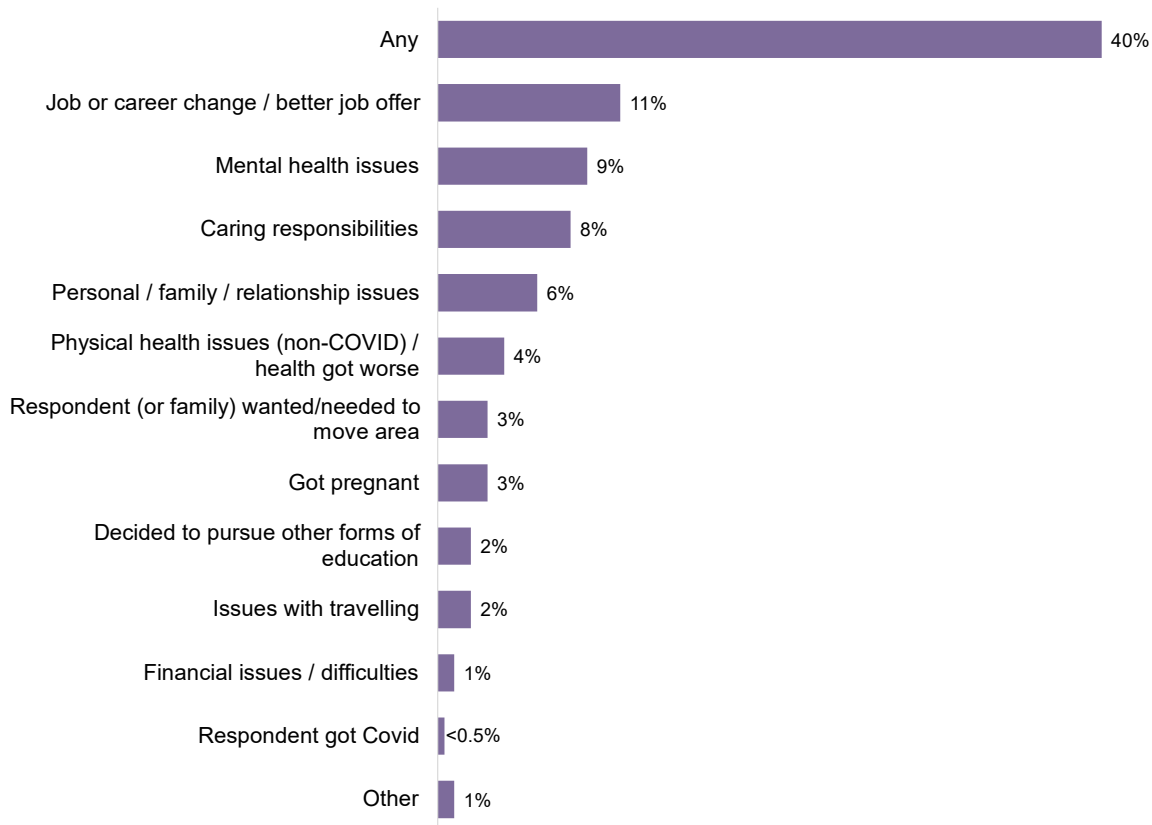
This section explores why respondents did not complete their apprenticeship. In the survey respondents were asked if a number of reasons were key, part of the reason or not reasons for them not completing; if personal or domestic reasons for them not completing and if so, what these were; and then which was the single most important factor.

Four in ten (40%) non-completers said that personal or domestic factors were at least part of the reason for not completing. Personal or domestic factors were more likely than average to be cited by:

- Non-completers who had been undertaking Health apprenticeships (58%)
- Level 2 apprentices (47%)
- Non-completers aged between 19 and 24 (46%).

The most common personal or domestic reasons, as shown in Figure 10-2, were a job or career change (11% of all non-completers) followed by mental health issues (9%) and caring responsibilities (8%).

Figure 10-2: Personal or domestic reasons for not completing (unprompted)



Base: All non-completers (541).

As well as personal and domestic reasons, respondents were asked whether a number of apprenticeship-related reasons contributed to them not completing. Figure 10-3 shows reasons cited by at least one in ten non-completers. The three most common reasons, each mentioned by just over two-fifths, were not having enough time for learning (44%), the training not being as good as hoped (43%) and the apprenticeship being badly run or poorly organised (41%). Around a third no longer wanted to work in the job role of the apprenticeship (33%), and a similar proportion wanted to work in the job role but thought they could progress as well without completing the apprenticeship (30%) or found the apprenticeship too difficult (29%).

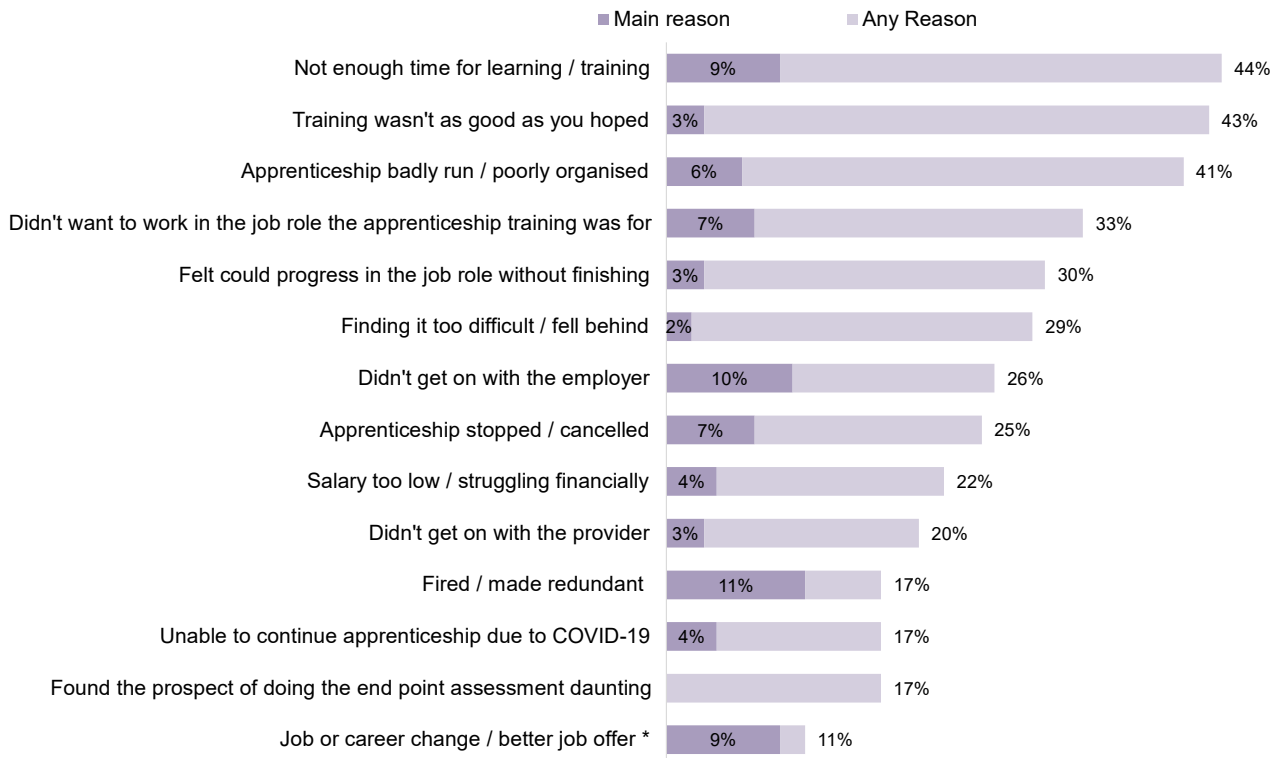
There were some differences in reasons given by subject area and level:

- Not enough time for training and learning was more of a reason for apprentices on Business apprenticeships (51%) and by those on Level 4+ apprenticeships (54%).
- Training not being as good as hoped was more often a reason for non-completion for apprentices on Retail apprenticeships (53%).
- Deciding they no longer wanted to work in the job role the apprenticeship was training for was more likely to be selected by those on Level 3 apprenticeships (38%).
- Thinking they could progress / do well in the job role without actually finishing the apprenticeship was a more common reasons for those on Business (37%) and Retail (41%) apprenticeships.
- Finding the apprenticeship too difficult or falling behind was more likely than average to have been a reason by those on Level 4/5 apprenticeships (39%, in comparison this was a factor for only 23% of Level 2 apprentices).

Figure 10-3 also shows the proportion who chose each of the reasons as the single main reason for not completing, with the most common reasons being:

- Being fired or made redundant (11%).
- Not getting on with the employer (10%).
- Not having enough time for the learning element (9%).
- Job or career change or getting a better job offer (9%).
- No longer wanting to work in job the apprenticeship was training for (7%).
- The apprenticeship being stopped or cancelled (7%).

