

## Contents

The **Skills Research Digest** monitors recently published skills and labour market research relevant to the work of the Department for the Economy and to the strategic and policy issues that we face in Northern Ireland.

In each case, we provide a short summary of the key points and web links to the full article or report\*. A full list of sources can be found at the end of the publication.

### **Highlights this quarter include:**

- New findings on the impact and legacy of Covid-19, including on: young people's wellbeing and career plans; the structure of employment; working practices and conditions; and gender inequality.
- Still pandemic related, several studies on the accelerated development of digital and blended learning in FE and HE.
- Plenty of new research on the impact and potential of automation, supporting a more nuanced understanding.
- More evidence of the urgent action needed around the general and sector-specific skills required to achieve net zero.

*\* Links are correct at the time of publication; however it is likely that some will break over time. The list of sources has more general links, which should help the reader to track down the original report.*

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*The research summarised here presents the views of various researchers and organisations and does not represent the views or policy of the Northern Ireland Executive or those of the authors.*

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## 16–19 EDUCATION

**The Centre for Vocational Education Research (CVER) published [On Track to Success? Returns to vocational education \[VE\] against different alternatives](#).**

- The research focuses on England, where, until recently, students chose between a vocational track, an academic track and quitting education at age 16.
- ‘Marginal’ vocational/academic students are on average higher achieving and from more advantaged backgrounds than ‘typical’ VE students and achieve rather highly in either track.
  - The majority of those who opt for VE over academic education experience no effects on the probability of employment but large negative effects on earnings at ages 29–30, especially males.
  - Enrolling in VE lowers upper secondary and tertiary attainment, especially for males; this appears to explain at least 20% of the negative earnings effect, which is likely due to students entering lower-wage jobs with weaker wage progression.
  - Marginal students living further from vocational institutions exhibit more modest negative returns; for males, there can even be positive returns for those with the lowest relative preferences for VE.
- Other studies have tended to find more positive effects for average marginal students; however, they focus on Nordic countries, where upper secondary VE is better integrated with work-based training and offers more equal pathways into tertiary education.
- In England, problems with VE include: a hard-to-navigate course offer with too many narrow qualifications; a lack of clear employer recognition; poor career guidance; a lack of clear progression routes into higher VE and firm-based learning opportunities.
  - These factors all contribute to deep-rooted negative perceptions of VE.
- Labour markets in countries like England are probably less favourable for VE more generally: in Denmark, for example, VE channels students into lower prestige occupations, but strong trade unions ensure this doesn’t translate into a difference in earnings.
- The findings suggest England should not expand VE in its current form, as this would divert students from the higher earnings associated with the academic track.
  - Instead, policymakers need to: continue current reforms to tackle the problems mentioned above; and increase post-16 academic provision in ‘cold spots’.
- Whether VE really has the potential to improve labour market inequality and workforce productivity in the UK will largely depend on the skills students acquire and how productively they can be put to use.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATHS (STEM)

**The Education Policy Institute (EPI) published [Digital Skills Divided: Technical provision for 16 to 19 year olds](#), highlighting a growing demand for digital skills that, in England, is not being addressed.**

- 5% of employers reported a skills shortage vacancy, of which 29% related to digital skills, including 17% relating to advanced digital skills.
  - Shortages were most common in ICT (61%), financial services (25%) and business (21%).
- GSCE IT or computing qualification entrants have fallen by 43% since their peak in 2016, largely as a result of the withdrawal of IT GCSE in favour of computer science.
- The number of 16–19 year-olds pursuing Level 3 digital technical qualifications fell from 33k in 2015 to 22k in 2020.
  - Male 16–19-year-olds are five times more likely to take a digital qualification than females.
  - 37% of recent digital skills students took qualifications that are at risk of being defunded in the government’s ongoing Level 3 review to remove duplication with new T levels.
- By 2020/21, ICT apprenticeship starts were down to 44% of their peak in 2015/16; however, Level 4+ starts have more than doubled since 2014/15, to almost 1k.

- 28% of digital teachers in further education (FE) aren't qualified to teach Level 3 qualifications and 33% have no industry experience; 66% of colleges find digital teachers difficult to recruit and retention is poor.
- Recommendations for government include increasing incentives for FE digital skills teachers and extending levelling up premium payments to FE.

The report was commissioned by [The Hg Foundation](#) to help inform its future work in the UK.

**The University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IOE) Faculty of Education & Society published ["Make it more relevant and practical": Young people's vision for school science in England](#), a new report from the ASPIRES 3 study.**

- Drawing on data from over 7,600 20–22 year-olds, it identifies four key improvements they think could have made a difference to their experience of science education when they were at school.
  - Make the curriculum more relevant (72%): less abstract and better grounded in contemporary life and societal issues, including personal health & wellbeing, climate change and environmental protection.
  - Increase practical and problem-based learning (60%).
  - Reduce exam pressure and broaden forms of assessment (52%).
  - Better and/or more specialist teachers (41%): i.e. knowledgeable, passionate, stay in post and care about all students.

## EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS

**The Prince's Trust published [Class of Covid report 2022](#), based on a Censuwide survey of 2k UK 16–25 year-olds in August 2022; 510 received free school meals (FSM) during schooling.**

- 51% feel their aspirations for the future are lower due to global events since 2020.
  - 33% no longer think they will achieve their career goals; 36% think their job prospects will never recover from Covid.
- 66% say a clear career path and 65% the right skills for work will make them feel more in control.
- 49% say living through the pandemic has made them more resilient, and 52% more determined to achieve their goals.
- 51% agree the expected recession makes them even more concerned for job security.
- 58% worry the cost of living crisis will prevent them from reaching their goals.

**City & Guilds published [Youth Misspent: Uncovering the harsh realities for Britain's young people in today's job market – barriers facing young working age people today](#), based on a survey of 5k UK 18–24 year-olds in October–November 2022.**

- 13% of respondents are currently unemployed and a further 3% are economically inactive.
  - 9% of those who are unemployed say they never intend to start working.
- 30% say they don't think they'll ever meet their career ambitions: this is highest among those who are currently not working (35%), those who have been in the prison system (59%), been a refugee (54%) or are care experienced (44%).
- 43% don't believe that their education has equipped them with the skills they need to get the job they want.
- 64% say it's not easy to get a good job these days and 29% say they have struggled to get interviews; 19% say there aren't the jobs available in their local area.
- Only 26% overall and 19% of those unemployed think the government is doing enough to support young people entering the world of work.

**The Careers & Enterprise Company published [Evaluation of the Careers & Enterprise CEF18 Part B Fund for disadvantaged groups](#).**

- The fund ran from January 2019 to March 2021 and aimed to test innovative approaches to career guidance and preparing for the world of work with young people from disadvantaged groups.
  - This included young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), looked after children (LAC)/care leavers and those from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

- Funding was also available to increase employers' capacity to engage with and support young people with SEND, aiming to improve employer confidence in working with these groups and create more employer encounters and workplace experiences.
- The main learning points focus on: providers' approaches to identifying and recruiting young people to their programmes; effective approaches to support young people's engagement; effective approaches to recruit employers and support their engagement; and perceived outcomes for young people and for employers.

**The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) published [Improving outcomes for young people: Lessons from Europe](#) with the Health Foundation, exploring how seven European countries are supporting transitions into employment and learning.**

- The countries (Sweden, Finland, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, France) have a strong record on raising youth participation and/or have introduced interesting and evidence-led reforms.
- Ten key lessons are identified:
  - **Collaboration:** with local partners having control, support and institutional backing to understand needs, target support and work together.
  - **National leadership and cooperation:** particularly between departments and agencies, with strong institutional frameworks for local areas and partners to operate in.
  - **Prioritisation:** clarity on where support should be focused, what can be improved and for whom; often underpinned by clear national missions and campaigns.
  - **Shared purpose:** with all levels of government, industry and social partners involved, and critically listening to and involving young people.
  - **Raising standards:** mechanisms to support improvement, share practice and encourage innovation between places and programmes.
  - **Inclusion:** reaching, engaging and supporting people on benefits or not, in education or out.
  - **Co-location:** meaningful integration of public employment services, careers, training and wider supports, delivered in different settings and often through 'one stop' services.
  - **Pace:** rapid engagement, onboarding and provision, with clear goals and responsiveness to need.
  - **Personalisation:** focusing on individual capabilities, goals and needs; often drawing on blended approaches that go beyond just employment, training and careers.
  - **Sustained outcomes:** balancing long-term goals and aspirations with short-term engagement.

**The Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI), Republic of Ireland (RoI), published [Baseline Study on Impact of Youth Employment Policies](#), the first output from a project funded by the European Economic Area (EEA) & Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment.**

- The Cowork4YOUTH joint research project among seven European partner institutions is exploring the impact of youth employment policies across the RoI, Greece, Spain and Italy from 2008 to 2020.
  - Its focus is on tourism-dependent, island or remote coastal regions, and areas facing energy transition, decarbonisation or intense industrial decline.
- The baseline report examines: employment, unemployment and long-term unemployment rates; not in employment, education or training (NEET) and inactivity rates, overall and by gender; and sectoral youth employment.
- Findings include:
  - Although the four countries share similar issues, there is considerable variation in the composition of the challenges within and between countries; differences also run between men and women.
  - There is a general upward trend of inactive youths in all countries, with a higher rate for females.
  - European-led Youth Guarantee policies may have been overshadowed by significant national policies of labour market liberalisation, particularly in the RoI and Greece.
- Key youth employment policy responses are identified for each country, with a number of policy implications including:
  - Disparity in male and female employment rates, as well as NEET rates, indicates the need for targeted policies.
  - The lack of job growth in manufacturing is a concern for Greece, Italy and Spain where 'engineering, manufacturing and construction' is one of the most studied fields for young people.

## THE FURTHER EDUCATION & SKILLS SECTOR

**The Northern Ireland Department for the Economy (DfE) published [Review of Level 4 and 5 Provision and Higher Education \[HE\] in Further Education – Overview](#).**

- The review was primarily in response to five years of declining enrolments in HE in FE, presenting a strategic challenge in light of future skills needs and a forecast undersupply at Level 4/5.
  - At the same time, England's reforms to post-16 and post-18 education and funding, Higher Technical Education and lifelong learning create potential risks and opportunities.
- The overarching aim is to achieve provision that is: unique; responsive to employer and skills needs; complementary to and aligned with other provision at other levels; and able to provide opportunities for those facing particular barriers to HE.
- Level 4/5 provision is crowded and complex: maximising retention and achievement and coordinating policy may increase numbers but won't address the challenge of low awareness and understanding.
- Ensuring a range of qualifications that meet employer needs and are understood and easily navigated by learners is likely to be important in boosting uptake.
  - More research is needed on the best route: a continued focus on more flexible Foundation Degrees; or opening up a wider range of qualifications subject to an overarching brand and quality assurance process.
  - A wide range of provision and clear pathways and progression are likely to be important, alongside ensuring the qualifications are prominent on platforms such as UCAS.
  - Barriers to take-up – particularly entry criteria – should be kept as low as possible without negatively impacting successful achievement and completion rates.
- There is limited information on the extent to which lower fees might encourage uptake.
  - The ability to pay fees through loans with earnings-contingent repayment makes some potential students less concerned about cost – however this may vary by cohort and personal circumstances.
  - Initiatives such as bursaries and scholarships may be more effective in take-up and retention.
- Some learners will become aware of HE in FE options as a result of studying in an FE college.
  - Understanding how Level 3 provision feeds into HE would enable a targeted approach; reduced numbers in colleges studying at Level 3 could have an impact on numbers studying HE in FE.
  - Year-on-year steps between qualifications, levels and years are difficult to observe through current data sets.
- A significant proportion of students leave Northern Ireland to study in GB; a proportion are 'determined leavers' who won't consider remaining regardless of the provision on offer.
  - However, a significant number may be 'reluctant leavers' who might be retained through a better understanding of what's driving them to leave and the gaps in Northern Ireland's provision.
- There is already small-scale collaboration between FE colleges and RoI institutes of technology.
  - Developing pathways for study in the RoI and alignment or joint development of qualifications could help with uptake in Northern Ireland in some areas.
- Outreach and engagement with schools/parents/communities would be beneficial for raising awareness of Level 4/5 and alternative pathways into and through HE.
  - More could be done through work on widening participation in HE and more coordinated work across HE institutions (HEIs).
  - Apart from tuition fees and living costs, there may also be other barriers such as digital poverty.
- The Tertiary Education Senior Leaders Forum, chaired by the DfE, has been overseeing a programme of work to strengthen collaboration between colleges and other HEIs.

*A number of areas considered by the review will be subject to public consultation; in the meantime, work has begun on recommendations that don't require consultation.*

**England's Association of Colleges (AoC) published [FE Provider Strategy and Mandate](#), exploring the distinctive role of English colleges in the skills landscape developing post-pandemic, post-Brexit and against a backdrop of high inflation.**

- Investment in skills must demonstrate excellent value for money if it is to compete successfully for limited resources.
- Colleges are uniquely placed to: support young people's transition to work; upskill and reskill adults and support them through the labour market; and enhance adults' lives.
  - The sector is used to working collaboratively to maximise benefits from scarce resources, rather than wasting funds on competition.
  - The development of a positive strategy for FE and skills, as part of a wider lifelong learning strategy, would enable a vital sense of direction and identity.
- Recommendations – drawing on a literature review exploring how colleges are managed in different skills systems, a quantitative review of FE and skills providers and stakeholder interviews – include:
  - Recast the 'dual mandate' as a 'triple mandate': for society, supporting social mobility and a further chance; for the economy, providing high-quality skills training; for individuals, providing education through points of transition.
  - Colleges must speak with a unified voice and to a unified message – consider a national brand.
  - Consider taking a partnership approach to strategic accountability, e.g. learning from the Scottish Regional Outcome Agreement model.
  - Use secure funding to build sector stability and allow colleges to become key resources for their communities.
  - Colleges' strong advocacy for sustainability should be fully acknowledged and, as anchor institutions, their contributions to sustainable communities should be used as a resource.
  - Consider reframing FE within a tertiary sector or developing a lifelong learning policy and strategy that links all pathways, acknowledging that education is a lifelong process.
  - Consider a managed market approach in 16–18, apprenticeship and technical education to reduce duplication and the risks of poor quality.
  - Streamline higher technical qualifications to eliminate market confusion and competition; support local provision by regulated providers.
  - Encourage employers to regard colleges as natural business partners through embedding a default setting of partnership working.
  - Colleges could be more proactive in working with partners to forecast future skills and support local plans.

**The Mental Health Foundation and Colleges Scotland published [Thriving Learners: Realising student potential and wellbeing in Scotland: Initial findings from Scottish colleges \(2022\)](#), based on a survey of over 2k students between March and May, as part of a study funded by the Robertson Trust.**

- 64% reported low wellbeing; 54% moderately severe/severe symptoms of depression; and 40% a serious psychological issue that they felt needed professional help.
  - 75% of those with low wellbeing said they experienced food insecurity or had a long-term health condition, and 50% had a disability.
  - 55% of students said they had concealed a mental health problem due to fear of stigma.
- 37% had experienced food insecurity in the previous 12 months; 31% worried about running out of food; 30% ate less due to a lack of resources or money; and 17% lived in households that had run out of food.
- Nine recommendations include those related to providing additional funding, support and research, and data collection and information sharing.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION (HE): APPLICANTS & ADMISSIONS**

**The House of Commons Library published [A levels, Scottish Highers, and university admissions 2022](#), an overview of assessment, grading and results, and analysis of university applications and admissions, including an exploration of the impact of the pandemic since 2020.**

- Findings on university admissions include:

- The number of UK 18 year-old applicants accepted at higher tariff universities on A level results day 2022 was down by 12% from 2021; it increased by 5% in lower tariff and 1% in medium tariff institutions.
- The number placed at higher tariff institutions was 11% lower than on the equivalent date in 2021, while those placed at middle tariff and lower tariff universities increased by 6% and 11% respectively – more UK 18 year-olds were placed at middle tariff than higher tariff universities for the first time since the pandemic.

**The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published [Reforming the UCAS personal statement: Making the case for a series of short questions](#), a debate paper including analysis of 164 personal statement drafts from 83 applicants from under-represented backgrounds.**

- There is growing recognition that the UCAS personal statement needs reform.
  - Its long-form, free-response format creates inequalities, e.g. more advantaged applicants are better supported to meet the challenge.
  - It is incompatible with Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE's [Fair admissions code of practice](#).
- Challenges applicants face when writing a UCAS personal statement include:
  - Organising the statement in an effective way – 35% struggled in at least one draft to write with cohesive paragraphs.
  - Writing the opening paragraph, meeting the character limit and knowing what would impress the admissions tutors.
  - 83% of drafts failed to supply an evidence-based opinion about a topic in their subject area.
  - Some spend 30–40 hours on it, requiring sacrifices in their studies and wider lives.
- Recommendations include replacing the personal statement with two questions, focused on an applicant's interest in their course(s) and relevant skills.

*Since this paper was published, UCAS has announced that it will be replacing the personal statement with a series of questions.*

**Universities UK International (UUKi) published [International Student Recruitment from Europe: The road to recovery](#).**

- The report uses student search behaviour data to forecast how changes will likely be borne out over the coming academic years.
- European students have historically made up around 33% of all international students in the UK and make 'vital contributions' to campuses and courses across the country.
  - Following Brexit, most European students wishing to start a course in the UK now require visas and no longer have access to domestic fee levels or tuition fee loans, dramatically changing the UK's proposition as a destination of choice.
- Recommendations for the HE sector and government to protect and develop recruitment include:
  - Recognise Europe as a target region in any future refresh of the government's International Education Strategy.
  - Support and promote other education internationalisation activities and initiatives that can provide a cross-cutting benefit to student recruitment, e.g. focusing on the strategic importance of inward and outward student mobility and the significant opportunities of UK transnational education (TNE) provision and online and distance learning.
  - Address practical barriers to student mobility, including reducing visa costs and addressing restricted visa routes post-Erasmus.
  - Build the evidence base on international graduate outcomes, including those of European students who are using the Graduate route.

*The third report in UUKi's ['Why aren't we second?'](#) series.*

## HE: THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

**Advance HE published [Internationalisation and students' outcomes or experiences: A review of the literature 2011–2021](#). [The full report is available to members only.]**

- Internationalisation refers broadly to the inclusion of international and intercultural elements across HE activities and services.

- This often focuses on teaching and learning, but also impacts on areas such as: recruitment of and support for international students; provisions for study abroad; intercultural social opportunities; opportunities for online collaborations across geographic borders.
- Internationalisation has become a strategic focus for many universities around the world, influencing changes in practices and services.
- Key findings include:
  - The greatest impact is shown when teaching and learning are purposefully developed to centre internationalisation via transformative and holistic (re-)designs of pedagogy, curricula, assessment, support provisions and extracurricular activities.
  - Excellent internationalisation initiatives around the world, particularly in teaching and learning, tend to be driven by the values of individual staff, rather than strategic focusing and resourcing.
  - Internationalisation is intertwined with equality and diversity work – xenophobia, racism, stereotyping and prejudices are significant barriers to meaningful internationalisation.

**MillionPlus published [Learning with the lights off: Students and the cost-of-living crisis](#), based on analysis of the 2022 Student Academic Experience Survey.**

- The 300k undergraduates who will be hardest hit financially this academic year are more likely to belong to groups traditionally under-represented in HE.
  - Black and mature students are most at risk, along with students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, from areas with lower rates of participation or who live at home or commute.
  - Given the close links between thoughts of quitting, mental health problems and financial difficulties, universities face significant rates of attrition in the coming months.
- A recent survey of MillionPlus [*i.e.* 'modern'/post-1992] universities illustrates a range of innovative and targeted programmes aimed at mitigating rising costs:
  - The expansion of hardship funds has been the most common response, increasing eligibility, the costs covered (to include rent and energy bills) or the size of the fund.
  - Ways of reducing costs for students take two main forms: programmes to provide cut-price goods and services; introducing greater flexibility in timetabling, attendance and study modes to reduce the need to travel.
  - A number of universities are using their student tracking systems to monitor emerging trends; e.g. Sunderland University is using data on attendance and drop-out to identify emerging issues.

**The House of Commons Library published [Student support for undergraduates across the UK](#), a briefing outlining student finance available to HE students in each nation, and recent policy debates about the student support systems.**

- It also published [Student Loan Statistics](#), a research briefing on the situation in England, including on take-up, total value owed, repayment, public expenditure and arguments for reform.

**England's Office for Students (OfS) published [Evaluation of the Mental Health Challenge Competition: Final report](#).**

- The competition ran from June 2019 to July 2022 and aimed to achieve a 'step change in mental health outcomes for students'; ten projects reached over 19k students, including:
  - 373 involved in co-creation activities, helping shape project design and implementation
  - 2,300 who benefited from access to new forms of support
  - 16,800 across FE and HE who benefited from support in managing transitions.
- There is evidence that the programme achieved a step change in relation to:
  - strengthened partnerships between universities, colleges, local partners and NHS services
  - better connected and more accessible services, providing the right support at the right time
  - an improved range of preventative and proactive mental health support.
- It also strengthened senior management commitment to supporting student mental health, with 80% of staff reporting that it is now seen as an organisational priority.
  - However, it has been difficult to attribute outcomes to the programme at a time when considerable efforts are being made across the sector to improve support in this area.

