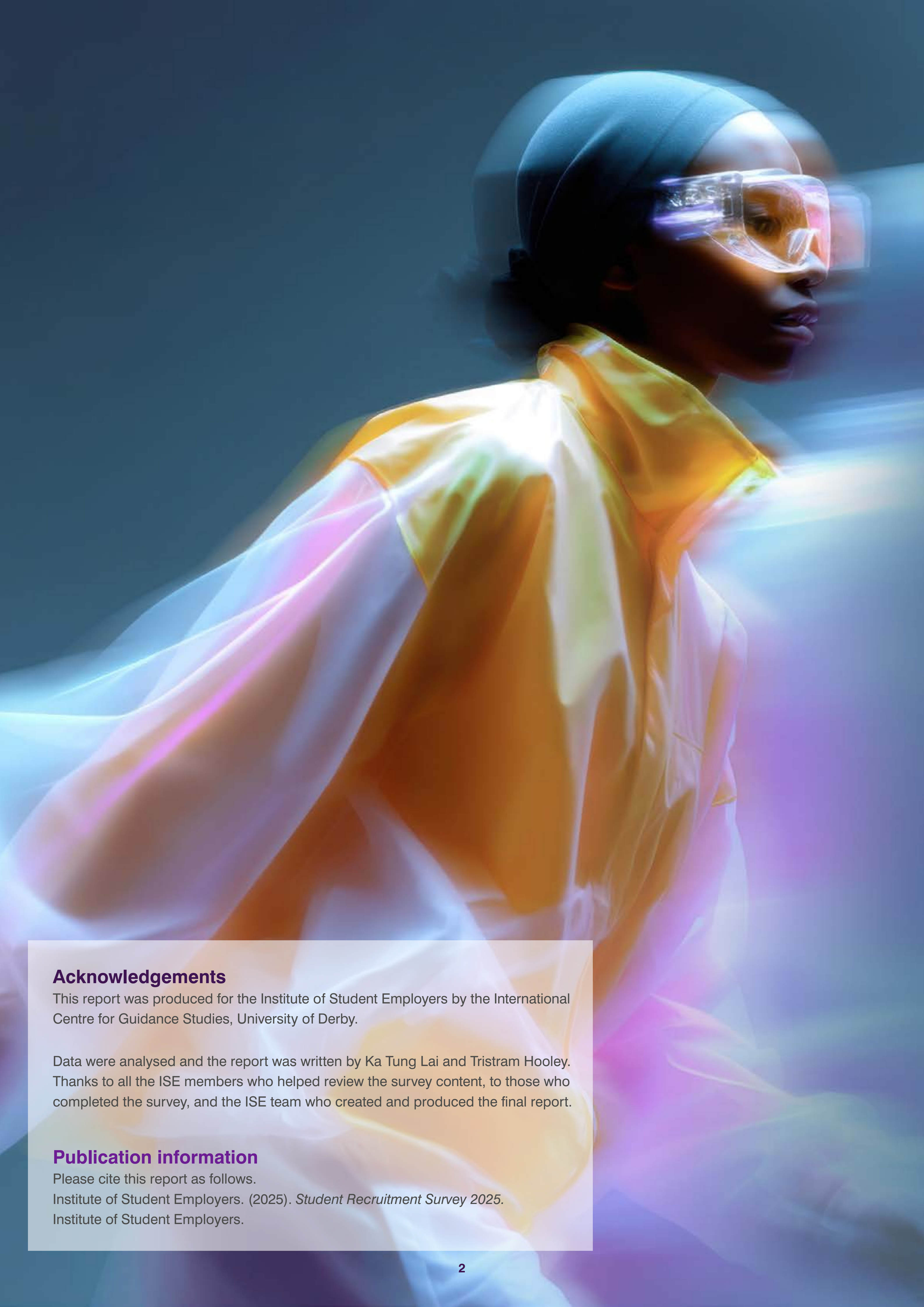
# Student Recruitment Survey 2025

Institute of Student Employers

ise.

Trends, benchmarks and insights



## Acknowledgements

This report was produced for the Institute of Student Employers by the International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

Data were analysed and the report was written by Ka Tung Lai and Tristram Hooley. Thanks to all the ISE members who helped review the survey content, to those who completed the survey, and the ISE team who created and produced the final report.

## Publication information

Please cite this report as follows.
Institute of Student Employers. (2025). *Student Recruitment Survey 2025.* Institute of Student Employers.

# Contents


# Foreword

**Stephen Isherwood,**
Joint CEO, ISE

Economic conditions are tough, a high number of students are graduating and making high volumes of applications, AI use by employers and students is growing, and government priorities around skills and employment continue to shift. From the amount of jobs available to the number of applications students are making to questions about education pathways, not all the messages in the public domain are an accurate reflection of the reality on the ground.

This is why the ISE's annual survey data is so important and why many turn to the ISE for an authoritative take on the student recruitment market. The market is challenging for all stakeholders at the moment and this report contains a wealth of data and analysis that provides deep insights across the attraction, selection and recruiting cycle.

We made a number of improvements to the survey this year that increased the depth and relevance of the content in this year's report. For example, you will find a greater dissection of the technology used in recruitment to differentiate between the use of AI and non-AI automation. We will also provide the core data in a range of online data dashboards so you can interrogate the data at a sector level.

As ever, this report can only be produced as a result of ISE member collaboration. Many thanks to all the ISE members who provided feedback on the survey's design and those who took the time to complete the survey. Also, thanks to the iCeGS team who both conducted the survey and produced the detailed analysis contained in this report, and to the ISE team who produced the final document and supporting content.

# Survey overview

**The ISE annual recruitment survey is the largest of its type and analyses data from 155 employers who recruited over 31,000 student hires from more than 1.8 million applications over the last year's student recruitment cycle, 2024 to 2025.**

# Market summary

## Vacancies under pressure

Despite a sluggish economy and frequent headlines about significant reductions in graduate jobs, our survey shows a mix of patterns in the student labour market. Graduate hiring has fallen by 8% year-on-year, yet school and college leaver hiring increased by 8%.

The data also varies from sector to sector and employer to employer. Whilst 42% of employers reduced graduate hiring and 40% reduced school/college leaver hiring, over a third of employers increased hiring volumes.

The state of the broader labour market also impacts the outlook for students as not all enter roles that are part of a formal training programme. The overall labour market is also challenging, for example REC data shows a 13% drop in all level and sector job adverts from July 2024 to July 2025[1].

## Application levels remain high

Application volumes also remain at an historic high. Go back two decades to 2002/3, and employers received an average of 38 applications per graduate vacancy. By 2022/3 that figure had more than doubled to 86 per vacancy and for the last two years has been at 140 per vacancy.

At an individual employer and sector level, many have experienced a significant increase in application numbers again this year. In the search for a job, some graduates are also applying to school/college leaver roles in greater volumes – 40% of employers reported an increase.

We believe a number of connected forces are impacting application volumes. Competition is a likely factor driving students to make more applications, and the significant reduction in minimum academic requirements over time means more students are eligible to apply to more roles. Online technology has also made it easier for students to make an initial application.

Applications at this level create considerable challenges for employers when managing volume whilst delivering a good candidate experience, and ensuring that they continue to make good hires. Despite these pressures, the data suggests employers continue to manage the process well as they report high satisfaction rates with hires and stable renege rates.