Figure 10-3: Main and contributing reasons why respondent did not complete their apprenticeship



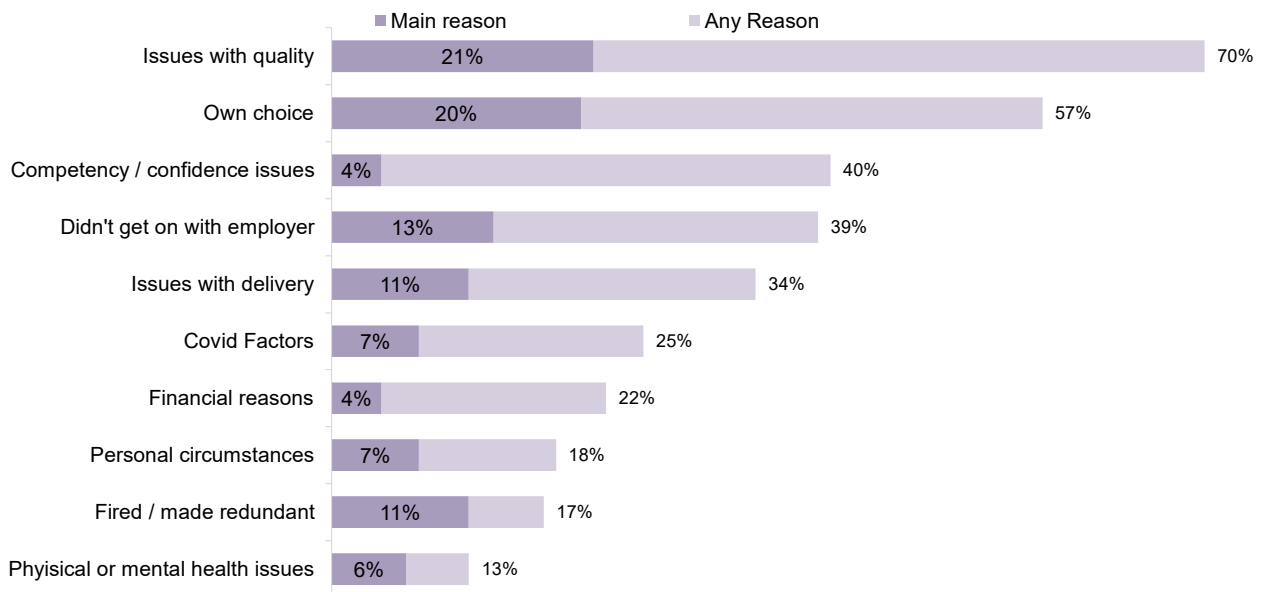
Base: All non-completers (541) Responses prompted unless statement ends with *

Figure 10-4 summarises reasons for not completing into broader, grouped categories.⁴⁹ It shows that seven in ten non-completers (70%) had issues with quality and a fifth (21%) selected quality issues as their main reason for leaving. Fewer (57%) left at least in part

⁴⁹ **Issues with quality included the following responses:** training wasn't as good as hoped (43%); apprenticeship badly run / poorly organised (41%); the negative impact COVID-19 had on the way the apprenticeship was delivered (17%); not enough time for learning or training (44%). **Own Choice included:** thought they could progress do well in the job role of the apprenticeship without actually finishing the apprenticeship (30%); decided they didn't want to work in the job role the apprenticeship was training for (33%); job or career change / better job offer (11%); decided to pursue other forms of education (2%). **Competency or confidence issues included:** Finding it too difficult / fell behind (29%); found the prospect of doing the end-point assessment daunting (17%); apprentice / employer / provider didn't think they'd pass the end-point assessment (9%). **Didn't get on with employer / provider included:** didn't get on with employer (26%); didn't get on with provider (20%). **Issues with delivery included:** apprenticeship stopped or cancelled (25%); unable to continue apprenticeship due to COVID-19 (17%); Issues with travelling (2%). **COVID factors included:** the negative impact COVID-19 had on the way the apprenticeship was delivered (17%); unable to continue apprenticeship due to COVID-19 (17%); respondent got COVID (<1%). **Financial reasons included:** salary too low / struggling to get by financially (22%); financial issues / difficulties (1%). **Personal circumstances included:** caring responsibilities (8%); personal / family / relationship issues (6%); got pregnant (3%); respondent wanted / needed to move area (3%). **Physical or mental health issues included:** mental health issues (9%); physical health issues (4%); respondent got COVID (<1%).

through their own choice, though a similar amount cited it as being the main reason they left. Alternatively, four in ten (40%) had competency or confidence issues that contributed to leaving but only 4% said this was the main reason they left. Those aged 25 plus were more likely to cite competency issues, such as finding the apprenticeship too difficult.

Figure 10-4: Grouped reasons why non-completers did not complete their apprenticeship



Base: All non-completers (541).

Table 10-2 gives a breakdown of the contributing reasons for not completing by sector subject area, level, age and ethnicity and sex. It shows for example that under 25s and White apprentices were more likely than average to say not getting on with their employer and the decision being their own choice were reasons. Male apprentices were more likely than female apprentices to say being fired or made redundant was a reason for not completing (21% vs. 12%)

Table 10-2: Contributing (grouped) reasons for not completing the apprenticeship

Row percentages	Base	Issues with quality	Own choice	Competency issues	Did not get on with employer	Issues with delivery	Covid Factors	Financial reasons	Personal circumstances	Fired/made redundant	Physical or mental health
All	541	70%	57%	40%	39%	34%	25%	22%	18%	17%	13%
Business	148	76%*	58%	47%*	38%	32%	27%	18%	15%	15%	8%*
Engineering	89	68%	59%	31%	43%	32%	28%	28%	9%*	29%*	16%
Health	108	60%*	52%	40%	39%	35%	17%*	18%	32%*	6%*	19%*
Retail	92	68%	67%*	33%	37%	28%	24%	27%	21%	16%	18%
Level 2	219	66%	56%	33%*	35%	35%	23%	23%	21%	15%	18%*
Level 3	234	70%	59%	39%	40%	36%	25%	24%	18%	19%	11%
Level 4+	88	75%	57%	50%*	41%	28%	25%	16%	16%	16%	10%
Under-19	135	73%	70%*	32%	47%*	32%	26%	37%*	7%*	24%*	15%
19-24	144	65%	69%*	34%	47%*	37%	25%	31%*	23%	18%	13%
25+	262	71%	48%*	45%*	32%*	33%	24%	13%*	20%	13%*	12%
White	428	70%	61%*	39%	42%*	32%*	23%	22%	17%	17%	12%
BAME	112	68%	44%*	44%	24%*	44%*	31%	22%	22%	16%	15%
Male	299	70%	57%	37%	35%	38%	27%	24%	17%	21%*	11%
Female	242	69%	58%	43%	42%	30%	22%	20%	20%	12%*	14%

Note – ICT, Construction and Other subject areas are not shown due to low base sizes (24, 39 and 41 respectively).* highlights where figure is significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

Table 10-3 shows results for main reasons. It is notable that female and BAME apprentices were more likely than their counterparts to cite personal circumstances as their main reason for leaving (9% among female vs. 5% male; 13% BAME vs. 5% White apprentices).

Table 10-3: Main (grouped) reasons for not completing the apprenticeship

<i>Row percentages</i>	Base	Issues with quality	Own choice	Did not get on with employer	Issues with delivery	Fired/made redundant	Personal circumstances	Covid Factors	Physical or mental health	Financial reasons	Competency issues
All	541	21%	20%	13%	11%	11%	7%	7%	6%	4%	4%
Business	148	26%	22%	12%	11%	10%	5%	7%	4%	3%	4%
Engineering	89	20%	22%	16%	7%	13%	2%	9%	10%	5%	3%
Health	108	14%*	18%	11%	17%*	4%*	16%*	6%	8%	3%	5%
Retail	92	19%	18%	18%	8%	11%	5%	7%	10%	4%	0%*
Level 2	219	15%*	18%	13%	13%	9%	13%*	4%	9%	5%	2%
Level 3	234	24%	23%	13%	11%	11%	2%*	8%	5%	3%	4%
Level 4+	88	24%	17%	14%	7%	14%	8%	7%	5%	3%	5%
Under-19	135	17%	22%	23%*	4%*	13%	4%	5%	6%	9%*	1%*
19-24	144	11%*	25%	15%	11%	10%	10%	5%	6%	5%	6%
25+	262	27%*	17%	9%*	13%	11%	6%	8%	7%	1%*	3%
White	428	21%	21%	15%*	10%	11%	5%*	6%	6%	3%	3%
BAME	112	18%	15%	7%*	16%	12%	13%*	8%	8%	5%	5%
Male	299	23%	20%	12%	10%	15%*	5%*	7%	6%	3%	3%
Female	242	18%	20%	15%	12%	7%*	9%*	6%	6%	4%	4%

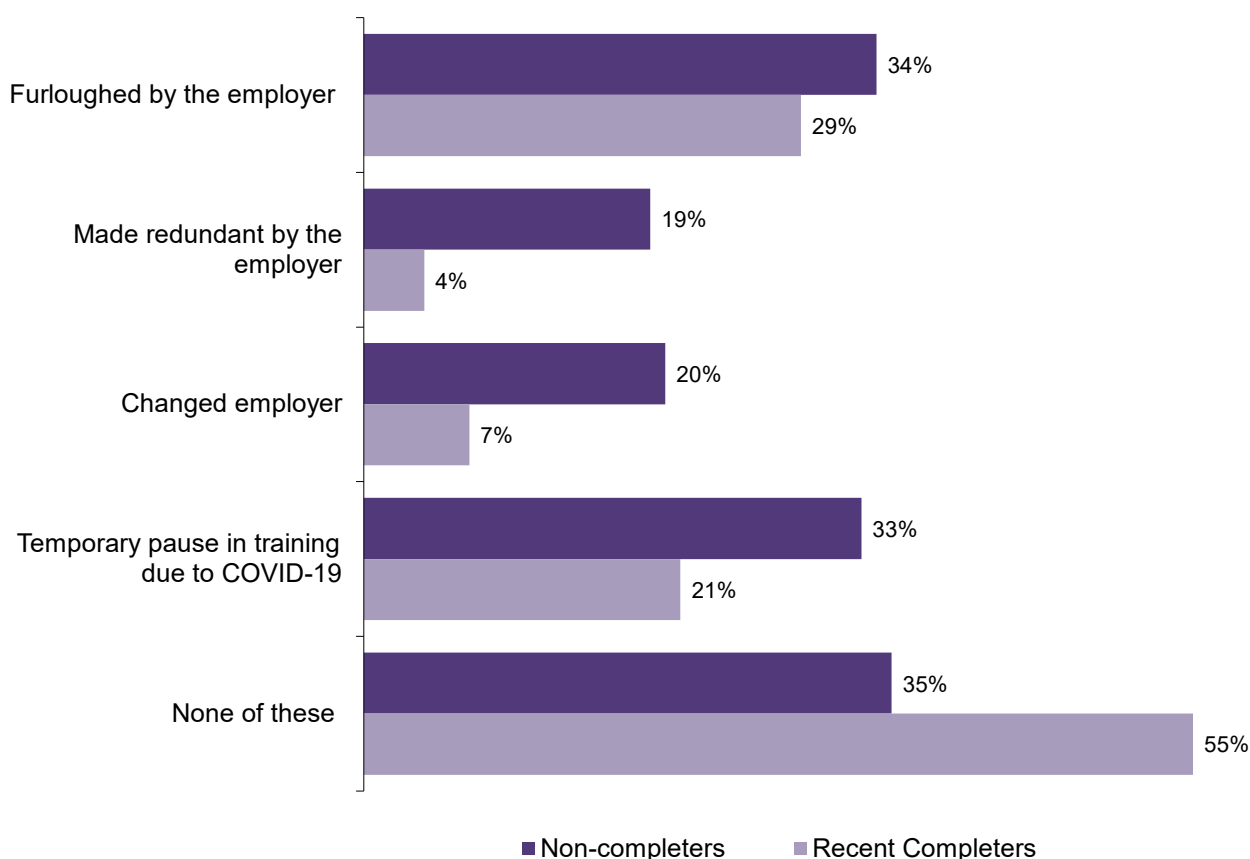
*Note – ICT, Construction and Other subject areas are not shown due to low base sizes (24, 39 and 41 respectively). * highlights where figure is significantly different from the average of the rest of sample (those in bold show results specifically which are significantly higher).