*The report is accompanied by [What works in supporting student mental health](#) and [Co-creating mental health initiatives with students](#), both based on key lessons from the projects.*



**England's OfS published [Evaluation of the Initial Impact of the Statement of Expectations – Final report](#), investigating how English HE providers are adopting its April 2021 [Statement of expectations](#) designed to tackle harassment and sexual misconduct.**

- The statement assists providers in developing and implementing effective prevention and response systems, policies and processes; it was the subject of consultation in January 2020.
  - Its themes are drawn from sector frameworks and reports, including UUK's 2016 *Changing the Culture* report.
- Findings show that, overall, the statement has not been a sufficient catalyst for change.
  - It has stimulated renewed discussions among providers, while UUK has continued to develop related new guidance; the issue has been high on the agendas of many other HE bodies and membership organisations and there have been many related events and discussions.
  - However, substantial variation remains, including in the consistency of approach and level of prioritisation accorded to the area; there is extensive duplication of effort and very little standardisation or evidence of evaluation.
  - The statement's initial impact has been in maintaining momentum, particularly at senior leadership level; however, this is often led by an individual senior champion who may move on.
  - There is no systematic data collection at individual provider or sector level and there are no data standards available; disclosures are not translating into formal reports and complaints, and filtering is taking place.
  - There is no clear overarching vision or goal for the sector; strategic objectives need to be more clearly stated; there need to be further opportunities for sharing and embedding good practice.
  - Providers have mainly prioritised student-to-student misconduct and there is much less focus on: other forms of harassment and hate-related incidents or crimes; staff-to-student misconduct; online misconduct; and protecting students wherever/however they may be studying.
- Change needs to be multi-layered and multiple recommendations are made for the OfS, other sector bodies and individual providers.

OfS also published a new [insight brief](#) on the role of universities in protecting students, summarising the data on the prevalence and effects of sexual misconduct and looking at what has been and needs to be done.

**Advance HE published [Postgraduate Research Experience Survey \[PRES\] 2022: Sector results report](#), based on 14k responses from 62 institutions.**

- Overall satisfaction is up 1ppt to 80%, stemming the tide of a slight but consistent three-year fall.
  - Many more postgraduate researchers (PGRs) than in 2021 'definitely agree' that they are satisfied, at a time when undergraduate satisfaction is yet to recover.
- Satisfaction rates have risen for PGRs reporting a face-to-face or hybrid experience but are lower and falling for the relatively high number who have mainly interacted online.
- Satisfaction rates are higher among non-UK nationals – around 40% of UK PGRs – and have increased in 2022, while satisfaction for UK-domiciled PGRs has fallen slightly.
- PGRs with a declared disability experience significantly lower – and declining – levels of satisfaction.
  - They are particularly likely to cite issues with access to appropriate working spaces, health and wellbeing support and feeling that their feedback is listened to and acted on.
- There has been a recovery in many areas, with particularly strong improvements in access to resources and facilities.
  - PGRs often praised how their institution had adapted and developed facilities to meet their needs, as well as their dedicated Covid-19 support, particularly the quality of communications.
- Overall support across aspects of academic skills, accessing or using resources and health and wellbeing needs also received high scores.
  - However, PGRs are still reporting lower levels of access to key experiences such as face-to-face conferences, submitting a paper for publication or communicating their research to their peers.
- A key driver of satisfaction is how institutions value and respond to feedback, but scores remain relatively low.

**HEPI published [Student belonging and the wider context](#), a policy note based on structured interviews exploring students' thoughts about belonging in general and in HE specifically.**

- Students defined 'belonging' variously as: security, comfort, sense of community, peace, authenticity and feeling accepted.
- Belonging in oneself, belonging in one's immediate environment and belonging in society and culture were all inter-related.
  - Their sense of belonging in their HEI is best situated not as an isolated phenomenon specific to being a student, but in the context of their sense of belonging more generally in the wider world.
- Five recommendations:
  - Avoid reducing student belonging to a quirk of individual students, and recognise instead that students emphasise the social, cultural and environmental dimensions of belonging.
  - Work with students and staff to identify areas of common ground – equality, diversity and inclusion policies should be wary of highlighting divisions among students at the expense of student cohesion in academic and co-curricular activities.
  - Facilitate deeper connections between students and local communities to help them feel more 'at home' where they live and to encourage them to contribute to the wider community.
  - Identify the cultural messages of the physical environment – students know that physical surroundings communicate ideas about who spaces are for and how much institutions value different people.
  - Co-create pro-belonging policies at a local rather than centralised level, e.g. within departments or in tandem with a departmental lead for student experience.

**Wonkhe and Pearson published [Building Belonging in Higher Education: Recommendations for developing an integrated institutional approach](#), based on research including surveys of 5,233 students and 430 staff from UK universities.**

- The report breaks down the concept of belonging and presents recommendations to help universities extend pockets of best practice across the sector.
- Four areas form the foundations of achieving belonging:
  - **Connection:** the way universities connect their students; getting to know their peers has a profound effect on students' sense of belonging as it enables them to build a support network and develop confidence.
  - **Inclusion:** access to and accessibility of teaching and learning, and whether the course content, and those teaching it, are diverse and representative; students associate diverse inclusive content with course credibility.
  - **Support:** well-defined, clearly articulated, inclusive support systems and networks; eliminating a deficit model approach by integrating support throughout the course and across the university had the greatest potential to remove deeply engrained feelings of unbelonging, 'otherness' or 'imposter syndrome'.
  - **Autonomy:** students feeling empowered to make choices about their learning and contribute to course content; despite an increasing number of projects around co-creation, the practice is not widespread.
- Three overarching narratives reflect the challenges of building a sense of belonging in students and implementing the recommendations: lack of integration between the course and 'everything else'; poor mental health; cultural and systemic barriers.

**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) published [Revisiting academic integrity from a student perspective](#), as part of its Quality Compass series to help institutions respond to 'future challenges and opportunities'.**

- It explores academic integrity as 'a positive approach to encouraging good academic conduct'.
  - Academic misconduct at undergraduate level largely focuses students who plagiarise, cheat, collude or purchase academic work online.
  - Contrastingly the notion of academic integrity is broadly based on the honesty and originality of academic submissions.
  - Integrity, or the absence of it, could therefore be viewed as the result of a risk-and-reward calculation on the part of students.
- Nurturing academic study skills is essential in supporting integrity, not least because students may inadvertently plagiarise or not understand the difference between collusion and collaboration.
  - The value placed on collaboration and teamworking skills may accentuate the challenge.

- Many students do not understand the seriousness of academic misconduct resulting from commissioning or using essay mill services and the consequential penalties and outcomes.
- A future approach to academic integrity should involve developing students' academic pride and ownership of their submissions.
  - Many institutions already offer academic integrity training to ensure students respect and understand what constitutes misconduct.
  - Reinspiring student culture to take on a level of self-determination, confidence building and social accountability is vital to changing their perspective and willingness to adopt cheating behaviours.
  - Reinforcing good behaviours and support through social and learning initiatives on campus can play an instrumental role in promoting self-determined paths towards accountability and authenticity.

**HEPI published [No Platform: Speaker events at university debating unions](#), investigating concerns about bias and no-platforming.**

- An analysis of all speakers invited by debating unions in 2021/22 found that they had a left-wing bias overall, reflecting the wider political views of students.
- The Cambridge Union hosted 195 speakers and Oxford 183, compared to 124 speakers across all other debating unions put together.
  - Only 19 universities appeared to have a debating society that hosted outside speakers in 2021/22.
- 'Quiet' no-platforming, where students decide not to invite otherwise suitable speakers to an event because of their views, was more common than reported cases of no-platforming.
- The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill – the main provisions of which apply only to England – aims to tackle the problem, but, in its current form, could make it worse as students tend to respond to controversy with more caution rather than more free speech.
- Recommendations include: produce clear guidance on managing challenging events and the complaints process; and streamline the Bill to ensure providers handle most complaints internally, cutting bureaucracy and protecting institutional autonomy.

**Advance HE published [Freedom of speech, academic freedom and good campus relations: A summary of 2022 sector roundtables](#).**

- Five roundtables convened with UUK and GuildHE covered: academic freedom; employment; equality, diversity and inclusion; student unions; and governance.
- Key challenges include:
  - Operationalising commitments to free speech in a complex landscape
  - Zero tolerance for harassment and fostering good relations
  - Building a robust and inclusive culture of enquiry
  - Issues around providing a 'space' for debates on crucial issues
  - Power and impact of online discourse especially through social media channels
  - Complexities in the delineation of responsibilities between the student union and their HEI
  - Continued and persistent public and media scrutiny of how HEIs (and student unions) manage their requirements to support free speech
  - Ensuring freedom of speech at campuses and for students studying at UK providers based in other countries.
- Suggestions for tackling the above challenges include:
  - Develop a whole-institution approach to freedom of speech, consulting with staff and students.
  - Review relevant policies and codes of practice and clarify accountability for issues relating to freedom of speech to ensure effective scrutiny and institutional management.
  - Consider how the executive and governing body are informed and equipped to provide effective scrutiny and direction of the institution's approach to freedom of speech.
  - Develop and communicate an approach to freedom of speech, academic freedom, and equality, diversity and inclusion as complementary aims, aligned with institutional values.
  - Clearly and regularly communicate institutional policy, including complaint processes.

- Undertake specific activity to foster good relations between different groups and ensure that all students and staff are made aware of expectations and responsibilities.
- Build a robust and inclusive culture of enquiry.

## HE: WIDENING PARTICIPATION

England's OfS published [Student characteristics data: Student outcomes](#), highlighting differences in continuation, completion, achievement and progression rates among UK-domiciled, full-time first-degree students.

- Among the key findings for just some of the characteristics:
  - Mature students (aged 21+ on enrolment) had lower continuation, completion and attainment rates than under-21s, but higher progression rates.
  - Rates tended to be lower for those who reported as disabled, but those not domiciled in the UK had higher attainment than non-disabled students; it also varied by type of disability.
  - The 2016/17 completion rate for those from a minority ethnic background was lower than for white students (86.0% vs 89.8%), but this was reversed for part-timers (49.3% vs 47.2%).
  - Male students generally had lower continuation, completion and attainment than female at all levels of study, but higher progression rates at most levels.
  - Students whose parents didn't have an HE qualification had lower rates across the board than those whose parents did have one.
  - Undergraduates eligible for FSM at any point in the six years to age 16 always had lower rates than those not eligible, with similar results for other measures of deprivation.
- Other characteristics covered include: gender identity and sexual orientation; religion/belief; care experience; household residual income, socioeconomic background and TUNDRA (tracked under-representation by area); entry qualifications and broad subject of study; service child (experimental).
  - 'Associations between characteristics of students' is a further set of intersectional measures, comprising those that shouldn't have an impact on outcomes but do.

The data can be explored through [interactive dashboards](#).

The Scottish Government published [The experiences of estranged students in further and higher education: A review of the literature](#) by ScotCen Social Research.

- An estranged student is defined as no longer having the support of or not being in contact with their family/parents/guardian due to a breakdown in their relationship.
- Student estrangement in the UK, particularly in Scotland, is under-researched; a key gap is in the experiences of estranged students in FE.
- The literature explores the experiences of estranged students (e.g. identity, financial challenges, homelessness), but there is less research on how government responds and the impact of student funding support.
  - The institutional perspective is largely absent, as is the views of staff or wider stakeholders who support them.

UCAS published [Next steps: What is the experience of students from a care background in education?](#) in collaboration with the Unite Foundation.

- 13% of care leavers enter HE by their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, compared to 45% of the wider population.
- Analysis of UCAS application data and a survey of 500 applicants with a care background found that:
  - 19% had moved schools once and 11% had moved multiple times.
  - 33% of applicants were aged 21+, compared to 20% of non-care applicants; they were more than twice as likely to take the Access to HE Diploma.
  - They were 51% less likely than non-care peers to achieve high grades at A level and 62% less likely in Scottish Highers; they were 30% less likely to be accepted at higher tariff providers.
  - 60% had received no care-specific guidance during their application journey, despite information, resources and support being available.
  - They were: 38% more likely than non-care peers to come from the most disadvantaged areas; twice as likely to be from mixed or Black ethnic groups; 79% more likely to identify as LGBT+; almost twice as likely to report a disability and nearly three times a mental health condition.

- Only 25% were always open about their care background with school staff; 33% didn't discuss it with anyone at school unless they had to.
- 41% felt supported pastorally in school or college but only 32% with social and extracurricular activities; 66% expected HE pastoral and educational support to be good/very good, and 40% believed the social and extracurricular support would be good/very good.
- They were 179% more likely to apply for health & social care courses than non-care students, and 50% more likely to apply for nursing & midwifery.
- In making HE choices, over 75% prioritised access to mental health and wellbeing support, with financial support, accommodation and pre-entry support also important factors.

*The report makes five recommendations for government, regulators, institutions and others in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.*

## GRADUATES & GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

**The Centre for Learning & Life Chances (LLAKES) published [Report on the ISIKLE Project: Increasing and Evaluating Student Impact in Knowledge & Learning Exchange \(ISIKLE\)](#); the project was funded by Research England and the OfS.**

- The current focus on the importance of student knowledge exchange (KE) derives from the confluence of two streams of UK policy development:
  - A growing recognition of the need for HE providers to engage with local businesses and communities, serving the economy and society.
  - The importance of cultivating employability skills among HE graduates who face growing competition for graduate jobs; this has been highlighted by the loss of such opportunities as a result of pandemic lockdowns.
- The project objectives were to: scale up four existing KE programmes to make them more accessible; introduce innovations in how they were implemented; and evaluate the effectiveness of different types of student KE activity.
- Among the key findings:
  - All the programmes resulted in improvements for at least some participants in terms of: community understanding and civic engagement; skills, especially for employability; career planning; and general sense of wellbeing.
  - The strongest quantitative evidence is around skills, where self-reported scores increased for all the clusters (leadership/independence, people skills/communication, reflection/self-determination and technical).
  - A common theme was around the opportunities afforded for 'real-life' application of knowledge and skills and the motivation of believing that this could 'make a difference' in the 'real world'.
  - Interacting and collaborating with others from diverse backgrounds and with different types of expertise in different professional contexts afforded new challenges in terms of communication skills.
  - Finding ways to adapt communication and research skills to new environments increased self-confidence and the sense of self-efficacy.
  - All the programmes helped the students think more deeply about how their work could have real-world impact and how their skills might be useful outside academia, making them feel their studies were worthwhile.
- Drawing on the evidence, policy recommendations include:
  - High-quality KE opportunities offer a comparative advantage in recruiting students and should be central to universities' strategic plans for improving learning opportunities and for enhancing the overall experience.
  - Maintaining a diverse set of KE offers is likely to be the most effective way to meet the different priorities of diverse groups, thereby enhancing the reputation of the KE offer.
  - Student KE programmes may differ in some of the specific benefits they offer, but they should always retain a focus on enhancing employability.
  - Diversity in recruitment can be improved by university-wide publicity, the provision of travel allowances and flexible delivery, including hybrid modes adopted through the pandemic.
  - KE programmes that are credit bearing and more integral to main study programmes may, in some cases, be more attractive to those from under-represented groups.

**HEPI published [How can you help me?: Students' perspectives on careers services and employment](#), based on an online survey of 1,105 students.**

- 34% believe it's the responsibility of their HEI to find them a job; 30% don't.
- 51% had used a careers service to date: 59% of them were quite/very happy with it; 20% were quite/very unhappy.
  - Of those who hadn't used it: some didn't know what it had to offer; some thought it wouldn't support their specific needs; some felt it was too early to start career planning.
- Students look to their careers service for help with: finding an internship/placement (63%); writing CVs (63%); preparing interviews (61%); finding a career (60%); life skills and mentoring (49%).
- 53% agree 'all university courses should be designed mainly with future employment in mind'.
  - However, 69% disagree with England's proposal to reduce access to student finance for those opting for courses with poor employment prospects.
- 46% are confident they are likely to find the job they want on graduation; 30% aren't confident.
- 34% don't mind the size of their future employer; of those who do, 28% chose large, 31% SME.
- 41% prefer employers who consider work experience and extracurricular activities; 30% prefer employers who mostly care about degree results.

**Prospects and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services published [What do graduates do? 2023: Insights and analysis from the UK's largest higher education survey](#), covering those who graduated in 2019/20.**

- The report is based on 192k responses from UK-domiciled graduates, 15 months after graduation; findings include:
  - The labour market had improved rapidly; outcomes were slightly better than the previous year and not dissimilar to 'normal': 80% were employed; 5.8% unemployed.
  - 67% were in permanent, full-time roles and 15% on fixed-term contracts; 8% were self-employed or actively working towards it.
  - 79% of first-degree graduates with disabilities were in full-time or part-time employment, 71% of them in professional-level jobs.
  - 63% of those in employment said they were using the skills learnt during their studies.
  - 74% were in professional-level employment; the figure was 95% among those who had taken an apprenticeship, 42% of whom were working as engineering and IT professionals.
  - Those from low-participation neighbourhoods were as likely to be employed full time as those from high-participation neighbourhoods, but less likely to be in professional jobs (70/77%).
  - 71% of those with First Class degrees were employed full time; 67% of those with a 2:1 or 2:2.
  - 70% of white graduates were employed, compared with 65% from Black, Asian or other minority ethnic backgrounds, and they were more likely to be in professional employment (74%/72%).
  - The largest falls in employment were in jobs not considered to be professional, e.g. retail assistants, care home workers and waiters/waitresses.
  - Although the economic signals are not good, the majority of new graduates have good jobs and there is no reason to suppose the coming economic difficulties will disrupt that.

*Separate chapters cover detailed outcomes for those who studied: business & administrative studies; creative arts; technology, engineering & maths; humanities; science; and social sciences.*

**The Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD) published [What is the scale and impact of graduate overqualification in the UK?](#)**

- The employment rate for graduates is 88% compared to 69% for non-graduates; the inactivity rate is 11% (28%); unemployment is 2% (5%).
- In 2022, 68% of working-age graduates were in 'high-skilled' employment, compared with 22% of non-graduates; in 1992, the figures were 75%/18%.
  - The percentage in medium-/low-skilled employment was 20% (47%), up from 10% (51%).
- Graduates born in 1970 earned around 17% more per annum than non-graduates by the age of 26; for those born in 1990, this premium had dropped to 10%, with a steeper fall for those gaining 2:2s.

- 42% of graduates who work in small organisations (<50 employees) say they feel overqualified for their role, compared with 30% in medium and 36% in large organisations.
  - Such overqualification is most likely among graduates in retail and hospitality (58%).
- Just 54% of overqualified graduates report being very satisfied/satisfied with their current jobs, compared with 72% of well-matched graduates.
- Graduate overqualification remains relatively stable, with 31% saying they are overqualified after 20 years in an organisation, compared with 34% after one year.

**CIPD also published [What is the scale and impact of graduate overqualification in Scotland?](#) – a brief outline of a policy context with differences in tuition fees, apprenticeships and careers services.**

- The findings do not suggest that differences in tuition fee policy have any impact on outcomes, especially when it comes to levels of overqualification.

**The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) published [Getting a move on: The creation of a new graduate mobility marker](#), providing insight into the added value such a marker will bring.**

- The marker is based on the local/unitary authority of pre-course domicile, the region of study and the authority where they are eventually employed.
- Previous research has defined 'returners' as graduates who leave their region of domicile to study but return for work.
  - The new marker shows that 63% of these 'returners' are actually employed in a different authority to the one they were living in prior to commencing their course.
  - 60% of graduates who previously lived, studied and now work in the same region – sometimes referred to as 'loyals' – were actually employed in a different authority than pre-study.
- Making these distinctions is useful when examining the association between graduate mobility and their outcomes.
  - E.g. those who return to work in a different authority exhibit higher design/nature of work scores [*see below*] than those who return to the same authority, primarily driven by the extent to which graduates believe their job fits with their future plans.

**HESA published [Graduate wellbeing: How does the design and nature of work relate to life evaluations and present emotions?](#), drawing on Graduate Outcomes Survey data from 2017/18 and 2018/19 covering jobs, wellbeing and salaries.**

- There was a positive relationship between the composite measure of the design/nature of work (meaningful; uses skills learnt in education; fits with future plans) and three wellbeing measures.

**The National Centre for Universities & Business (NCUB) published [An insight report into the UK's graduate entrepreneurs](#), based on HESA's Graduate Outcomes Survey data.**

- 'Graduate entrepreneurs' are defined as those who started a business, were self-employed or at the concept stage within 15 months of leaving university.
  - They comprised 8.7% of HE leavers in 2020; 58% had studied arts & humanities and 21% STEM; 54% were male compared to 45% of graduates.
  - 78% were in the devolved nation or region where they were originally domiciled.
  - 30% offer knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS) in ICT, professional & scientific activities, 40% offer other KIBS.
  - 40% of those in R&D active sectors are in computer-related services.
  - Entrepreneurial rates are higher among Black graduates (13%), those with a disability (10%) and those aged 30+ (13%).

## HE: INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

**The British Council published [The Value of Transnational Education Partnerships](#) by Education Insight – a literature review, survey and analysis of 79 interviews with representatives from ministries, regulatory bodies and HEIs across 12 countries.**

- The report explores the value of TNE partnerships to stakeholders, HEIs and communities in the UK and overseas, and the drivers and challenges for institutions to engage in TNE.

- TNE partnerships contribute significantly to local, national and global agendas, e.g. the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Value and impact vary across and within countries; key areas of value and impact include:
  - Capacity building and institutional development
  - Developing teaching capacity in HEIs and strengthening the academic talent pool in countries
  - Enhancing student experience and improving graduate employability
  - Enhancing research capacity and reputational value
  - Building sustainable communities.
- Value of TNE partnerships to the UK includes:
  - Increased exports as a government priority
  - Recruitment of international students to the UK as an institutional priority
  - Revenue diversification and research growth
  - Institutional and national reputation
  - Institutional internationalisation
  - Strengthened knowledge base and knowledge diplomacy.
- 11 lessons for UK policymakers and institutions include:
  - Shape policy interventions around shared benefits for the UK and partner countries; currently, the agendas of the UK and partner country governments are insufficiently aligned to achieve maximum benefit for both.
  - Enhance research partnerships by developing government-supported dual and double postgraduate programmes, particularly at the PhD level.
  - Broaden existing teaching partnerships to deliver on higher levels of national and institutional priorities, e.g. research collaborations and student and staff exchanges funded by the Turing scheme.
  - Greater system-to-system engagement for improved degree recognition for undergraduate degrees acquired through TNE and professional qualifications, especially those delivered online; there is huge potential for continuing professional development (CPD), microcredentials and qualifications required by labour markets globally.
  - HEIs must understand the broader national and educational contexts of partners; this is critical to institutional strategic and operational decisions on TNE partnerships.