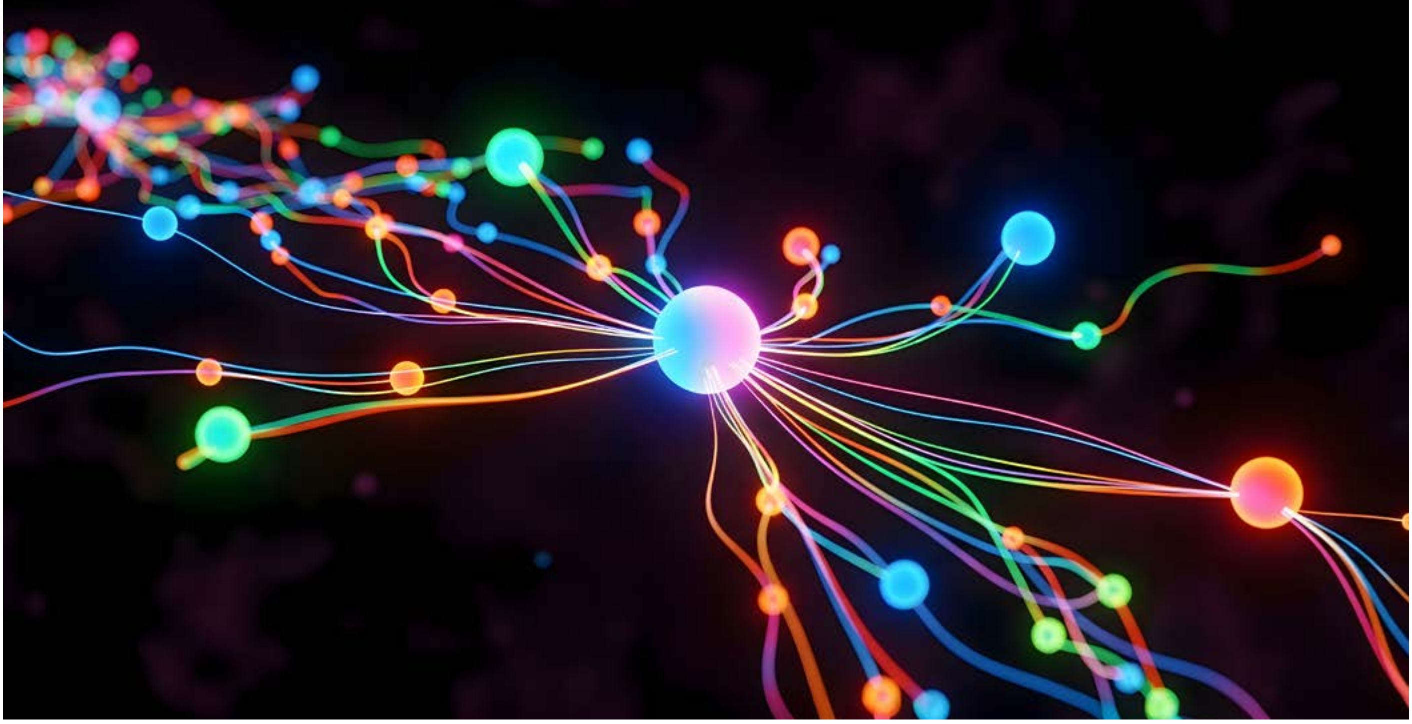
## AI & Technology in recruitment

Our analysis shows that AI isn't yet widely adopted by employers to recruit students. To gain a greater understanding of how technology is used by employers in the student market and to differentiate between AI and other solutions, this survey probed employers on the recruitment tech they deploy.

We found that technology is widely used in the early stages of the recruitment process, but AI adoption is limited. Whilst over half of employers use automated systems to fully manage some aspects of testing, AI use is very rare. Employers are most likely to use AI in gamified assessments, but even here the adoption rate is only 15%.

But AI adoption is likely to increase, particularly as students make greater use of technology in the application process. There is some evidence of an arms race underway: only 15% of employers said they never suspected or identified candidates cheating in assessments; and 79% of employers are now either redesigning or reviewing their recruitment processes because of AI developments.


[1] REC Labour Market Tracker https://www.rec.uk.com/our-view/research/labour-market-tracker



# Recruitment pathways

## Graduates

Graduate recruitment remains the most common pathway, with 91% of employers hiring graduates.

- Application volumes remained at record high levels with employers receiving a mean of 140 applications per vacancy. And many employers experienced an increase in volumes. Those employers that supplied year-on-year data showed a 14% increase in applications per vacancy compared to last year.
- Graduate recruitment fell by 8% this year, marking the weakest year for graduate hiring since 2021.
- Next year, overall graduate hiring is forecast to decline by 7%, largely driven by sharp declines for a small number of large employers. For the rest of our members, graduate hiring is forecast to grow by only 1%.
- The occupations most commonly targeted by graduate employers were IT, AI and digital, accountancy, finance and banking, and engineering, reflecting the sectors where the highest proportion of employers reported recruiting.
- Similar to last year, employers were broadly content with the skills, knowledge and behaviours of the graduates that they were able to recruit. Almost half (46%) reported that they are 'almost always' able to find the quality of graduates that they require and a further 47% are 'often' able to.
- The proportion hiring international students fell from 61% to 57%, and 21% plan further reductions in the next recruitment cycle.

## School and college leavers

School and college leaver recruitment grew by 8% this year, with only a modest 1% increase forecast for 2026.

- Employers received a mean of 89 applications per vacancy; a 13% increase compared to last year.
- Recruitment is focused on priority skill areas such as IT, digital and AI, accounting, finance and banking, and engineering, highlighting the role of school and college leaver pathways in closing skills gaps.
- Some larger employers are increasing their emphasis on school and college leaver recruitment relative to graduates. Overall, employers in our survey who recruited students onto both pathways, hired 1.8 graduates for every school/college leaver this year (down from 2.3 last year based on the same sample).

## Interns and placement students

The proportion of employers recruiting interns or placement students fell to 71%, down from 80% last year.

- Competition intensified: the mean applications per hire rose to 101 for internships (up from 87 last year, 16% increase based on the same sample), 123 for undergraduate placements (up from 97 last year, 27% increase based on the same sample).
- Recruitment of interns increased by 2% this year and is expected to rise by a further 1% in the coming year. Recruitment of placement students decreased by 4% this year and is expected to decline by a further 3% in the coming year.
- In 2024/2025, respondents reported providing 4,287 work experience placements for school students. Among organisations providing comparable data for both 2023/24 and 2024/25, respondents reported a 22% increase in opportunities compared with the previous year.

## Recruitment strategy

### Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships remain central to early talent recruitment. This year, 81% of employers recruited apprentices, broadly consistent with last year (82%).

- Most apprenticeships were offered to school and college leavers (77%), with smaller proportions being graduates (16%) and experienced professionals (5%).
- In response to changes in the UK apprenticeship regime, 80% of employers expect to maintain current apprenticeship levels. However, 42% anticipate reducing recruitment at Level 7, suggesting a particular impact of government policy on higher-level apprenticeships.