Impact of COVID-19 on delivery

Around four in ten non-completers (42%) undertook at least some of their apprenticeship in March 2020 or later. This group was asked about the impact that COVID-19 had on the delivery and quality of their apprenticeship. A third (34%) of these non-completers were placed on furlough at some point during their training, a broadly similar proportion to those who completed their apprenticeship at some point after the COVID-19 pandemic (29%). However, as can be seen in Figure 10-5 there was more disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic among non-completers than among recent completers in terms of redundancies, changing employer and training being paused.

One in five non-completers were made redundant (19%, compared to 4% of recent completers), a similar proportion changed employer (20%, compared to 7% of recent completers), and a third (33%) had their training temporarily paused (compared to 21% recent completers).

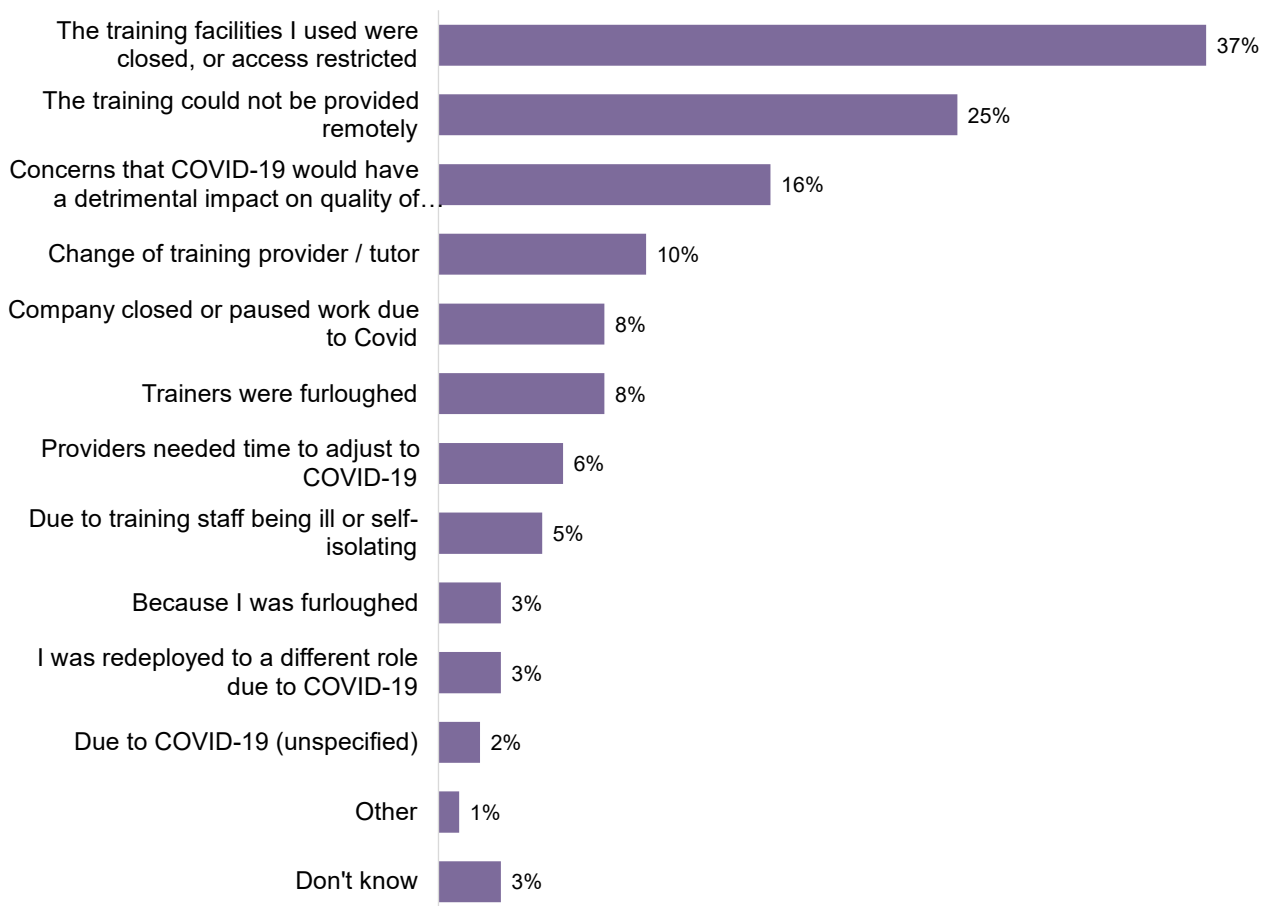
Figure 10-5: Impact of COVID-19 on learners who did not complete their apprenticeship, compared to those who did



Base: Non-completers who had at least some training take part during the COVID-19 pandemic (232) and Recent completers (1,036).

As can be seen in Figure 10-6, the most common reason why non-completers said that the training was paused was because the training facilities were closed, or access was restricted (37%). Other reasons were the training could not be provided remotely (25%), concerns that COVID-19 would have a detrimental impact on the quality of training that could be delivered (16%) and a change of training provider or tutor (10%).

Figure 10-6: Reasons why training was paused (unprompted)



Base: Non-completers whose training was temporarily paused (76).

Almost six in ten (58%) of those who were doing their apprenticeship during the COVID-19 pandemic said that changes were made to their learning as a result. Changes were most common in Business (69%) and least common in Health (42%). These changes were far more likely to have had a negative impact (43%) than to have made the apprentice feel more positive about the apprenticeship (6%), though more than half (52%) said the changes made no difference to how they felt about the apprenticeship.

Under 19s (64%) and those who did not work for their employer before the apprenticeship (57%) were more likely to feel that the changes made to learning because of the pandemic made them feel less positive.

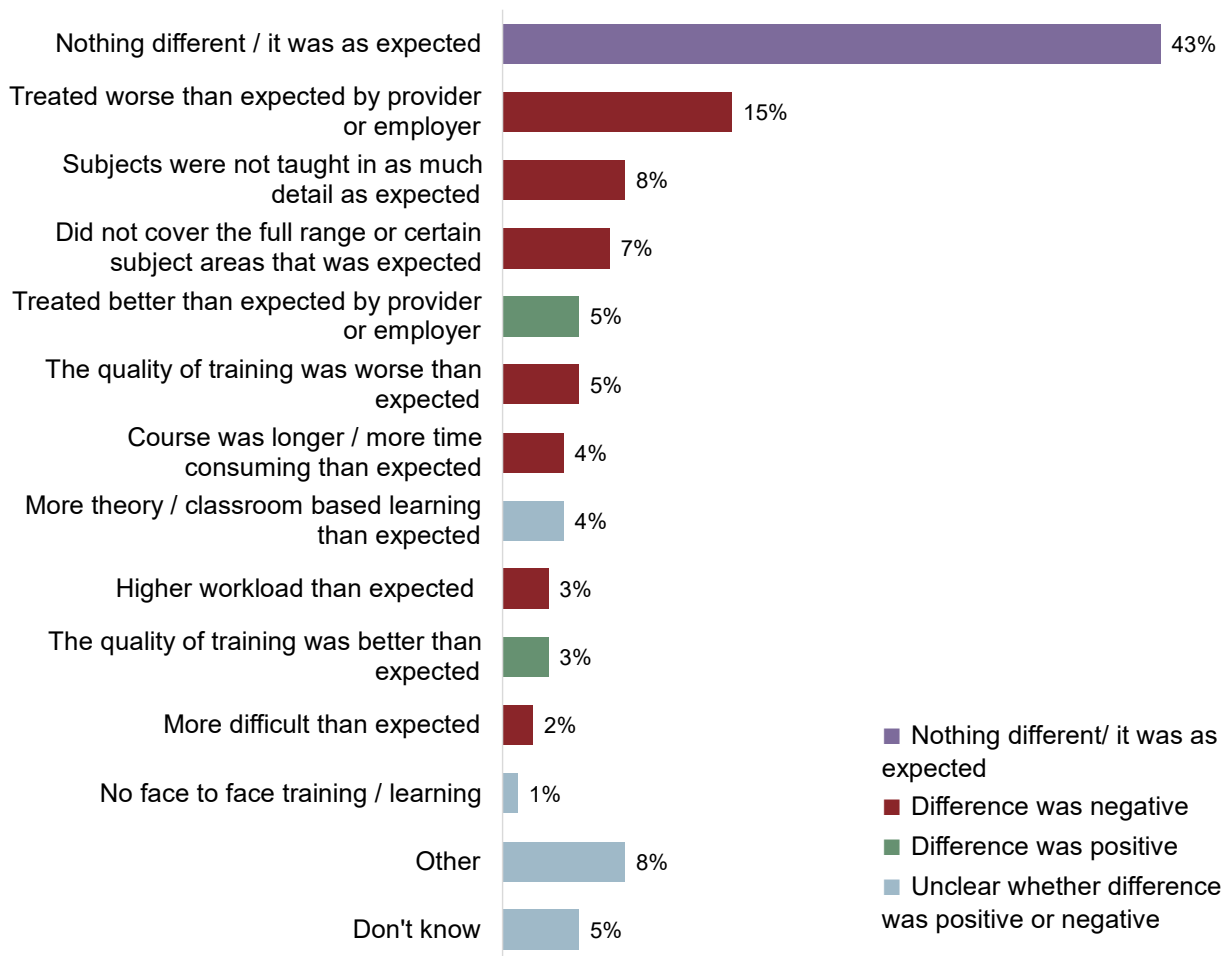
Satisfaction levels

Respondents were asked how, if at all, their apprenticeship differed from their expectations. As can be seen in Figure 10-7 more than two-fifths (43%) said their apprenticeship was as expected. Those aged 25 or older were less likely than average to say their apprenticeship was as expected (39%).