*Part of British Council's [Going Global Partnerships](#) programme.*

**UUKi, in partnership with the British Council, published [The scale of UK higher education transnational education 2020–21: Trend analysis and regional highlights](#).**

- 162 HE providers reported 510,835 students studying through TNE – up 12.7% on 2019/20; 67.2% were studying at undergraduate level.
  - The top 15 providers accounted for 50% of all students; the top two accounted for 18.7%.
- 39.1% of UK HE TNE students were studying through collaborative provision; 30.0% were studying through distance, flexible or distributed learning; 22.6% were studying while registered at an overseas partner organisation; and 7.0% studied at an overseas campus.
  - Students registered with an overseas partner saw the largest proportional increase (+17.6%).
- UK TNE was reported in 228 countries and territories: Asia hosted 49.5% of students, followed by the EU (15.8%), the Middle East (13.8%), Africa (11.1%), North America (5.3%), non-EU Europe (3.4%), Australasia (0.6%) and South America (0.6%).
  - China was the top host country (12.0%), followed by Malaysia (9.5%), Sri Lanka (7.3%), Singapore (5.5%) and Egypt (4.7%).
  - Student numbers in the EU increased by 44.7% between 2016/17 and 2020/21.

**HEPI published [Why open access is not enough: Spreading the benefits of research](#), considering the challenges that may remain in facilitating engagement, even if all research outcomes are available to all readers.**



- Open access is one of the main discussion points in today's research environment, with the last two decades having seen growing commitment not only to open access but also to open research.
  - Open access research outcomes are more impactful in terms of increased citations, and more accessible given their wider availability within and outside of academia.
- However, open access alone does not resolve the challenges in making the best use of research:
  - The sheer volume of content; the length and format of research articles; and inaccessible language, not only for the public but across disciplines.
  - **For policymakers:** the long timescales that researchers work to; the lack of clear-cut solutions generated; the risk of political bias.
  - **For industry:** the multifaceted and complex nature of translating research into commercial applications – there is a missing link between doing/communicating research and applying it.
- Ways of creating enabling conditions for research impact include:
  - Embedding within PhD training the skills to communicate research and collaborate with policy networks; the focus should be on putting the needs of the end user at the heart of the story.
  - Building decision-makers' capability by having more researchers embedded with them, as is now being piloted in the UK.
  - Offering academics – particularly early career researchers – industry placements.
  - Engaging the public to co-produce testable research questions focused on local issues.
  - Creating new formats for different audiences, e.g. short summaries in plain English.
  - Using knowledge brokers to synthesise and translate research into more accessible language.
  - Rewarding academics for impact, e.g. for public engagement, presenting accessible formats and sharing outputs throughout the research process.

**NCUB published [State of the Relationship 2022: Analysing trends in UK university–business collaboration](#), its ninth annual assessment of partnerships, based on data from 2020/21.**

- **UK-wide:**
  - There were 76,952 interactions in 2020/21, down just 2% from 2019/20, demonstrating the resilience of collaboration during the pandemic; those with SMEs fell by 2.5% and with large businesses by 0.6%.
  - UK business investment in university R&D was down 10.1%, especially driven by a decline in CPD, facilities and equipment and contract research; investment from foreign sources fell by 5%.
  - Universities reported a 26.6% decrease in the number of Innovate UK grants, and a 38% decrease in the size of the average grant, now at £195k.
  - Universities' contribution to research commercialisation continued to grow, with the number of licenses granted up by 4.6%.
- **For universities in Northern Ireland:**
  - Interactions with large businesses and SMEs were down compared to the five-year average.
  - The number of patents granted and income from licensing fell, but the number of licences and academic spinouts grew.
  - The percentage of university income achieved in 2021 through collaboration was 33.1%, up 4.9ppt from 2020.
- Two major challenges face collaboration in the UK:
  - Ensuring that vital collaborations continue to thrive and develop despite significant economic and political disruption.
  - Building deeper, more purposeful, strategic partnerships to respond to the biggest challenges.

**MillionPlus published [Staying local to go far: Modern universities as placemakers](#), exploring the economic and social impact of its members in England and Scotland.**

- The report draws on: analysis of student/graduate mobility; economic analysis of regional impact; [case studies](#) from member institutions (published separately); and interviews with local stakeholders.
- Among the findings:
  - 68.7% of working MillionPlus university graduates are 'regional loyals', living, studying and finding work in the same region – 20ppt higher than for the sector as a whole.

- 65.9% of those in work are in key public professions in their regions, e.g. education and health.
- Accounting just for the direct, indirect and induced impacts of modern universities' expenditure, they generate 17b in UK gross value added and support 211,826 jobs.
- They work closely with employers to create a variety of pathways into HE leading to future employment, e.g. in 2017–22 they were responsible for 128k higher apprenticeship starts.
- They clearly have a role as placemakers and also have great potential as vehicles for levelling up, reaching into some of the most disadvantaged communities within every region of the UK.
- Among the recommendations for government (particularly in England):
  - Use modern universities' knowledge, infrastructure and expertise to expand the geographic reach of HE, e.g. through satellite campuses.
  - Restore maintenance grants and create a Sharia-compliant student finance system to reduce barriers for Muslim communities.
  - Strengthen the public sector workforce pipeline by offering maintenance grants of up to £10k for relevant disciplines and a 'fee-loan forgiveness scheme' after five years of employment.
  - Use devolved funding to empower local government to work with anchor institutions such as universities to foster place-based innovation.

*Wales has four 'other' modern universities; there are none identified in Northern Ireland.*

**The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) published [Delivering Economic and Social Benefit through Tertiary Education and Research: College and university case studies 2021–22](#), an insight into the contributions of institutions to support recovery and social renewal following the pandemic.**

- The report also presents work being done to support: fair access and transitions; quality learning and teaching; the student experience; student engagement; equalities and inclusion; the promotion of positive mental health; and impactful research and innovation.

**Advance HE published [Diversity of governors in higher education: What we know, and what we still need to learn](#), based mainly on HESA data.**

- In 2020/21, 42.4% of governing body members were women – up 0.1ppt from 2019/20, a slowing of the positive trend recorded over the past decade.
  - 38.1% of 202 institutions approached gender parity; smaller governing bodies were significantly less diverse, despite women making up the majority of their academic staff.
- 31.9% had no international governors, despite having on average 10.4% international staff.
- 25% had no minority ethnic governors, despite on average 11.6% minority ethnic academic staff.
  - However, 39.1% had a higher proportion of minority ethnic governors than academic staff.
- 5.8% of governors disclosed a disability.
- 54% were aged 56+, which was the least diverse age group.
  - Although those aged 25 or under comprised 6.5% of governors, they constituted 21.1% of those who disclosed a disability and 16.7% of those from two or more intersecting minority groups.

**HEPI published [Opportunities to improve university governance in England](#), with findings that are potentially relevant to other countries.**

- There has been a shift towards more interactive governance at some universities, with the best examples relying on clarity of roles, skilled participants and both time in post and available time.
  - Those participating in more interactive governance were clear about the distinction between governance and management.
  - They were also more likely to contribute to the context, content and conduct of strategy and to leverage oversight as a means to enhance performance.
- Governors are least confident about how best to discharge their roles in academic governance and institutional performance monitoring.
  - However, some universities have recruited lay governors with sector expertise and altered their committee structures to enhance work in these areas.
- Rather than recruiting from among 'the great and the good', there has been a shift towards people with skills and experience who bring different expectations to their roles.

- Student governor legitimacy has increased; staff governors feel conflicts between their perceived representational roles and their collective responsibility.
- Governors have experienced a volatile external environment, presenting risks and opportunities.
  - Internally, some institutions have appointed vice-chancellors who are more open and transparent than their predecessors.
- The changed regulatory regime in England has resulted in more focus on student and staff experiences as well as compliance but has also meant less sector-level emphasis on governance enhancement.
  - It is widely felt that there is an onus on governing bodies to become more visible to underpin institutional governance legitimacy.

*Ten recommendations are made to address sector-wide issues arising from the research.*

**UK student network People & Planet published its [2022/23 University League](#), which ranks UK universities against sustainability and ethics criteria.**

- Based on the most recent HESA estates management record, 59% failed to reach the target of reducing carbon emissions directly controlled by them by 43% between 2005/06 and 2020/21.
- Cardiff Metropolitan University topped the league, up from 68<sup>th</sup> in 2019 to 1<sup>st</sup> place with 82.3% overall in 2022; University of Bedfordshire and Manchester Metropolitan were 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  - Stranmillis University was bottom of the league, with just 2.2% overall.
- Ulster, Cardiff Metropolitan and Edinburgh Napier all remained top of their respective nations, with University of Bedfordshire moving above Manchester Metropolitan to top in England.
  - The East of England and Northern Ireland are the worst performing regional categories, with no universities meeting the carbon reduction target or scoring above a 2:2.

## TEACHING & LEARNING

**England's OfS published [Blended learning review: Report of the OfS-appointed Blended Learning Review Panel](#), examining approaches in six providers, representing a cross-section of the sector.**

- There are examples of high-quality approaches and innovation, as well as pockets of poor online teaching practice and learning resources.
  - The balance between face-to-face and online is not the key determinant of quality.
- Students reported less timely and lower quality feedback in online settings than face-to-face.
  - They also reported feeling isolated studying online during lockdowns, affecting their sense of belonging to an academic community.
- Recommendations include:
  - A blended approach should be informed by sound pedagogic principles, not growth in numbers.
  - Students must have clear information about the approach to blended learning when they are thinking about applying for a course and after they have registered.
  - Academics must be able to identify where students are struggling online or falling behind.
  - Institutions must engage with students to identify and address barriers to attendance and engagement and must work with them to create evaluation tools.

**Jisc and Emerge Education published [From technology-enabled teaching to digitally enhanced learning: A new perspective for HE](#), exploring the key digital learning and teaching trends, challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.**

- The last two years have seen the groundwork laid for a much more profound digital transformation than has been seen so far in most UK universities.
  - Both staff and students are showing a greater openness to innovation and awareness of what is possible, along with enhanced digital skills.
  - There is also a greater awareness of the benefits, particularly in inclusivity and accessibility for students who are part time, distanced, disabled, carers or having to balance work and study.
  - There has been a narrowing of attainment/awarding gaps related to gender, disability and race.

- Employability has been enhanced through embedding skills.
- Recommendations for institutions:
  - Change the underlying perspective from how students are *taught* to how they *learn*, with that learning journey as a critical, integral part of the whole student experience.
  - Provide much greater guidance and full transparency about what students will experience and why, alongside more institution-wide consistency in understanding, expectations and experience.
  - Collaborate with students as curriculum co-designers and as participants in transforming their educational experiences.
  - Invest strategically in technology, not just in physical spaces; digital representation in the boardroom is an essential start.
  - Keep building staff and student digital capabilities, including among senior leaders; benchmark skills using national tools and data.

*The report includes four case studies.*

**QAA published [Blended Learning for STEM at Levels 3–6 during the Covid-19 pandemic and its implications for pedagogy and skills \(A QAA funded research project of experiences at Leeds College of Building and York College\)](#).**

- The research explored STEM, construction and built environment, which don't traditionally lend themselves to blended learning due to the significant practical elements; key findings included:
  - Students struggled more with subject-specific online learning and found learning maths for engineering difficult, particularly transitioning from Level 3 to 4+; peer support (via WhatsApp) appeared to be useful.
  - Students felt that units heavy on theory/legislation were the easiest to learn online.
  - Learning management systems and virtual learning environments enabled more flexible learning and the ability to review recorded sessions, promoting greater reflection.
  - Innovation and engagement in lessons was dependent on tutors' ICT literacy; in order to continue adopting blended learning across STEM, developing innovative approaches rather than importing existing ones online will be critical.
  - Inconsistent application of software, delivery, ICT skills and teaching presence, including different software being used by different tutors for the same thing, made it challenging for tutors to replicate rounded in-person experiential learning.
  - There is a danger that blended learning tools are overused without thought for pedagogy.
  - Home environments were not always conducive to blended learning and blurred the lines between work, education and home life.
- **Better incorporation of flexibility in blended learning provision requires:**
  - self-discipline from students and trust from staff and employers that students have the motivation and resilience to take responsibility for their learning
  - complementary training to improve ICT and practical skills
  - institutions to continue to provide flexible study spaces on site.
- **Better stimulation of interaction in blended learning requires:**
  - space for students to actively participate without disrupting the flow of the lesson
  - in-person delivery of some more technical and practical aspects of STEM that benefit from a more collegiate learning environment
  - additional training and support to ensure that students can make the most of digital tools.
- Two recommended interventions: development of a tutor CPD programme in using blended learning; a non-accredited, in-person/online course on digital skills and employability for Level 3–6 students.

**Jisc published findings from its [Teaching staff digital experience insights survey 2021/22](#); [UK further education](#) is based on responses from 2,691 staff in 30 FE and sixth form colleges; [UK higher education](#) is based on responses from 3,533 staff in 28 universities and two colleges.**

- 56% of FE and 48% of HE staff (-6ppt on 2020/21) said the support they received to teach effectively online was 'above average'.

- 53% in HE wanted a mix of on-site and online teaching and 39% mainly on-site; only 8% wanted mainly online.
- 31% in FE (+1ppt) and 14% in HE (-1ppt) were assessed on their digital skills and training needs.
  - 52%/50% received training and support for teaching online.
  - 79%/73% went to colleagues for help with digital problems, 52%/48% contacted IT staff for help.
  - 19%/6% said they were rewarded or recognised for their digital skills.
- 69%/64% rated the quality of the online learning environment as above average; 38%/42% reported poor wifi connections.
- The main themes cited by FE staff as improving the effectiveness of online teaching were: enhanced staff development; improving learner support; and greater access to technology and improved digital infrastructure.
- 37% of HE staff wanted universities to upgrade platforms and systems; 32% wanted them to provide better IT support; 16% wanted more computers or devices; and 14% wanted specialist software.

**HEPI and Kortext published [The Future of Digital Learning Resources: Students' expectations versus reality](#), based on a UCAS survey of over 2k HE students in UK universities and colleges.**

- 38% say that their school/college online resources were better than their HEI's; 45% disagree.
- 87% want to see streamlining of digital learning resources onto a single platform with an easy-to-use interface.
  - Texts must be easily readable and platforms not appear cluttered and busy; the platform should be available across devices and accessible on- and off-campus.
- 95% want online resources to be available without waiting lists.
- The most in-demand resource is lecture recordings: they should be uploaded onto a single, user-friendly platform for the duration of the course.
  - However, there are intellectual property questions that still need to be resolved.

**Jisc published [Approaches to curriculum and learning design across UK higher education](#), based on a literature review, interviews and a survey.**

- Learning and teaching strategies are primary organisational drivers for curriculum design.
  - Curriculum review is also a common driver, providing the occasion and rationale for implementing strategic changes to learning and teaching practice and giving agency to programme teams.
  - Since the pandemic there is evidence of new interest in modes of delivery, alongside routine and ongoing curriculum review and refreshes.
- There are clear links between quality assurance, quality enhancement and staff engagement with learning design.
  - Engagement with institutional design process/models is actively encouraged in many institutions as part of the formal curriculum review process.
- Since the pandemic there appears to be more of an emphasis on programme-level curriculum change, which can allow for a more coherent use of resources and information.
- Staff workload allocation, reward structures and investment in academic staff development are concerns that could represent significant challenges to progress over the next three years.
- Engaging students as co-creators in curriculum and learning design is more of an aspiration than a realisation for many.
  - There is a clear desire to work with students beyond the established methods of representation on review panels, etc.

**The Open University (OU) published [Enquiry-based learning \[EBL\]: Transforming nurse education](#), exploring the EBL teaching style and its ability to 'close the theory-practice gap'.**

- EBL:
  - encourages students to take the lead in directing their own learning
  - involves peer collaboration and builds a community of learning

- emphasises the student's role in the learning process and asks them to engage with an idea or topic in a more active way than in traditional learning models.
- Working interactively in groups benefited students as it widens perspectives and improves the retention of knowledge.
  - 75% of students surveyed said EBL had helped teamworking and enhanced critical thinking.
  - 68% said it had helped their nursing practice and 66% their skills in caring for patients.

**QAA published [QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project Report on badging and micro-credentialing within UK higher education through the use of skills profiles](#).**

- Six UK case studies illustrate different ways of accommodating badges and microcredentials and demonstrate ways to explain more clearly to learners, teachers and employers how they align with future job roles.
- Badges and microcredentials are gaining popularity within UK HE, opening up opportunities for more flexible personalised learning and earning approaches within and beyond HE.
- Recommendations are provided for potential next steps to realising the opportunities.

**Cedefop (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) published [Teachers and trainers in a changing world: Building up competences for inclusive, green and digitalised vocational education and training \(VET\): Synthesis report](#).**

- The report builds typologies of VET professionals working in initial VET (IVET) and identifies important trends in the organisation of their initial professional development (IPD) and CPD.
  - Understanding the different types and roles of VET teachers and trainers may support policymakers and education and training providers to better tailor IPD and CPD to their needs.

**Cedefop published [Empowering Teachers and Trainers to Manage Change](#), focusing on the changing skills requirements of teachers and trainers in VET.**

- The training and employment of young people who are NEET, refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups has become a cornerstone of high-quality VET.
  - It requires specific psychosocial and intercultural skills, as well as up-to-date technical skills.
  - This is on top of the challenges posed by the greening of European economies and the rapid digitalisation of jobs, including the teaching profession itself.
- The briefing presents new evidence gathered on teacher and trainer IPD/CPD, including many practical examples from around Europe.

**The Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD) published [Digital higher education: Emerging quality standards, practices and supports](#), exploring how public authorities across OECD countries have started to embed digital education quality assurance into their existing HE quality assurance frameworks.**

- Four focus areas have emerged:
  - **Digital pedagogy:** a need for institutions to develop specific standards or guidance for course content, design, delivery and assessment.
  - **Supporting instructors:** supporting and incentivising professional development.
  - **Supporting students:** adequately preparing and supporting students for digital learning, with a particular focus on mental health.
  - **Feedback and performance monitoring:** a need for more detailed and up-to-date data on quality, using the potential of digital technologies such as learning analytics.
- There are four key areas of institutional support: policies, resources, people and processes.

*The report proposes eight key principles and 25 associated indicators for ensuring quality.*

## WORKFORCE ISSUES

**University of the Arts London published a new, annual [Ethnic Representation Index](#) for universities in England, suggesting a lack of progress in addressing issues around racism.**

- On average, 17% of academics, 10% of professors, 11% of governors and 4% of executives are from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 32% of students.

- 2.7% of academics, 0.7% of professors, 2.6% of governors and 0.9% of executives are Black, compared with 9.5% of students.
- 78% of the universities analysed are less likely to make Black students an offer despite having the same entry profile as other applicants.
  - Over 90% of universities have higher rates of dissatisfaction among their Black, Asian and other minority ethnic students than their white students.
  - No university has parity in Firsts or 2:1s, even those committed to anti-racism strategies like decolonisation initiatives.

**UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) published [UKRI diversity data for funding applicants and awardees: 2020–21 update](#).**

- White males received the largest percentage of awards as both principal investigators (PIs) (57%) and co-investigators (CIs) (49%).
  - 28% of PIs and 33% of CIs were women, despite being 42% of the academic population.
- Most PI awardees were white (81%), followed by Asian (8%), mixed (2%) and Black (1%).
- The award rate for Black PIs was 13% and other ethnic groups 12%, compared with 29% for white PIs, 23% for mixed ethnic and 21% for Asian.
- 2% of PI and CI grant holders reported a known disability, compared with 4% of wider academic staff and 13% of the wider employed population.
  - 6% of PI and CI grant holders didn't disclose their disability status; 8% PI/9% CI their ethnicity.

UKRI also published an [analysis](#) of responses to its spring 2022 consultation on its draft equality, diversity and inclusion strategy.

**HEPI published [Research Leadership Matters: Agility, alignment, ambition](#), addressing the 'research leadership vacuum' in UK HE.**

- Changes in the research, innovation and development ecosystem are increasingly raising the need for connective and catalysing leadership capacities.
  - But very few researchers have ever considered what research leadership is, why it matters or where they can go for support.
- Researchers generally develop their skills through a highly inefficient combination of trial and error, luck and structured serendipity; many feel unsupported; little is known about what works in supporting their leadership skills.
- Research leadership has little to do with heroic leaders and more to do with a recognition of different talents and the creation of different leadership roles.
  - Institutional incentives have a big role to play in recognising and rewarding those individuals who take on often risky and demanding research leadership roles.
- The research leadership challenge cannot be addressed by any single discipline or institution – it demands the creation of boundary-spanning platforms and genuine systemic thinking.
  - Examples of positive innovation in this space abound but more needs to be done to connect them.
- A bold new vision could redefine standards, lever additional resources and attract global talent; the report provides a 12-part plan for seizing this opportunity.

The report was sponsored by [Worktribe](#), a platform for HE research and curriculum management.

## The Workplace

### RECRUITMENT

**The Institute of Student Employers (ISE) published the [Student Recruitment Survey 2022](#) based on responses from ISE members. [The full report is available to members only.]**

- 38% ran continuous rather than seasonal recruitment campaigns in 2022 and are building greater flexibility into their recruitment and learning programmes, as competition for hires is increasing.

