



BRIEFING PAPER

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Apprenticeship Statistics

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Summary

Apprenticeship starts in 2019/20

In 2019/20, there were 719,000 people participating in an apprenticeship in England, with 322,500 apprenticeship starts and 146,900 apprenticeship achievements.

The number of starts fell in 2019/20 due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic from March 2020. The pandemic and lockdown period saw a disproportionate negative impact on apprenticeship starts for those aged under 19, and those starting an intermediate level apprenticeships.

23,400 fewer people were **participating** in an apprenticeship in 2019/20 than in 2018/19.

Constituency data on apprenticeship starts are available in the [Constituency Apprenticeship Statistics spreadsheet](#) accompanying this Briefing Paper.

Starts by apprentice characteristics

The **age profile** of people starting apprenticeships changed between 2018/19 and 2019/20, with a higher proportion of starts from apprentices over the age of 24.

47% of the apprenticeships started in 2019/20 were by people aged 25 and over. Starts fell for all ages and the age group with the largest fall was by those aged 17, with 26% less starts than in 2018/19.

The **gender profile** has also changed. The number of women and men starting apprenticeships were almost at the same level, with slightly more starts by men (51.2%). In 2018/19, there were slightly more starts by women (50.1%).

Starts by apprenticeship characteristic

Apprenticeship starts were more likely to be at a **higher level** in 2019/20.

44% of apprenticeships started in 2019/20 were at advanced level, with 26% started at higher level. In 2018/19, 44% of apprenticeship starts were at advanced level and 19% were at higher level.

The number of starts at intermediate level in 2019/20 have fallen heavily. **31%** of apprenticeship starts were at intermediate level in 2019/20. This is down from **65%** in 2013/14.

From 2018/19 to 2019/20 the number of standards apprenticeships and framework apprenticeships both fell. However, the number of starts on **apprenticeship standards** has increased by over 170,000 between 2017/18 and 2019/20, while the number of framework starts fell by over 130,000 for the same two-year period. 75% of apprenticeship starts were on standards in 2019/20, up from 63% in 2018/19.

81% of all starts were in four **subject areas**: Business, Administration and Law; Health, Public Services and Care; Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies and Retail & Commercial Enterprise.

Policy Developments

In May 2017 the apprenticeship funding system was revised, and the apprenticeship levy was introduced. A summary of significant policy developments is provided in section 5 of this paper.

1. Overview of apprenticeships in England

Skills and training are devolved policy areas. This Briefing Paper covers apprenticeships in England. Sources of information on apprenticeships in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are included in the [Commons Briefing Paper, Apprenticeships Policy in England](#).¹

Apprenticeships are paid jobs that incorporate on and off the job training. A successful apprentice may qualify with a nationally recognised qualification on completion of their contract.

In 2019/20, there were **719,000** people participating in an apprenticeship in England, with **322,500** apprenticeship starts and **146,900** apprenticeship achievements.

Since May 2010 to January 2021, **4.75 million** apprenticeships have been started.

Apprenticeships can be studied at different qualification levels:

| Name | Level | Equivalent educational level |
|--------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Intermediate | 2 | 5 GCSE passes at grades A* to C |
| Advanced | 3 | 2 A level passes |
| Higher | 4,5,6 and 7 | Foundation degree and above |

There are two different types of apprenticeship schemes, frameworks and standards. Apprenticeship frameworks are being progressively phased out and replaced by the newer apprenticeship standards, which were introduced in 2014. For further information see the [Commons Briefing Paper, Apprenticeships Policy in England](#).

Constituency data on apprenticeship starts are available in the [Constituency Apprenticeship Statistics](#) spreadsheet accompanying this Briefing Paper.

Changes to the funding system for apprenticeships

The way in which the government funds the training and assessment costs of apprenticeships was revised in May 2017, and the apprenticeship levy was introduced.

Prior to the changes being introduced the majority of apprenticeship starts were on apprenticeship frameworks. For this type of apprenticeship, the government paid all the training costs for 16-18 year olds, half the training costs for 19-23 year olds and up to half for apprentices aged 24 and over. Extra support was provided to apprentices living in the most deprived parts of the country or those in areas where training costs were higher.

¹ Data in this paper is taken from the Department for Education's [Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#).

The Apprenticeship Levy

All UK employers with a pay bill of over £3 million per year pay the apprenticeship levy. The levy is set at 0.5% of the value of the employer's pay bill, minus an apprenticeship levy allowance of £15,000 per financial year. The funds generated by the levy have to be spent on apprenticeship training costs. The government tops up the funds paid by the employer by 10%.

Since May 2017, apprentices on both apprenticeship frameworks and apprenticeship standards have been funded in the same way. Employers who pay the apprenticeship levy will pay for their training costs from their levy funds, while employers who do not pay the levy will generally pay 10% of the cost of training with the government contributing the remaining 90%. The government will provide additional payments, mainly targeted at younger apprentices.

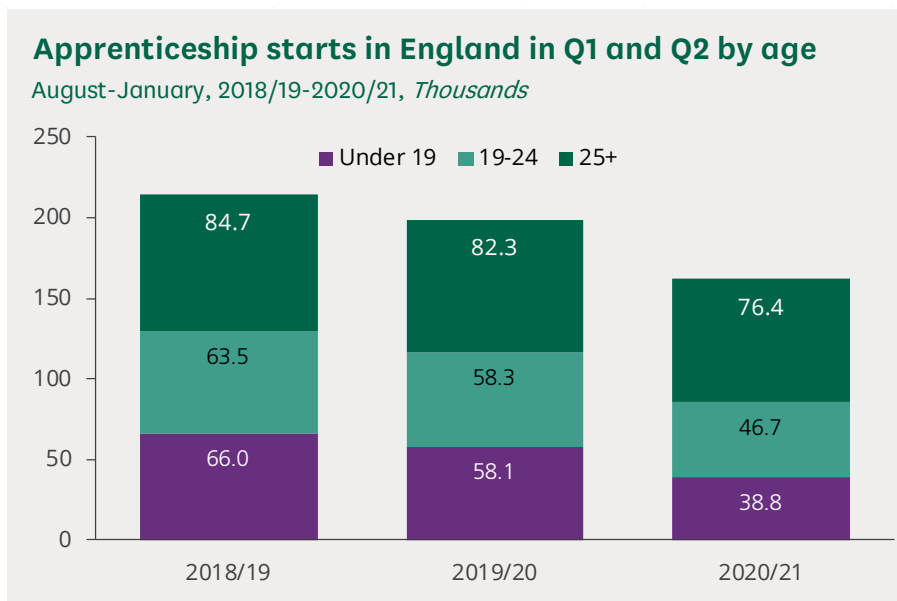
A full description of the funding changes and the apprenticeship levy is available in the library briefing note [Apprenticeships and Skills Policy in England](#).

2. Quarterly starts

This section provides a summary of the most recent data for apprenticeship starts, and the trends over time.²

2.1 Starts in 2020/21, quarter 1 and quarter 2

In the first two quarters of the 2020/21 academic year (August 2020 to January 2021), there were 161,900 apprenticeship starts. This was a drop of 18% from the same period in 2019/20, with 36,700 fewer starts.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

The fall in apprenticeship starts in quarters 1 and 2 of 2020/21 can be partly attributed to the coronavirus pandemic, as during the outbreak, some businesses have had to close and will have stopped hiring. More information on the impact of coronavirus on apprenticeships can be found in **section 2.2**.

The table below shows the number of starts in Q1 and Q2 (August-January) of 2019/20 and 2020/21 by age and level. Apprentices under the age of 19 and intermediate level apprenticeships had the largest proportional fall for the first two quarters of 2020/21, from the same period a year before.

There were 38,800 starts by apprentices under 19 in the first two quarters of the 2020/21 academic year, 19,300 fewer starts than the same period a year previously. This was a 33% fall in starts for this age group. In comparison, starts for apprentices aged 19-24 fell by 20% and fell by 7% for those aged 25 and over.