The most common way the apprenticeship differed from their expectations was being treated worse than expected by the training provider or their employer (15%), followed by the subjects not being taught in as much detail as they had anticipated (8%) or that the apprenticeship did not cover the full range of subject areas they were expecting (7%).

Not all differences in expectation were negative: one in twenty (5%) said they were treated better than expected by their training provider or employer and 3% felt that quality of training was better than expected.

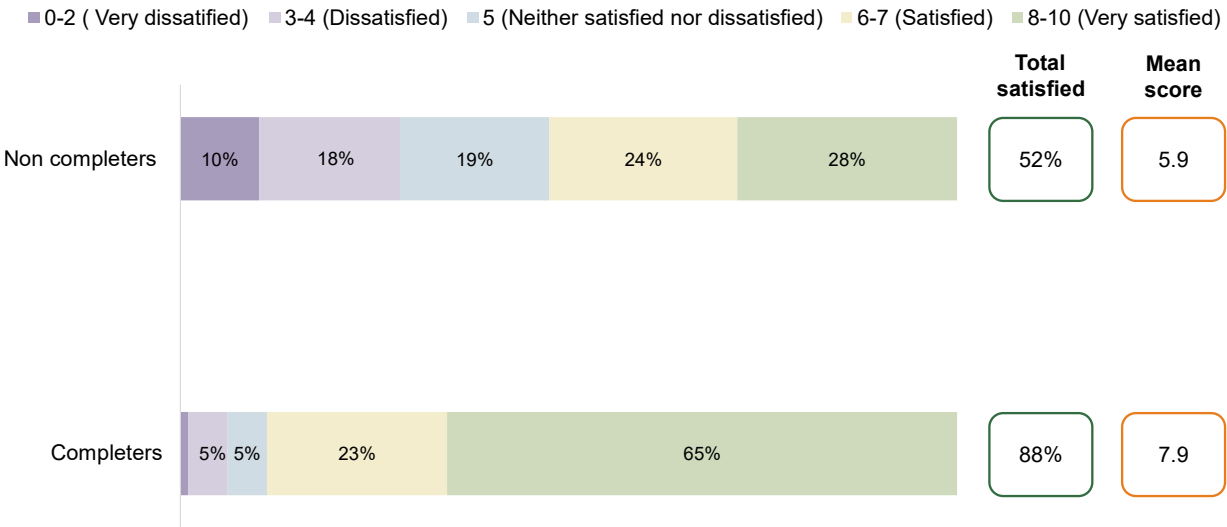
Figure 10-7: How, if at all, the apprenticeship differed from expectations (unprompted)



Base: All non-completers (541).

A slight majority (52%) of non-completers were satisfied overall with their apprenticeship, (a score of between 6 and 10 on a 10-point scale) and just over a quarter (28%) were very satisfied (a score of 8 to 10). Overall satisfaction was much lower among non-completers than completers (among whom 88% were satisfied) as can be seen in Figure 10-8.

Figure 10-8: Overall satisfaction levels among non-completers and completers



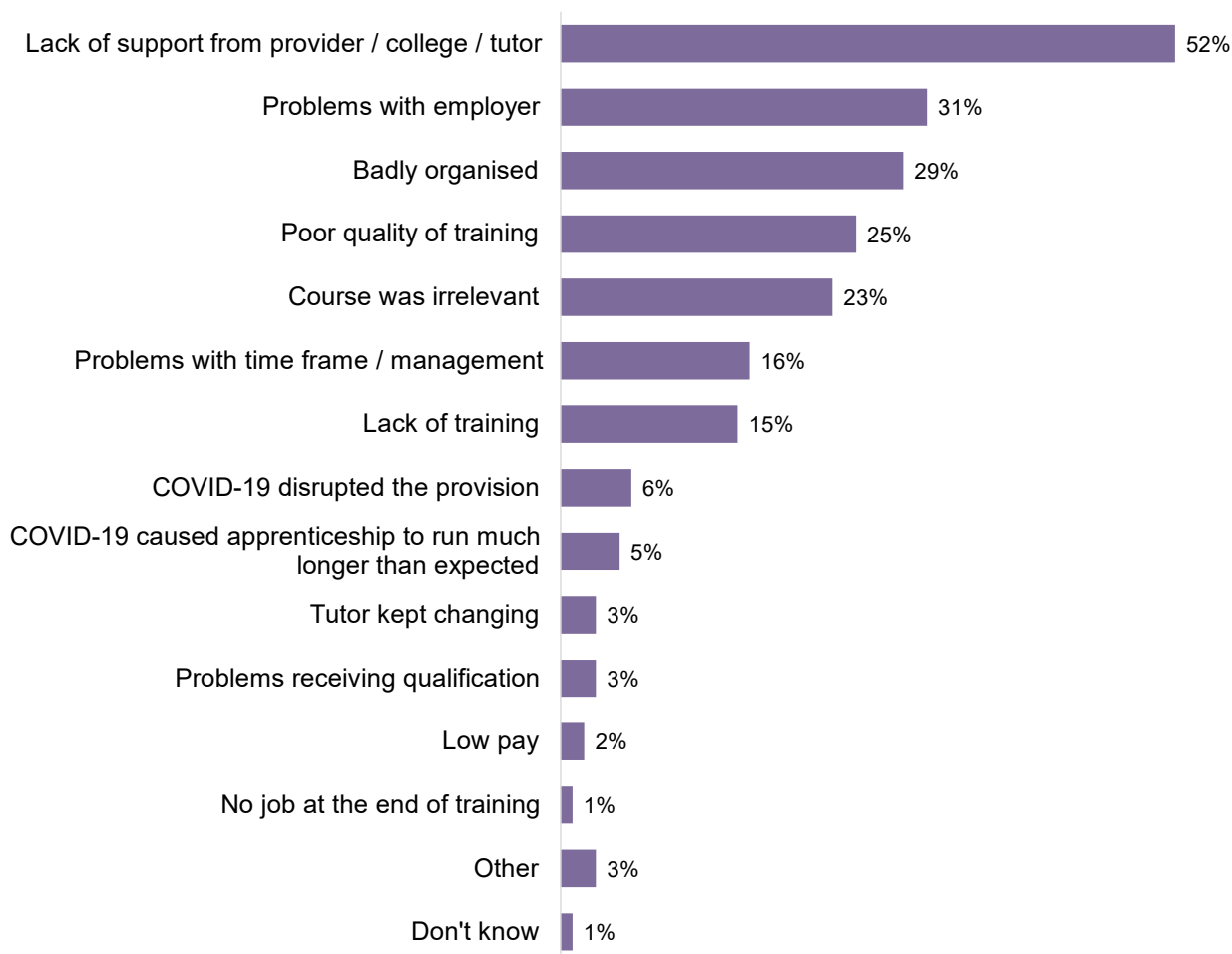
Base: All non-completers (541) and completers (2,075).

There was little variation in overall satisfaction among non-completers by subject area and level. However, other demographics did have an influence:

- Males were more likely to be dissatisfied than females (32% compared to 23%).
- Those aged 19 or older were more likely to be very satisfied (31%) than those under the age of 19 (18%).
- White non-completers were more likely to be dissatisfied (30%) than BAME non-completers (20%).

Figure 10-9 shows the reasons for dissatisfaction among non-completers. The most common reason was a lack of support from the training provider (52%), followed by problems with the employer (31%), the apprenticeship being badly organised (29%) and perceived poor quality training (25%).

Figure 10-9: Reasons for dissatisfaction with apprenticeship (unprompted)



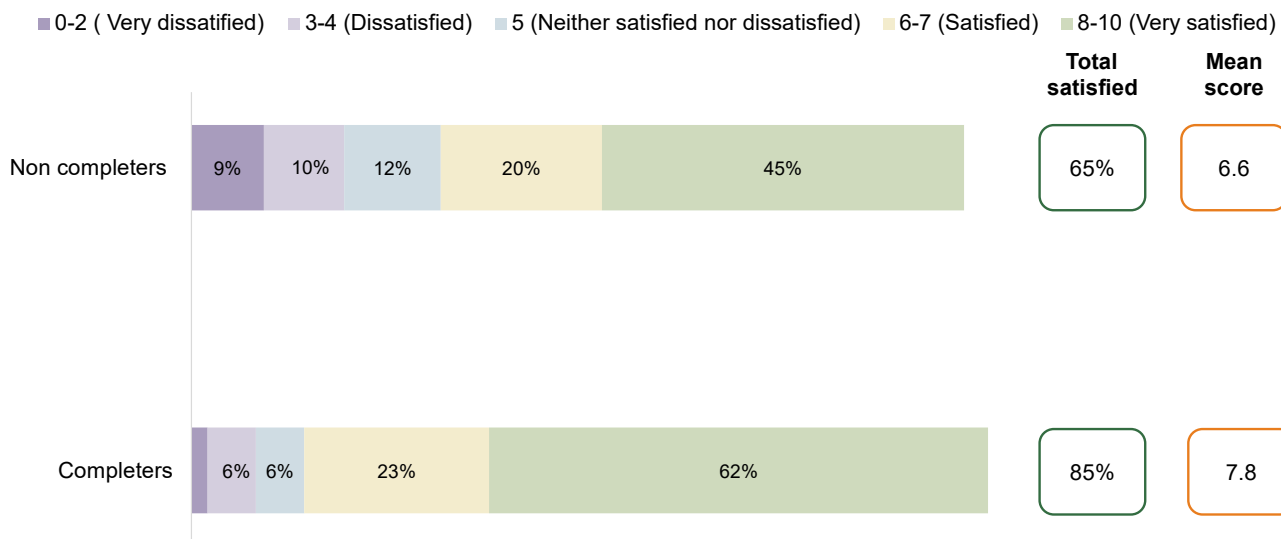
Base: Non-completers who were dissatisfied overall with their apprenticeship (147).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, non-completers who were not working for their employer before the apprenticeship were more likely to select problems with their employer as a reason for dissatisfaction (49%).