- Only 9% used personality tests to assess and select candidates (~33% in 2014) due to their low ability to predict future job success and issues around diversity; situational judgement tests are now most popular.
- 68% used competency-based methodology to underpin their recruitment strategies; 56% used a strengths-based perspective, focused on 'natural talents and motivators'; 35% used a values-based exercise to help candidates find roles in line with their values.
- 10% have added an artificial intelligence (AI) tool to areas of their selection processes, e.g.: to pre-screen candidates and analyse video interviews; algorithms to analyse CVs and update candidates; gamified assessments.
  - Financial and professional services and IT sectors are more likely to use AI.
  - AI can help reduce initial application volumes and make the overall process more efficient; but employers are not entirely confident with the outcomes and there are concerns about potential bias; there are also challenges around how graduates perceive and engage with the process.
- 48% believe hiring will become mainly virtual; 38% expect to drop academics for screening.

**Prospects Luminate published [How are employers recruiting school \[and college\] leavers? based on the ISE Student Recruitment Survey 2022](#) [see above].**

- 68% are hiring school/college leavers alongside graduates, up 5% on 2021.
  - Although graduate volumes remain higher, the numbers of school/college leavers hired are up by an average of 18%, with reported intentions suggesting a 28% increase next year.
- Respondents received 91,797 applications for non-graduate, entry-level positions (+3.5%) – an average of 19 per vacancy (down from 21).
  - This compares to an average of 62 graduate applications per vacancy (91).
- London saw a recovery in school/college-leaver roles, from 24% to 28%; pre-pandemic, it was 33%.
  - Some other English regions saw an increase this year, but in Scotland vacancies fell by 6%.
- 20% reported that they were 'almost always' able to recruit the quality of candidate they needed, down from 46% in 2021; 55% reported that they were 'often' able to do so.
- 88% enrol school/college leavers onto apprenticeships, with an average of 92.5% enrolling non-graduates onto one; 28% were at Level 3 and 22% at Level 4.
- 40% of recruitment campaigns ran January–March, with 54% of offers made April–June and campaigns closing between July and September.
  - Graduate recruitment still tends to follow the academic year [although this is changing – see above].

## APPRENTICESHIPS & TRAINEESHIPS

**The Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education published [2022 Apprentice Panel Survey of Apprentices Report](#), setting out the learning and assessment experiences of 2,016 apprentices in England via an online survey developed by other apprentices.**

- 68% of respondents agreed that their workloads as apprentices were manageable; those aged under 22 and those who worked at an SME were more likely to say they had a manageable workload (75%); those undertaking apprenticeships at Level 6/7 were less likely to agree (54%).
  - 70% agreed that their training provider and 78% their employer takes steps to support their wellbeing.
- 79% said that they received an induction to their apprenticeship from their employer – 91% of those under 22, but 72% of female apprentices and 71% of those at Level 6/7.
- 90% said they were learning skills, knowledge and behaviours that were up to date and that would benefit them in their future careers (89%).
- They were less positive about how successfully their employers and training providers worked together: only 53% agreed that they worked effectively together (down from 60% in 2020).

**The St Martin's Group published [Apprenticeship Outcomes and Destinations](#), research by the Learning & Work Institute (L&W) investigating why apprentices don't complete, based on a survey of 2,427 apprentices in England and 38 interviews.**



- 64% of those surveyed had completed; 37% had withdrawn early after an average of 6–12 months.
  - More likely to withdraw were those: on Level 6/7; on apprenticeships with micro-employers; whose employer changed during the programme; aged 50+; with a disability/long-term condition.
  - The most common reasons included: lack of employer support (37%), tutor support (26%) or both (13%); poor organisation (32%); high workload (29%); poor teaching (24%); losing interest or motivation (27%).
  - Interviewees overall didn't feel well-informed about their programme before starting.
- Both completing and non-completing interviewees cited wider benefits, such as increased confidence, skills and completing qualifications.
  - 75% of completers and 31% of non-completers were using skills learnt during the apprenticeship.
- The most helpful forms of support overall are from providers/tutors (50%), e.g. study support or support networks; and from employers (49%), e.g. time to study or a workplace mentor or network.
- Suggested areas for improvement included: more protected time off for learning/study; better communication between employers and providers; more/earlier communication on programme details; more opportunities for networking/support/mentoring; support with access to study resources/materials.

**The International Labour Organization (ILO) published [\*Promoting apprenticeships to meet the skills needs of the digital and knowledge economy\*](#), research into how apprenticeship systems need to change to prepare people for good quality jobs in rapidly changing economies.**

- The report includes good practice from four countries (England, Australia, India and Singapore) and other sources.
- Eight main issues from the shift to digital and knowledge-based economies impact jobs, including:
  - Education and training are essential to provide the right digital, cognitive and transversal skills.
  - Digitalisation plays out differentially in different economies.
  - Labour market polarisation and hybridisation are significant.
  - The pandemic has had a profound effect on the pace of digitalisation and on jobs and skills.
- Challenges to be addressed if apprenticeships are to remain valid and valuable include:
  - **Strategic and policy:** how can apprenticeships meet the wide range of demands for digital skills and stay relevant within a polarised labour market; should they primarily remain the way in which young people are given initial skills or have a wider role in supporting professional development and reskilling; what role should they play in developing higher- and degree-level digital skills?
  - **Curriculum and teaching:** how can apprenticeships be kept relevant and up to date and be designed to allow continuous adaptation and skills development throughout life?
  - **Accreditation:** how can institutions provide appropriate accreditation for digital and wider transversal skills; how can they address the issue of vendor-specific accreditations which may carry greater currency than national qualifications?
  - **Inclusion:** how can access to apprenticeships be arranged so that no one is left behind by digitalisation and the wider polarising effect on the labour market?
  - **Funding and delivery:** how can the cost of adapting apprenticeships, and a sustainable funding mechanism (e.g. for off-the-job learning, incentives for employer engagement and possible stipends for learners) be established; should centres of excellence in digital skills be developed?
- 44 'essential' and 'radical' recommendations in modernising apprenticeships include:
  - Engage business and other key stakeholders to shape a clear strategy for digital skills development in which the role of apprenticeships is clearly located.
  - Strengthen existing apprenticeships for young people by adding digital literacy, digital user skills and cognitive and social skills development to all occupational frameworks.
  - Consider how standards could be modularised, as in Australia, to be more flexible for updating.
  - Develop a set of generic digital literacy standards that can be included in all occupational profiles to ensure all apprentices have a basic grounding in digital skills.
  - Support training institutions to recruit, train, develop and retain staff with the necessary depth of digital skills to be credible to industry.

- Adopt a 'no one left behind' policy when tailoring apprenticeships, recognising the persistent gender imbalance in IT occupations; provide incentives to meet the additional costs when employers take on apprentices with disability.
- Use apprenticeships to support the updating of digital user skills in the workforce including by rethinking the concept of on- and off-the-job training to support more flexible and bite-sized apprenticeships based on modular standards using blended learning.
- Consider how microcredentials or badges can be incorporated in the framework of assessment for apprenticeships in digital skills to reward the achievement of modules or units of learning.
- Encourage the development of digital apprenticeship centres of excellence.

Part of the [Apprenticeship Development for Universal Lifelong Learning and Training](#) project funded by the Government of Flanders.

### **Skills Development Scotland (SDS) published the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board's [Gender Commission: Report and recommendations](#).**

- The Commission was set up in October 2019 to explore workplace gender segregation 'through the lens of apprenticeships and work-based learning'.
- 11 recommendations include:
  - **Employers** should: create an inclusive workplace; promote and ensure gender diversity; engage with young people.
  - **Government and public sector** should: develop a long-term partnership approach to address gender stereotypes; develop a national campaign; raise awareness through career education.
  - **Education and training providers** should: raise awareness of gender stereotyping through career education; increase diversity in the early learning and childcare sector.

## **SKILLS GAPS & SHORTAGES**

### **The UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy published [Evaluation of the Industrial Masters in AI \(IMAI\) programme](#), presenting lessons that can be applied to similar programmes leveraging industry funding to develop skills.**

- The programme was developed to improve postgraduate skills and help close the AI skills gap.
  - The Office for AI funded the Institute of Coding (IoC) to run the three-year programme due to its established network of UK universities and key industry stakeholders.
- 125 scholarships and placements funded by 19 industry partners were awarded over the three years compared to a business case aim of 200 in year one; some of the scholarships may have been awarded in the absence of the programme.
  - The programme leveraged ~£1.3m of industry funding for a government investment of £394k; the business case was aiming for £5m, although the ratio is still 3.3.
  - HEIs from all four nations participated, with 12 of the 17 English HEIs located outside the south.
  - Industry partners mainly wanted to access new talent, followed by: support the wider AI sector; diversify their workforce; strengthen links with universities.
  - Uncertainty around whether funded students would work for them was a key barrier.
- Industry partners and HEIs felt it helped to create relationships that would not have formed otherwise; one HEI worked with large companies that they had previously struggled to engage.
- The IoC collected no data on outcomes from engagement events, the scale of investment or the programme's effectiveness in encouraging uptake of AI roles or addressing lack of representation from certain groups.
- Feedback from industry and HEIs indicated that the programme was not well known and more should have been done to publicise it, including to students.
  - Industry stakeholders suggested: a stronger cohort learning experience and a mentoring element; a model that matched industry and government funding; larger companies paying more so that smaller companies could participate.
  - Several mentioned that apprenticeships were a more appealing route as large companies already pay the levy and it leads to direct employment.

*The evaluation is dated February 2022 but was published in December.*

**PwC published [Green skills as an enabler of UK retrofit](#), a 'deep dive research report' into its [Green Jobs Barometer](#) [see p. 36].**

- At least 20% of the UK's carbon emissions come from buildings, therefore retrofitting them to make them more energy efficient is key to meeting net zero goals and is a strategic issue for the UK.
- There are not enough people working in the retrofit sector.
  - 10k to 66k new tradespeople will be needed each year as retrofit take-up accelerates, with heating engineers, glazers and insulation specialists the most in demand.
  - In addition, many more green jobs will be required in the sector (e.g. retrofit coordinators, receptionists and marketing) and in its wider manufacturing and distribution supply chains.
  - However, since demand for labour in this sector has been limited until now, and has slowed markedly in the past decade, people have not yet acquired the relevant skills.
  - A lack of skilled workers could be a key bottleneck to solving the cost of living crisis, and to delivering energy security and net zero.
- There is a skills gap.
  - A vicious cycle is holding retrofit back – projections point to a significant gap in the skills needed, but in order to invest in upskilling, the private sector and training bodies require clear market signals, however current demand for housing retrofit is low and future demand is uncertain, therefore the skills gap will not be filled.
  - There are few recognised technical education pathways into the retrofit sector – currently, most training is done on the job as quickly as possible (e.g. a plumber 'downs tools' for a week to learn to install a particular brand of heat pump).
  - Working in the retrofit sector does not receive the same societal 'prestige' as white-collar jobs.
- Different actors have critical roles to play.
  - **Construction and training sectors** should: create new technical education pathways for school leavers and adult learning; invest in new training programmes; set aside time for workers to upskill in new retrofit technologies and processes.
  - **National government** should: create clear market signals to convert the targets in the *Heat and Buildings Strategy* into reality, including a national campaign to encourage young people to take up a trade.
  - **Local government** should help to match local retrofit demand with local supply.
- There is limited time for a response.
  - The policy framework is not yet fully in place to drive the large programme of delivery required within this decade.
  - Identifying and training the workforce that will be required to retrofit 29m homes is one of the crucial missing components of this framework.

**City & Guilds published [Shining a light on the jobs that power the country: Uncovering the opportunities and challenges facing the UK energy sector](#), a detailed look at the sector including skills shortages.**

- The energy sector currently employs approximately 270k workers in oil and gas; an estimated 400k new workers will be needed between 2020 and 2050, 154k of these between 2030 and 2040.
  - Attracting skills, upskilling and skills retention are critical to the sector and for achieving net zero.
- Recommended actions include: transfer skills from other sectors; create robust career entry points for young people and attract younger workers to a career with purpose; investigate alternative options for older people by offering flexible training roles or contractual work; actively recruit from under-represented groups.

Part of City & Guilds' series following its [Great Jobs](#) research with Emsi Burning Glass [see [Skills Research Digest Q1 2022](#), p. 17].

**The Edge Foundation published its 11<sup>th</sup> bulletin on [Skills Shortages in the UK Economy](#), on the consequences of existing shortages and current unpredictable economic circumstances.**

- The bulletin summarises recent research from: the Recruitment & Employment Confederation; the OU (2022 Business Barometer); Federation of Small Businesses; Gatsby Foundation; Youth Employment UK (2022 Youth Voice Census); and L&W and WorldSkills UK.

- It includes items on: staffing, digital skills and recruitment in health & social care; skills shortages in UK film and TV production; the London Screen Academy; and England's Unit for Future Skills.

Edge also published [Skills shortages in the UK economy: Evidence summary](#), presenting key messages from the bulletins.

**The Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science, RoI, published [Report on the Analysis of Skills for Residential Construction & Retrofitting 2023–2030](#) commissioned with SOLAS (Further Education & Training Authority of Ireland).**

- To achieve the RoI's targets in new housing and retrofitting of 446,300 homes, an estimated 50,831 new entrants will have to be recruited in managerial, professional, skilled and semi-skilled occupations.
  - This includes workers currently employed in the industry who are seeking to upskill, or jobseekers looking for a career in building or retrofitting.
- The main sources of supply of professional, technical, skilled and semi-skilled workers are:
  - **In the RoI** – technological universities and institutes of technology; the apprenticeship system; the Construction Skills Certification Scheme; and a range of relatively short vocational training courses
  - **Beyond RoI** – skilled workers employed in the industry from another country within the EEA; and those from outside of the EEA with work permits.
- The situation for apprentices is complex.
  - In general, if the employment prospects in the industry are good, the rate is relatively high and vice versa; however, the completion rate is rarely above 75%.
  - The impact of pandemic-related closures on the completion rate is still unclear.
  - There may be shortages in some trades unless action is taken, however some of the potential shortages are a cause for greater concern than others.
- Skills gaps and recommendations to fill them include:
  - New courses in project management, building surveying and for 'retrofit assistants' are needed.
  - Mandatory professional development courses should continue to focus on upskilling in the knowledge and building techniques required to enhance the sustainability of buildings.
  - Increase the number of planners and monitor the level of provision of education programmes in quantity surveying as a significant increase in commercial development will create shortages.
  - Explore the curricula on graduate environmental courses to ensure that the current level of provision of education for the management and disposal of waste is adequate for future needs.
  - An information campaign to persuade skilled workers employed in the EU and other countries to seek work in construction in Ireland.
  - Consider creating a national centre for the development and assessment of construction skills, modelled on the centre at Kings Lynn in the UK [*refers to the [CITB's National Construction College \(NCC\) – East](#) in Norfolk, one of three NCCs – the others are in Kent and Renfrewshire*].

**Skillnet Ireland published [Sustainable Banking & Finance: Review and recommendations on the education and training needs for retail financial services in Ireland](#), produced with Sustainable Finance Skillnet, the Institute of Banking and the Banking & Payments Federation of Ireland.**

- The report identifies the skills gaps, education and training needs for retail financial services in the RoI in sustainable finance; there is a need for more:
  - structured training and development across all roles, customer categories and levels
  - focused sustainable finance education and training from new hire to board member level
  - collaboration across the retail financial services sector in its approach to educating employees and customers
  - education and training in: risk & compliance technology; data & fintech solutions; strategy & leadership; product development & delivery; and oversight, governance & assurance.
- Five key recommendations:
  - Develop a sustainable finance education and training roadmap that addresses the skills gaps and offers a clear educational route for all within retail financial services.

- Continuous education and training for board members and executives to develop strategy and leadership skills relating to sustainable finance/environmental, social and governance activities.
- Develop and run flexible and modular multi-level education and training with content catering for all roles and career levels within retail financial services.
- Create a collaborative central training hub for industry stakeholders to access information and support for education and training.
- Develop teams of retail sustainable finance specialists with the knowledge and skills to guide and inform customers.

**Skillnet Ireland published two reports on how digital transformation and converging technologies are key to the future of the RoI's screen industries.**

- **[Digital Transformation in the Screen Industries](#)** commissioned with Animation Skillnet, with research by Strategic Innovation Partners, featuring five case studies.
  - The successful integration of digital technologies can require new skills and capabilities; deep technical skills are required to integrate and adapt technologies to meet organisational needs.
  - Successful longer term digital transformation requires constant learning and adaptation; organisations must seek to implement, learn, iterate and refine their digital processes and associated offerings.
  - Appropriately targeted and tailored learning and development interventions can be effectively delivered using digital technologies, particularly for a dispersed and diverse audience.
  - Significant investment is required to support the upskilling and reskilling of existing crew and teams to support the implementation of new technologies, particularly given the technical skills deficit across Europe; this will be required by organisations in the sector and by skills providers.
- **[SIIL – A Screen Industries Innovation Lab for Ireland](#)**, a study exploring the case for developing a national innovation lab for the sector encompassing film, animation, games, augmented reality and virtual reality (VR) technologies.
  - The development would require an increased focus on research and training.
  - The bottleneck to growth is delivering the relevant and current software and technology skills and talent needed by the industry.
  - There is a shortage of talent, particularly in technical skills such as animation, digital screen and sound; the lack of both training and availability of digital screen facilities is universally acknowledged.
  - Academics and industry need to work together to design sector-specific formal accredited programmes; a SIIL could help to network the existing training facilities and organisations.

**Cedefop published the policy brief, [Too good to waste: Tapping the potential of vocational education and training in the waste management sector](#).**

- It reports on a Cedefop skills foresight study exploring the occupations and skills that are central to greening waste management and the role VET can play in developing them.
- In the past two decades, employment in sewerage, waste management and remediation in the EU has steadily increased from 902k in 2000 to around 1.3m in 2019.
  - Implementing the European Green Deal could boost this by 63% by 2030, with increased demand expected for workers at all levels, but particularly in highly skilled occupations.

## TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

**City & Guilds published [Training Trends: Setting up for success – Insights for driving effective in-house training](#), based on a Censuswide survey in August 2022 of 600 learning and development and HR professionals in large organisations with global operations.**

- **In-house training is gaining momentum...**
  - 88% of respondents carry out in-house training; 65% of these choose to design and deliver bespoke training to support technical and job-specific skills.
  - 96% expect their training budgets to be the same or increase in the next financial year.
- **...but continues to fall short.**
  - 57% offer internal certification for their programmes, but only 29% offer externally recognised certification.

- 99% have seen ineffective or failed in-house training programmes in the last five years; 54% have seen three or more programmes not meet their objectives in the last three years.
- The majority say if they had more budget available, they would increase their external training investment for planning and design (38%), delivery and implementation (46%) and evaluation and measurement (57%).
- Key elements of 'engaging and impactful' in-house programmes include: evaluation of quality and effectiveness; planning and design; recognition of achievement; learning from mistakes; and senior leadership support.

**The Resolution Foundation and Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) published [Train in Vain? Skills, tasks, and training in the UK labour market](#) as part of the [Economy 2030 Inquiry](#).**

- Over the past 25 years, the need for social and abstract skills in the workplace has increased, while the employment shares of occupations that are intensive in routine and manual skills have fallen.
- Wages have grown particularly strongly for jobs that require a significant amount of abstract reasoning.
  - Occupations that use abstract skills intensively have seen 30% average wage growth since 1994, compared with below 15% for occupations that involve below-median levels of abstract skills.
  - These changes are relatively positive for workers with high levels of education and those in high-paying occupations, as they are most likely to utilise social and abstract skills at work.
- Despite these fundamental shifts in the skills needed, training is in decline.
  - The proportion of workers who said they received work-related training in the past three months has fallen from 29% in 2002 to 24% in 2020; it has fallen the most for workers aged under 25.
- The training that does take place is increasing, not reducing, inequalities.
  - The most educated workers train more, with an average of over 40% having received some form of training in the previous quarter, twice as high as those with below secondary level education.
  - Among unemployed adults, training rates are very low: only 13% received any training in a 12-month period, less than half the rate at which employees are trained.
- In a world of stagnant productivity growth and with an increasing need for wages to keep pace with prices, improving the UK's system of training and skills provision could have a beneficial impact.

All the Inquiry reports published to date can be found [here](#); also see p. 31.

**England's Association of Employment & Learning Providers, NOCN Group and the Skills & Education Group published [Access to the Future: The value and worth of qualifications & study at Level 2 and below](#).**

- Employers in England report that these qualifications: improve staff recruitment, retention, productivity and performance; support social development and mobility; and help develop 'soft skills' such as confidence and self-esteem.
  - Most employers interviewed saw them as stepping stones for future progression.
- Employers who value them are more likely to promote those who achieve them.
  - This aligns with the pride and confidence that learners expressed and suggests rationalisation should not just be based on economic and productivity considerations.
- The top benefits that learners expect are: increasing vocational and technical skills (80%); improving skills such as communication and teamwork (80%); increasing their confidence (75%).
  - Learners at Level 2 and below often come from disadvantaged backgrounds: around 20% are either on FSM or have a disability or learning difficulties.
- Some employers reported low awareness among learners of the qualifications available, particularly apprenticeships.
  - Learners often question the worth of apprenticeships compared to academic qualifications and routes to learning.

The research was undertaken in response to England's proposed [reforms](#), which could lead to far fewer of these qualifications being approved for funding.