### Attraction and selection

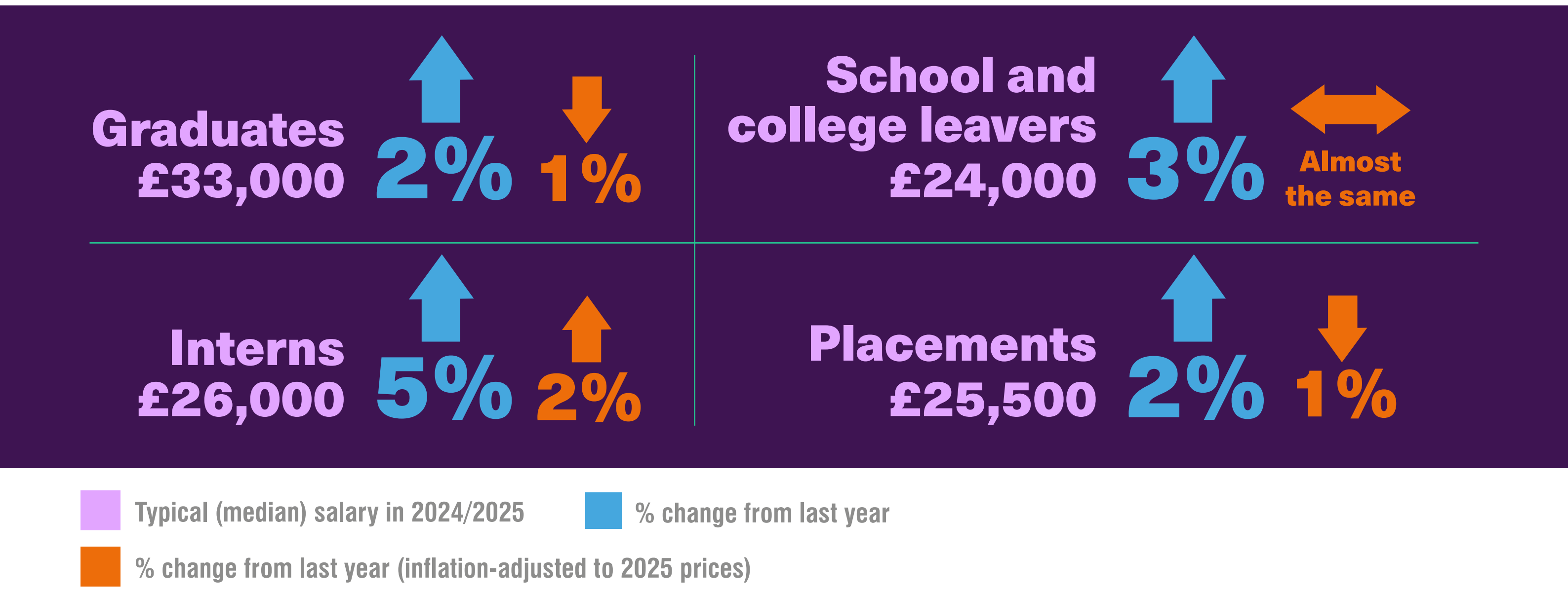
Attraction and selection methods continue to evolve, influenced by AI and changing recruitment practices.

- The majority of employers offer a single intake (70% for graduates, 76% for school and college leavers).
- A third (33%) of employers reported that generative AI has prompted them to redesign selection processes (up from 23% last year).
- Almost half (46%) of employers reported they have no problem with candidates using AI at some stages of the recruitment process whereas a smaller proportion (10%) reported banning the use of AI or introducing technical measures to prevent its use.
- 45% of employers said they had not provided applicants with any guidance on when it was or was not appropriate to use AI.
- Only 15% of employers in 2025 reported that they had never suspected or identified cheating in assessments – 61% reported candidates using AI during interviews without disclosure or permission, the most commonly reported form of misconduct.
- Minimum academic requirements remain common (77%), but long-term data shows a shift away from A-level grades and the 2:1 degree classification as entry thresholds. Since 2022/23, however, this trend has stabilised, suggesting a new balance between academic benchmarks and skills-based recruitment.

### Hiring

- Employers filled 97% of graduate roles, unchanged from last year.
- The fill rate for school and college leaver roles fell slightly to 94% (from 96%).
- Conversion of interns and placement students into graduate hires declined, with 50% of interns (down from 54%) and 44% of placement students (down from 49%) staying on as graduates.
- 40% of employers reported an increase in graduates applying for school and college leaver roles.
- Similar to last year, acceptance rates remained strong: 86% of graduates and 91% of school leavers accepted offers.
- Salaries rose across all groups in nominal terms, but inflation eroded gains: graduate and placement salaries fell by 1% in real terms, school leaver pay was flat, and intern salaries rose by 2%.

During the first three years after being hired, graduates increase their salaries by 37% and school and college leavers by 39% on average.



## Resourcing

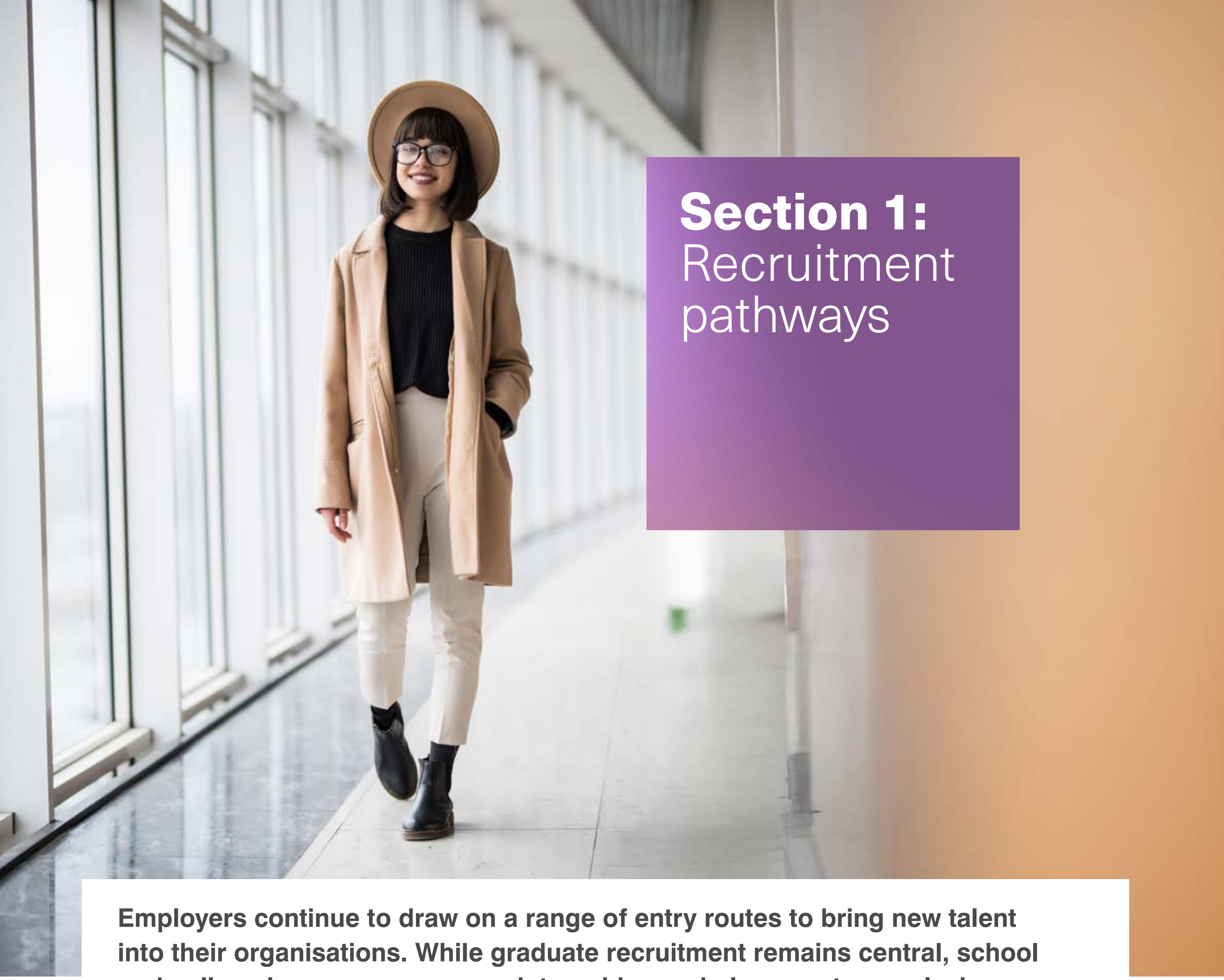
Effective student recruitment requires the right strategy, skills and resources. This year's results reveal important trends in how recruitment activities are being resourced.

- Similar to last year, organisations allocated the largest share of their budgets to attraction and marketing (47%), followed by selection and assessment (35%), with only 9% spent on offers and 'keep warm' activities.
- Within attraction and marketing, online marketing received the greatest investment (55%), followed by on-campus events (26%), online events (11%), and other activities (8%).
- The typical (median) cost per hire — covering graduates, school and college leavers, interns, and placement students —fell to £1,961, down from £2,158 last year.
- The typical (median) cost per hire is £2,600 for graduates and £1,950 for school and college leavers
- One member of a recruitment team is typically responsible for recruiting 17 students (median) or 28 students (mean).
- Reliance on recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) fell, with 43% of employers using an outsourced provider compared with 49% last year.