There were also differences in reasons for dissatisfaction by gender. Female apprentices were more likely than male to think that their apprenticeship was badly organised (44% compared to 19%), and were more likely to cite poor quality of training (37% compared to 17% of men).

Non-completers were asked to rate their satisfaction with the quality of training they received from their training provider. Results are shown in Figure 10-10. A majority (65%) were satisfied (45% very satisfied) compared to one-fifth (19%) dissatisfied (9% very dissatisfied). As with overall satisfaction, satisfaction with the quality of training received was much lower among the non-completer group than among completers (65% satisfied compared to 85% respectively).

Figure 10-10: Satisfaction with the quality of training received from the training provider among non-completers and completers



Base: All non-completers (541) and completers receiving training from a college or training provider (1,454).

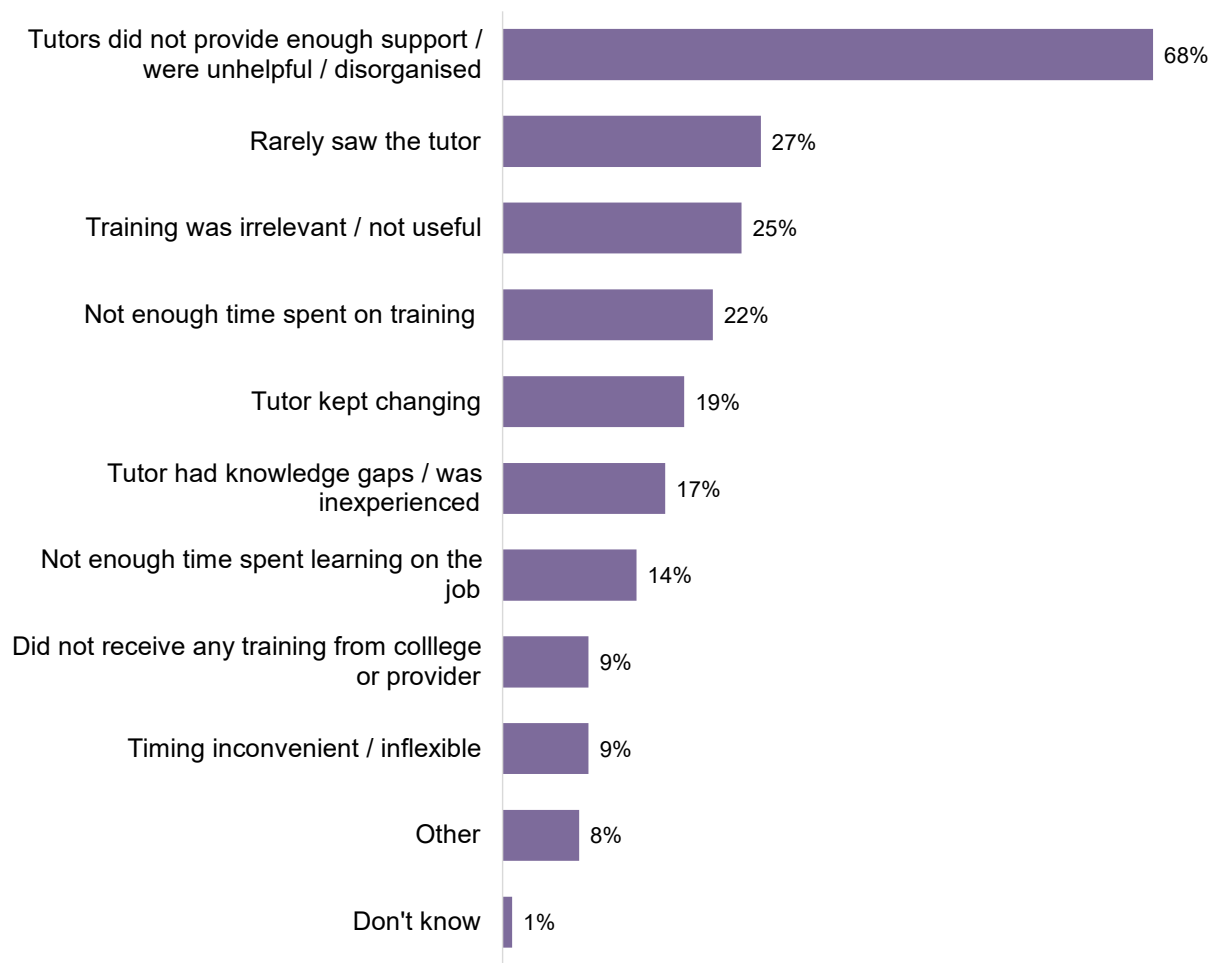
Non-completers that had been undertaking Retail and Level 2 apprenticeships were more likely to be very dissatisfied than average (16% and 13% respectively), and white non-completers were more likely to be dissatisfied than BAME non-completers (21% compared to 12%).

As with overall satisfaction, those aged 19 or older were more likely to be very satisfied than those under the age of 19 (48% compared to 33%).

Non-completers who would have preferred to do something else other than their apprenticeship were less likely to be satisfied with the quality of their training than those for whom the apprenticeship was their preferred choice (51% compared to 67%).

Figure 10-11 shows the reasons why non-completers were dissatisfied with the quality of the training received for their college and training provider. More than two-thirds (68%) of those dissatisfied cited tutors not providing enough support or not being helpful or organised as a reason. Other less common reasons for dissatisfaction with the quality of the training were rarely seeing the tutor (27%), training being irrelevant / not useful (25%) and not enough time being spent on training (22%).

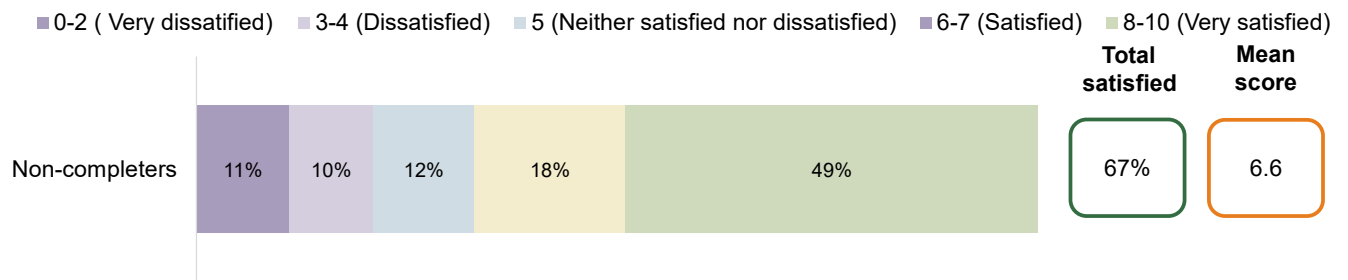
Figure 10-11: Reasons for dissatisfaction with the quality of training received from training providers among non-completers (unprompted)



Base: Non-completers dissatisfied with the quality of training from training provider (108)

A large majority (82%) could not provide a response to the level of satisfaction with the way they were assessed in the end-point assessment process. Figure 10-12 shows the results of those who were able to answer. Two-thirds (67%) were satisfied compared to a fifth (21%) dissatisfied.

Figure 10-12: Satisfaction among non-completers with the end-point assessment process



Base: Non-completers who began the end-point assessment process (113).

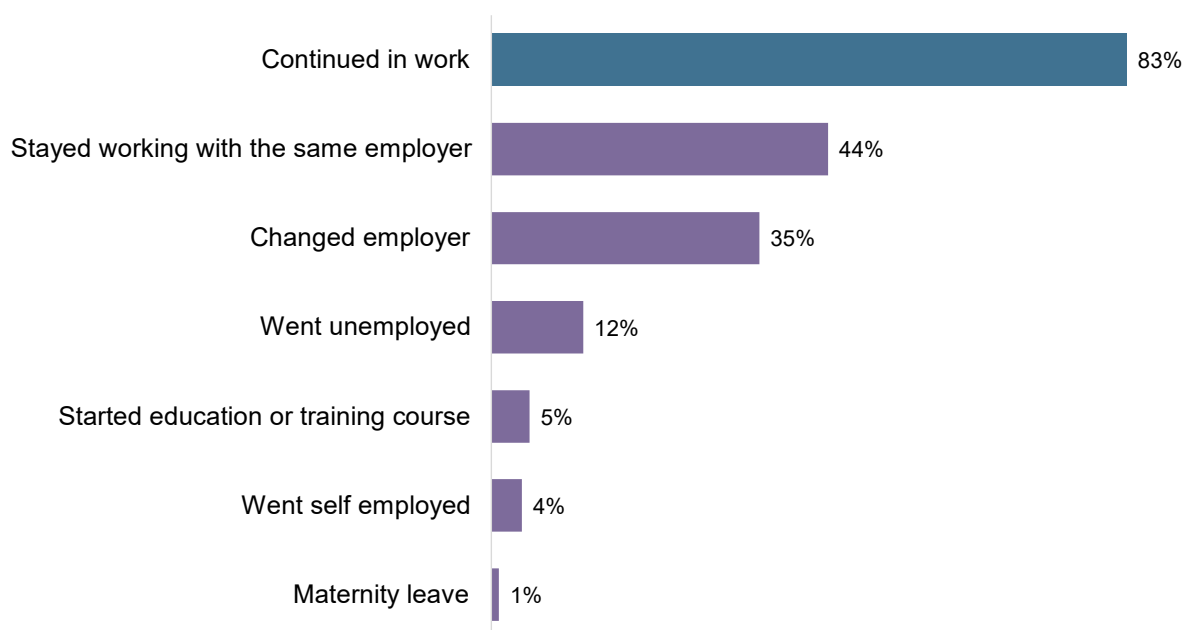
A small base size (21) meant that we are unable to report on the main reasons for dissatisfaction with EPAs quantitatively, but reasons given included:

- Perceptions that it was unfair,
- Apprentices being asked things they didn't know about,
- It being badly organised,
- That it didn't take place.