**L&W published [Reskilling for net zero](#), based on a survey of 5k UK adults, exploring awareness of and interest in green skills for work\*.**

- 62% had never heard of green skills prior to the survey; 21% had heard of them but didn't know what they were; only 8% had heard of them and knew what they were.
  - Groups more likely to have at least heard of green skills: 17–44 year-olds; men; social grades A, B and C2; those from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds; parents; graduates.
- 60% of employed and self-employed respondents said they didn't currently need green skills in their work; 13% did; 27% didn't know.
  - Those more aware of green skills are also more likely to say their job requires them.
- Only 21% knew which green skills employers needed currently.
- 29% felt inspired to develop green skills to help their careers; 42% didn't; 30% didn't know.
- The most common barriers to developing green skills were: not understanding them (27%); not knowing how to acquire them (20%); not knowing what employers need (20%); not understanding what jobs are available (19%).
  - 12% cited lack of training opportunities or relevant work experience; 12% saw no barriers.

*\*The skills needed to promote a green economic recovery by reducing UK carbon emissions, ranging from technical green skills (e.g. in construction) to more general skills (e.g. project management).*

*The questions were included in L&W's 2022 Adult Participation in Learning Survey (see p. 38) for its [New Futures programme](#), funded by the Covid-19 Support Fund.*

**Cedefop published [Microcredentials for labour market education and training: First look at mapping microcredentials in European labour-market-related education, training and learning – take-up, characteristics and functions](#).**

- The main drivers of change behind the use of microcredentials are:
  - The fourth industrial revolution, bringing new sectors and new professional disciplines and sub-specialisms, creating a greater need for continuous reskilling and upskilling
  - Teaching and learning decoupled from time and space, offering new and different learning experiences; rising demand for digital, individualised learning and on-demand learning
  - The globalisation of competences and labour markets, with international vendor certificates becoming industry standards.
- The characteristics of microcredentials are changing.
  - The quantity has increased in both public and private spaces, particularly in relation to in-company training and upskilling/reskilling opportunities.
  - They can be issued in various formats and learning can be supported in different ways (online, blended, in-class, apprenticeship).
  - The public sector increasingly focuses on upskilling/reskilling and recognition of prior learning; the private sector increasingly sees its credentials being integrated into public provision.
  - The relationships between designers and providers of learning activities, awarding bodies and qualifications authorities are becoming increasingly complex.
- **Microcredential strengths:** respond to changing needs; promote upskilling/reskilling and lifelong learning; enable learners to build and validate skills; an opportunity for providers to work with employers; able to widen access to education; supportive of flexible learning pathways.
- **Microcredential weaknesses:** doubts about their benefits; often unregulated; complexity causes confusion; lack of transparency around quality control; recognition presents challenges; don't always reach the most vulnerable/disadvantaged learners.
- The interpretation of what they are remains fluid and they have only recently gained Europe-wide attention in policy debate; however, different types – professional, academic and vendor-specific – are being issued.
  - The main providers include large companies, industry associations and online learning platforms, which often cooperate with formal VET providers to offer them.
  - They are being offered across a broad range of both product- and service-focused sectors; they also exist for generic programmes and qualifications.
- Their main purposes and objectives echo the goals of modularised learning, but some believe they should not only be deconstructed qualifications but should also offer something more to the system.

- Overall, they are largely seen as not posing any major threats in terms of replacing or substituting formal qualifications because they serve different purposes and target different markets, complementing less responsive traditional education and training.

**IZA published [Costs and Benefits of an Individual Learning Account \(ILA\): A simulation analysis for the Netherlands](#).**

- The policy of introducing an ILA for all those in the labour force has received renewed attention in relation to policy discussion on financing lifelong learning; the idea is that an ILA provides workers with individual resources that can be used to improve their skills.
- This study considers an ILA that is funded by subsidies targeted at low- and medium-educated workers and co-funded by training levies as a share of the wage bill.
  - Predictions are explored for gross earnings, income inequality and costs (training subsidies and tax deductions) and benefits (tax revenues and fewer unemployment benefits).
- Findings include:
  - An ILA should increase investment in training and stimulate participation in lifelong learning in order to be effective; this might be especially difficult for low- and medium-educated workers, whose training participation is currently lagging behind those of high-educated workers.
  - Therefore, an ILA should be accompanied by additional measures in order to maximise take-up and stimulate a learning culture among the labour force; these measures may include interventions that address behavioural factors (e.g. self-control and inertia), provision of information, advice and guidance and/or paid training leave.

**CESifo published ["The Double Dividend of Training": Labor market effects of work-related continuous education in Switzerland](#).**

- Unusually, the paper studies the effect of continuing education and training (CET) on both earnings and the risk of becoming unemployed; this in a country where participation is far higher than the European average and adult education is largely privately organised.
- Key findings:
  - Training participation increases earnings by 4.8% and reduces the risk of becoming unemployed by 2.2ppt, which is a large relative effect given low unemployment rates.
  - The returns on work-related training are particularly high for male workers at the peak of their professional careers (around age 45).
  - Those with VET benefit more from work-related training in terms of earnings and employment than those with general education, suggesting particularly strong returns for those with occupation-specific skills who are more at risk of skill obsolescence.
  - Training returns are higher in depressed labour markets (i.e. low employment/high unemployment); but CET reduces the risk of unemployment more in booming labour markets.

## **AUTOMATION & AI: IMPACT ON WORK**

**The Resolution Foundation and CEP published [Adopt, adapt and improve: A brief look at the interplay between labour markets and technological change in the UK](#) as part of the [Economy 2030 Inquiry](#) [also see p. 29].**

- Worries about jobs being lost to automation were heightened by the release of the [2013 Frey & Osborne study](#) that predicted that 50% of US jobs were at 'high risk' of automation.
  - However, the period since has seen rising employment, reaching a peak of 76% in the UK on the eve of the pandemic, with even some of the jobs considered to be at highest risk growing fast.
- Automation doesn't only destroy jobs but can also raise demand for workers and create space for entirely new jobs; exposure to automation has affected the cross-section of UK employment growth.
- Although automation can have more adverse effects on some people and places, more pressing issues for the UK are low investment and low productivity growth.

**Cedefop published [Setting Europe on a course for a human digital transition: New evidence from Cedefop's second European skills and jobs survey](#), drawing on findings from 46k adult workers in 29 European countries.**

- In 2020–21, almost 50% of adult workers saw new digital technology introduced at their workplace and 35% of them had to learn how to use it.



- 40% of adult workers now use digital technology more often for some tasks and 30% work more time away from their employer's premises.
- Exposure to and upskilling for new technology varies with occupation skill level, education, gender and age.
- 52% of all EU+ jobs have low skills demands, 31% moderate and 17% high; over 50% are relatively repetitive and standardised, however routine work and task discretion often coexist.
  - 60% need to further develop their knowledge and skills to do their job better and over 50% need to improve their digital skills.
- 70% of those in skilled occupations report significant skill gaps; over 50% of those in jobs that are elementary or have little digital intensity report limited or no gaps.
  - 50% say they need to upgrade their social skills; 40% technical skills; 29% numeracy skills.
- While 45% say they need digital technology training, only 25% benefited from it in 2020–21.
  - It is more prevalent among the highly educated in high-skilled occupations and those in larger firms; those who need it the most often don't get it.
- 20% of all workers and 31% of those not using devices stand to gain from training in navigating the web, 30–40% in fundamental word processing and use of spreadsheets.

**IZA published [The Impact of ICT and Robots on Labour Market Outcomes of Demographic Groups in Europe](#), exploring the age- and gender-specific labour market effects in 14 countries from 2010 to 2018, using Eurostat and International Federation of Robotics data.**

- Between 2000 and 2019, the real value of ICT capital per worker in Europe increased by 91%; the robot exposure – the number of industrial robots per 1k workers – increased by 140%.
  - These technologies have reduced the role of routine tasks and increased the role of non-routine tasks, both within and across occupations.
- Overall, the increase in ICT capital played a much larger role than robot adoption in driving changes in European labour market outcomes.
  - Both types of technology affected the employment shares of demographic groups rather than their relative earnings.
  - Exposure to ICT and robots increased the shares of young and 'prime-aged' (30–49) women in employment and the wage bills of particular sectors but reduced the shares of older women and prime-aged men.
  - The adverse effects were particularly pronounced for older women in cognitive occupations, who had relatively low ICT-related skills; and for young men in routine manual occupations, who experienced substitutions by robots.
- Findings highlight the future of demographic-specific challenges such as extending working life, preventing youth unemployment and minimising the gender wage gap.
  - As technology adoption continues, trends similar to those reported in this study may be expected, supporting arguments for increased focus on lifelong learning.

**The OECD published [What skills and abilities can automation technologies replicate and what does it mean for workers? New evidence](#).**

- The paper uses data collected through a survey on the degree of automatability of ~100 skills and abilities, completed by experts from different AI research fields.
  - The findings were then applied to occupations using information on requirements taken from the Occupational Information Network database.
- Thanks to advances in AI and robotics, some skills and abilities previously identified as bottlenecks to automation are now more susceptible to it.
  - However, there are still several bottlenecks, particularly skills related to complex problem-solving, high-level management and social interaction.
- Even though some sectors – e.g. construction, production and transportation – rely on skills and abilities that are highly susceptible to automation, only 18–27% of the skills and abilities required are highly automatable.
  - They still require around 5% of bottleneck skills; most occupations rely on both.

- The least at-risk jobs – e.g. management and social service occupations – include 5–10% of skills and abilities that are highly automatable, but also 25% that are bottlenecks.
- On average across OECD countries, occupations at highest risk of automation account for about 28% of employment; previous OECD figures put it at 14%.
- While more jobs may be exposed to AI, only 9% of workers are employed in occupations with a significant share of highly automatable skills and abilities; this figure is less than 6% in the UK.
- Workers in occupations with the highest shares of automatable skills and abilities continue to be low-skilled, young and male.
  - Despite government efforts to retrain at-risk workers, the relationship between an occupation's risk of automation and the share of its workers participating in training remains negative.

**McKinsey published [\*The state of AI in 2022 – and a half decade in review\*](#), based on 1,492 responses to its fifth global survey on the role of AI in business.**

- 50% of organisations had adopted AI in at least one function, compared with 20% in 2017.
  - The top five AI use cases are: service operations optimisation (24%); creation of new AI-based products (20%); customer service analytics (19%); customer segmentation (19%); new AI-based enhancements of products (19%).
  - In 2018, manufacturing and risk were the functions that were thought to benefit most from AI; today, it's marketing & sales, product & service development and strategy & corporate finance.
  - The highest cost benefits from AI are reported in supply chain management.
- 43% of organisations that have adopted AI say they are using it to assist in sustainability, most commonly improving energy efficiency or waste reduction.
  - 40% are working to reduce the environmental impact of their AI use.
- AI 'high performers' – those getting the greatest bottom-line impact from its use – are more likely to be using it to drive revenues rather than reduce costs.
  - They are 1.6 times more likely to engage non-technical employees in creating AI applications.
- While AI use has increased, the reported mitigation of AI-related risks hasn't; risk mitigation practices are more prevalent among high performers.
- Hiring issues remain, with data scientists particularly scarce; reskilling existing employees is the most popular strategy, along with recruiting from top universities.
  - High-performing companies are more likely to recruit from a range of sources, including diversity-focused programmes and professional organisations.
  - High performers are also three times as likely to have capability-building programmes to develop AI skills and twice as likely to offer peer-to-peer learning and certification programmes.
- On average, 27% of AI employees identify as women; 25% as racial or ethnic minorities.
  - 46% of organisations have programmes to increase gender diversity within AI teams; 33% have programmes to increase racial and ethnic diversity.

**The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) published [\*Enablers and Challenges of the Digital Transition in the EU: Key recommendations for innovative business ecosystems, effective implementation of new rules, and a skilled workforce for the future\*](#).**

- Harnessing the value of data and bolstering the digital economy in the EU are at the heart of several recent initiatives, such as the European Strategy for Data and the Digital Decade.
  - The digital transition has ramifications across policy areas and is expected to contribute significantly to recovery and transition towards resilience and sustainability over this decade.
- In terms of the workforce, while digitalisation holds great potential for the economy, serious questions have been raised about the extent to which it would render certain jobs extinct.

**Workforce-related recommendations**

- Strengthening a human-centric approach to the transformation of work in digitised value chains:
  - Ensure workers' perspectives are taken into account.
  - Actively involve workers in the deployment of AI systems so that they understand the goals pursued and the skills needed.

- As AI systems become more embedded in managerial and HR operations, be transparent about the data collected and the algorithms in place.
- Reskilling/upskilling the workforce of the future in digitised industries:
  - Ensure those workers already in the field have access to upskilling opportunities.
  - Ensure reskilling is available for people to access new, in-demand occupations.
  - Focus as well on transversal soft skills such as collaboration, empathy and communication.
  - Engage with key funders: public investment and development banks are already looking to support programmes to equip workers for the digital transition [*the report offers a number of international examples*].
- Take an ecosystem-wide approach to the future of work in digitised value chains:
  - Focus on carefully balancing: the need for new rules and fostering innovation; the need for appropriate enforcement and to guarantee workers' privacy and the protection of their data.
  - Ensure the necessary focus on ex-ante identification of risks, but also on ex-post surveillance to ensure positive social impact and identify pressure points.

**IZA published [Technological and Organizational Change \[T&O\] and the Careers of Workers](#), using a survey panel data set of German firms spanning 18 years.**

- Firms that implement T&O reduce their employment share of workers in routine jobs.
  - However, workers holding routine jobs at T&O implementation do not suffer employment losses or reduced earnings growth on average; instead, they succeed in moving up to more abstract jobs, often facilitated by firms' training opportunities.
- There is a decline in employment prospects of routine jobholders aged 55+, however, who withdraw permanently from the labour market.
  - T&O also leads to withdrawal for older workers, including those with a university degree, in non-routine ('abstract') jobs.
- Firms may accomplish the necessary skill upgrading by upskilling or retraining workers, rather than replacing them.
  - The widespread involvement of apprenticeship systems and unions in training activities may promote upward movements from routine to abstract jobs following T&O, and thus help lessen T&O's possibly harmful career effects.

**Skillnet Ireland published [Open Source and InnerSource Skills in Ireland: A call for action](#), on the benefits of investing in developing these skills to organisations in the RoI.**

- Open source has been reported to accelerate innovation, improve code quality and increase efficiencies within organisations; it is central to all future technological advancements.
- 'InnerSource', a software development strategy that 'applies open source practices to proprietary code', is linked to removing silos and bottlenecks, improving collaboration and developer productivity.
- There is a broad set of skills required for optimal use and creation of open source software and hardware, including technical engineering skills as well as non-technical skills, e.g. legal, sales and marketing.
- There is a global shortage of qualified open source and InnerSource talent.
  - Local businesses, international companies and public sector organisations all report challenges in finding talent in the RoI with the required practical experience to help them deliver their priorities.
- Five actions include:
  - Curate a directory of existing open source and InnerSource learning resources.
  - Create innovative open source and InnerSource learning programmes.
  - Support the establishment of 'open source program offices' in educational institutes.

**IZA published [Automation and Low-Skill Labor](#), using the Danish employer–employee matched dataset from 1995 to 2019 during a large influx of immigrants into urban areas.**

- Many firms in advanced economies are currently facing difficulties in filling vacancies, which may increase robot adoption by firms.

- However, a higher local share of migrant workers – who tend to have lower wages than native workers with comparable skill level – reduces labour costs and leads firms to adopt fewer robots.
- The finding that immigration and robot adoption are substitutes suggest that more automation will be seen over the next decades in response to labour shortages.
  - It is therefore important to implement policies ensuring that young workers entering the labour force can collaborate rather than compete with robots.
  - Retraining measures should also be designed to help older workers transition into non-automatable tasks.

## SKILLS POLICY

**The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) published [The Skills Imperative 2035: Occupational Outlook – Long-run employment prospects for the UK: Working Paper 2 – Headline report](#), research by the University of Warwick Institute for Employment Research (IER) with Cambridge Econometrics.**

- The paper analyses structural changes taking place in the UK economy, setting out implications for the labour market and the occupational structure of employment to 2035.
- Projections focus on long-term structural trends such as demographics, economic change and automation, rather than short-term impacts on the labour market and future skills needs.
  - Some commentators anticipate that skills such as creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, problem-solving and resilience – which complement the new technologies and other changes – will become increasingly important.
- Projections include:
  - There will be 2.6m new jobs by 2035, the majority of which will be taken by females.
  - Employment in the health sector is expected to increase the fastest, with around 369k new jobs by 2035.
  - Almost all of the new jobs created will be in professional and associate professional occupations.
  - At the most detailed occupational level the largest job growth will be for care workers and home carers, programmers and software development professionals, higher level teaching assistants, and nursing auxiliaries and assistants.
  - The services sector will largely drive job growth, with jobs in manufacturing continuing to fall – this has significant skills implications for the labour market.
  - Job losses will be concentrated among blue-collar manual occupations, especially in areas where automation is possible, as well as among less-skilled white-collar non-manual occupations.
  - The jobs most vulnerable to automation are currently mainly held by men.
  - Current trends that see young people acquiring more and higher level qualifications (replacing those generally less qualified people who are leaving the labour market) will continue.
  - Economically active people will be better qualified by 2035: those with a postgraduate degree or equivalent will rise from 4.7m in 2020 to 8.3m and those without a formal qualification drop from 1.4m in 2020 to 0.8m.
- Concerted action is needed to support displaced workers through upskilling and reskilling.
- Given the cross-cutting nature of the challenges presented by the projected labour market changes, a similarly cross-cutting body should be established.
  - It should report to the UK Cabinet Office and be responsible for working across government departments, with employers and others to ensure that appropriate strategies are developed.
  - It should aim to understand the implications of these changes in more detail and set out how government, employers, training providers and the education system should respond.
- Industry leaders and representative bodies, working with regional and local partners, should assess what the projections mean for employment and output growth and for the business-critical occupations they will need in future and start planning what actions they need to take.

*Part of NFER's [The skills imperative 2035: Essential skills for tomorrow's workforce](#) five-year (2021–2025) project funded by the Nuffield Foundation. Supporting/technical papers were published on [Baseline Projections](#), [Alternative Scenarios](#) and [Sources and methods](#). The final stage of the project will investigate how the education system can support the development of the essential employment skills needed.*

**CBI published [Making a positive impact: The contribution of retail & wholesale to communities and the economy](#), including findings on investment in skills.**

- Retail and wholesale is a key sector of the UK economy, supporting 20% of all jobs from across a range of industries and supporting economic activity equivalent to more than double the annual budget for the NHS.
- The sector is already playing a significant role in providing economic opportunity to all through:
  - providing apprenticeship opportunities in the most deprived parts of the UK – 25% of all apprenticeships created by the sector are found in the 20% most deprived areas
  - investing in its workforce, with £100b spent on wages and £4b every year – 10% of all UK training expenditure – on training more than 50% of its employees in current and future skills.
- As it continues to capture the growing opportunities of the e-commerce market, the sector is expected to increase its expenditure on automation, robotics and cybersecurity.
  - To support this digitalisation, new roles are being created in digital technology, data science, engineering and digital marketing.
  - The sector is making significant strides in ensuring the existing workforce can benefit from these opportunities, investing in upskilling and reskilling in digital skills, supporting career progression.
- The sector could make an even greater contribution to the UK economy if changes were made – including to the apprenticeship levy – to unlock additional investment in training enabling a shift towards higher value roles and preventing job losses at lower skill levels.

**PwC published [Green Jobs Barometer: Monitoring a fair transition to a green economy](#), its second annual picture of the pace and spread of the UK's transition to a cleaner economy.**

- The tool provides an evidence base tracking five 'pillars' for 12 regions and nations of the UK: job creation; wider employment benefits; sunset jobs to disappear; carbon intensity of employment; and worker perceptions of the transition.
- The UK's green transition is accelerating: the number of green jobs advertised almost trebled in 12 months; every region saw the number of green jobs in demand at least double; Scotland has the highest proportion of new green jobs to all jobs, at 3.3%.
  - A large proportion of new roles are based in London and the South East; if growth continues on this trajectory, the green economy will increase London's dominance over other cities and regions.
- The biggest barrier to green jobs growth is skills shortages; the solutions vary by sector, but reskilling will be key.
  - **The energy sector:** skills shortages have largely been mitigated by the high transferability of technical skills between oil and gas and clean energy (90% have transferable skills); however, many of these skilled workers are heading for retirement age.
  - **The housing sector** will require between 10k and 66k new people each year [see report below].
  - **SMEs:** the full opportunity of green jobs cannot be seized if more help is not offered to SMEs, especially in the regions outside Scotland, London and the South East; the most pressing hurdles are: access to the right technical expertise to plan the operational changes needed; access to affordable finance; and knowing what skills to hire when the exact path to net zero is uncertain.

Also see PwC's Green skills as an enabler of UK retrofit on p. 26.

**Warwick IER published [Green Jobs in Scotland: An inclusive approach to definition, measurement and analysis](#) with the University of Strathclyde, a 'support tool' for policy development and evaluation based on existing research.**

- The report defines green jobs as: new and emerging (4.3% of all jobs), requiring enhanced skills and knowledge (25.7%) or increased demand (9.9%).
  - **New and emerging jobs:** 97.5% are in four occupational groups – professional, associate professional, skilled trades and process, plant and machine operatives.
  - **Enhanced skills and knowledge jobs** tend to be dominated by engineering occupations.
  - **Increased demand jobs** have a high presence of skills trades and operatives.
- Only 27.8% of green jobs are held by women; 58% of green jobs are performed by 25–49 year-olds.