² Unless otherwise stated, the statistics within this paper are for academic years (August 1st to July 31st)

Over the same period, intermediate level apprenticeship starts fell by 36%, while advanced level starts fell by 21%. Higher level apprenticeship starts increased over this period with 12% more starts.

Apprenticeship starts in England by age and level in Q1 and Q2

August-January, 2019/20 and 2020/21

| Level | Age | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | Change | % Change |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Intermediate level | Under 19 | 29,700 | 18,400 | -11,300 | -38% |
| | 19-24 | 16,800 | 11,100 | -5,700 | -34% |
| | 25+ | 18,500 | 11,900 | -6,600 | -36% |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>65,000</i> | <i>41,500</i> | <i>-23,500</i> | <i>-36%</i> |
| Advanced level | Under 19 | 25,000 | 17,500 | -7,500 | -30% |
| | 19-24 | 27,600 | 22,200 | -5,400 | -20% |
| | 25+ | 35,100 | 29,400 | -5,700 | -16% |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>87,600</i> | <i>69,100</i> | <i>-18,500</i> | <i>-21%</i> |
| Higher level | Under 19 | 3,400 | 2,800 | -600 | -18% |
| | 19-24 | 13,900 | 13,400 | -500 | -4% |
| | 25+ | 28,700 | 35,100 | 6,400 | 22% |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>46,000</i> | <i>51,400</i> | <i>5,400</i> | <i>12%</i> |
| All apprenticeship levels | Under 19 | 58,100 | 38,800 | -19,300 | -33% |
| | 19-24 | 58,300 | 46,700 | -11,600 | -20% |
| | 25+ | 82,300 | 76,400 | -5,900 | -7% |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>198,600</i> | <i>161,900</i> | <i>-36,700</i> | <i>-18%</i> |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

Note: Age is calculated based upon age at start of programme

2.2 Impact of coronavirus

Apprenticeship starts

The table below shows apprenticeship starts in 2019/20 for the pre-lockdown period (1 August to 22 March) and for the lockdown period (23 March to 31 July), in comparison to the same periods a year previously.

Although for all ages the number of apprenticeship starts had fallen in 2019/20 for the pre-lockdown period, the fall in starts for the lockdown period shows the coronavirus pandemic had a large impact. From 23 March to 31 July 2019 to the same period in 2020, when the UK went in to its first national lockdown, apprenticeship starts fell by 45%. This is in comparison to the fall of 7% for the 1 August to 22 March periods in 2019 to 2020.

The COVID-19 lockdown period saw a disproportionate negative impact on apprenticeship starts for those aged under 19, and those starting intermediate level apprenticeships. In the lockdown period in 2019/20, the number of starts by apprentices under the age of 19 fell by two thirds (66%) from the same period in 2018/19. This is in comparison to a 11% fall in the pre-lockdown period in 2019/20.

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on young apprentices was also seen in the impact on young people in the whole labour market. For more information on the impact of the pandemic on the labour market, see the Library briefing, [Coronavirus: Impact on the labour market](#).

As previously mentioned, intermediate level apprenticeship starts were also negatively impacted. In the 2020 lockdown period, the number of apprenticeship starts at intermediate level fell by 61% from the same period in 2019. This is in comparison to a 49% fall for advanced level apprenticeships, and a 3% fall for higher level apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship starts in England for pre-lockdown, and lockdown periods by age

1 August to 22 March, and 23 March to 31 July

| Age | Pre-lockdown (1 August to 22 March) | | | Lockdown period (23 March to 31 July) | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|---------|----------|---------------------------------------|---------|----------|
| | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | % Change | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | % Change |
| Under 19 | 78,990 | 70,010 | -11% | 18,710 | 6,270 | -66% |
| 19-24 | 83,930 | 78,190 | -7% | 32,070 | 17,100 | -47% |
| 25+ | 118,890 | 113,480 | -5% | 60,790 | 37,490 | -38% |

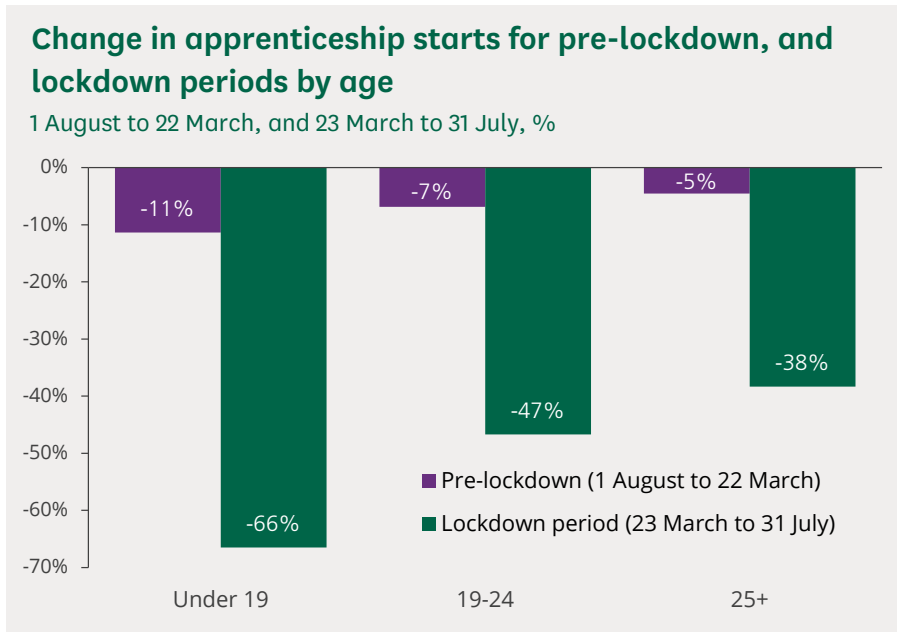
Apprenticeship starts in England for pre-lockdown, and lockdown periods by level

1 August to 22 March, and 23 March to 31 July

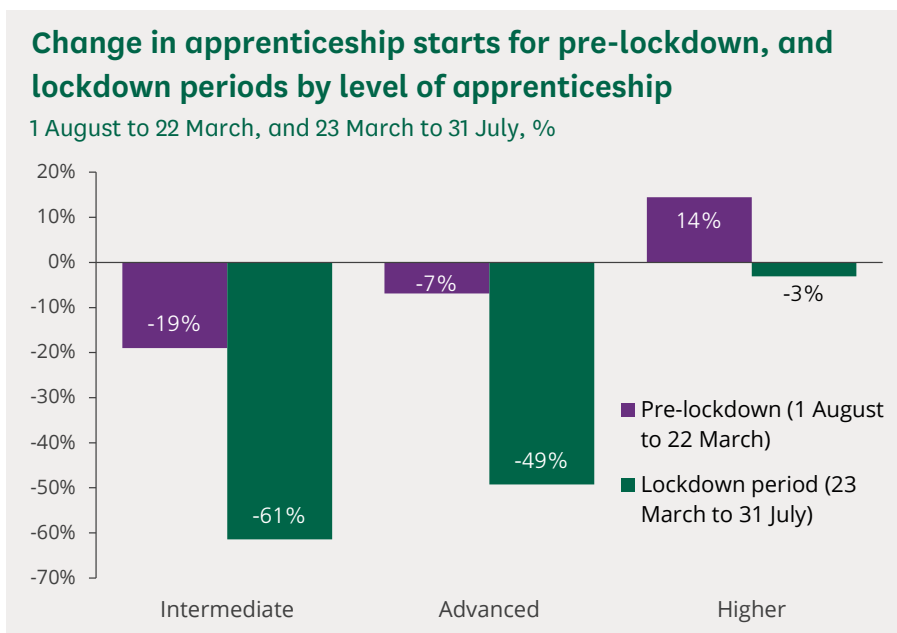
| Level | Pre-lockdown (1 August to 22 March) | | | Lockdown period (23 March to 31 July) | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | % Change | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | % Change |
| Intermediate | 103,300 | 83,670 | -19% | 40,300 | 15,550 | -61% |
| Advanced | 123,190 | 114,670 | -7% | 51,540 | 26,170 | -49% |
| Higher | 55,320 | 63,330 | 14% | 19,740 | 19,130 | -3% |
| Total | 281,810 | 261,670 | -7% | 111,570 | 60,860 | -45% |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#), additional analysis

The charts below show the percentage change in apprenticeship starts for the pre-lockdown and lockdown periods by age and by level of apprenticeship.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#), additional analysis



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#), additional analysis

Redundancies

Another indicator of the impact of the coronavirus on apprentices is statistics on redundancies. From 30 July 2020, employers have been able to record on the Apprenticeship Service (AS) if an apprenticeship has ended due to a redundancy. Note, this data does not capture all apprenticeships as not all non-levy employers are currently using the AS.