**"...The typical (median) cost per hire is £2,600 for graduates and £1,950 for school and college leavers"**

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

In light of recent US government actions on EDI, most ISE members (66%) reported no change in their commitment. A further 13% are maintaining commitment but reviewing practices (e.g. reporting), while another 13% are increasing their focus. Only 7% are actively reassessing their stance on EDI and 1% reported reducing their commitments.



# **Section 1:** Recruitment pathways

**Employers continue to draw on a range of entry routes to bring new talent into their organisations. While graduate recruitment remains central, school and college leaver programmes, internships and placements are playing an increasingly important role in building diverse pipelines. This section examines each of these pathways in turn, focusing on application and hiring trends, sectoral differences, and the evolving role of each entry point within employers' early talent pipelines.**

## 1.1 Graduates

Graduate recruitment remains at the heart of most ISE members' early talent strategy. Almost all respondents (91%) reported that they recruit graduates.

At the same time, the balance between graduate and school and college leaver hiring is shifting. Amongst employers who recruited both graduates and school/college leavers and provided comparable data across three years (33 employers), employers hired over two graduates for every school and college leaver (2.3:1) in 2023/24. By 2024/25, this had fallen to 1.8:1, and projections for 2025/26 suggest the ratio will decline further to 1.6:1[2]. This trend is driven by some larger employers gradually rebalancing their early talent pipelines to place greater emphasis on school and college leaver recruitment relative to graduates. However, graduates still outnumber school and college leavers, and they remain a core element of early talent strategies.

[2] The ratio is calculated as total graduate hires divided by total school and college leaver hires. As such, changes in the recruitment strategy of employers with larger intakes are a key driver of any changes to this ratio. The data should therefore be interpreted with caution.

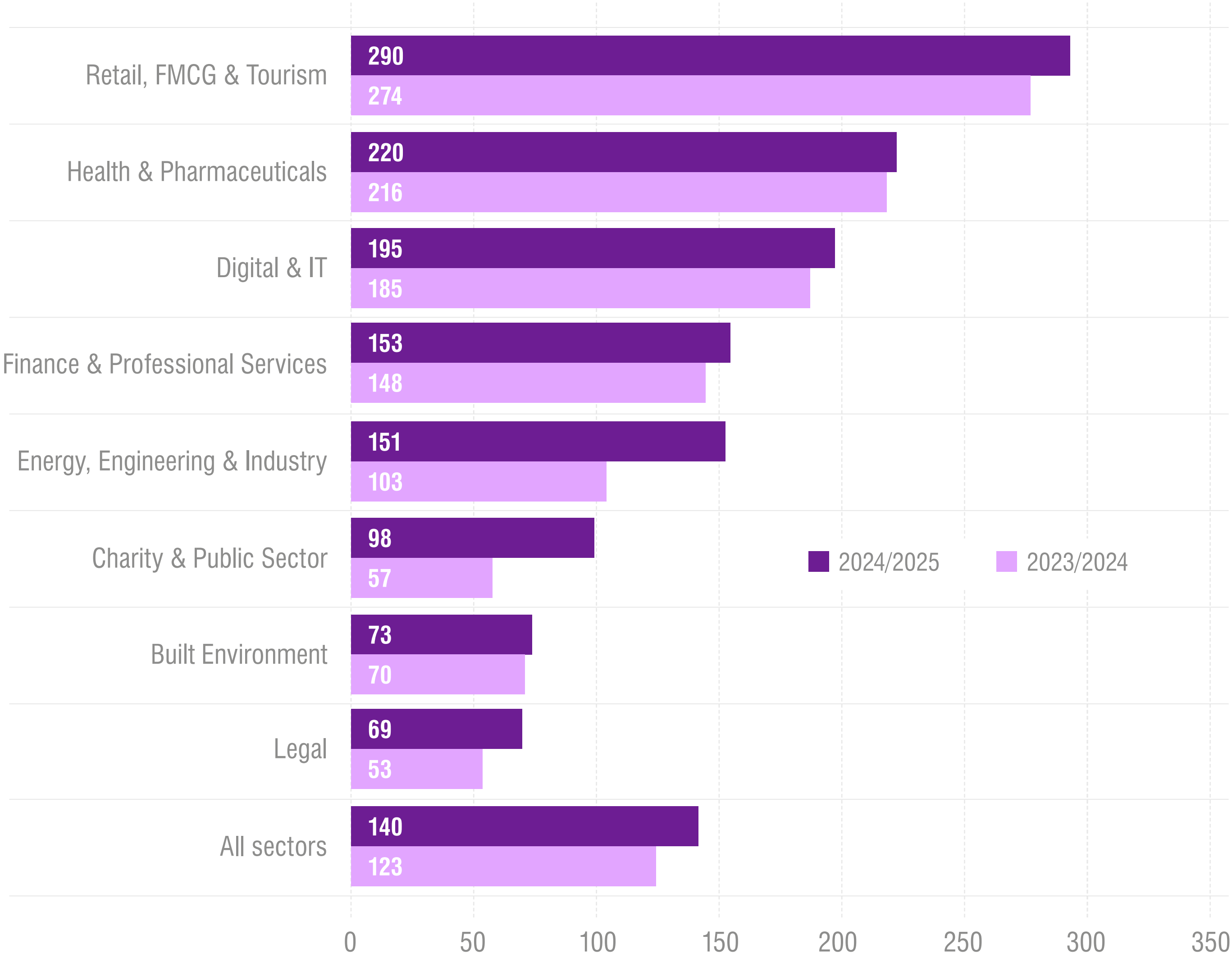
## Applications and hires

In this year's report, we asked respondents to report the number of applications they received and graduates they hired for both this year and last year.

In total, respondents received just over 1 million applications for graduate jobs during 2024/2025. Among organisations able to provide comparable data for both years, this represented a 4% increase on 2023/2024. This follows sustained growth in application volumes, with a 15% rise reported in 2024 and a 32% increase in 2023, highlighting a clear upward trend in graduate job applications. The fact that this trend for increased applications seems sustained across all types of hiring clearly presents recruiters with challenges: managing substantially increased volumes whilst still delivering a good candidate experience and identifying suitable candidates is becoming more difficult. Application volumes remained at record-high levels, with employers receiving an average of 140 applications per vacancy. While this headline figure is unchanged from last year's published results, analysis of a matched sample of employers who provided data in both years shows a 14% increase, from 123:1 in 2023/24 to 140:1 in 2024/25. The typical (median) vacancy received 97 applications, representing a 35% increase on last year.