**The Social Market Foundation published [A vehicle for change: Upskilling the UK's technicians to service and repair electric vehicles \[EVs\]](#), exploring how policymakers can help address the skills challenges inherent in shifting to cleaner road transport.**

- There is currently a surplus of well-trained technicians to service and repair EVs for existing and near-future demand.
- However, there is set to be a shortfall of 25k EV-trained 'TechSafe' technicians by 2030, raising concerns for the safety and mobility of the UK as well as the net zero targets.
  - The industry also faces key challenges around the increasing computerisation of cars and efforts by manufacturers to monopolise the aftermarket space.
- Upskilling barriers include:
  - Recruitment challenges following a 30% decline in vehicle technicians between 2006 and 2021, along with an ageing workforce
  - Low confidence in government plans for the EV transition and doubts about the technology
  - Capital constraints in FE colleges preventing the necessary strategic planning
  - The need for additional support for small workshops facing resource and capital constraints.
- The EV transition represents a unique opportunity to get more young people into the auto technician sector who are passionate about climate action and technology.
  - A greater focus on electrical and computer-based skills is likely to make it more attractive, especially for young people who have high levels of digital and environmental awareness.
- Recommendations include launching an attractive green careers campaign to get young people and those from under-represented backgrounds into EV repairs.

**The British Academy published [Understanding digital poverty and inequality in the UK: A summary of insights from our evidence reports](#), based on six projects exploring the relationship in particular between digital technology and inequality.**

- Disparities in levels and types of digital access, digital skills, usage and outcomes exist across the UK, aligning with the 'three levels' of the digital divide: poor access to digital technologies (first level), poor digital literacy and skills (second level), and a reduced ability to exploit digital resources and transform them into tangible social benefits (third level).
  - An emerging skills gap, in which the capabilities of device-limited individuals are constrained to the use of only specific hardware, software or services, may limit their ability to benefit from the digital world.
- Six lessons to shape policy on effectively addressing digital poverty and its impacts include:
  - Addressing digital poverty involves more than improving access – interventions must empower people and places to benefit from digital access.
  - Local resources and intermediaries can be valuable assets in tackling place-based digital poverty, and the public sector has a crucial role to play in enabling them.
  - Policies should consider how and why intersecting inequalities are likely to exacerbate digital poverty and design interventions that can benefit those most at risk of digital poverty.
  - Consider policy interventions that can adapt to demographic and economic changes, through consistent and long-term investment.

**The European Commission published [Labour market training for the long-term unemployed](#), based on a survey in 26 EU member states plus Iceland and Norway, as part of the European Network of Public Employment Services 2022 work programme.**

- Issues for consideration by policymakers when planning or adjusting training programmes for long-term unemployed (LTU) people include:
  - 'On-the-job' or training with a 'practical component' in companies seems to be the most effective in terms of employment outcomes; courses without an in-company component appear to be the least effective.
  - Professional training involving a formal vocational qualification/diploma and self-selected training are also effective; self-selection of training courses and/or the training provider offers a quick and more flexible way for those who are LTU to use the resources for further training or retraining.
  - Training courses with mixed groups (i.e. unemployed and employed people) seem to work better and are more beneficial than training alongside only others who are LTU.
  - Major challenges encountered by those who are LTU in accessing and attending the distance learning include: poor financial resources creating problems with internet access and IT

equipment; a lack of or low digital skills; poor or no support network to assist them in accessing online resources/courses; and no opportunity to practice the skills.

- Distance learning can have low effectiveness in reaching out to people who are not motivated and/or unfamiliar with learning.
- More systematic monitoring and evaluation is needed to provide relevant information on the impact/effectiveness of the training programmes for disadvantaged groups, such as LTU.

**Cedefop published a briefing note: [Looking back to look ahead: What is the future for VET in Europe?](#), exploring how the content and provision of VET is responding to changing labour market and societal needs.**

- Research into the changing VET landscape points to the need to promote more learner-centred strategies.
- To be prepared for the future, VET needs to rebalance general subject knowledge, occupation-specific skills and transversal competences.
  - Transversal skills and competences are increasingly common in IVET curricula.
- Many countries are reducing the number of their IVET qualifications while broadening their profile and increasing their occupational scope and flexibility.
- The EU has promoted individualised, flexible learning pathways for two decades and national policies are increasingly adopting more modularised qualifications and the use of learning outcomes.
- Many countries have strengthened the general education component of their VET programmes, often integrating it into workplace learning, thereby improving overall programme quality.
- Workplace learning has increased across Europe, often at the expense of classroom instruction and most countries have seen wider use of vendor-specific learning materials.
- The greater autonomy of local VET schools and authorities and the introduction of modularised IVET qualifications have increased the relevance of IVET for adults; 60% of Danish IVET learners are 20+.

## ADULT & LIFELONG LEARNING

**L&W published [Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2022](#), in which 5,139 adults aged 17+ in the UK were asked in September about their learning participation, experiences and intentions.**

- 42% had participated in formal or informal learning in the last three years (-2ppt from 2021):
  - 43% in Northern Ireland (+3ppt); 42% in England (-3ppt); 42% in Wales (+4ppt); 39% in Scotland (-2ppt).
  - Those who are younger, from a higher socioeconomic group, highly qualified or in work were more likely to participate.
- Independent and informal learning had grown since the pandemic; 68% said at least part of their learning had taken place online.
- 57% were motivated to learn by factors related to learning and knowledge, 51% for work-related reasons and 51% for personal/social reasons.
- Employer investment in training had fallen 28% since 2005.

*[Interactive charts](#) provide trend data from the past 25 years, including for learning methods, motivations, benefits and barriers, broken down by demographics, learning status and other variables.*

**L&W published [Review of National Strategies for Adult Basic Skills](#), as part of the work of the Skills for Life Alliance, convened in 2021 by L&W and English adult education body HOLEX.**

- The report looks at Australia, Germany, Norway and Switzerland, which have a distinct strategic focus on adult basic skills.
- It identifies six areas where policy in England could be strengthened: policy implementation; systems based approach; policy devolution; language provision for migrants; support for providers; basic skills provision models.
- Key points include:
  - Dedicated basic skills strategies and implementation and action plans signal a political intention to move beyond policy pronouncements to implementation.

- There is a tension between a universal funded basic skills entitlement and limited funding, which is particularly stark in England but also a cause for concern in countries where funding has increased.
- Countries seeking to move basic skills up the policy agenda reference them in the overarching national skills strategy as a way of raising their profile across the skills system.
- A systems approach is critical to support progression and upskilling; due attention must be paid to enabling basic skills learning to act as a gateway to higher skills if nations are to avoid a 'race to the bottom' in terms of skills and productivity.
- Case study countries have sought to address capacity issues by: strengthening the basic skills workforce, including requiring teaching qualifications and supporting CPD; developing resources such as assessment tools and teaching materials; using networking and research to help providers and practitioners better understand how to respond to learners' needs.
- All the case study countries embed provision in the workplace or in the context of work, while three also focus on provision in the community; two make embedding basic skills mandatory in publicly funded courses; engaging SMEs in supporting basic skills training is never easy.

*The report is dated July but was published in October.*

**The OECD published [Education Policy Outlook 2022: Transforming pathways for lifelong learners](#).**

- The forces that caused disruption and uncertainty in 2022 – the invasion of Ukraine, the continuing pandemic, extreme weather events – will reverberate into 2023, with implications for education and training, including:
  - Short term – global economic uncertainty and tight labour markets
  - Longer term – increasing global investment in clean energy, digital transformation and mass information.
- These forces challenge education policymakers to transform existing pathways so that people can become effective lifelong learners capable of navigating change; three areas of policy effort will advance transformation in 2023:
  - **Enhancing the relevance of learning pathways**, including by strengthening skills anticipation capacity and empowering learners to navigate broader change
  - **Easing transitions along learners' personal pathways**, including by increasing learner resilience by making stronger connections in their personal pathways throughout life and continuing to support learners at greater risk of leaving early, such as by prioritising changing pedagogies, going beyond structural or procedural change
  - **Nurturing learners' aspirations**, including by engaging target learners in education, training or work opportunities through outreach strategies, enriching and expanding learners' perspectives from an earlier age, and supporting learners' agency to identify and capitalise on opportunities.

**IZA published [Different Degrees of Skill Obsolescence across Hard and Soft Skills and the Role of Lifelong Learning for Labor Market Outcomes](#), based on a study of the Swiss job market 1950–2019.**

- Lifelong learning effects for 'harder' versus 'softer' occupations are examined, thereby analysing the role of lifelong learning or training in counteracting skill depreciation or obsolescence.
  - Hard skills (e.g. knowing how to operate a certain machine) do not age well, whereas soft skills (e.g. leadership ability) preserve their value over time.
- In harder occupations, with large shares of fast-depreciating hard skills, the role of lifelong learning is primarily as a safeguard against unemployment risks rather than a boost to wages.
- In contrast, in softer occupations, in which workers build on more value-stable soft skill foundations, the role of lifelong learning is mostly as a boost for upward career mobility and larger wage gains.
  - Workers in softer occupations earn on average lower wages but experience higher longer-term employment probabilities.
  - These workers probably add new and up-to-date skills, thereby enhancing productivity beyond previous levels, which then opens the door to promotions.
- A combination of hard- and soft-skill training allows workers in harder occupations to escape the environment of high depreciation rates, likely leading them to management-related positions with more balanced skills sets and higher wages.



## THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK

**Eurofound (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living & Working Conditions) published [Recovery from COVID-19: The changing structure of employment in the EU](#), using EU Labour Force Survey data for 2020 and 2021.**

- While the pandemic has accelerated some pre-existing structural trends such as digitalisation, it has also left enduring employment scars on the in-person service sectors which have been acutely hit by social distancing restrictions.
  - For the first time in a generation, labour shortages rather than unemployment – labour supply rather than demand – is emerging as a greater concern for policymakers.
- Although job loss during the pandemic was concentrated in low-paid jobs, the recovery in employment levels during 2021 was driven by growth in well-paid jobs and occupations.
  - Throughout 2019–21, increases in well-paid employment were greater among women than men in the 27 EU member states, while job loss has been most acute for women in low-paid jobs.
- The rise in teleworking is likely to remain as the legacy of the Covid-19 crisis, with remote working continuing to grow in 2021 in nearly all EU member states, even after the dramatic increase at the start of the pandemic [*see the report below*].
  - The crisis also favoured employment growth in sectors and occupations where telework is more feasible: between 2019 and 2021, 'ICT professional' was the fastest growing occupation and in 2021 it was the one with the highest share of teleworking.

**Eurofound published [The rise in telework: Impact on working conditions and regulations](#).**

- Telework is here to stay: 41.7m employees teleworked across the EU in 2021, double the number teleworking since 2019.
  - Despite a small decline in 2022, the upward trend is set to resume as technological developments are increasing the number of teleworkable jobs, and employees and employers are leaning more towards remote working.
- The pandemic demonstrated the enormous potential of telework by improving workers' living and working conditions, allowing them to balance their working time around their private and family life.
  - Workers also experienced less commuting time and greater work autonomy and flexibility, without any negative impact on productivity in the workplace.
- The prevalence of telework is not necessarily influenced by gender, even though slightly more women telework than men.
  - However, especially during the pandemic, women were more likely to bear the brunt of additional unpaid work and found it more difficult than men to balance telework with their private life.
- Several EU countries have updated telework regulations, however, there is no common approach as sectors and companies require different combinations of regulation, practices and work culture.
  - Findings confirm the critical role of social dialogue in implementing telework regulations that protect working conditions and create positive outcomes for both employers and workers.
- The rise in telework since the pandemic may have further exacerbated wage and employment gaps between high- and low-skilled workers, as it mostly impacted better-paid, higher level occupations.
  - Employees with access to telework can enjoy greater job security, better wages and potentially more autonomy and better work–life balance.
  - Policymakers have an important role to play in ensuring a level playing field between those who can and can't telework.

## EMPLOYMENT: FAIR WORK & WAGES

**IES published [Employment and Opportunity in the UK](#), background and evidence on the UK labour market pre- and post-pandemic and compared to other developed economies.**

- Pre-pandemic, although there were record levels of employment and low unemployment, there were significant labour market challenges including:
  - Wide employment (and pay) gaps for different groups and between areas
  - Falling access to training in work, received by around 25% of the workforce in 2019

- Persistent low pay, affecting 17% of workers in 2019, rising to over 50% in hospitality, 33% in social care and over 25% in retail
- Rising poverty among households where someone works.
- Following the pandemic there are significant issues around labour force participation, labour and skills shortages, pay disparities and widening labour market inequalities.
  - 600k more people are economically inactive than pre-pandemic, driven in particular by long-term ill health and by more older people being out of work.
  - Economic inactivity is rising most among: those who last worked at least five years ago; those who left immediately either side of the first lockdown; and those who have never worked.
  - Vacancies remain close to the highest on record – nearly 50% higher than pre-pandemic levels and higher in every single industry.
  - Nominal pay growth (not including inflation) is at its highest in at least 20 years at around 5.5%, rising to around 6.5% in the private sector but only 2.5% in the public sector.
  - Very high inflation continues to lead to large falls in real terms pay, down by 3.3% since the start of the 2022 – the steepest fall in at least 20 years.
  - Employment ‘gaps’ have widened for a number of disadvantaged groups: disabled people, the lowest qualified, lone parents and older people.
- The UK has had one of the weakest labour market recoveries of any developed economy: it is one of only five developed nations to still have an employment rate below where it was at the end of 2019.

The paper informs a new [Commission on the Future of Employment Support](#) – the context is outlined in [Working for the Future: Launch report](#).

**Timewise published [Can a more flexible jobs market raise the status and pay of part-time workers?](#), research by the IES supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.**

- 87% of workers want to work flexibly, but only 30% of job adverts offer flexible working.
- The report outlines how the lack of flexible – particularly part-time – jobs at the point of hire traps parents, older workers and people with disabilities (‘priority groups’) out of work or in low pay, and why many employers are still resistant to offering flexibility.
  - Those in priority groups are disproportionately disadvantaged as their need to work part time is greater; e.g. 38% of single parents want to work part time vs 24% of coupled parents.
- The hourly pay rates of part-time workers are lower than full-time people qualified to a similar level due to differences in the occupations in which part-time and full-time individuals are employed.
  - At every qualification level, a higher proportion of full-time workers are employed in higher skill and earnings occupations.
- 39% of 1k senior business decision-makers said they never offered flexible working in their job adverts; the main underlying reasons included:
  - Lack of trust: 46% were unwilling to offer flexible work until an employee had proved themselves
  - Lack of understanding of the need for clarity in job adverts: 15% assumed they would ask at interview and 24% preferred to leave flexibility to the negotiation stage once the job was offered
  - Concern about operational constraints: 15% struggled to design some roles flexibly and 12% felt it was incompatible with their business requirements or infrastructure
  - Concerns about parity between employees: 17% worried that offering flexibility to new hires would cause tension among existing staff and ‘open the floodgates’.
- **Recommendations for employers** include:
  - Strategic development at an organisational level to build the business case for flexible hiring
  - Internal and external communications to champion flexible working, e.g. showcasing role models
  - Training and guidance for managers to include how to design flexibility into jobs in a way that is compatible with the business needs of the role
  - Flexible working to be considered from the point of hire and offered in job adverts when possible; piloting flexible hiring in one department or type of role.
- **Recommendations for business intermediaries** include:
  - Trade and industry bodies to call on members to act on flexible working and support them by signposting guidance and resources.

- Recruiters and restart providers to champion flexible hiring to their employer clients and provide guidance on how to adapt recruitment processes.

- **Recommendations for UK and devolved governments** include:

- Bring forward the Employment Bill to include flexible working by default from day one.
- Introduce a requirement for all organisations receiving public funds to commit to considering flexible working from day one.
- Introduce a flexible job design training module to support SMEs to build capabilities.
- Fund flexible hiring pilots within the Department for Work & Pensions in-work progression trials.

**ESRI published [A universal basic income \[UBI\] for Ireland: Lessons from the international literature](#), funded by the Low Pay Commission, including case studies from Germany, Finland, Ontario, California and Barcelona.**

- There are a number of potentially positive impacts associated with a UBI, including:
  - Avoiding situations where people are discouraged from work due to the risk of losing means-tested welfare payments
  - Offering the financial freedom to leave insecure or exploitative work and seek other opportunities
  - Reducing the stigma associated with welfare receipt and reducing the administrative complexity of the current welfare system
  - Providing those in informal and unpaid work, e.g. childcare, with an income.
- Potential drawbacks include:
  - Doesn't proportionately target income to those most in need
  - The impact on labour supply is not clear – some people might withdraw from the labour market
  - High cost: implementation in the RoI in 2019 could have cost an estimated €50b per year
  - Could lead to some low-income households being financially worse off.

*Basic calculations are provided for four possible UBI approaches.*

## EMPLOYMENT: WORKING PRACTICES

**CIPD published [The Four-Day Week: Employer perspectives on moving to a shorter working week](#), based on a survey of 2k senior HR practitioners.**

- The four-day week reduces hours worked without loss of pay, e.g. cutting 35 hours over five days to 28 hours over four\*.
  - Companies are often innovative about implementation, usually based on workforce consultation and new forms of flexible working, and there is no one size fits all.
- Perhaps the biggest challenge will be catering for working arrangements outside the 'nine-to-five': 10.6% of people work more than five days a week; 25.4% are already working four days or fewer.
  - Based on the average of hours worked (35.9), 24% work a four-day week or less; 63% more than five days and 23.1% more than six days.
- 16% of employers have reduced working hours in the past five years, around 50% of them due to the furlough scheme; 10% of employers have reduced hours without reducing pay.
  - They had seldom reduced hours for the entire workforce, but most had done so permanently.
  - Reasons included: wellbeing (36%); reduced demand (32%); recruitment and retention (30%); to increase productivity (24%); technology improvements (21%); employee demand (18%).
  - Challenges included: doesn't suit everybody (32%); reduced work/output (30%); role requires attendance (26%); 25% hadn't experienced any challenges.
- Only 25% of employers have never considered reducing hours; 25% say the organisation's work isn't amenable to it; only 2% plan to reduce hours in the future, while 14% don't know.
  - 55% think it's a great idea but couldn't happen in their organisation; 17% think it could happen and 28% are unsure.
  - 37% think a four-day week is unlikely in the UK in the next ten years; 34% think it is likely.

*\*This is the model currently being [trialled](#) with 70 UK companies involving 3,300 workers.*

A separate report covers [Scottish employer perspectives](#). The Scottish Government's 2021–22 [Programme for Government](#) included a commitment to fund four-day working week pilots in 2023.

**Eurofound published [Working conditions in the time of COVID-19: Implications for the future](#), based on telephone interviews with over 70k working adults in 36 countries between March and November 2021.**

- Good job quality supports wellbeing and is at the heart of a high-quality working life: during the pandemic, job quality had a positive impact on work–life balance, trust within the workplace and the ability to make ends meet.
  - Such positive outcomes make work sustainable, enabling workers to have longer working lives.
- Gender segregation in sectors, occupations and workplaces persist: there is a long way to go to achieve equal opportunities at work and equal access to key decision-making positions.
  - In 2021, only 20% of workers worked in a gender-balanced workplace, while just 33% had a female boss.
- A high number of EU workers continued to be in vulnerable situations: 26% had difficulty making ends meet and 17% were unable to predict their earnings in the coming three months.
  - It is important to focus policy efforts on making work pay and targeting specific groups, e.g. single parents and workers in low-paid jobs, who are under greater financial pressure and were more severely affected by the pandemic restrictions than other groups.
- Most workers do not work in an environment that supports the development of their skills – almost 50% said they did not have enough opportunities to use their skills and knowledge in their work.
- New green jobs will potentially have better job quality, however, many existing jobs for which demand will increase in the green transition show poorer job quality, underlining the importance of also mainstreaming job quality in greening policies.

**The ILO published [Working Time and Work–Life Balance Around the World](#), a comprehensive review of working hours and work schedules and their effects on work–life balance.**

- The most prominent feature of working-time patterns and developments in today's world is the uneven distribution of hours of work.
  - Women are more likely to work short or very short hours and to experience time-related underemployment; men are more likely to regularly work long hours.
  - Workers in the informal economy are more likely to work both long and short hours.
- The classic standard working week (eight hours per day, five/six days per week) provides stability but is often too inflexible to allow time for family demands.
  - There are positives and negatives around shift work, part-time work with predictable schedules, and flexitime (flexible schedules).
  - Compressed workweeks offer longer weekends; there is a debate regarding the health impacts, but there is more evidence that their effects are positive.
  - Work–life balance can potentially be facilitated with hours-averaging schemes, but when they are poorly designed and implemented, employees can be left vulnerable to drastic swings in hours.
- High-income countries tend to have a slightly higher rate of overemployment and a lower rate of underemployment than upper middle-income and lower middle-income countries.
  - Work–life imbalances are strongly connected with overemployment in most regions of the world and most of the countries and income levels considered.
  - Self-employed workers report a higher incidence of underemployment; women have greater rates of both overemployment and underemployment; higher occupational skill levels are clearly correlated with higher overemployment and lower underemployment.
- Overemployment is particularly harmful to work–life balance life satisfaction, while both types of mismatches tend to lead to poorer physical and mental outcomes, resulting in reduced productivity and higher turnover.
- The positive experience with short-time work/work-sharing and teleworking during the pandemic suggests that these responses should be made permanent.
  - At the same time, weaknesses became apparent in terms of the economic cost, but also issues around the 'right to disconnect' as well as the recording of working time.

- Five guiding principles for 'decent working time': promote health and safety; be 'family-friendly' and improve work-life balance; promote gender equality; increase the productivity and sustainability of enterprises; offer workers a degree of choice and influence over their hours of work.