From August-December 2020, apprentices aged 25+ had the highest number of redundancies.

Of all apprentices made redundant from August 2020 to March 2021, 44% were aged 25+, 31% were aged 19-24, and 24% were aged under 19.

Apprenticeship redundancies in England by age

August 2020 to January 2021

| | Under 19 | 19-24 | 25+ | Total |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| August 2020 | 150 | 300 | 290 | 730 |
| September 2020 | 130 | 140 | 200 | 470 |
| October 2020 | 90 | 100 | 180 | 370 |
| November 2020 | 40 | 50 | 90 | 180 |
| December 2020 | 30 | 20 | 50 | 100 |
| January 2021 | 30 | 20 | 30 | 80 |
| February and March 2021 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 60 |
| Total | 550 | 710 | 1,010 | 2,270 |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

Note: Currently this data does not capture all apprenticeships as not all non-levy employers are using the AS currently, but from 1st April 2021 all new starts must be reported and managed through the AS.

To further support apprentices who have been made redundant, or are at risk of redundancy, the government have introduced the [Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices](#).

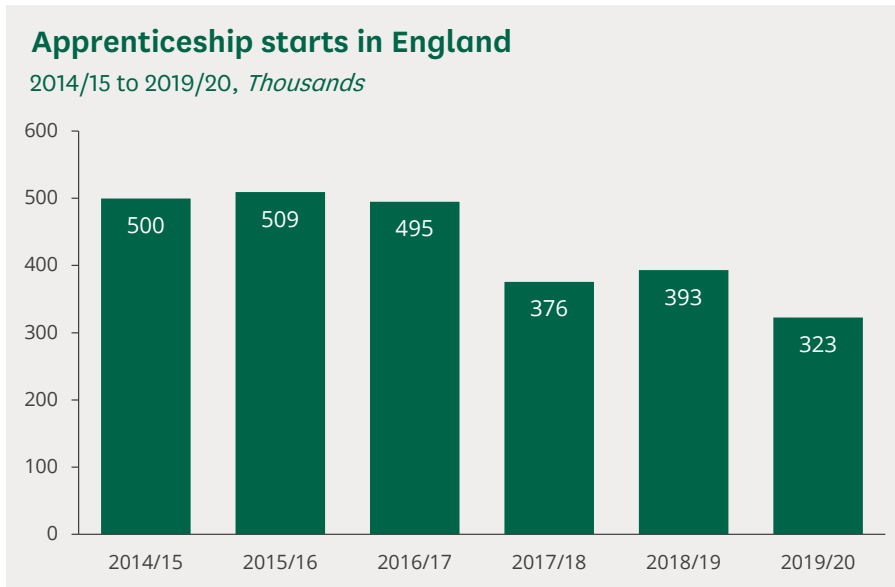
Incentive payment

In the March 2021 Budget, the Government announced that it will pay employers in England **£3,000** for every new apprentice they hire between 1 April 2021 and 30 September 2021. More information on the incentive payment for apprentices can be found in section 1.2 of the Library briefing, [Coronavirus: Getting people back into work](#).

3. Annual starts

3.1 2019/20

Between August 2019 and July 2020 (the 2019/20 academic year), there were 322,500 apprenticeship starts in England, 70,900 less than in 2018/19.



There were 322,500 apprenticeship starts in 2019/20, 70,900 less than in 2018/19.

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

The number of starts fell following the introduction of a new apprenticeship funding system in May 2017. This led to a large fall in starts in the final quarter of 2016/17, and the lower number of starts continued in 2017/18. The number of starts fell again in 2019/20, after a slight increase in 2018/19, due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

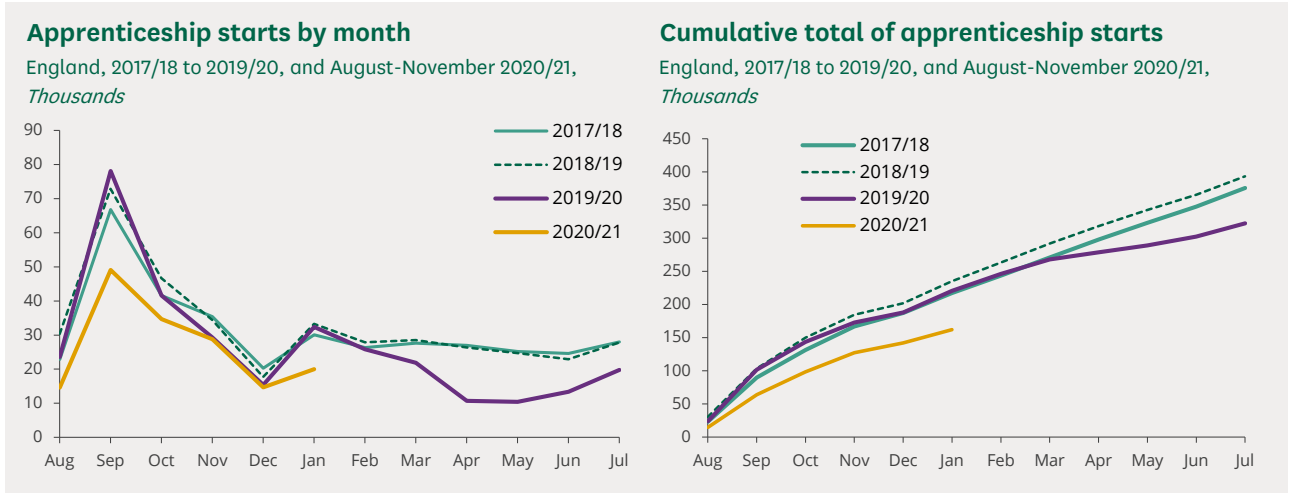
The chart to the left below shows the number of apprenticeship starts in each month from 2017/18 to 2019/20 by academic years, while the cumulative total of starts in the same years are shown in the chart to the right.³

In 2019/20, there was a significant fall in starts below 2017/18 and 2018/19 levels from March 2020. There were 8% less starts in March 2020 and 12% less starts in April 2020, than the same months in 2019. This trend has continued for the rest of the 2019/20 academic year.

The yellow line on the charts also shows the monthly data for the 2020/21 academic year, from August 2020 to January 2021. Although starts in 2020/21 are still below levels seen in previous years, the number of starts in November and December 2020 were at similar levels to those in November and December 2019. Levels in November and December 2020 were down by 500 starts and 700 starts than the same months in 2019, respectively. The number of starts in January 2021 was over 12,000 lower than in January 2020. This could be attributed to the

³ DfE/ EFSA, [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#) [accessed 9 March 2021]

tightening of restrictions under the new [national lockdown](#) from January 2021.



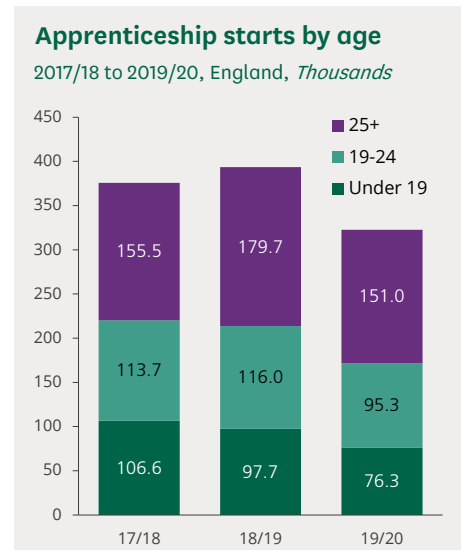
Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

By age

The age profile of people starting apprenticeships changed slightly between 2018/19 and 2019/20. In 2019/20, a lower proportion of starters were aged under 19 and a higher proportion were over the age of 19.