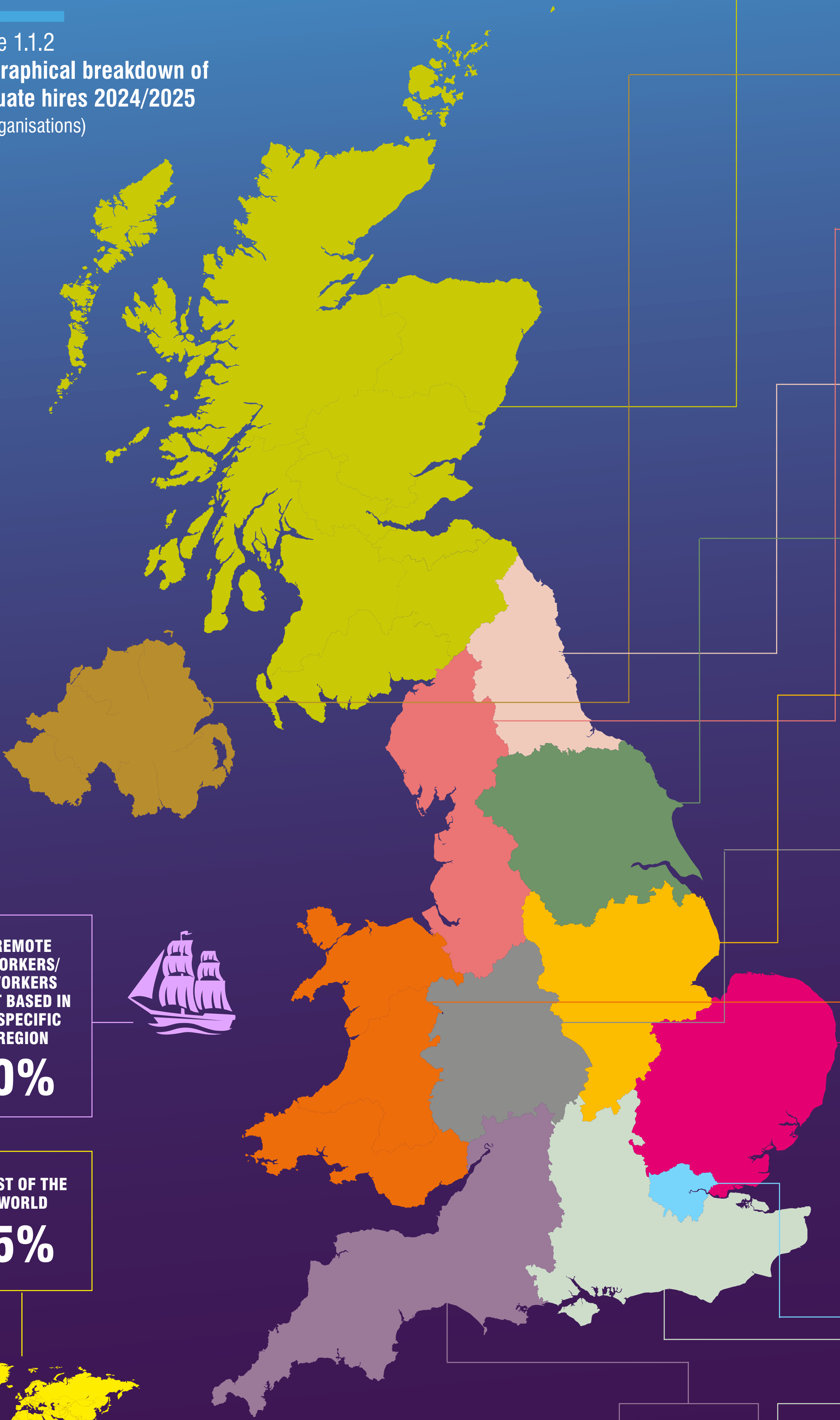
The sector breakdown indicates that Retail, FMCG & Tourism (290 applications per vacancy) and Health & Pharmaceuticals (220 applications per vacancy) are the most competitive sectors. On the other hand, the Legal sector (69 applications per vacancy) and the Built Environment sector (73 applications per vacancy) are the least competitive sectors (although still very competitive).

Figure 1.1.1
**Average application to vacancy ratio across all sectors** (86 organisations)



Overall, respondents hired a total of 14,850 graduates during 2024/2025. Figure 1.1.2 shows the geographical breakdown, with London continuing to dominate (45% of graduate hires), consistent with previous years.

Figure 1.1.2
**Geographical breakdown of graduate hires 2024/2025**
(95 organisations)




REMOTE WORKERS/ WORKERS NOT BASED IN A SPECIFIC REGION
0%

REST OF THE WORLD
5%

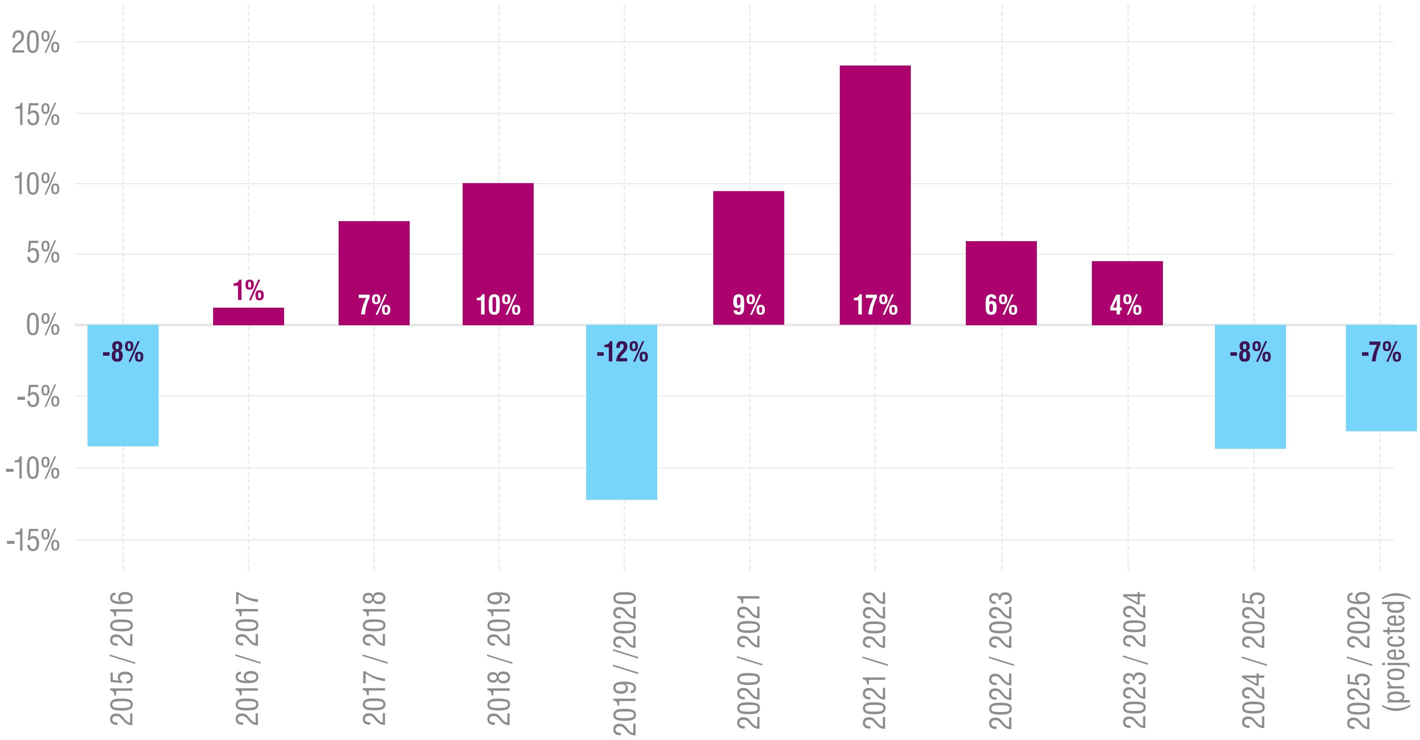
## Growth in graduate market

Among organisations providing data for both years (99 employers), graduate hires decreased by 8% between 2023/24 and 2024/25[3]. Within this group, around a third of employers (33%) increased their intake, 25% maintained it, while 42% reduced their numbers.

Looking ahead, forecasts from a smaller sample of 78 employers point to a further 7% decrease in graduate hiring between 2024/25 and 2025/26. Looking deeper, we find this decline is driven by three large employers who forecast particularly sharp declines in hiring in 2025/26. The forecast excluding these employers reveals a 1% growth in graduate hiring for 2025/26 (based on 75 employers).

Overall, 31% of employers expect to increase their graduate hiring in 2025/26, 26% to keep it unchanged, and 44% to reduce it (Figure 1.1.3). These results indicate that the graduate market is contracting overall, with fewer opportunities available despite continued growth in applications.

Figure 1.1.3
**Growth in the graduate recruitment market[4]**




There have been notable sectoral differences in hiring trends over the last two years as can be seen in Figure 1.1.4. Between 2023/24 and 2024/25, the steepest declines were recorded in Digital & IT (–46%), Health & Pharmaceuticals (–18%), and Energy, Engineering & Industry (–16%). More modest falls occurred in Finance & Professional Services (–8%) and the Built Environment (–2%), while Retail, FMCG & Tourism (0%) and Legal (+1%) remained broadly stable. In contrast, the Charity & Public Sector recorded a small increase (+3%).