## EMPLOYMENT: INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

**CIPD published its inaugural report on [Inclusion at work 2022: Findings from the inclusion and diversity \[I&D\] survey 2022](#), in partnership with Reed, based on responses from 2k senior UK decision-makers.**

- 48% either have a stand-alone I&D strategy/plan or integrate it into their wider people strategy.
  - 76% evaluate effectiveness, usually through staff surveys and feedback from staff networks.
- The most common areas of focus are: mental health (29%); race/ethnicity (23%); gender (21%).
  - The future focus is the same, but percentages are lower: 21%, 15%, 14%.
- The top three I&D practices in recruitment are: reviewing job descriptions; making reasonable adjustments where possible; and using structured interviews (e.g. standard questions).
  - Only 6% give under-represented groups guidance on the process but find it highly effective.
- The top three practices in people management are: train managers in addressing conflict and dealing with concerns/complaints; train managers in fair and inclusive people management; training or awareness on I&D topics for all employees.
  - All practices relating to management capability were rated highly for effectiveness.
- 52% say they have policies for flexible working, 49% for anti-discrimination, bullying and harassment and 48% for hybrid working.
- 78% of leaders understand how I&D can benefit the organisation.
  - 21% say leaders aren't committed to having a diverse workforce; 17% to an inclusive workplace.
  - 21% feel that senior leaders pay lip service to I&D, while 46% say that isn't the case.
  - Only 29% of organisations use tangible action to judge senior leader performance on I&D.
- 51% believe managers generally feel confident to improve I&D in their team and 60% that they have the skills to manage people as individuals with empathy, fairness and compassion.
  - Just 30% of organisations include I&D objectives in managers' performance objectives.
- 38% say they collect equal opportunities monitoring data; 21% connect them to other organisation/business data; 61% say senior leaders are interested in the data and 49% say there is demand for more.

*CIPD published two guides to inclusive recruitment, one for [employers](#) and one for [line managers](#).*

**Eurofound published [COVID-19 pandemic and the gender divide at work and home](#), examining the inequalities that existed pre-pandemic, the pandemic's impact on gender divides and the policy responses of national governments across the EU.**

- The impact of the pandemic on the labour market was remarkably gender-neutral, partly reflecting women's over-representation in sectors that were shut down, but also their concentration in teleworkable jobs and essential sectors.
  - However, job loss in the pandemic for women was most prevalent among the lowest paid while job loss for men was more evenly distributed.
- Work-life conflicts increased dramatically during the pandemic, particularly among teleworking mothers of young children.
  - Flexible work arrangements – most likely to be adopted by women – can also mean increased unpaid workload and lower visibility in the workplace.
- The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the critical role of care services in supporting women's labour market participation, financial security and overall wellbeing.
  - The post-pandemic recovery is an opportunity to bring about real change in gender norms, behaviours and policy innovation.

**The House of Commons Library published [The gender pay gap](#), a research briefing examining the size of the gap in the UK and some of the reasons why it exists.**

- The size of the gender pay gap depends on several factors, including:
  - **Age:** there is little difference for those in their 20s/30s, but a large gap at 40+ among parents.
  - **Occupation:** the gap tends to be smaller where a larger proportion of employees are women.
  - **Industry:** the gap is largest in finance/insurance, and smallest in accommodation/food services.
  - **Public and private sector:** for full-time workers, the pay gap is slightly smaller in the public sector; the part-time pay gap is negligible in the private sector, but large in the public sector.
  - **Region and nation:** the full-time gap is highest in the South East and East Midlands and negative in Northern Ireland.
  - **Pay:** the highest earners have a larger pay gap than the lowest earners.
- The full-time gap has been getting smaller since 1997 and the overall gap has also decreased; the part-time gap has generally remained small and negative on average.
- In 2021, 78% said their median hourly pay was higher for men; 13% said it was higher for women and 9% that it was the same for both.

**The Work Foundation at Lancaster University published [The Gender Gap: Insecure work in the UK](#) – its UK Insecure Work Index uses data for three elements: employment contracts, personal finances and access to workers’ rights.**

- ‘Insecure work’ is defined as having unpredictable pay, no guarantee of set hours or future work and no access to employment rights and protections.
- 26% of UK working women (3.9m) are trapped in severely insecure work, compared to 14% of men.
  - Even in the most senior positions the figures are 9.2% vs 4.5%.
- For mothers with children under nine it’s 30.4% compared with 11.2% for men and 24.7% for women without children; this is only partly related to mothers being more likely to work part time.
  - Working mothers generally have higher levels of contractual insecurity than fathers and are more likely to experience low or unpredictable pay.
- For Black women it’s 30.3% compared with 21.8% for Black men and 25.5% for white women.
  - White men are significantly less likely to be in insecure work than Indian, Chinese, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Black men.
- 30.2% of disabled women are in severely insecure work vs 25% of non-disabled women.
  - This appears to be driven by involuntary temporary work, low-paid work and self-employment being more common among disabled than non-disabled women.
- Recommendations include:
  - Require Statutory Sick Pay to be paid from the first day of absence, available to all workers and in line with minimum wage.
  - Embed flexibility in all roles and make it available to all workers from the first day of work.
  - Run a campaign with employers to actively promote take up of flexible working among men.
  - Improve corporate reporting on equality making it obligatory for all organisations with 250+ workers, including details of contracts issued and plans to tackle their gender pay gap.
  - Improve provision of affordable childcare; cover full costs for those on Universal Credit.
  - Consult with employers and parents on maternity, paternity and parental leave, reviewing entitlement and rates to ensure this aligns with parents’ ambitions.

**IZA published [The Gender Pay Gap in the CEOs’ Labor Market](#), analysis of 1,174 newly appointed CEO successions across 18 countries from 1992 to 2018.**

- Male and female CEOs receive similar pay packages overall, but this masks marked gender differences in the pay structure:
  - Female CEOs receive a lower proportion of their total pay in cash in countries where CEOs negotiate with boards to set their own compensation: the penalty is about 15% in the US and 23% in the UK, Canada and Australia.
  - Where the CEO is a less forceful bargainer, as is possible in the case of a woman CEO, she will be paid a lower proportion of cash-base salary.

- This may also reflect that prospective female CEOs have fewer outside options relative to males, and bargain over wages with male-dominated boards.
- A more balanced gender composition in boards can help women close the gap in pay structure.

**IZA published [Why Do the Earnings of Male and Female Graduates Diverge? The role of motherhood and job dynamics](#), exploring gender wage dynamics using an administrative dataset covering RoI graduate earnings from 2010–2020.**

- Although male and female graduates have similar returns to study field immediately after graduation, a substantial gap soon emerges, driven by a 27% fall in earnings immediately after childbirth.
  - E.g. for business and law graduates, the gender gap for women with children grows from zero on graduation to over 28% ten years later.
  - Compared to fathers, there is an estimated motherhood penalty of 27% overall: 25% in business and law, 23.2% in STEM and 28.8% for other graduates.
- The gap is not driven by job mobility, but almost entirely accounted for by changes within a job.
  - Although there is a large and persistent reduction in hours of work after childbirth, this does not seem to explain all of the reduction in earnings.
- With no striking differences between fields of study, policies to tackle the gender wage gap need to be broad-based, rather than focused on particular sectors.

**IZA published [The Ongoing Impact of Gender Pay Gap Transparency Legislation](#), using the sudden temporary suspension of legislation in the UK due to the Covid-19 pandemic.**

- The introduction of the legislation in 2017 requiring employers with 250+ employees to report headline measures of gender equality had a significant narrowing impact on the pay gap.
  - In March 2020, the requirement to report gender pay gaps was suspended for one year.
- The paper compares post-suspension pay gaps between organisations that did and didn't report during the suspension year (2019/20).
  - Reporting organisations have a 6% lower pay gap a year later, driven by a relative increase in females in the top pay quartile and a rising female concentration in the workforce overall.
  - Ongoing reporting is most effective in organisations with weaker pre-existing pressures to narrow their gender pay gap through female representation and voice.

**Demos published [Understanding 'early exiters': The case for a healthy ageing workforce strategy](#).**

- The research draws on: focus groups; a UK poll of 2k people aged 50+; analysis of labour market data; an evidence review; and input from an advisory group and a roundtable.
- There are around 100k more 50–64 year-olds than before the pandemic who say they aren't in work because of a long-term health condition, either physical or mental; this is holding back UK growth.
- Almost all focus group participants said they would have preferred to continue working if they could have, but felt they had no choice due to ageism, ableism and insufficient support.
- While ageing has an impact on health, other risk factors affect it to a greater degree, including physical inactivity, obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption and diet/nutrition.
  - The focus should be less on age and more on maintaining and improving people's health.
- Specific recommendations relating to the workplace include:
  - Government and employers to ensure job design and recruitment practices are age-inclusive and accessible, including providing the right to flexible working from day one.
  - Government to work with employers, charities and older workers to tackle ageism and ableism by developing guidance and training on inclusive workplace cultures and proactive line management.
  - Government and employers to work together to integrate promoting healthy lifestyles into employers' policies.

**CIPD published [Working with terminal illness: What is known and what is needed](#), drawing on a review of the literature and a survey of 1k UK HR professionals.**

- As the population ages and works longer and disease treatments continue to improve, it is highly likely that more people will be working with a terminal illness.

- The survey revealed an 'employer lottery' where access to type of support varies significantly.
- There are four areas where evidence is needed: social, welfare and legal needs; financial needs; mental wellbeing needs; factors affecting decisions to work.
- The report offers a number of recommendations, including reviewing employment legislation and preparing national guidance on minimum standards and good practice.

**CBI launched the first iteration of its new UK-wide [Work Health Index \(WHI\)](#) in collaboration with Business for Health, supported by the NHS and the UK Government.**

- The aim is to help tackle the record long-term sickness absence levels that are restricting the UK's productivity – the UK loses 131m working days a year to ill health, costing around £180b in GDP.
- The WHI will cover all workplace policies, practices and provision and will enable businesses to assess how their health offer compares to those of other businesses by sector, size, revenue and region, and monitor progress over time.

## International Comparisons

**The European Commission published:**

- [The Structure of the European Education Systems 2022/23: Schematic diagrams – Eurydice facts and figures](#) for 39 systems from 37 countries participating in the Erasmus+ programme; it covers mainstream education from pre-primary to tertiary.
- [The organisation of the academic year in Europe 2022/2023 – Eurydice : Facts and figures](#), comparing 37 countries and university and non-university programmes.
  - A common model based on two semesters has been adopted in nearly all European HE systems.
- [Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe 2022: Overview of major reforms since 2015](#) for 37 countries participating in Erasmus+.
- The report contains data on education policies including: achievement in basic skills; early leaving from education/training; HE; and digital competence.

**Cedefop published [Recognising the learning outcomes acquired abroad by IVET learners: Some progress made, but still much to do](#), analysing country policies and practices in the EU member states, Iceland and Norway.**

**The OECD published [Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators](#), its annual report comparing the structure, finances and performance of education systems in 46 countries.**

- This year's report focuses on tertiary education, including: the rise of attainment and the associated benefits; and costs and funding models.
  - A new indicator looks at the profile of academic staff.
- Key findings in a [UK Country Note](#) include:
  - HE attainment is strongly related to improved wage prospects in the UK, above OECD average.
  - The UK has the highest completion rate among OECD countries with data at bachelor's level.
  - The UK invests more per student than the OECD average at all levels of education.
- Other topics in the main report include the Covid-19 crisis and the shift from crisis management to recovery.

## Government

### NORTHERN IRELAND

**The DfE published [Survey of Further Education College Leavers Report: Academic year 2020/21](#), the eighth annual snapshot of the immediate added value of completing a qualification at Level 3 or below.**

- 50.0% were in employment six months after completion, 6.4ppt higher than in 2019/20.



- 11.7% studying at entry/Level 1 were unemployed (-3.9ppt); 5.0% Level 2 (-3.5ppt); 2.6% Level 3 (-2.1ppt).
- The highest proportions in full-time employment had studied construction, planning & the built environment (71.0%), business, administration & law (67.0%) and engineering & manufacturing technologies (59.0%).
  - The lowest proportions had studied: arts, media & publishing (9.2%), social sciences (11.9%) and history, philosophy & theology (13.3%).
- Most of those in employment were in jobs classified as: skilled trade (20.4%); caring, leisure or other service (19.3%); associate professional and technical (13.3%).
- The most important reasons for taking the course were: to improve career prospects (21.9%); to improve their ability to do their current job (13.2%); greater job satisfaction (9.7%).
  - 74.9% of those in employment said they were using what they had learnt in their current work.

**The DfE published [Understanding Widening Participation in Northern Ireland](#), reviewing progress made towards the vision set out in [Access to Success \(2012\)](#).**

- Many of the barriers to accessing HE are similar in Northern Ireland (NI) to the rest of the UK; however, particular issues are low levels of attainment and access for those living in rural areas.
- Overall, most of the key *Access to Success* actions have been at least partially met at the national level [*a performance table is provided*].
  - Applicants to HE in NI have increased by 33%; most are NI-domiciled, although the proportion from England has doubled.
  - The number of NI-domiciled applicants to GB providers has increased by 20%, but most NI students choose to study in NI.
- Widening Access & Participation Plans (WAPPs) – the equivalent of England’s Access & Participation Plans (APPs) – have enhanced the monitoring of widening participation activity and expenditure.
  - However, providers perceive them as burdensome and time consuming; a revised process would help to simplify and streamline WAPPs and enhance the quality and consistency of the data.
- WAPPs show an increase in volume and range of outreach, with a focus on raising attainment.
  - There is evidence that most of the activities can positively influence knowledge and awareness of HE and the benefits of higher level study.
  - Contextual admissions have been implemented at NI’s highest tariff institution.
  - The introduction of higher level apprenticeships has expanded the range of HE entry routes.
- Most providers are outperforming their benchmarks for non-continuation for both full- and part-time students; NI rates are lower than in the UK as a whole.
  - There is evidence that financial support has more influence on retention than on access.
- Only a minority of providers invest a small proportion of their additional fee income in widening participation research and there is little evidence of impact evaluation.
- Seven strategic priorities to inform a future approach to widening participation in NI:
  - Take account of intersectionality to identify priority target groups and ensure that interventions address specific barriers, including low prior attainment.
  - Set national targets and national and provider-level key performance indicators to address under-representation of priority groups.
  - Require providers to set more ambitious targets to address gaps in access, retention and progression; consider mechanisms to encourage them to work collaboratively to address ‘cold spots’ in widening participation provision and reduce duplication.
  - Consider a revised outcomes-focused WAPPs process; capture consistent and comprehensive data; consider a three- or five-year cycle with risk-based monitoring.
  - Develop a more robust evidence base on ‘what works’ in NI; consider a common set of national and local outcome measures; build evaluation capacity through training and collaboration and ensure an appropriate proportion of widening participation budgets is allocated to research and evaluation.
  - Increase access to HE in rural areas and the range of courses available in NI, to reduce migration and retain more graduate talent with higher level skills.

- Establish a collaborative forum to achieve economies of scale, maximise value for money, minimise duplication and better coordinate widening participation activities across all relevant stakeholders.

## ENGLAND

**The COVID Social Mobility & Opportunities Study (COSMO), led by the Sutton Trust and the UCL Centres for Longitudinal Studies and for Education Policy & Equalising Opportunities, published its first four briefings.**

- The study is following 13k young people across England who were in year 11 in 2021; most have just begun year 13 or are undertaking other forms of study or training.

### Briefing 1: Lockdown learning

- Barriers to remote learning – e.g. lack of a suitable device, a quiet space or teacher/parental support – were all more likely to be experienced by those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
  - Those without a device worked on average eight hours per week in lockdown one; those with just a mobile phone 10 hours; those with a laptop or tablet 14 hours.

### Briefing 2: Education recovery and catch up

- 37% of those at state schools say they have fallen behind their classmates; those from ethnic minorities are more likely to be concerned they have fallen behind.

### Briefing 3: Future plans & aspirations

- 64% of those who had made education plans reported that they had changed because of the pandemic; 60% of those who had made career plans had changed them.
  - Females, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those attending state comprehensive schools were more likely than their counterparts to have changed plans.
  - 70% of those who had suffered from long Covid had changed career plans vs 56% of those who hadn't had the virus at all.

### Briefing 4: Mental health and wellbeing

- 44% reported elevated psychological distress, up from 35% in 2017 and 23% in 2007.
  - Higher proportions were seen among those who suffered from severe long Covid (66%) or who, during the pandemic: saw more arguments between parents/guardians (69%); were seriously ill (68%); struggled to afford food (67%); argued more with parents/guardians (67%).
- 68% of those with high levels were less motivated to study, compared to 37% with no distress; they were also more likely to say they had fallen behind classmates and that career plans had changed.

**The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC) published Developing workforce skills for a strong economy, the report of its inquiry into the approach of England's Department for Education.**

- The Department spends at least £4b each year on activities designed to develop workforce skills in England, but evidence shows that the skills system is failing to support the skills needed.
  - The number of adults participating in government-funded FE and skills training has dropped from 3.2m in 2010/11 to 1.6m in 2020/21.
  - Skills training in the 20% most disadvantaged areas of England fell by 39% between 2015/16 and 2020/21.
- The Department's response is not commensurate with the scale of the problem and is not effectively addressing the wider economic and societal factors that are creating skills shortages or a demand for new skills, such as the UK's exit from the EU and the transition to net zero.
  - It places great emphasis on 'skills bootcamps' [see p. 51], but these are short and sharp and only 24,500 people had started a course by April 2022.
- Its approach to skills is employer-led, with employers intended to have a central role in identifying needs and designing qualifications and training; however, the average expenditure on workforce training fell in real terms from £1,710 per employee in 2011 to £1,530 in 2019.
  - The input of other bodies is also crucial: local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, colleges and others all have a legitimate interest in co-producing skills programmes.

- Recommendations for the Department for Education include:
  - Develop an evidence-based plan to support disadvantaged groups to participate in training; provide an update on how it is helping colleges to deal with workforce and funding challenges.
  - Working with other departments: review the number of skills programmes and eliminate overlap; review and improve how it incentivises employers to invest in skills development.

**The Centre for Progressive Policy (CPP) published [New Horizons: Transforming educational opportunities to support inclusive growth](#), focusing on deprived communities in England, including findings and recommendations on post-school opportunities.**

- Preparation for adult life is a determinant of educational success and clear pathways are critical, but support is currently mostly reserved for those planning to go to university.
- Policy recommendations include:
  - Expand payments that provide extra support for those on FSM to students in FE.
  - Conduct a review of careers advice in areas with high levels of deprivation.
  - Introduce a universal bus pass, so that young people can attend any local institution.
  - Improve parent/carer working conditions, including by: mandating employers to offer guaranteed contracts to regular zero-hours workers; guaranteeing the right to request flexibility from day one; investing in training to help organisations improve their flexible work offer.

**CVER published [The Recent Evolution of Apprenticeships \[in England\]: Apprenticeship pathways and participation since 2015](#), a report for the Sutton Trust.**

- There was a dramatic decline in starts between 2017 and 2018 after the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and new regulations on the quality and duration of apprenticeships.
  - There was a further decline during the pandemic and starts have not yet recovered.
- Apprenticeships in construction & planning and ICT have increased; retail has fallen substantially.
  - Those at Level 2 have fallen the most; the number and share at higher and degree level has risen.
- Apprenticeships are now equally popular across all quintiles of local deprivation, apparently driven by the expansion of degree apprenticeships, disproportionately taken in more prosperous areas.
  - In January 2020, 17% of students in England were eligible for FSM; among apprentices under 30 it's 13% at Level 2, 9% at Level 3, 7% at Level 4/5, 5% at Level 6 (vs 6.7% of those entering university).
  - Between 2015 and 2020, the proportion of apprentices from poorer backgrounds fell by up to 2ppt at each level.
- Most of those on higher apprenticeships and over 50% on degree apprenticeships are aged 25+, although returns to apprenticeships are typically higher for younger age groups.
  - Around 60% of younger apprentices are male, but this is reversed for those aged 25+.
  - 90% of 16–18 starters and 83% of 19–24s are white British; at 25+, it's 74% – much closer to the proportion in the wider working-age population.
- For 2017 starts, achievement rates are 63–71%, but lower for older apprentices.
- ~45% of 19–24s starting at Level 3–5 have already taken an apprenticeship, usually at a lower level.

**EDSK published [No train, no gain: An investigation into the quality of apprenticeships in England](#), exploring what has happened since ministers implemented the 2012 [Richard Review](#).**

- Many low-skill roles are still masquerading as 'apprenticeships' even though they clearly do not support skilled occupations or require 'substantial training', both mandatory elements.
- The government has not implemented the recommendation that upskilling or accrediting the existing skills of staff should remain distinct from apprenticeships.
  - 90k have taken 'Team Leader' apprenticeships over the last five years, 70% more than any other; employers can access £4,500 for enrolment; a similar non-apprenticeship programme is available for just £1,300.
  - Some employers are inventing fake job titles to access apprenticeship funding.
- Since the Richard Review, apprentices are entitled to a minimum 20% of working hours to be spent on off-the-job training; 20% don't know this and 54% don't receive it.

- 30% say they received no training from their provider during the entire working week.
- 19% report no on-the-job training from their employer, rising to 26% among entry-level apprentices; 10% are unaware they are even on an apprenticeship.
- Employers and training providers are not required to provide a curriculum or syllabus; the OECD says England is an international outlier by treating on-the-job training as 'marginal'.

**The Department for Education published [Evaluation of the Employer Support Fund \[ESF\] pilots: Final report.](#)**

- T level ESF pilots offered grants of up to £750 to cover the cost of hosting industry placements for those employers that cited cost as a barrier.
  - Over two years, the ESF supported 843 placements against a target of 32,466; 8% of the £7m budget was spent.
  - Even accounting for Covid, the placement and spend targets seemed to overestimate employer need; providers felt that most of their employers didn't see cost as a barrier.
  - Most of the employers receiving a grant said it helped alleviate resource barriers and ensure a meaningful learning experience; for some, it helped staff justify providing placements to senior managers; providers thought it also made employers feel their time was valued.
  - There was some evidence that the grants increased the number of placements, although estimates are subject to much uncertainty; some providers wanted to use the grant as an incentive.
  - The £750 limit was lower than for other programmes (e.g. apprenticeships); providers felt this could result in employers prioritising those programmes or feeling that placements had less value.
  - Some employers and providers felt it would be valuable to cover learner travel costs.