151,000 (47%) of the apprenticeships started in 2019/20 were by people over the age of 24. A further 95,300 (30%) were started by those aged between 19 and 24, meaning that 246,300 (76%) of apprenticeships were started by people aged 19 or over. The remaining 76,300 (24%) of apprenticeships were started by those aged under 19.

In 2018/19, 46% of apprenticeships were started by people over the age of 24, 29% by those aged 19-24 and 25% by those aged under 19. In this year 75% of apprenticeships were started by those aged 19 or over.

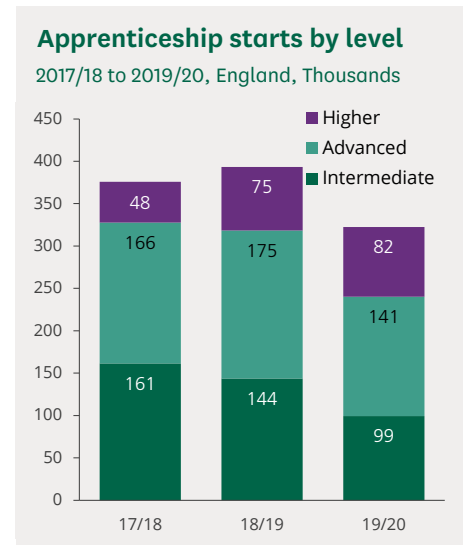


By Level

Apprenticeships starts were more likely to be at higher level in 2019/20 than in 2018/19.

140,800 (44%) of apprenticeships started in 2019/20 were at advanced level, with 82,500 (26%) started at higher level. In 2018/19, 44% of apprenticeship starts were at advanced level and 19% were at higher level.

The proportion of apprenticeship starts at intermediate level fell from 36% in 2018/19 to 31% in 2019/20.



By Region

All regions saw a fall in the number of apprenticeship starts between 2018/19 and 2019/20. The North East had the largest proportional fall in apprenticeship starts, with 23% less starts. The East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber both had 20% less starts.

Other regions had smaller decreases in the number of apprenticeship starts. The South East and South West had the smallest proportional fall, with 15% less apprenticeship starts in 2019/20 than 2018/19.

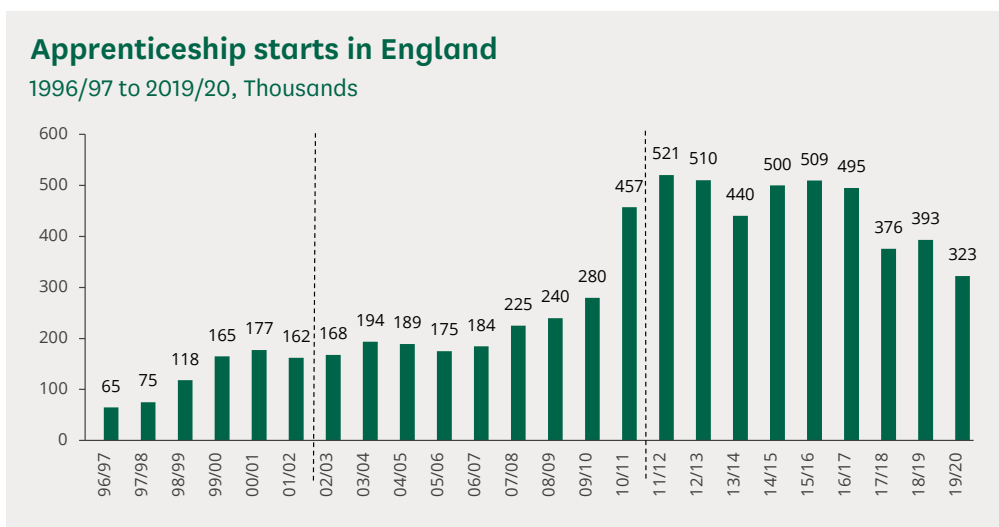
| | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | Change 18/19-19/20 | |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------|
| | | | Level | % |
| South East | 56.3 | 47.8 | -8.5 | -15% |
| South West | 43.9 | 37.1 | -6.8 | -15% |
| East of England | 38.3 | 32.3 | -6.0 | -16% |
| London | 40.7 | 33.9 | -6.8 | -17% |
| West Midlands | 45.7 | 36.9 | -8.8 | -19% |
| North West | 58.3 | 47.0 | -11.3 | -19% |
| Yorkshire & The Humber | 47.3 | 37.7 | -9.6 | -20% |
| East Midlands | 35.9 | 28.6 | -7.3 | -20% |
| North East | 23.3 | 18.0 | -5.3 | -23% |
| Other | 3.8 | 3.2 | -0.6 | -16% |
| Total | 393.4 | 322.5 | -70.9 | -18% |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

For data on the number of starts by parliamentary constituency or local authority, please see the excel sheet attached to the landing page of this briefing.

3.2 Starts since 1996/97

The current apprenticeship scheme was launched in 1994 but it wasn't until 2007/08 that apprenticeship starts exceeded 200,000 per year. Between 2009/10 and 2011/12 there was a large increase in starts, and since then there were generally around 500,000 starts each year, before the large decrease in starts in 2017/18.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#), and HC DFeb 14 Feb 2011 c560-1W (PQ38-62)

Notes, Dotted lines denote where changes have been made to how information on

apprenticeships has been collected. Data on either side of the dotted lines are not directly comparable.

Apprenticeship starts increased from 279,700 in 2009/10 to 457,200 in 2010/11, an increase of 63%. There was then a further increase between 2010/11 and 2011/12. These increases can be attributed to the increase in government spending on apprenticeships between these years (see box below).

In May 2010 the Government [announced](#) that £150 million from the Train to Gain budget would be deployed to provide an extra 50,000 apprenticeship places.

As part of the March 2011 Spring Budget the [Plan for Growth](#) was announced which included an £180 million package for 50,000 additional apprenticeships.

Between 2011/12 and 2016/17 the volume of starts per year has been relatively steady at just above 500,000. The exception was 2013/14 when the number of starts dropped by 70,000 from the previous year. The Department for Education have attributed this fall to the introduction and subsequent withdrawal of advanced learner loans for apprentices aged 24+ (see section 6).⁴

The fall in apprenticeships in 2019/20 means that starts are at their lowest level in ten years.

⁴ DfE, [Further Education and Skills in England Statistical First Release](#), October 2017, p 15

4. Starts by apprentice characteristics

This section provides a summary of apprenticeship starts broken down by the characteristics of the apprentice.

4.1 By Age

2019/20

As reported in section 3.1, the age profile of people starting apprenticeships changed between 2018/19 and 2019/20, with a lower proportion of starts from younger apprentices.

24% of apprenticeship starts in 2019/20 were from people aged under 19, down from 25% in 2018/19. Meanwhile the proportion of starts by apprentices aged 25 or over increased from 46% in 2018/19 to 47% in 2019/20. It is worth noting that the number of apprenticeship starts fell for all ages in 2019/20.

A higher proportion of starts in 2019/20 were from apprentices aged 25 and over.