Activity since leaving apprenticeship

Non-completers were asked what they did immediately after they left their apprenticeship. The vast majority (83%) continued in work, typically either at the same company (44%) or at a different employer (35%); 4% were self-employed. One in eight (12%) became unemployed after leaving their apprenticeship.

Figure 10-13: What non-completers did immediately after leaving their apprenticeship



Base: All non-completers (541).

By the time of the survey there were slightly more in work (87%), though less (34%) were still employed by the same organisation as they had done their apprenticeship with. The proportion unemployed was lower at the time of the interview (8%) than immediately after leaving the apprenticeship (12%).

Non-completers who undertook Business apprenticeships and those studying at Level 4 or above were more likely than average to be in work at the time of the survey (91% and 94% respectively), whilst those who had done Health or Level 2 apprenticeships were more likely than average to be unemployed (each 14%).

There were also some differences by age and ethnicity:

- Those aged under 19 were more likely to be unemployed (14%),
- Those aged between 19-24 were more likely to be in education (10%),
- Those aged 25 or older were more likely to be in work (93%),
- BAME non-completers were more likely to be unemployed (14%).

Interest in the line of work covered by the apprenticeship

Approaching half of non-completers (46%) said their level of interest in the line of work of their apprenticeship had not changed. Slightly more were now less interested than they had been (30%) than were more interested (22%).

Those who studied Health apprenticeships were more likely than average to now be more interested in that line of work (30%).

Level 3 apprentices were more likely than average to be less interested in their line of work than they had been (38%, compared to 23% among Level 2 non-completers).

There were differences by age, with those aged under 19 more likely than average to now be less interested (38%), those aged 19-24 more likely to say their interest had increased (28%) and those aged 25 or above more likely to have seen no change (53%).

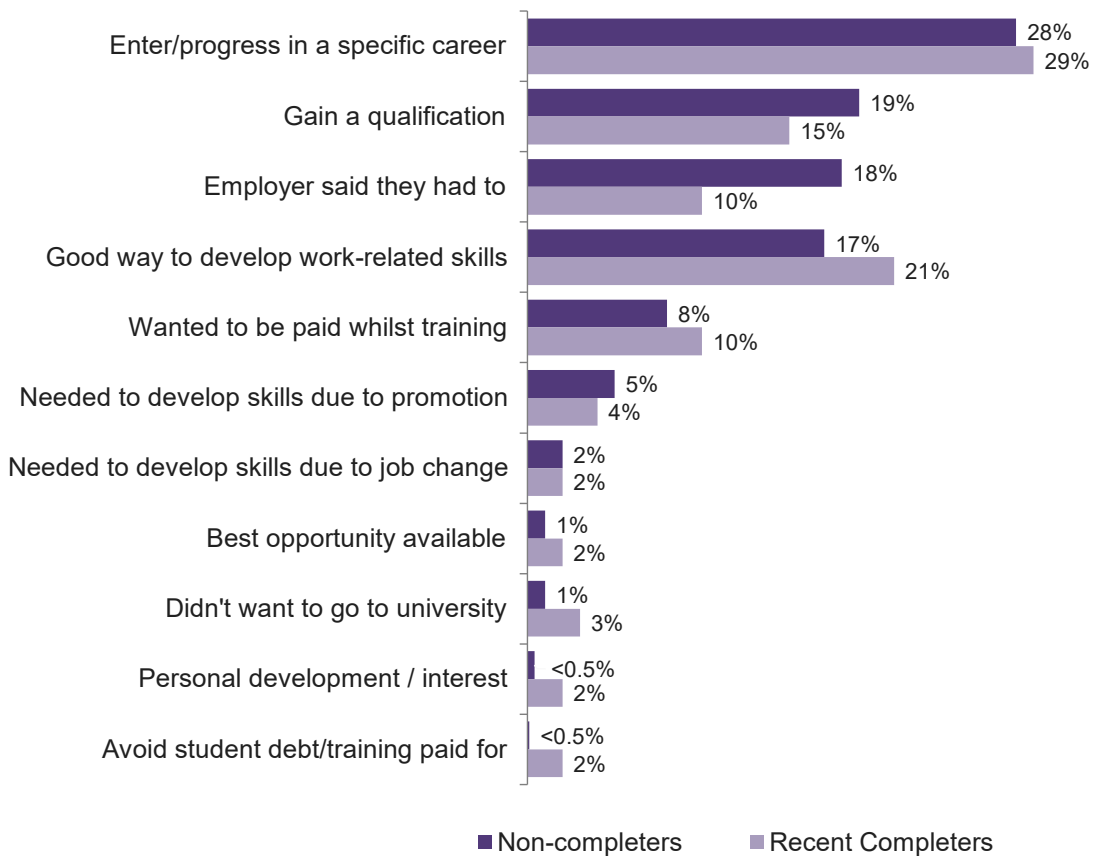
Differences between non-completers and completers in relation to the routes into their apprenticeship

There were notable differences between non-completers and completers in terms of their prior activity and motivations for starting an apprenticeship. Non-completers were more likely than apprenticeship completers to have already been working for their employer before starting their apprenticeship (67% vs. 56%). Among those who were new to their employer when they started their apprenticeship, the most common prior activity for non-completers was working for a different employer (46%); this was mentioned by only around a third (35%) of apprenticeship completers. Instead, apprenticeship completers who were new to their employer most commonly said they were doing or had recently completed a school or college course (45% vs. 33% of non-completers).

There were also differences between the two groups in terms of the motivations for doing an apprenticeship. Non-completers were more likely to say they did an apprenticeship because their employer said they had to (18% vs. 10% of apprenticeship completers), though as noted above, they were more likely to have already been working for the same employer they did their apprenticeship with. Non-completers were also more likely to have been motivated by the opportunity to gain a qualification (19% vs. 15%).

In contrast, apprenticeship completers were more likely to mention that an apprenticeship was a good way to develop work-related skills (21% vs. 17% of non-completers).

Figure 10-14: Main reason for starting an apprenticeship (non-completers vs. completers)



Base: All non-completers (541); All completers (modularised) (2,696). Responses shown if mentioned by 2% or more in either group).

Overall, non-completers were less likely than completers to say doing an apprenticeship was their preferred choice when they first considered it (34% vs. 47%). Among those that would have preferred to do something else (12% of non-completers and 7% of completers), almost twice as many non-completers said they would have preferred to stay in the job they already had without doing an apprenticeship (37% vs. 20% completers).

Overall, these changes are likely to be due in part to the age profile of apprentices. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, more than half (55%) of non-completers were aged 25 or over, which compares with 40% among completers overall. Among current apprentices and completers, older apprentices were more likely to have worked for their employer before starting their apprenticeship and less likely than average to say doing an apprenticeship was their preferred choice.

11. Conclusions

This report presents findings from a large-scale survey of apprentices conducted between May and July 2021. It comprised interviews with 3,047 current apprentices, 1,580 with those completing an apprenticeship between March and December 2020 ('recent completers'), 1,039 with those completing between July 2019 and February 2020 ('longer-term completers') and 541 interviews with non-completers of apprenticeship standards.

Compared with earlier surveys in the Apprenticeship Evaluation series, 2021 results indicate:

- Overall satisfaction levels remained high. This is in line with 2018-19, however the proportion 'very satisfied', which fell between 2017 and 2018-19, has fallen again.
- Satisfaction remained very high across various measures but had fallen in several areas. Fewer were satisfied than in 2018-19 with the way they were assessed on the job, the extent to which their employer supported their apprenticeship, and the balance between the time spent learning and working.
- More apprentices, than in 2018-19, believing the intended duration was appropriate to provide them with required skills (returning to 2017 levels). This is in addition to longer average duration of apprenticeships than 2018-19.
- Signs of increased time spent undertaking off-the-job training in the apprenticeship.
- Increases in the proportion reporting gaining skills during their apprenticeship, particularly for skills related to their work, communication skills, working with others and digital skills.
- Successful outcomes, with more longer-term completers in 2021 working full-time at the time of interview than in the 2015, 2017 and 2018-19 surveys.

Among apprentices that were dissatisfied (8% of all apprentices), the main reasons were a lack of support or contact from the training provider, the apprenticeship being badly organised, and the poor quality of training received.

In addition to exploring reasons for dissatisfaction, this was the first survey in the series to explore the experiences of learners on apprenticeship standards who did not complete their apprenticeship. Personal or domestic factors were found to be a key contributing factor to non-completion, cited by one-in-four, most commonly job or career changes, mental health issues or caring responsibilities.

The most common apprenticeship-related reason contributing to non-completion was the learner feeling they were not given enough time for their training. Compared with completers, non-completers were less likely to say that doing an apprenticeship was their first choice, and their overall satisfaction with the course was much lower. Most non-completers surveyed continued in work immediately after leaving their apprenticeship, with one in eight becoming unemployed.

Results in the 2021 survey have clearly been impacted by COVID-19. Just over a quarter of current apprentices and recent completers experienced their training being paused due to COVID-19, and a similar proportion were furloughed at any point (two-fifths experienced either). Predictably those who experienced a pause in training or who were furloughed for more than 6 months were less satisfied than other apprentices.

Significant reforms have been introduced to apprenticeships over the course of the Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey series aimed at improving their quality. These have included the requirements for: apprenticeship duration to be at least 12 months; a minimum of 20% of contracted hours being spent on off-the-job training, and the move from frameworks to standards.⁵⁰ It is important to note that, the time of fieldwork, these changes were still relatively new, however survey findings reveal some early impacts of these reforms, as follows:

Apprenticeship duration: The average intended duration of apprenticeships was reported as just under two years (22 months), an increase of 2-3 months compared with 2018-19 and a continuation of the trend for longer apprenticeships over recent years, partly a reflection of the shift towards higher level apprenticeships.