Looking ahead to 2025/26, projections point to continued contraction in the graduate market overall (–7%), with particularly sharp expected declines in Digital & IT (–53%), Health & Pharmaceuticals (–32%), and Retail, FMCG & Tourism (–11%). Finance & Professional Services (–8%) and Legal (–6%) are also forecasting reductions, while the Charity & Public Sector (–3%) anticipates a modest dip after this year's growth. Only the Built Environment (+14%) and Energy, Engineering & Industry (+1%) are projecting increases. These sectoral shifts underline how the aggregate market decline masks very different experiences across industries (Figure 1.1.5).

[3] Growth in graduate hiring is calculated as the annual change in the total number of graduate hires. In our sample, there were three outliers who were large employers with substantial changes in their hiring figures in 2024/25. Excluding these, there was a 4% decrease in graduate hiring across the rest of our sample in 2024/25.
[4] Data from 2015/16 to 2023/24 is based on data published in previous ISE survey reports.

Figure 1.1.4

**Average (mean) change in graduate hiring numbers by sector 2023/24 to 2024/25**

(99 organisations)

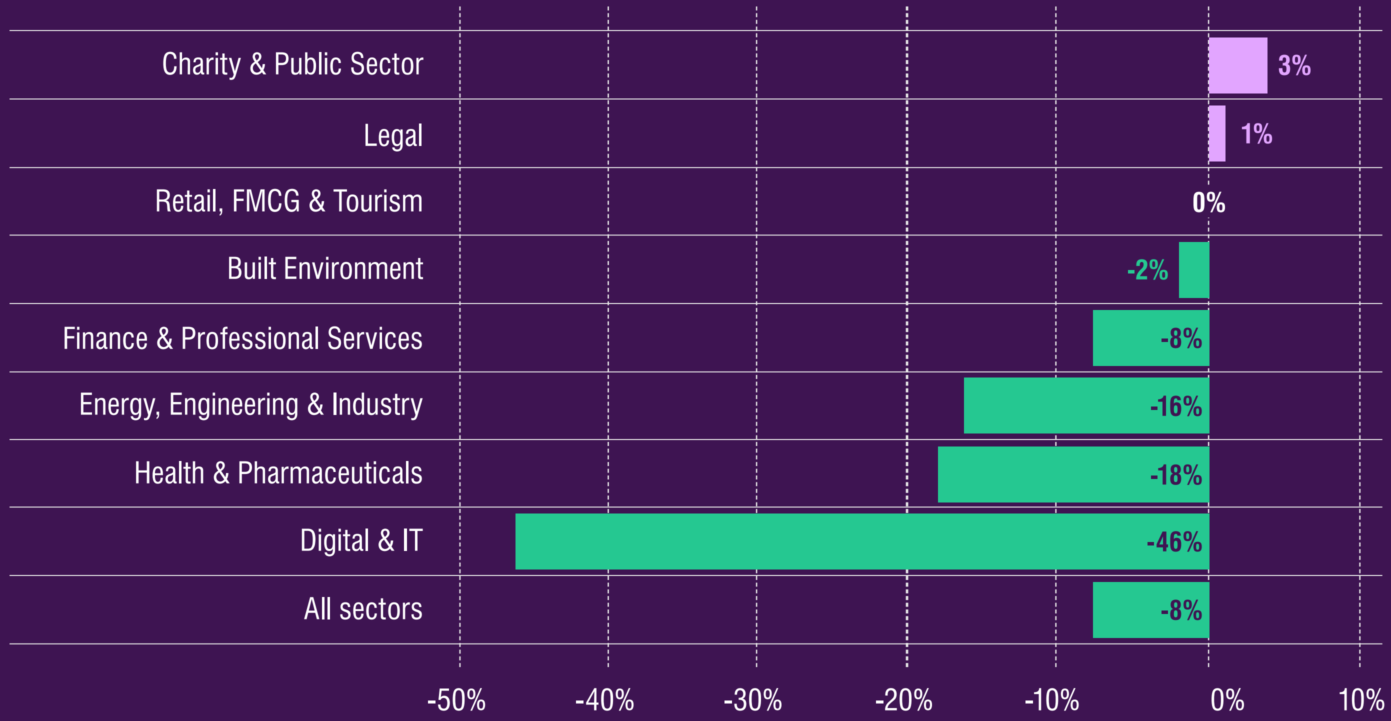
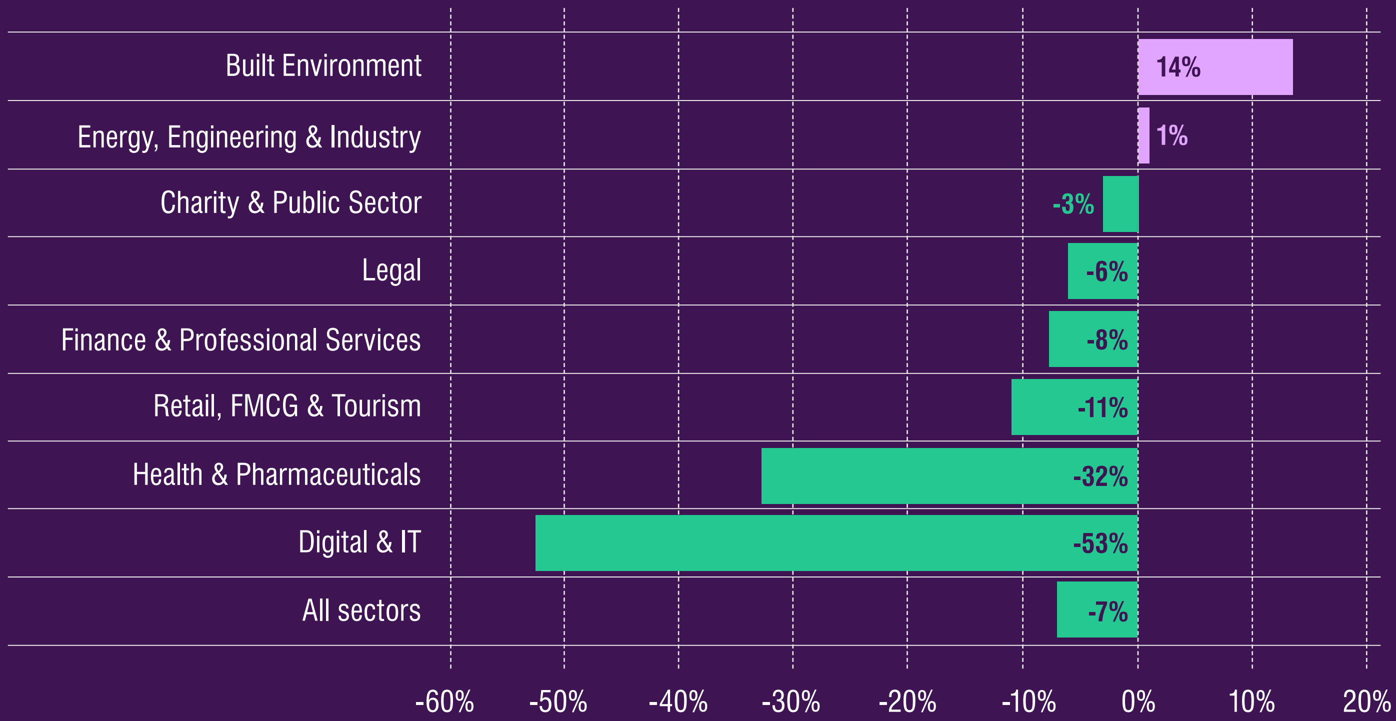



Figure 1.1.5

**Average (mean) forecast change in graduate hiring numbers by sector 2024/25 to 2025/26**

(78 organisations)