Apprenticeship starts in England by age

2019/20, thousands

| Age | Starts | Proportion of total | Change from 2018/19 | |
|-----------------|------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| | | | Level | % change |
| 16 | 20 | 6% | -4 | -15% |
| 17 | 23 | 7% | -8 | -26% |
| 18 | 33 | 10% | -10 | -23% |
| 19-24 | 95 | 30% | -21 | -18% |
| 25-34 | 76 | 24% | -15 | -16% |
| 35-44 | 43 | 13% | -7 | -14% |
| 45-59 | 30 | 9% | -7 | -18% |
| 60+ | 1 | 0% | 0 | -21% |
| All ages | 323 | 100% | -71 | -18% |

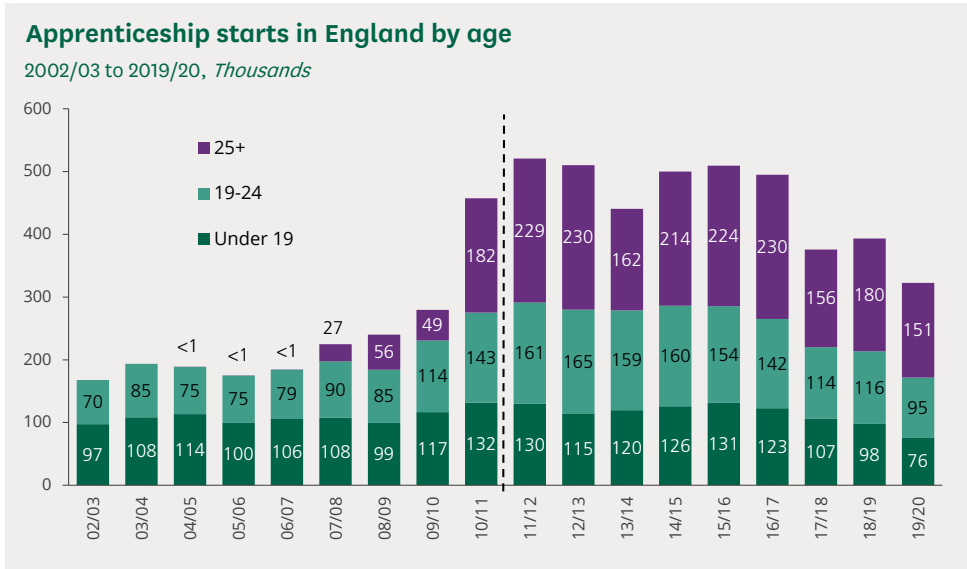
Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

Notes: Proportion is the percentage of all apprenticeship starts made by an age/ age group

The largest fall was seen by apprentices aged 17, where the number of starts fell by over a quarter (26%). The largest fall in starts for the older age bands was those aged 60+, which fell by over a fifth (21%).

Trend over time

The age breakdown of starts was quite stable between 2011/12 and 2016/17, with around a quarter under 19 years old, a further 30% aged between 19 and 24, and the remainder aged 25 or over. The exception was in 2013/14 when there was a large fall in the number of apprentices aged 25 or over, which can be attributed to the government's attempts in this year to make these apprentices pay for part of their apprenticeship.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

The growth in the number of apprenticeship starts between 2009/10 and 2011/12 was largely driven by people aged 25 and over, with the number of apprentices of this age increasing from 49,000 to 229,000 between these years.

4.2 By Gender

In 2019/20, the number of women and men starting apprenticeships were almost at the same level, with slightly more starts by men. 51.2% of apprenticeships starts were by men (165,200) and 48.8% by women (157,400).

Starts for both men and women decreased in 2019/20 from 2018/19, although the decrease was larger for women (39,710) than the decrease for men (31,070).

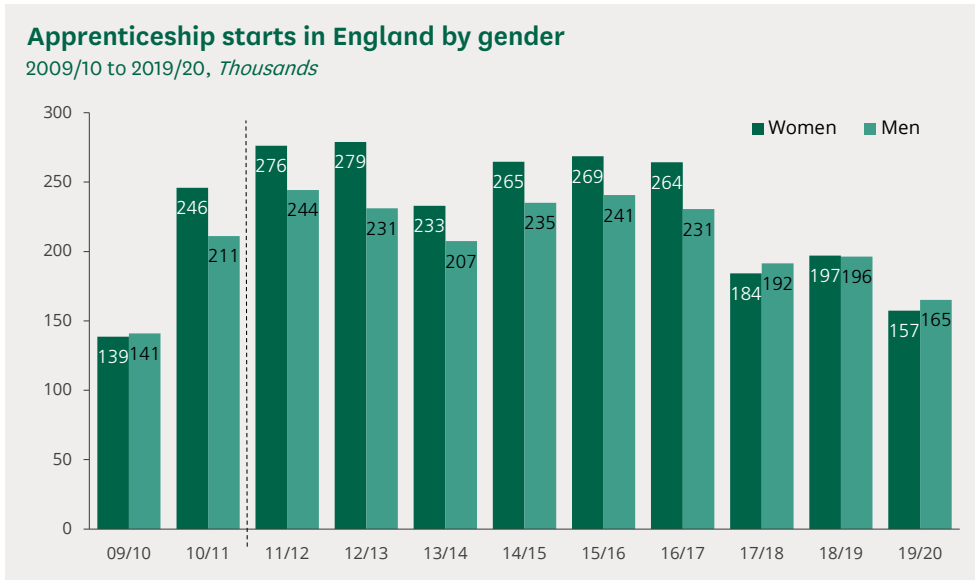
Almost 8,000 more men than women started apprenticeships in 2019/20.

Trend over time

The number of women starting apprenticeships was higher than men for every year between 2010/11 and 2019/20, other than 2017/18 and 2019/20.

In 2019/20, the number of women and men starting apprenticeships was almost at the same level.

51.2% of apprenticeships were started by men, with 48.8% started by women.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

| % of total | 09/10 | 10/11 | 11/12 | 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Women | 49.6% | 53.8% | 53.1% | 54.7% | 52.9% | 53.0% | 52.8% | 53.5% | 49.0% | 50.1% | 48.8% |
| Men | 50.4% | 46.2% | 46.9% | 45.3% | 47.1% | 47.0% | 47.2% | 46.5% | 51.0% | 49.9% | 51.2% |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

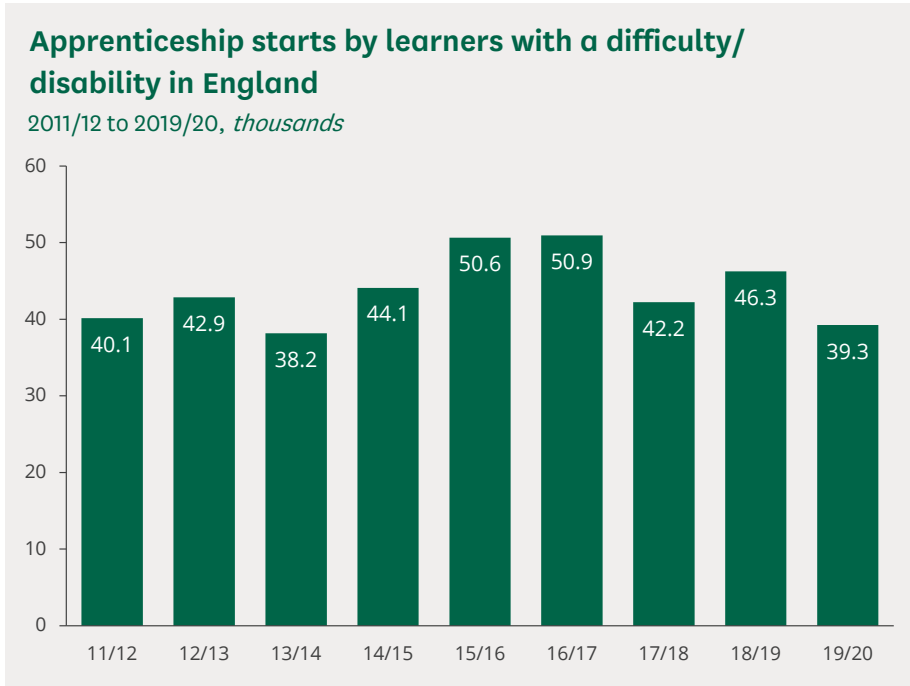
Prior to 2010/11, more men participated in apprenticeships than women. Between 2009/10 and 2011/12 there was a large increase in the number of starts for women, 35,000 higher than the increase for men.