20% minimum off-the-job training requirement: While needing to bear in mind the potential difficulty for respondents to accurately recall their exact learning hours, the mean average hours spent on off-the-job training was just a little below the 20% requirement (19%), and a slight minority of apprentices reported received compliant levels of off-the-job training during their apprenticeship. Results, however, do suggest that levels of compliance are increasing, with current apprentices and recent completers more likely than longer-term completers to have met the 20% requirement, though it was a minority for all three groups. Awareness of the 20% requirement has also increased.

Apprenticeship standards and frameworks: Generally, this report has highlighted relatively few differences among the experiences and views of current apprentices on standards and those on frameworks, for example there was no difference in their overall satisfaction. Apprenticeship standards were on average two months longer than framework apprenticeships, and related to this apprenticeship standards were less likely to be thought too short and more likely to be thought too long.

⁵⁰ From August 2020 all apprenticeship starts were on standards.

End-point assessment: EPAs were covered for the first time in the Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey series in 2021. Results indicate that most current apprentices on standards had at least reasonable knowledge of EPAs, tended to be informed within at least the first month of starting and in nearly all cases by their training provider, and that where support for preparing for the EPA had been provided by providers and employers this was viewed very positively. However, one in twelve had not heard of end-point assessment, suggesting that more could be done early in the process to tell apprentices about EPA and what it entails.

Throughout the report, we have seen how findings on their experience and views of the apprenticeship, and the outcomes achieved following completion, often differ quite widely between apprentice groups, both by type of apprenticeship (e.g., level and subject area), and also by demographics (particularly age, whether they had a learning difficulty or disability, and ethnicity). The survey provides a rich dataset to explore further the factors driving these differences, and the interplay between factors such as level, subject area, age and their situation immediately prior to starting.

12. Annex A Detailed profile of apprentices

Annex A considers the profile of the three groups that are covered in the core Learner survey: current apprentices, recent completers, and longer-term completers. The profile of non-completers can be found at the start of [Chapter 10](#).

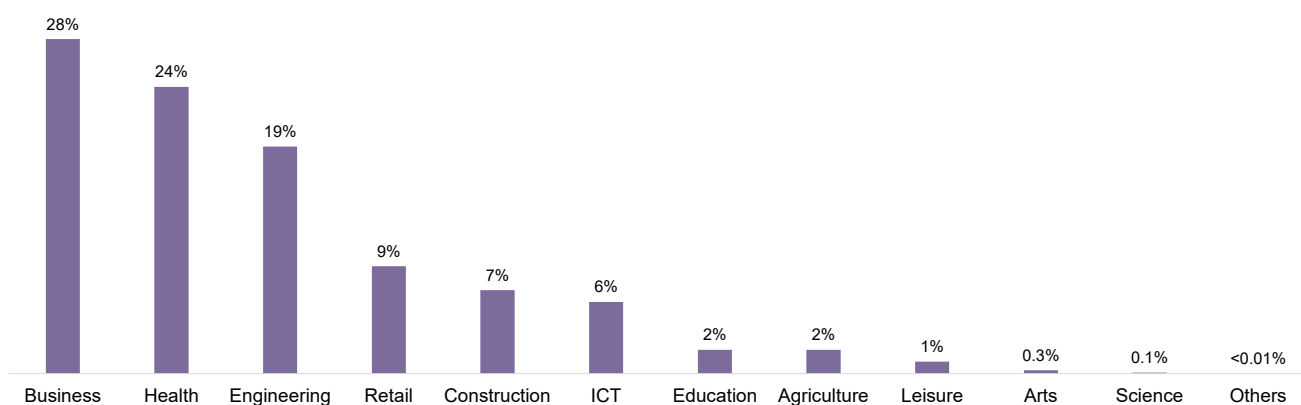
Completion status

Based on the ILR, the population of current apprentices, recent completers and longer-term completers comprised 713,228 learners split 461,393 current apprentices (65%), 119,901 recent completers (17%) and 131,934 longer-term completers (18%). Note, 17% of the current apprentices group (11% of all apprentices) were recorded as having had their training temporarily paused at the time the sample was drawn.

Apprenticeship subject area

Figure 12-1 shows the full population of apprentices by sector subject area. The three largest subject areas were Business (28%), Health (24%) and Engineering (19%). Arts and Science each made up less than 1% of all apprenticeships.

Figure 12-1: Apprenticeship subject area



Base: All apprentices (713,228). Source: Individualised Learner Record: all current apprentices at 31st December 2020; recent completers (1st March 2020 to 31st December 2020); longer-term completers (1st July 2019 and 29th February 2020).

There were relatively few differences in terms of the profile of subject areas among the three survey groups (and the overall profile largely reflects the profile of current apprentices given they are the largest of the three groups). As shown in Table 12-1,

recent completers were made up a higher proportion than average of Business (30%) and Health apprentices (26%) and a lower proportion of Engineering apprentices (15%). Longer-term completers had the highest proportion of Retail apprentices (15% vs. 10% of recent completers and 8% of current apprentices); combined with the figures in the 2018-19 survey (when, for example, 16% of long-term completers were undertaking Retail apprenticeships) results suggest a general decline in the relative proportion of Retail apprenticeships.

Table 12-1: Apprenticeship subject area by survey group

<i>Sector</i>	Current	Recent completer	Longer-term completer	Current 2018-19	Longer-term completer 2018-19
Agriculture	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Arts	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%
Business	28%	30%	28%	26%	27%
Construction	8%	6%	6%	7%	4%
Education	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Engineering	20%	15%	19%	22%	16%
Health	24%	26%	22%	24%	26%
ICT	5%	7%	5%	4%	3%
Leisure	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%
Retail	8%	10%	13%	11%	16%
Science	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%
Other	<0.5%	0%	0%	N/A	N/A

Base: All apprentices (713,228). Source: Individualised Learner Record

Level of apprenticeship

Level 3 apprenticeships were the most common type undertaken (46%), followed by Level 2 (29%). Around a fifth were doing apprenticeships at either Level 4 (7%), Level 5 (7%) or non-degree Level 6+ apprenticeships (3%). Overall, 7% were doing degree apprenticeships.

As Table 12-2 shows, there has been a large fall in the proportion undertaking Level 2 apprenticeships, from around two-fifths (39%) of current apprentices in 2018-19 to a quarter (24%) in the current survey. The proportion undertaking Level 3 apprenticeships has remained relatively consistent (45% of current apprentices for the 2021 survey vs. 48% in 2018-19), hence there has been an increase in those doing apprenticeship at higher levels (Level 4+). The proportion of current apprentices undertaking degree apprenticeships had increased markedly, from 1% in 2018-19 to 10% in the current study.

Table 12-2: Apprenticeship level by survey group

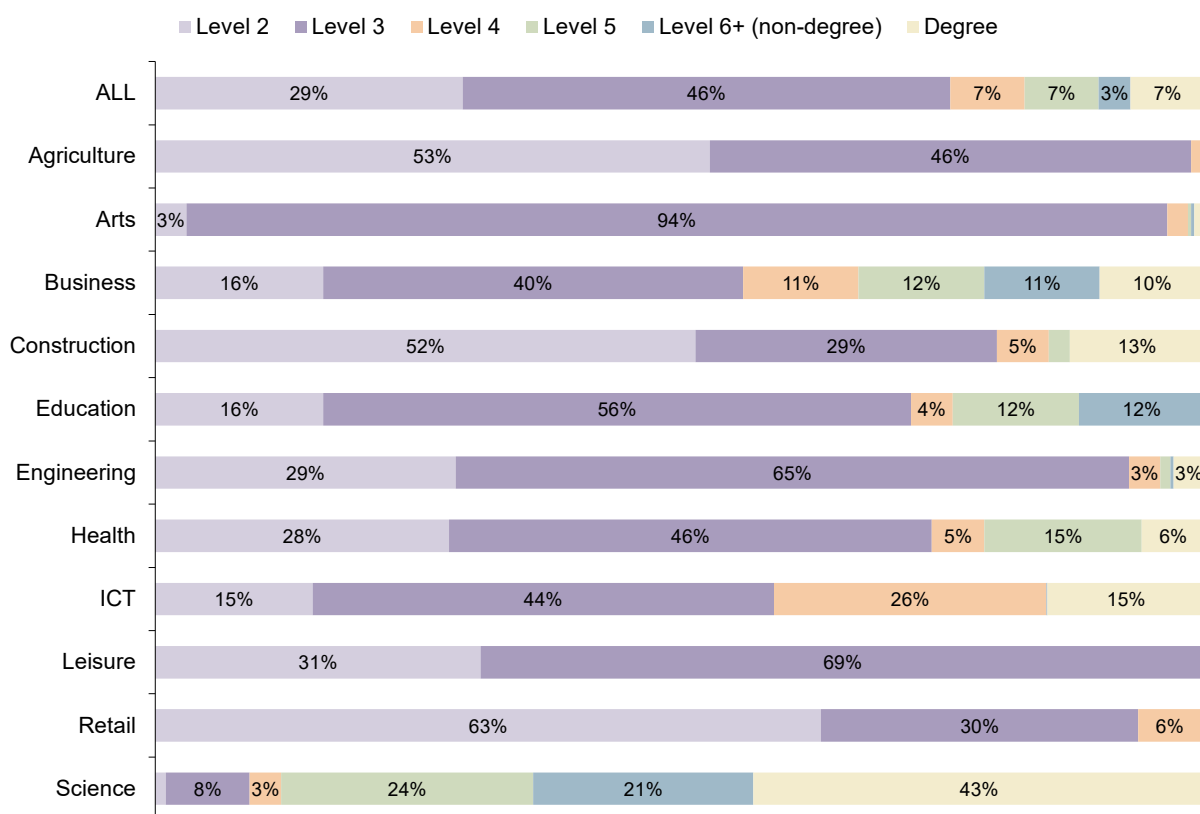
<i>Column percentages</i>	Current	Recent completer	Longer-term completer	Current 2018-19	Longer-term completer 2018-19
Level 2	24%	36%	44%	39%	54%
Level 3	45%	47%	45%	48%	41%
Level 4	8%	7%	5%	4%	2%
Level 5	8%	7%	4%	6%	3%
Level 6+ (non-degree)	4%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Level 6+ degree	10%	1%	1%	2%	<1%

Base: All apprentices (713,228). Source: Individualised Learner Record

The level distribution varied greatly by subject area. The majority of apprenticeships were undertaken at Level 2 in Retail (63%); Agriculture (53%) and Construction (52%), whereas most were undertaken at Level 3 in Arts (94%); Leisure (69%); Engineering (65%); and Education (56%). Level 4 apprenticeships were particularly common in ICT (26%) and Business (11%); while Level 5 were most common in Science (24%); Health (15%); Business (12%) and Education (12%).