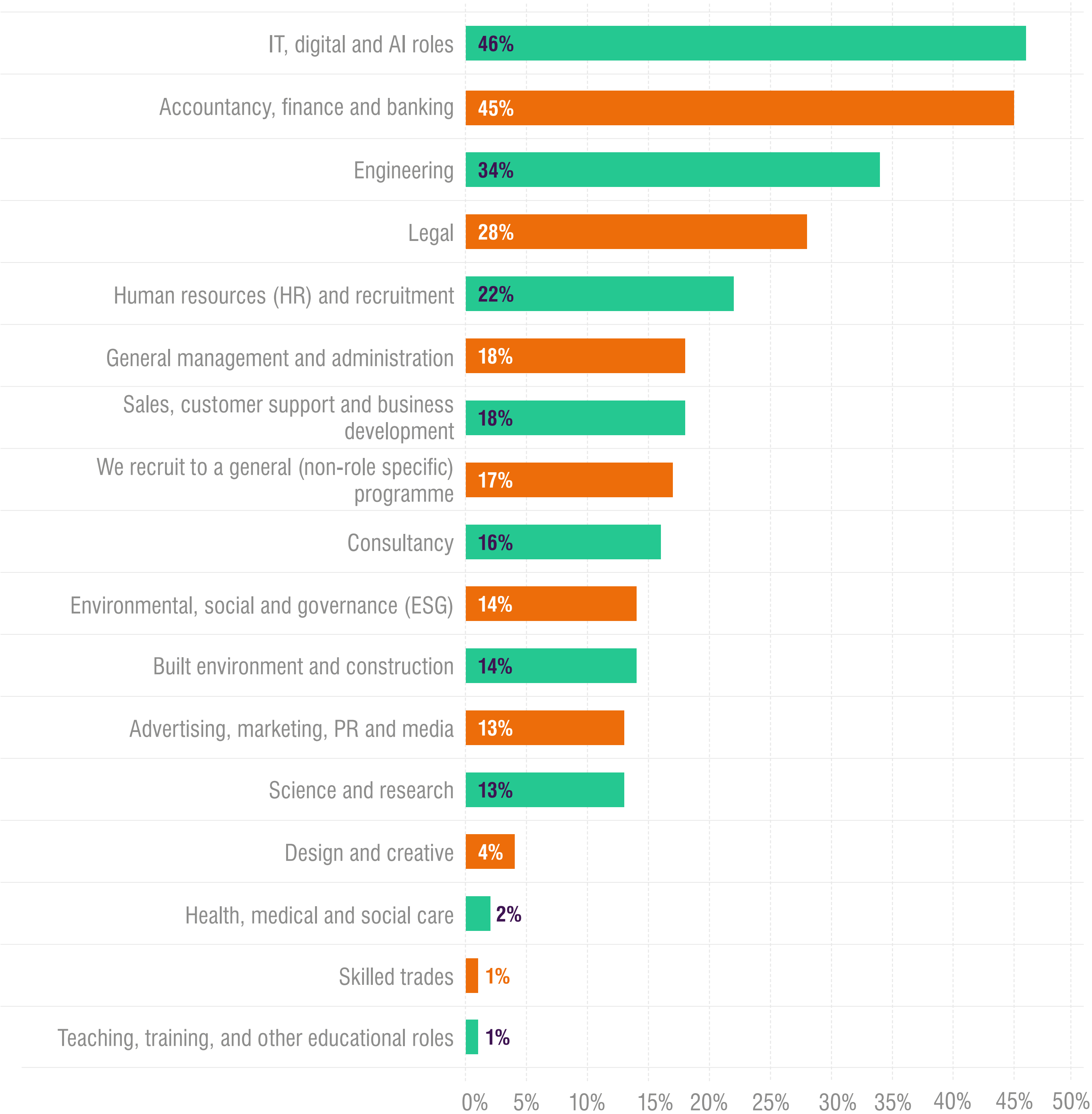
## Graduate roles

Graduates were recruited into a wide variety of roles in 2024/25. The most common were IT, digital, and AI, followed by accountancy, finance, and banking. By contrast, relatively few employers in our sample recruited for health, medical and social care roles, skilled trades, or teaching and education. This distribution is consistent with previous years. It is important to note, however, that growth rates by sector should be considered in the context of vacancy volumes—smaller sectors may show sharp percentage changes even where the absolute number of roles remains relatively low.

Figure 1.1.6

**Proportion of graduate employers recruiting to different occupations**

(120 organisations)



Recruitment challenges persist. 45% of graduate-recruiting employers reported finding at least one role hard to fill — almost identical to school and college leaver recruitment (47%) and unchanged from last year (45%).

Looking specifically at the role types that were hardest to fill, the top 5 roles were:

## Satisfaction with graduates

Despite hiring pressures, most employers remain satisfied with graduate quality, with 46% saying they can 'almost always' secure candidates of the desired quality and a further 47% saying they can 'often' do so. This represents a slightly higher level of satisfaction compared to school and college leavers, where 37% reported they could 'almost always' secure candidates of the desired quality and 48% said this was 'often' the case. Again, this is good news in the light of growing application levels and suggests that employers' recruitment processes are continuing to allow them to find the candidates that they need.

Satisfaction levels vary significantly by sector. Legal, Health & Pharmaceuticals, and Digital & IT report the highest confidence, with more than two-thirds of employers in these sectors saying they 'almost always' secure the quality of graduates they need. Similar to the findings for school and college leavers, employers in the Finance & Professional Services sector and Charity & Public Sector were less positive.