4.3 By Disability

In 2019/20, 12% (39,250) of apprenticeship starts were learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of starts by apprentices with learning difficulties or disabilities increased from 8.8% in 2014/15 to 12.2% in 2019/20.

The **proportion of starts** by apprentices with learning difficulties or disabilities has increased each year since 2011/12.

The proportion of starts by apprentices with learning difficulties or disabilities increased in 2019/20.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

Apprenticeship starts in England by learner difficulty/disability

2010/11 to 2019/20

| Level (thousands) | 10/11 | 11/12 | 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Learning Difficulty/Disability | 37 | 40 | 43 | 38 | 44 | 51 | 51 | 42 | 46 | 39 |
| No Learning Difficulty/Disability | 417 | 474 | 461 | 396 | 449 | 451 | 437 | 322 | 338 | 275 |
| Not Known | 4 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 9 | 8 |
| % of total | | | | | | | | | | |
| Learning Difficulty/Disability | 8.0% | 7.7% | 8.4% | 8.7% | 8.8% | 9.9% | 10.3% | 11.2% | 11.8% | 12.2% |
| No Learning Difficulty/Disability | 91.2% | 91.0% | 90.4% | 89.9% | 89.8% | 88.5% | 88.3% | 85.8% | 86.0% | 85.4% |
| Not Known | 0.8% | 1.3% | 1.2% | 1.4% | 1.3% | 1.5% | 1.4% | 3.0% | 2.3% | 2.4% |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

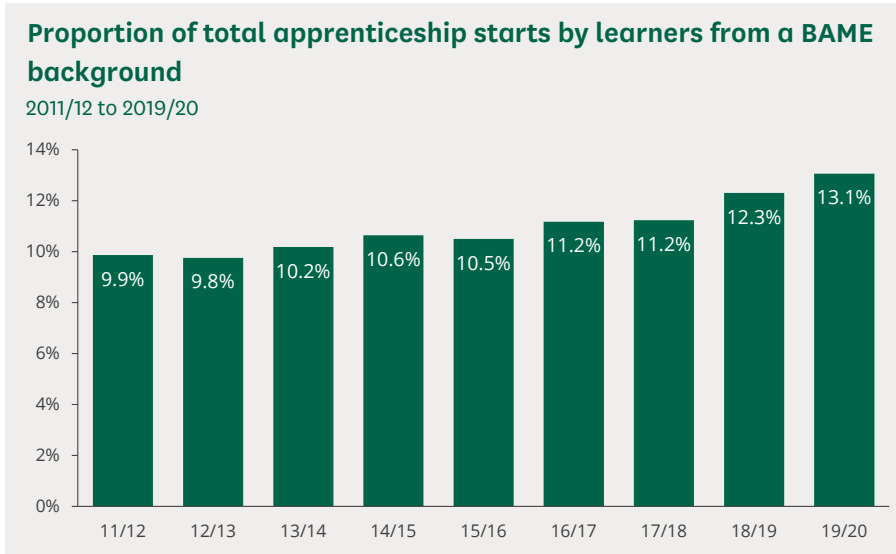
4.4 By Ethnicity

The overwhelming majority (84.9%) of all learners starting an apprenticeship were white in 2019/20. The proportion of starters from BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds was 13.1%, its highest level since 2002/03. This was an increase from 12.3% in 2018/19.

The number of starters from a BAME background gradually increased between 2011/12 and 2016/17, from 51,350 to 55,310 in 2016/17. Both the number of starters from a white background and a BAME background fell between 2016/17 and 2017/18.

From 2018/19 to 2019/20, the number of starts by apprentices from a BAME background fell by over 6,000.

In 2018/19, apprenticeship starts by learners from a BAME background reached its highest level, 13.1%.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

Apprenticeship starts in England by learner ethnicity

2010/11 to 2019/20, *Thousands*

| | 10/11 | 11/12 | 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Asian/ Asian British | 19 | 21 | 20 | 19 | 22 | 21 | 22 | 17 | 21 | 18 |
| Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British | 15 | 17 | 17 | 14 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 12 | 14 | 12 |
| Mixed/ Multiple Ethnic Group | 8 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 9 | 11 | 9 |
| White | 407 | 465 | 455 | 391 | 442 | 449 | 434 | 328 | 338 | 274 |
| Other Ethnic Group | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Not Known/ Not Provided | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| BAME | 46 | 51 | 50 | 45 | 53 | 53 | 55 | 42 | 48 | 42 |
| Total | 457 | 521 | 510 | 440 | 500 | 509 | 495 | 376 | 393 | 323 |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

5. Starts by apprenticeship characteristic

This section provides a summary of apprenticeship starts broken down by the characteristics of the apprenticeships.

5.1 By Level

2019/20

As reported in section 3.1, apprenticeship starts were more likely to be at higher level (levels 4 to 7) in 2019/20 than in 2018/19.

140,840 (44%) of apprenticeships started in 2019/20 were at advanced level (level 3), with 82,470 (26%) started at higher level. In 2018/19, 44% of apprenticeship starts were at advanced level and 19% were at higher level. The proportion of apprenticeship starts at intermediate level (level 2) fell from 36% in 2018/19 to 31% in 2019/20.

Between 2018/19 and 2019/20, the number of starts fell for all levels except higher level, which increased by 7,410. The number of advanced level starts fell by 33,890, while the number of intermediate level starts fell by 44,370.

The proportion of starts at intermediate level have fallen substantially. **31%** of apprenticeship starts were at intermediate level in 2019/20. This is down from **65%** in 2013/14.

There were 22,500 level 6 and 7 starts in 2018/19. Of the 22,500, 13,400 starts were degree apprenticeships. More information on this can be found in the Library Briefing Paper, [Degree Apprenticeships](#).

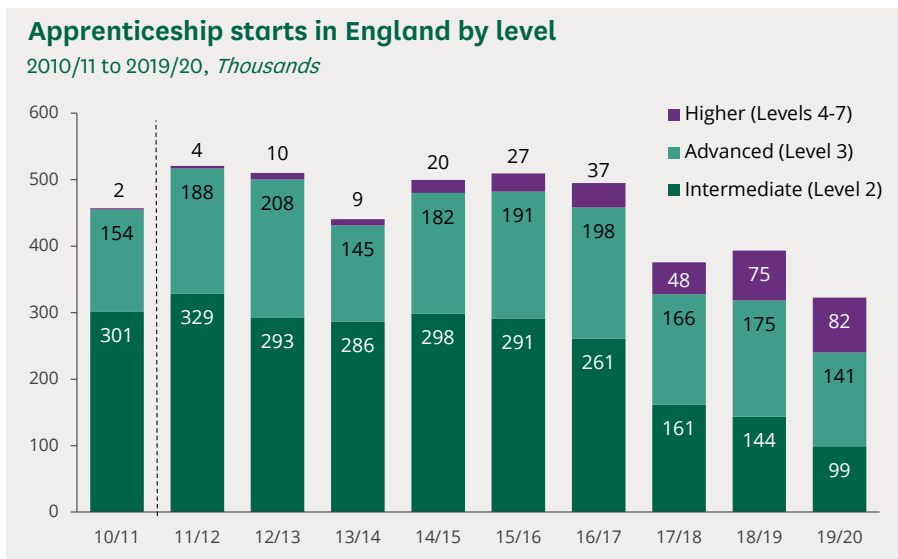
Trend over time

There were large increases in the number of Intermediate and Advanced Level apprenticeship starts between 2009/10 and 2011/12. Since 2011/12 the proportion of starts that are advanced level or higher has steadily been increasing, from 37% in 2011/12 to 63% in 2018/19.

Apprenticeship starts were more likely to be at higher level in 2019/20.

In 2019/20, **26%** of apprenticeship starts were at higher level in comparison to **19%** in 2018/19.