Non-degree apprenticeships at Level 6 and above and degree apprenticeships were most common in Science (21% and 43% respectively). Degree apprenticeships were also relatively common in ICT (15%), Construction (13%), Business (10%) and Health (6%), while Level 6+ non-degree apprenticeships were also common in Education (12%) and Business (11%).

Figure 12-2: Level of apprentices by subject area (ILR data)



Base: All apprentices (713,228). Agriculture (13,888); Arts (2,465); Business (201,522); Construction (53,327); Education (15,619); Engineering (136,127); Health (172,064); ICT (40,638); Leisure (10,623); Retail (66,241); Science (561). Note: Data labels <3% removed.

Source: Individualised Learner Record.

Apprenticeships standards vs. frameworks

The government set out its plans to replace apprenticeship frameworks with new employer-defined apprenticeship standards in late 2013. The first standards were introduced in 2014 with a commitment to ensure all new apprenticeship starts were standards by August 2020, with frameworks discontinued in England by the start of the 2020/21 academic year.⁵¹

Across the three apprentice groups surveyed, almost a quarter (24%) were on apprenticeship frameworks and just over three-quarters (76%) were on standards though the increase in the proportion on standards is clear from the fact that nine in ten (90%)

⁵¹ [Progress report on the Apprenticeships Reform Programme \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

current apprentices were on standards (up from half in 2018-19), In comparison, 56% of recent completers and 46% of longer-term completers were on apprenticeship standards.

The proportion doing apprenticeship standards increased with level; from 64% of Level 2 apprentices, 77% among Level 3s, 83% among Level 4 and 5 apprentices and virtually all (100%) apprentices at Level 6 and above.

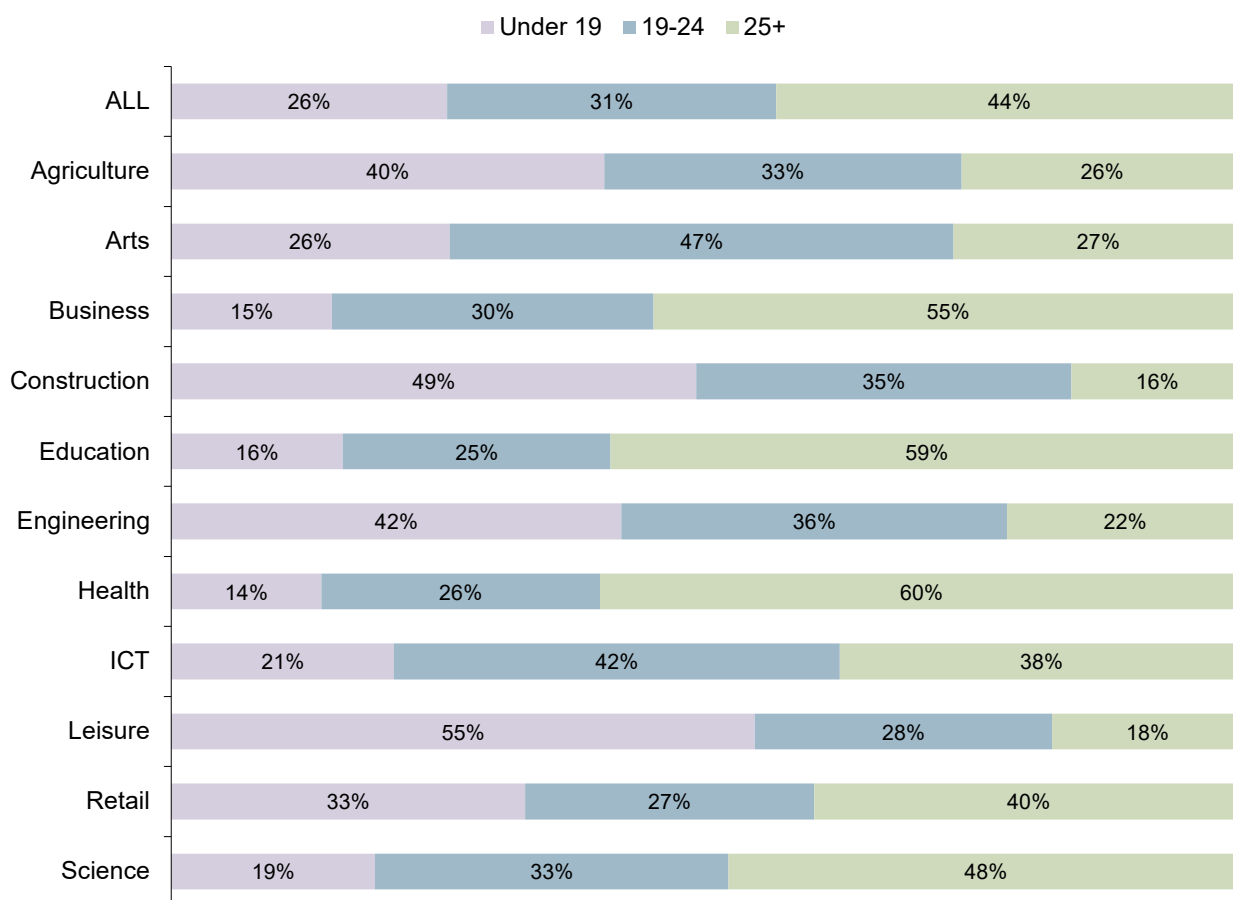
In terms of subject areas, apprenticeship standards were most common in Retail (90%); Business (85%) and Arts (85%). In contrast, only around half of Leisure and Science apprentices were doing apprenticeship standards (50% and 51% respectively) and fewer than two-thirds of Engineering; Education; and Construction apprentices (61%, 63% and 64% respectively).

Age of apprentices

As shown in Figure 12-3, 44% of apprentices were aged 25 and above at the start of their apprenticeship, three in ten (31%) were aged between 19 and 24 years old and a quarter (26%) were aged under 19.

There was substantial variation by subject area. In Health, Education, and Business, the majority of apprentices were aged 25 and above (60%, 59% and 55% respectively). In contrast, apprentices tended to be younger in Leisure (55% aged under 19); Construction (49%); Engineering (42%) and Agriculture (40%).

Figure 12-3: Age of apprentices (ILR data)



Base: All apprentices (713,228). Agriculture (13,888); Arts (2,465); Business (201,522); Construction (53,327); Education (15,619); Engineering (136,127); Health (172,064); ICT (40,638); Leisure (10,623); Retail (66,241); Science (561).

Source: Individualised Learner Record.

Gender distribution

Among survey respondents, there was a roughly equal split of male and female apprentices (51% and 49% respectively). Male learners made up a slight majority among current apprentices (52% male vs. 48% female). There was no change from 2018-19 in the proportional gender split among current apprentices.

While by level the profile of male and female apprentices was generally similar, female apprentices comprised the majority of Level 5 apprentices (63% vs. 37% male). There was substantial variation by subject area, with men making up the majority of apprentices in:

- Construction (91%)
- Engineering (91%)
- ICT (78%), and
- Leisure (65%).

Female apprentices, on the other hand, made up the majority in:

- Health (79%)
- Education (76%)
- Retail (61%)
- Business (59%), and
- Arts (57%).

Ethnicity of apprentices

The vast majority of survey respondents were White (87%), with 13% in BAME groups. By way of comparison, the most recent quarter (April to June 2021) of the Labour Force Surveys showed that 87% of those aged 16 and over and in employment were White and 13% were in BAME groups.⁵² Current apprentices had a higher proportion from BAME groups (15%) than recent (10%) and longer-term completers (12%).

There was little difference in the ethnic breakdown of either current apprentices in 2021 (85% White vs. 15% BAME) compared with the 2018-19 survey (84% vs. 16%); or among longer-term completers (88% White vs. 12% BAME in 2021; 87% and 13% respectively in 2018-19).

Apprentices at Level 2 and 3 had a lower proportion of BAME groups (12%) than those at Level 4 and above (18%). There was also a relatively low proportion of BAME apprentices in Agriculture (3%); Construction (6%); Engineering (6%) and Retail (10%).

NEET status

One in twenty apprentices (5%) aged under 25 were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in the period before starting their apprenticeship.⁵³ This equates to 3% of all apprentices.

⁵² [ONS data](#) [Accessed 15th May 2019]

⁵³ Those aged 16-24 and not in employment, education or training for a period of at least three months immediately before starting their apprenticeship.

Disabilities and learning difficulties

Overall, 4% of apprentices identified as having a disability and 6% a learning difficulty (7% reported either).⁵⁴ Among current apprentices, the proportion reporting either was in line with 2018-19 (8% vs. 6%). The proportion reporting either a disability or learning difficulty was highest among Level 2 apprentices (9%, compared with 7% among Level 3 apprentices and 5% on Level 4+ apprenticeships) and those undertaking apprenticeships in the Agriculture (11%) and Construction (10%) subject areas.

⁵⁴ [Administrative data](#) show that 11.7% of apprenticeship starts in 2018/19 were by apprentices who identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and/or health problems. The inclusion of 'health problems' is a likely reason why the figure from administrative data is higher than the figure from this survey. Additionally, this survey only asked apprentices if they had a disability or learning difficulty if this was already recorded on the ILR sample file.

[Figures for October to December 2020](#) showed that 8.4m people in the UK aged 16-64 (20% of the working age population) had a disability. Of these 8.4 million people of working age with disabilities, 4.4 million (52.3%) were in work. This compares to 81.1% of those without disabilities.



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