**Inspection body Ofsted published findings from a [Skills Bootcamps thematic survey](#), exploring the quality of training.**

- Government-funded bootcamps offer short, flexible courses designed to tackle local skills shortages in England.
  - Most providers make good use of regional partnerships and labour market intelligence to develop and provide courses that meet identified skills needs.
  - However, some don't engage effectively with employers to design courses, and some haven't engaged with them to ensure that each learner is guaranteed a job interview.
  - Leaders and managers ensure that most trainers have good technical skills and curriculum knowledge and have relevant industrial expertise, but don't provide sufficient opportunities for trainers to develop their pedagogical skills, including skills in online training.
  - Most providers include elements that help learners to develop personal and professional behaviours and gain a range of skills, in addition to the vocational content of the course.
  - Too many providers don't have a rigorous system to identify learners' prior knowledge and skills; a minority don't give learners enough time or opportunity to master skills.
  - Some courses have generated significant interest while others haven't met recruitment targets.
  - Most learners are satisfied with the content and quality of their training and retention is mostly high; however, many have had a poor experience on programmes that are taught exclusively online with limited support from teachers.
  - Staff don't have sufficiently frequent or detailed discussions with learners about next steps and the extent to which they help learners to find work varies significantly.

## SCOTLAND

**The OECD published [Strengthening Apprenticeship in Scotland, United Kingdom](#), providing recommendations on how to make the system more responsive, innovative and inclusive.**

- The Scottish system has become one of the most flexible and wide-ranging in the OECD.
  - Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) reach a broad group, including those from more deprived backgrounds and adults; Graduate Apprentices gain a university degree.
  - Foundation Apprenticeships at Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4/5 offer work-based alternatives to pupils who might otherwise not complete upper secondary education.

- Outcomes have been positive: 90% of those completing their MA were in work six months later; employers reported that apprentices improved technical skills, and communication and teamwork.
- However, the system still needs strengthening if it is to help Scotland close its growing skills gaps.
  - It needs to be more responsive to employer needs: employers lead in developing frameworks and standards, but not all play an equal role in design; only 16% take on any apprentices; smaller employers are particularly under-represented in both areas.
  - Learning providers play a mediating role in determining the scale and mix of places and there is a danger of skewing towards the most cost-effective rather than the most needed training.
  - Flexibility is both a strength and a risk: Scotland has some of the shortest apprenticeships in the OECD, and some apprentices receive no off-the-job training; new minimum requirements could help strengthen the brand without losing much flexibility.
  - Technology offers ways to make apprenticeships more efficient and effective and more accessible to learners and employers alike; e.g.: 'big data' to identify future skills needs, monitor outcomes and identify students at risk of dropping out; robotics and VR to allow students a safer environment to master skills; assistive technology to open doors to those with disabilities.
  - Funding per student is less generous than for tertiary degrees, potentially reducing the number of places on offer and driving some learners into less suitable programmes.
  - Although the current flexibility enables experienced workers to accelerate their apprenticeships, there is no clear route for those who already have almost all the skills needed; nor are there clear onward routes like the German *Meister* qualification.
- Key policy recommendations:
  - **Responsiveness with attention to quality:** strengthen the role of employers; build a more demand-led funding system; establish minimum requirements on length, mix and trainers.
  - **Innovation with strategic guidance:** use technology and innovation to further expand and promote apprenticeships; innovate assessment and monitoring of outcomes; provide strategic guidance and practical support for innovation.
  - **Inclusiveness and equity:** mainstream inclusion and equity; develop a direct route to a final assessment and qualifications; develop further learning opportunities for qualified apprentices.

**The Scottish Government published [Longitudinal Education Outcomes \(LEO\) from Universities: 2019/20: Scotland](#), tracking UK-domiciled 2013/14 graduates from Scottish HEIs in sustained employment five years after graduating.**

- Graduates of Scottish HEIs had higher median earnings in ten out of 35 subject areas studied compared to the median earnings for all GB HEIs.
  - Historically, those graduating from Scottish HEIs earn more than those from GB overall, due to the large influence of subject choice on earnings, and how greatly earnings can vary across subjects.
- Female graduates earned £2,500 less than male graduates five years after graduation.
  - In 27 out of 35 subjects, males have higher median earnings than females; the largest difference is in pharmacology, toxicology & pharmacy (males £36,200, females £31,500).
  - Female median earnings only exceed male earnings in six subjects, the largest difference is in media, journalism & communications (females £25,600, males £23,400).
- Graduates from the 20% most deprived areas earned £3,300 less than those from the 20% least deprived areas; disabled graduates earned £2,900 less than those with no known disability; those from a non-white background earned £1,100 less than white graduates.

**The Scottish Government published [The Cost of Living Crisis in Scotland: An analytical report](#), by a cross-government group of analysts.**

- Impacts with relevance to learning and skills include on:
  - Digital access, with possible effects on educational outcomes for learners of all ages
  - Staff shortages in public and third sector services, due to challenges in recruiting and retaining sufficient skilled staff.

*It includes an overview of policies and interventions by ten European countries and Canada.*

**SDS published [Skills for a Changing World: Strategic Plan 2022–27](#), a new five-year plan.**

- The plan is shaped by drivers including: industry 4.0; climate change; inflation and the cost of living crisis; productivity; population and talent supply; and poverty and inequality in the labour market.
- New corporate goals focus on themes including: industry-focused skills; an inclusive talent pool; invested employers; and an intelligence-led skills system.

**The Fraser of Allander Institute, University of Strathclyde, published [Understanding the impact of Covid-19 on income: Labour market changes and policy solutions](#), research including trends in employment, pay and work hours of adults in Scotland by age, gender and education level.**

- Employment and unemployment rates for men aged 25+ with below degree-level qualifications worsened during the pandemic and have not recovered.
- Men with degrees or other HE qualifications, and most women, have returned to pre-pandemic levels of employment.

**The Scottish Government published [A Fairer Scotland for All: An Anti-Racist Employment Strategy](#).**

- The strategy aims to support employers to:
  - Improve their collection of workforce data, including their pay gap, and take action on the findings
  - Take an anti-racist approach to remove barriers in recruitment, retention and progression
  - Build an understanding of the impact of institutional racism and the processes and practices in an organisation that lead to the unfair treatment of people on the basis of race.

A refreshed [Fair Work Action Plan: Becoming a leading Fair Work Nation by 2025](#) was also published.

## WALES

[No relevant material sourced for this quarter's release.]

## REPUBLIC OF IRELAND (RoI)

**SOLAS published two reports on behalf of the National Skills Council, examining the labour market and the skills needs of the economy.**

- [National Skills Bulletin 2022](#), an overview of the labour market at occupational level.
  - The report supports policymaking in employment, education and training, and immigration (particularly the sourcing of skills in short supply in the Irish and EU labour market) and informs careers guidance and choices.
  - Skills shortages are anticipated in occupations including science and engineering, IT, business & finance, healthcare, education, social care and construction.
- [Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply 2022](#), a companion report to the *Skills Bulletin*.
  - It shows the potential supply of skills emerging from the FE and HE system and provides a profile of the educational attainment of the population based on labour force survey data.
  - The largest number of awards were in social science, business and law followed by health & welfare; between 2019 and 2020 there was 43% growth in awards in ICT.

**The OECD published [Recent developments in entrepreneurship training: Implications for inclusive entrepreneurship in Ireland](#), commissioned by the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment.**

- Skills gaps are an important barrier to sustainable entrepreneurship activities, with the size of such gaps varying across the population.
  - E.g. 43% of women in OECD countries report having the skills and knowledge to start a business, compared with 56% of men, reflecting both actual and perceived gaps and levels of self-confidence.
- Governments commonly use inclusive programmes to address the gaps, using multiple formats such as courses, workshops, bootcamps, coaching and mentoring.
  - In addition to improving entrepreneurship skills, there is some evidence that they can increase employability and that short formats can boost business creation, especially among vulnerable groups that typically have lower levels of self-confidence.

- Online training is increasing, especially since the pandemic; this has improved reach but has also created challenges due to the high levels of self-motivation and self-management required.
  - Another important trend is the shift from passive to experiential learning.
- Ireland offers a range of government support to help prospective entrepreneurs to start their own business, including training schemes.
  - Local Enterprise Offices are a vital source for many first-time entrepreneurs, including courses such as Start Your Own Business, mentoring and financial assistance.
  - These schemes are complemented by a range of offers from non-government organisations.
  - While many are of high quality, the availability of high-quality, tailored training varies.
- Recommendations:
  - Develop a referral system to help entrepreneurs identify relevant training options.
  - Expand regional training through online channels when appropriate and by using a network model.
  - Improve coaching and mentoring by offering modules for coaches and mentors through the Local Enterprise Offices; this could also lead to a certification system to ensure consistent quality.

**Skillnet Ireland published [Investigating the Development and Implementation of an Accredited Continuous Professional Development Framework within the Hair and Beauty Sector](#), research commissioned with IMAGE Skillnet by the University of Limerick Kemmy Business School.**

- A lack of recognition for hair and beauty professionals in the RoI is resulting in skill shortages, skill gaps and safety issues that are threatening the future of the sector.
  - Boosting the professional status of the industry would encourage more people to consider it as a valuable career choice and help to retain professionals within the mainstream business market.
  - With ongoing rapid evolution of the industry, training and development is crucial for a business to ensure safe practices and remain competitive.
- Findings include:
  - The top three skills gaps involve technical skills, business knowledge and retail skills.
  - 67% of professionals surveyed engaged in training and development two or three times per year but their efforts are not recognised.
  - The top three benefits from ongoing training and development are increased confidence with skills, increased job satisfaction and increased productivity at work.
  - The top three barriers to participating in ongoing training and development involve location and distance to training, cost and lack of time.
  - Progression to HE needs to be more accessible to those working in trades and the service industries.
  - Over 90% of business owners and managers would support a sector-wide CPD framework, comprising: technical skills, practical skills, business knowledge and health & safety.
  - 25% would (almost 75% might) be willing to pay an annual fee for CPD registration.

**SOLAS published [Community Education in FET \[FE & Training\]: A study into community education in Ireland](#).**

- Community education plays an important role in social inclusion, particularly for retirees and inactive learners, and access to learning opportunities for older females.

## EUROPE

**The European Commission published [Education and Training Monitor 2022](#), including a new EU-level indicator for the equity of EU education and training systems, plus 27 country reports.**

- **VET:** 48.7% of all pupils enrolled in upper secondary education are in VET.
  - The pandemic interrupted an increase in learner mobility, with recovery beginning in May 2021.
  - At 76.4% in 2021, the employment rates of recent VET graduates suffered from the pandemic, with recovery remaining incomplete.

- The share of **early leavers from education and training** continues to fall and remains on track to achieving the 2030 target of less than 9%.
  - Young people whose parents have a low level of education are nine times more likely to be early school leavers than those whose parents have a high level of education.
- **Tertiary education:**
  - In 2021, 41.2% of 25–34 year-olds had a tertiary qualification; the EU 2030 target is 45%.
  - The rate is now 11.1ppt higher for women (+0.3ppt); however, women remain under-represented in subjects such as ICT and engineering.
  - Attainment rates are 48.6ppt higher among those whose parents have a high level of education than among those whose parents have a low level of education.
- **Lifelong learning:**
  - In 2021, 10.8% of 25–64s participated in formal or non-formal learning activities over the preceding four weeks, showing a recovery from pandemic-induced drops.
  - Participation increased among the unemployed (12.7%) but is still much less prevalent for those with a low level of education (4.3%) and people living in rural areas (7.8%).

**The European Commission published [Investing in our future: Quality investment in education and training, the final report of an expert group.](#)**

- Below a minimum level of spending, no education and training system can achieve high quality educational outcomes and equity; however, at a comparable level of spending, some EU member states achieve better results than others.
- Findings and conclusions include:
  - A large body of robust evidence comes from the US and UK – much less from EU member states.
  - A culture of evaluation should build on four pillars: experimentation; use of appropriate evaluation methods; development of data collection; and assessment of costs and benefits.
  - Key funding instruments, e.g. performance-based funding in HE, need to be based on smart performance measurement systems, which could also include indicators on the use of infrastructure and learning environments.
  - Mentorships and summer programmes are appropriate student-based compensatory policies but special attention should be paid to their policy design and implementation.
  - Needs-based grants in HE have a positive effect on completion rates of disadvantaged students, but they increase enrolment rates only when they provide adequate resources.

**The European Commission published [Study supporting the evaluation of the Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New opportunities for adults.](#)**

- The recommendation was for low-skilled adults to be given access to upskilling pathways via a skills assessment, a tailored learning offer and validation and recognition of skills and competences.
- Key findings relating to changes made and the impact of action taken include:
  - Member states have made only moderate efforts to facilitate access to upskilling pathways.
  - Relevant indicators show moderate progress, including increased participation in adult learning and level of digital skills and a decreased share of low-qualified adults; however there is limited evidence that improvement is the result of upskilling pathways.
- Key lessons include:
  - It is essential to continue to develop awareness of the importance of acquiring basic skills and of the need for specific upskilling measures for low-skilled adults.
  - There is considerable scope for improvement in the outreach methods used; particular attention is needed to avoid stigmatisation.
  - Improvement is needed in better identifying and adapting training to the needs of low-skilled adults facing different forms of additional disadvantage.
  - It is important to consider how transversal competences can be better taken into account in qualifications/learning outcomes, since these are crucial for low-skilled adults.
  - Upskilling pathways would benefit strongly from integrating a holistic gender and equality perspective into all steps given the intersectional nature of different disadvantages often faced.



**The European Commission published [The dynamics of ICT skills in EU Member States](#), a *Social Situation Monitor*.**

- A digital skills intensity index measures the average number of digital skills used by a worker, based on their International Standard Classification of Occupations.
  - The index can be applied in combination with the EU Labour Force Survey to obtain digital skills intensities for sub-samples of the survey using sample weights.
- The index was used to determine overall digital skills intensity across 23 EU member states, finding substantial variation.
  - Sweden and the Netherlands have the highest intensities, Romania and Hungary the lowest.
  - Men are over-represented in average intensive occupations, with a strong education gradient in occupational intensity; this is most marked in countries with low overall intensity scores.
  - At EU level, average intensity increased by around 5% between 2011 and 2019; all countries except the RoI experienced increases.

**Cedefop published [The future of vocational education and training in Europe volume 3: The influence of assessments on vocational learning](#).**

- Assessment is continuously being reformed in the countries covered, with a greater emphasis on formative assessment as well as continuing summative approaches.
  - Some countries are increasingly assessing individual units/modules to increase flexibility, while in some cases formerly very modularised systems are becoming more holistic.
  - Many countries have introduced final practical exams or assignments, projects and performance demonstrations; at the same time, there is a clear trend towards digital assessment.
- In assessing general subjects, there is a tendency towards externalisation and standardisation of exams, often related to the pursuit of reliability and requirements for entry to HE.
- There is increasing assessment of transversal skills, although more through internal, formative assessment.

**Eurofound published [Regulating minimum wages and other forms of pay for the self-employed](#), as part of a three-year (2021–23) European Commission pilot project on the role of the minimum wage in establishing the Universal Labour Guarantee.**

- 14 member states have extended rights of representation and collective bargaining rights for the self-employed (Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, the RoI, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden).
  - However, only a small number have all of: trade union (TU) representation; rights to collective bargaining; statutory minimum wages; and collectively agreed minimum wages or other forms of pay for the self-employed.
- **TU representation** for self-employed people is allowed in 16 member states; Estonia, Romania and Slovakia don't allow it on the grounds of labour law.
- **Collective bargaining** for the self-employed without any restrictions is only allowed in Poland; Austria, France, Germany, Greece, RoI, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden allow it in exceptional cases.
- 13 member states have **statutory minimum wages** or other forms of pay for specific groups of self-employed people (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia).
- Only eight member states (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands and Slovenia) have **collectively agreed minimum wages** and other forms of pay for the self-employed.

## Sources

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[www.aoc.co.uk](http://www.aoc.co.uk)

**Association of Employment & Learning Providers (AELP)**

[www.aelp.org.uk](http://www.aelp.org.uk)

**British Academy**

[www.britac.ac.uk](http://www.britac.ac.uk)

**British Council**

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

**Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)**

[www.careersandenterprise.co.uk](http://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk)

**CBI (Confederation of British Industry)**

[www.cbi.org.uk](http://www.cbi.org.uk)

**Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)**

[www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)

**Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)**

[www.ceps.eu](http://www.ceps.eu)

**Centre for Learning & Life Chances (LLAKES)**

[www.llakes.ac.uk](http://www.llakes.ac.uk)

**Centre for Progressive Policy (CPP)**

[progressive-policy.net](http://progressive-policy.net)

**Centre for Vocational Education Research (CVER)**

[cver.lse.ac.uk](http://cver.lse.ac.uk)

**CESifo Group Munich**

[www.cesifo-group.de/ifoHome.html](http://www.cesifo-group.de/ifoHome.html)

**Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD)**

[www.cipd.co.uk](http://www.cipd.co.uk)

**City & Guilds**

[www.cityandguilds.com](http://www.cityandguilds.com)

**COVID Social Mobility & Opportunities (COSMO)**

[cosmostudy.uk](http://cosmostudy.uk)

**Demos**

[demos.co.uk](http://demos.co.uk)

**Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), UK**

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy)

**Department for Education, England**

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education)

**Department for the Economy (DfE), Northern Ireland**

[www.economy-ni.gov.uk](http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk)

**Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science, RoI**

[www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-higher-education-innovation-and-science](http://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-higher-education-innovation-and-science)

**Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI), RoI**

[www.esri.ie](http://www.esri.ie)

**Economy 2030 Inquiry**

[economy2030.resolutionfoundation.org](http://economy2030.resolutionfoundation.org)

**Edge Foundation**

[www.edge.co.uk](http://www.edge.co.uk)

**EDSK**

[www.edsk.org](http://www.edsk.org)

**Education Policy Institute (EPI)**

[www.epi.org.uk](http://www.epi.org.uk)

**Eurofound (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living & Working Conditions)**

[www.eurofound.europa.eu](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu)

**European Commission**

[ec.europa.eu/commission/index\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/commission/index_en)

**Fraser of Allander Institute, University of Strathclyde**

[fraserofallander.org/publications](http://fraserofallander.org/publications)

**Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI)**

[www.hepi.ac.uk](http://www.hepi.ac.uk)

**Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)**

[www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk)

**House of Commons Library**

[commonslibrary.parliament.uk](http://commonslibrary.parliament.uk)

**House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC)**  
[committees.parliament.uk/committee/127/public-accounts-committee](https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/127/public-accounts-committee)

**Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE)**  
[www.instituteforapprenticeships.org](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org)

**Institute for Employment Studies (IES)**  
[www.employment-studies.co.uk](https://www.employment-studies.co.uk)

**Institute of Labor Economics (IZA)**  
[www.iza.org](https://www.iza.org)

**Institute of Student Employers (ISE)**  
[ise.site-ym.com](https://ise.site-ym.com)

**International Labour Organization (ILO)**  
[www.ilo.org](https://www.ilo.org)

**Jisc**  
[www.jisc.ac.uk](https://www.jisc.ac.uk)

**Learning & Work Institute (L&W)**  
[www.learningandwork.org.uk](https://www.learningandwork.org.uk)

**McKinsey & Company**  
[www.mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com)

**Mental Health Foundation**  
[www.mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

**MillionPlus**  
[www.millionplus.ac.uk](https://www.millionplus.ac.uk)

**National Centre for Universities & Business (NCUB)**  
[www.ncub.co.uk](https://www.ncub.co.uk)

**National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)**  
[www.nfer.ac.uk](https://www.nfer.ac.uk)

**OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development) iLibrary**  
[www.oecd-ilibrary.org](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org)

**Office for Students (OfS), England**  
[www.officeforstudents.org.uk](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk)

**Ofsted, England**  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

**Open University (OU)**  
[www.open.ac.uk](https://www.open.ac.uk)

**People & Planet**  
[peopleandplanet.org](https://peopleandplanet.org)

**Prince's Trust**  
[www.princes-trust.org.uk](https://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

**Prospects**  
[luminare.prospects.ac.uk](https://luminare.prospects.ac.uk)

**PwC**  
[www.pwc.co.uk](https://www.pwc.co.uk)

**Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)**  
[www.qaa.ac.uk](https://www.qaa.ac.uk)

**Resolution Foundation**  
[www.resolutionfoundation.org](https://www.resolutionfoundation.org)

**Scottish Funding Council (SFC)**  
[www.sfc.ac.uk](https://www.sfc.ac.uk)

**Scottish Government**  
[www.gov.scot/Publications](https://www.gov.scot/Publications)

**Skillnet Ireland**  
[www.skillnetireland.ie](https://www.skillnetireland.ie)

**Skills Development Scotland (SDS)**  
[www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk)

**Social Market Foundation (SMF)**  
[www.smf.co.uk](https://www.smf.co.uk)

**SOLAS (Further Education & Training Authority), RoI**  
[www.solas.ie](https://www.solas.ie)

**St Martin's Group**

[smartinsgroup.org](http://smartinsgroup.org)

**Timewise**

[timewise.co.uk](http://timewise.co.uk)

**UCAS**

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

**UK Research & Innovation (UKRI)**

[www.ukri.org](http://www.ukri.org)

**Universities UK International (UUKi)**

[www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/International](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/International)

**University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IOE)**

[www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe)

**University of the Arts London**

[www.arts.ac.uk](http://www.arts.ac.uk)

**Warwick Institute for Employment Research (IER)**

[www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier)

**Wonkhe**

[wonkhe.com](http://wonkhe.com)

**Work Foundation**

[www.theworkfoundation.com](http://www.theworkfoundation.com)