31% of apprenticeship starts were at intermediate level in 2019/20. This is down from **65%** in 2013/14.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

| Level | 10/11 | 11/12 | 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Intermediate (Level 2) | 301 | 329 | 293 | 286 | 298 | 291 | 261 | 161 | 144 | 99 |
| Advanced (Level 3) | 154 | 188 | 208 | 145 | 182 | 191 | 198 | 166 | 175 | 141 |
| Higher (Levels 4-7) | 2 | 4 | 10 | 9 | 20 | 27 | 37 | 48 | 75 | 82 |
| Level 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 12 | 17 | 25 | 26 |
| Level 5 | - | 1 | 6 | 5 | 13 | 17 | 23 | 20 | 28 | 26 |
| Level 6 | - | - | - | - | 0 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 11 | 15 |
| Level 7 | - | - | - | - | - | 0 | 0 | 5 | 12 | 15 |
| Proportion (%) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Intermediate (Level 2) | 66% | 63% | 57% | 65% | 60% | 57% | 53% | 43% | 36% | 31% |
| Advanced (Level 3) | 34% | 36% | 41% | 33% | 36% | 37% | 40% | 44% | 44% | 44% |
| Higher (Levels 4-7) | 0% | 1% | 2% | 2% | 4% | 5% | 7% | 13% | 19% | 26% |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

Notes: Proportion is the percentage of all apprenticeship starts made at each level

5.2 By Sector

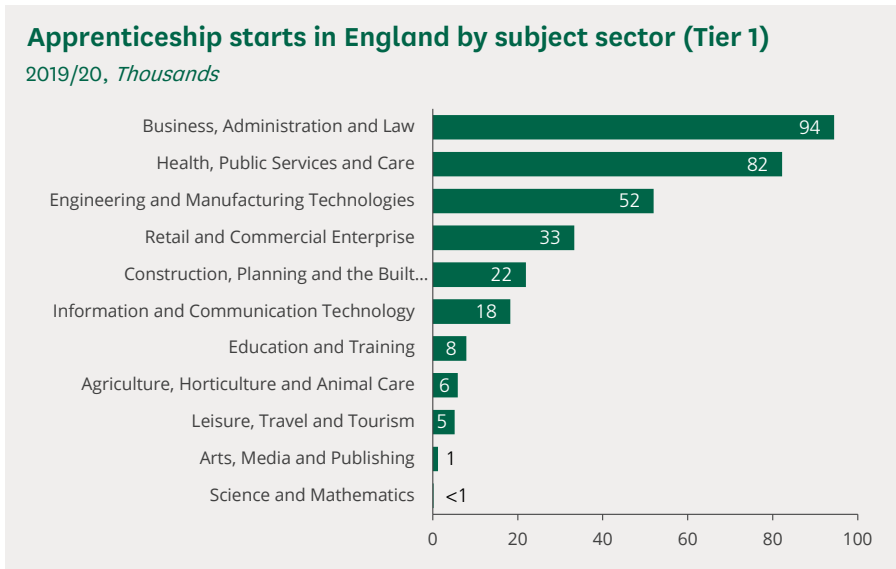
2019/20

81% of starts in 2019/20 were in the following four sector areas, with over half in the top two areas:

- Business Administration and Law: 94,400 starts (29% of all starts), down 24,200 from 2018/19.
- Health, Public Services and Care: 82,200 starts (25% of starts), down 15,500 from 2018/19.
- Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies: 52,000 starts (16% of starts), down 8,000 from 2018/19.
- Retail and Commercial Enterprise: 33,300 starts (10% of starts), down by around 18,000 from 2018/19.

Over half of the apprenticeship starts in 2019/20 were in two sector areas.

The largest **increase** was seen in the Education and Training sector, where starts increased by 800 from 2018/19 to 7,900 starts in 2019/20.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

Trend over time

Between 2011/12 and 2019/20 the Retail and Commercial Enterprise sector saw the biggest fall in the proportion of apprenticeship starts. In 2011/12, 21% of all starts were in Retail and Commercial Enterprise. In 2019/20, 10% of starts were in this sector. The Construction, Planning and the Built Environment sector had the largest increase over the same period: 3% in 2011/12, to 7% in 2019/20.

Apprenticeship starts in England by sector subject area

2009/10 to 2019/20, thousands

| Subject area (Tier 1) | 11/12 | 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Business, Administration and Law | 165 | 160 | 126 | 143 | 143 | 138 | 111 | 119 | 94 |
| Health, Public Services and Care | 109 | 123 | 109 | 130 | 132 | 139 | 88 | 98 | 82 |
| Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies | 70 | 66 | 65 | 74 | 78 | 75 | 61 | 60 | 52 |
| Retail and Commercial Enterprise | 108 | 101 | 87 | 90 | 85 | 75 | 52 | 51 | 33 |
| Construction, Planning and the Built Environment | 14 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 21 | 21 | 23 | 23 | 22 |
| Information and Communication Technology | 19 | 14 | 13 | 16 | 16 | 15 | 18 | 21 | 18 |
| Leisure, Travel and Tourism | 20 | 14 | 11 | 13 | 15 | 14 | 9 | 7 | 5 |
| Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Education and Training | 8 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Arts, Media and Publishing | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | <1 | <1 | 1 | 1 |
| Science and Mathematics | <1 | <1 | <1 | <1 | <1 | <1 | <1 | <1 | <1 |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

Notes: Under 500 people started an apprenticeship in Science and Mathematics for every academic year since 2009/10

5.3 Frameworks and standards

Over recent years, there has been a large increase in the number of apprenticeship starts on standards and a fall in the number on frameworks. In 2019/20 the majority (75%) of apprenticeship starts were on standards, whilst the number of frameworks apprenticeship starts fell. Between 2016/17 and 2019/20 the proportion of starts on apprenticeship standards increased from just 2% to 75%.

The number of starts on apprenticeship standards fell by over 7,000 between 2018/19 and 2019/20, while the number of framework starts

75% of starts in 2019/20 were on apprenticeship standards. This was up from just 2% in 2016/17.

fell by over 63,000. However, it is worth noting that all apprenticeships fell from 2018/19 to 2019/20, due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. From 2017/18 to 2019/20, the number of standards apprenticeships has increased by almost 171,000 whilst frameworks has fallen by over 130,000 over the same period.

By 2020, the ESFA expect all apprenticeship starts to be on standards, and will not allow any starts on frameworks.⁵

| Number of framework and standards apprenticeship starts | | | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 2014/15 to 2018/19 | | | | | | |
| Level | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
| Framework | 498,910 | 505,080 | 470,270 | 212,080 | 145,300 | 81,810 |
| Standard | 10 | 1,240 | 9,130 | 69,920 | 248,080 | 240,720 |
| % of total | | | | | | |
| Framework | 100% | 99% | 95% | 56% | 37% | 25% |
| Standard | 0% | 0% | 2% | 19% | 63% | 75% |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

The most popular framework in 2019/20 was Manufacturing Technologies, with 14,000 starts. The highest number of starts in an apprenticeship standard was in the Business Management standard with over 39,000 starts.

The table below shows starts in the 10 most popular apprenticeship frameworks and standards.

| Apprenticeship starts by framework | | Apprenticeship starts by standards | |
|---|----|--|----|
| 10 most popular frameworks in 2019/20, <i>Thousands</i> | | 10 most popular standards in 2019/20, <i>Thousands</i> | |
| Manufacturing Technologies | 14 | Business Management | 39 |
| Child Development and Well Being | 12 | Health and Social Care | 37 |
| Administration | 11 | Administration | 20 |
| Building and Construction | 8 | Accounting and Finance | 19 |
| Health and Social Care | 6 | Engineering | 17 |
| ICT Practitioners | 5 | Building and Construction | 14 |
| Engineering | 4 | Public Services | 13 |
| Transportation Operations and Maintenance | 3 | ICT Practitioners | 12 |
| Service Enterprises | 3 | Hospitality and Catering | 11 |
| Warehousing and Distribution | 3 | Transportation Operations and Maintenance | 9 |

Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

⁵ ESFA, [Information about the withdrawal of apprenticeship frameworks](#)

6. Apprenticeship achievements and participation

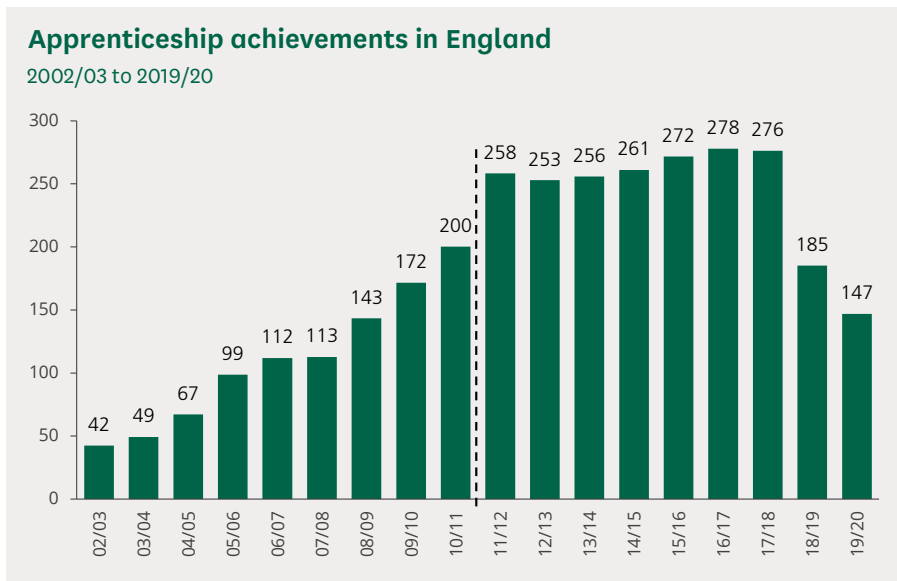
As well as statistics on apprenticeship starts, data are also available on the number of people who complete an apprenticeship (achievements) and the total number of people who were on an apprenticeship in a given year (participation).

6.1 Achievements

There were 146,900 achievements in 2019/20, down 38,250 (21%) on the previous year.

Apprenticeship achievements followed a similar trend to starts, with the number of achievements increasing up to 2011/12. Since then achievement volumes had stayed at a similar level, until 2018/19 when achievements fell. In 2019/20, achievements fell for a successive year, falling by over a fifth.

The number of apprenticeship achievements fell by over a fifth, from 2018/19 to 2019/20.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

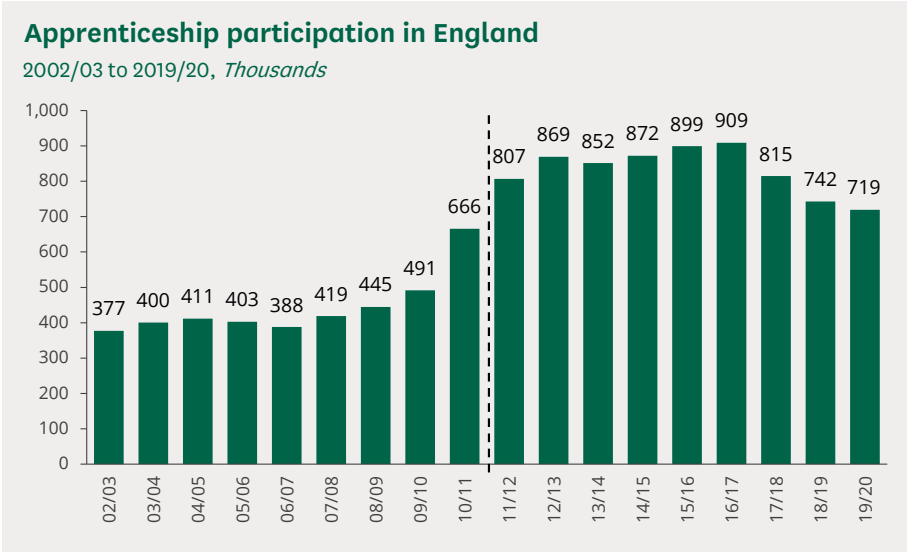
Notes: Academic years (August 1st to July 31st)

6.2 Participation

719,000 people were participating in an apprenticeship in 2019/20, the lowest annual level of participation since 2010/11. 23,400 fewer people were participating in 2019/20 than in 2018/19.

The trend for apprenticeship participation is also similar to that for starts with large increases from 2009/10 to 2011/12, and a gradual increase between 2011/12 and 2016/17.

The number of people participating in an apprenticeship fell to its lowest level in 2019/20 since 2011/12.



Source: [DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#)

Notes: Academic years (August 1st to July 31st)

7. Significant apprenticeship policy developments

This section provides a summary of some of the key policy developments for apprenticeships.

1994 to 2010

A new apprenticeship scheme called “Modern Apprenticeships” was launched in 1994 which offered an opportunity to work and be paid a wage, while working towards a NVQ level 3 qualification. These were aimed at 18 and 19 year olds.⁶

Significant changes were made to the scheme in 2004 with the introduction of level 2 apprenticeships, revised level 3 apprenticeships and the removal of the upper age limit of apprenticeships, which meant that people over 25 could become apprentices. Higher level apprenticeships were introduced in 2006.⁷

In 2008, in response to the Leitch report that included a recommendation that the number of apprenticeships should be increased to 500,000 per year by 2020 (in the UK), the National Apprenticeship Service was created. It was launched in 2009. The government also committed to increase funding for apprenticeships between 2007/08 and 2010/11.⁸

2010 to 2015

In May 2010 the Government [announced](#) that £150 million from the Train to Gain budget would be deployed to provide an extra 50,000 apprenticeship places. As part of the March 2011 Spring Budget the [Plan for Growth](#) was announced which included an £180 million package for 50,000 additional apprenticeships. Also, in December 2011, the Skills System Reform Plan was launched which included an initiative to provide 40,000 incentive payments to small employers who take on apprentices.

The [Apprenticeship Grant for Employers of 16 to 24 year olds](#) (AGE 16-24) was introduced in February 2012, and provided £1,500 to small businesses hiring young apprentices.

In 2013/14 advanced learner loans were introduced, and individuals aged 24 and over were required to take these loans to pay half of the cost of advanced level apprenticeships. This was the first time that apprentices were expected to contribute to the costs of their learning, and led to an 88% fall in the number of people aged 25+ starting an advanced or higher apprenticeship. In February 2014 the Skills Funding Agency announced that apprentices would no longer be required to

Further information on apprenticeships policy in England is covered in the library briefing paper, [Apprenticeships Policy in England](#).

⁶ House of Commons Library briefing paper, [Apprenticeships Policy, England prior to 2010](#), July 2015, p5

⁷ Ibid, p7

⁸ Ibid, p8

take out a loan, and those who had were not required to repay them.⁹
¹⁰

An extra £40 million was announced in the 2013 Autumn Statement to deliver an additional 20,000 higher level starts between August 2013 and July 2015.¹¹

In 2014 apprenticeship standards were introduced, with the intention of replacing apprenticeship frameworks which are being progressively phased out.

2015 to 2019

In 2015 the Government announced a commitment to create 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020. The [Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016](#) placed an obligation on the Government to report annually on its progress towards meeting this target. The [Enterprise Act 2016](#) provided the Secretary of State with the power to set targets for apprenticeships in public bodies in England to contribute towards meeting the national targets.¹²

In March 2015 [Degree apprenticeships](#) were launched.

The [Institute for Apprenticeships](#) was established in May 2016 and launched in April 2017 with an aim of ensuring high-quality apprenticeship standards and to advise the government on funding for each standard.

The funding system was revised in May 2017, and the Apprenticeship Levy was introduced. A brief summary of the levy and the funding changes is provided in section 1 of this paper.

⁹ BIS/SFA [Skills Funding Statement 2013-2016](#), February 2014, pg 10

¹⁰ Second Reading, [No more advanced learning loans for apprentices after low take up](#), February 2014

¹¹ HM Treasury, [Autumn Statement 2013: key announcements](#), December 2013

¹² BIS, [Apprenticeships \(in England\): vision for 2020](#), December 2015, pg 9

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