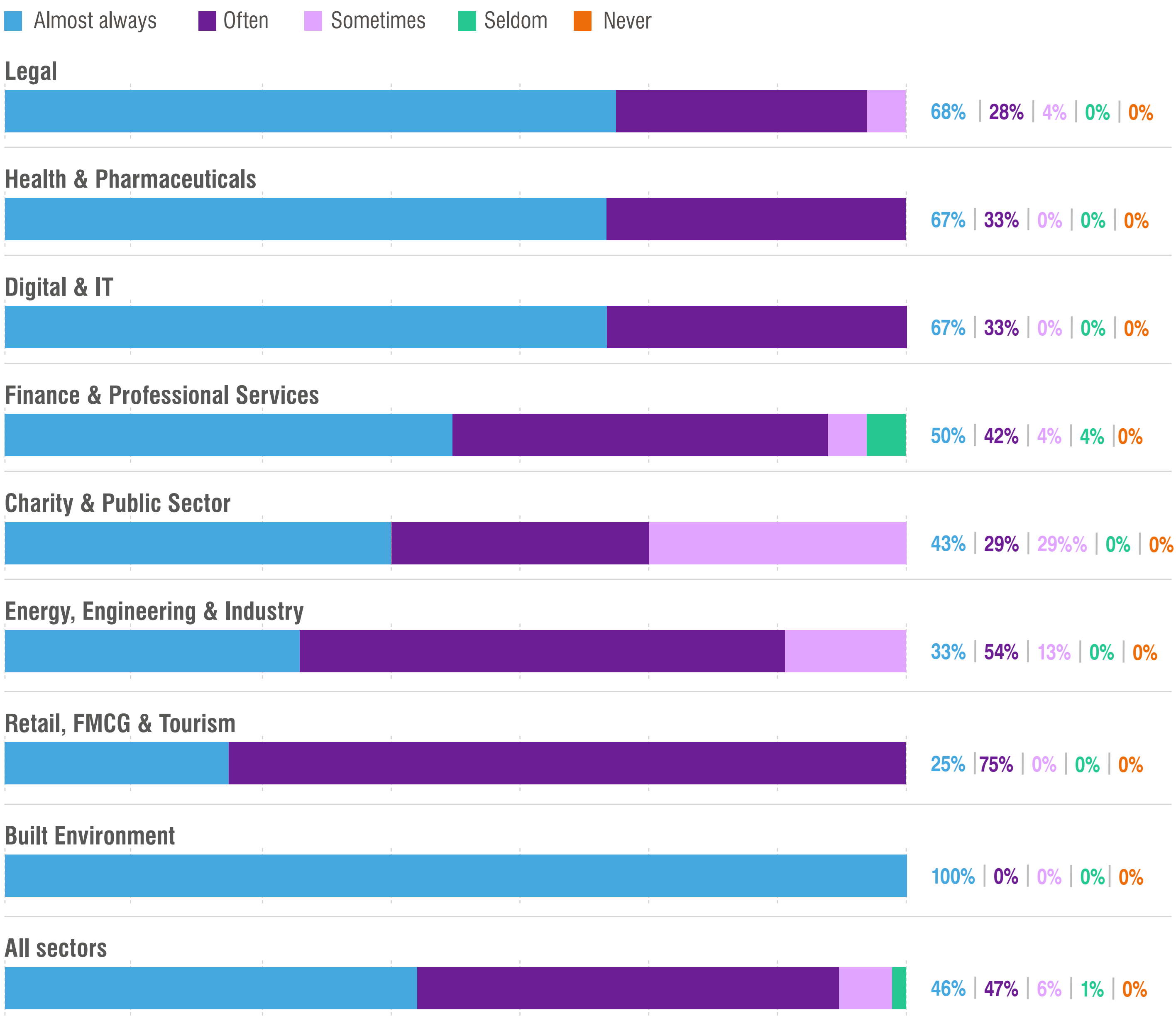
**93%**

**of employers 'almost always' or 'often' able to recruit quality graduates**

Figure 1.1.7

**Organisations' ability to recruit the quality of graduate hires that they need**

(114 organisations)



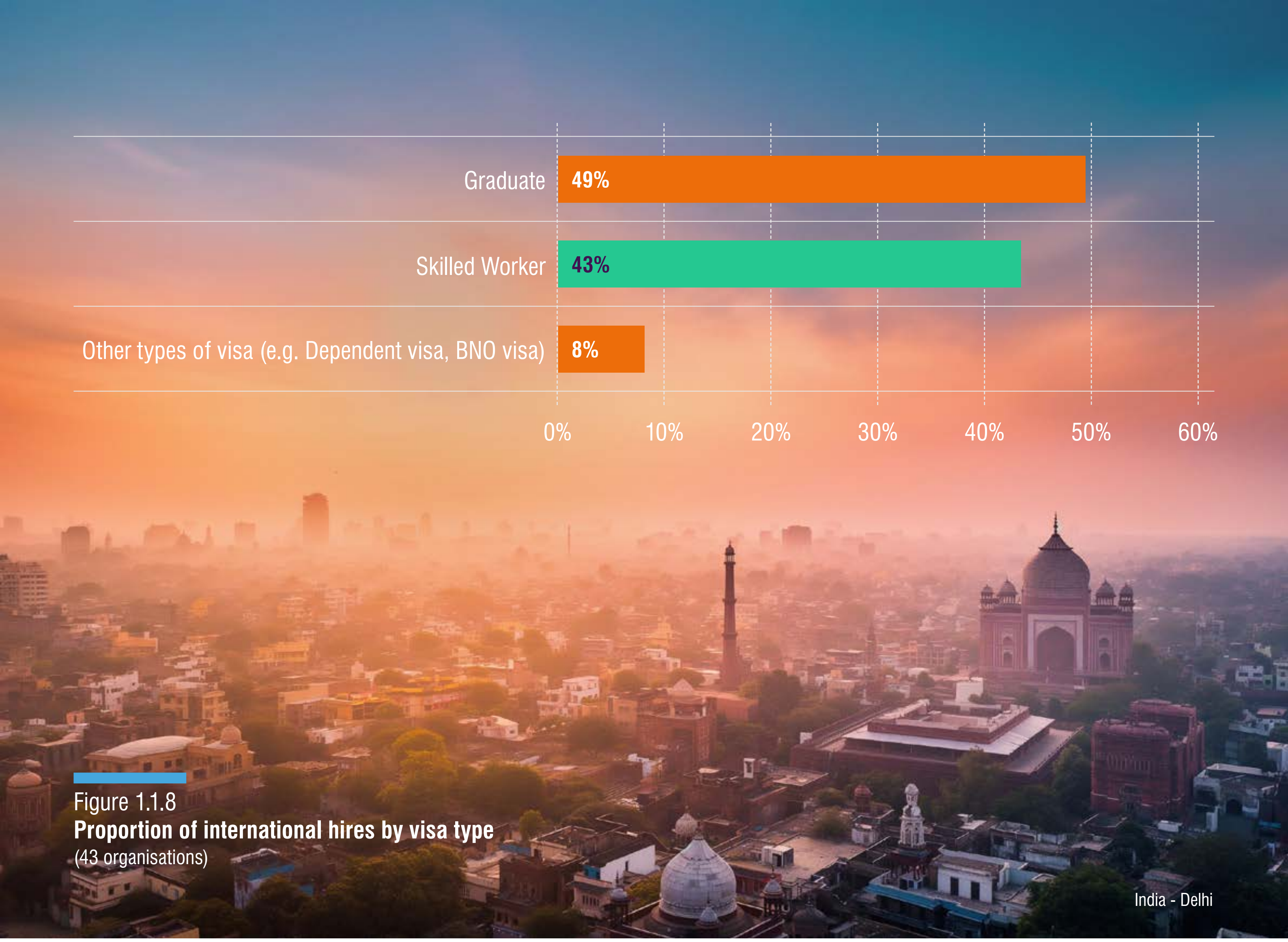



Figure 1.1.8
**Proportion of international hires by visa type**
(43 organisations)

## International students

In 2024, international graduates in the UK faced a turbulent and uncertain environment following proposed reforms to the Graduate Route visa. Although the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) conducted a rapid review and found no evidence of systemic abuse, recommending the route remain as is, policy discussions around tightening the visa's terms have continued to create uncertainty[5]. These pressures were further intensified by formal changes to the immigration system, including an increase in the general salary threshold for the Skilled Worker visa from £38,700 to £41,700 (effective 22 July 2025) and reinstating the requirement that sponsored roles align with Degree level (RQF 6) qualifications[6].

Against this shifting backdrop, 57% of respondents said they currently hire international students, down from 61% the previous year. Future recruitment intentions are marked by uncertainty: nearly half (49%) remain unsure how application volumes will change in the next recruitment cycle; while 27% plan to maintain current levels, 21% expect to decrease, and just 3% plan to increase them.

Although not all international graduates hired studied in the UK, the majority (87%) graduated from UK institutions. Among these hires, 49% entered under the Graduate Route visa and 43% under the Skilled Worker visa (Figure 1.1.8). Notably, reliance on the Skilled Worker route at the onboarding point has dropped compared to previous years (47% in 2024 and 51% in 2023). This could be due to the rising salary and skill thresholds and tighter occupation eligibility or because international students have been hired later in the season and will be switched to the Skilled Worker visa at a later point.

Taken together, these shifts suggest that the UK's graduate workforce is becoming somewhat less international in response to government policy. Whether this narrowing of the pool ultimately creates skills shortages for employers will be an important area to watch.

[5] Migration Advisory Committee. (2024). *Graduate route: rapid review.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/graduate-route-rapid-review

[6] UK Home Office. (2025). *Workers and temporary workers: Sponsor a skilled worker.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-sponsor-a-skilled-worker

# 1.2 School and college leavers

School and college leavers remain an important part of the early talent landscape. This year 66% of employers recruited school and college leavers and other non-graduate entry-level hires. For employers who provided current and prior year data, overall volumes of hiring for this entry route has increased this year (by 8%).

There are some important differences by sector in respondents' likelihood to be recruiting school and college leavers. For example, analysis by sector shows that 77% of employers in the Built Environment sector recruited school and college leavers, compared to 53% of employers in the Retail, FMCG & Tourism.

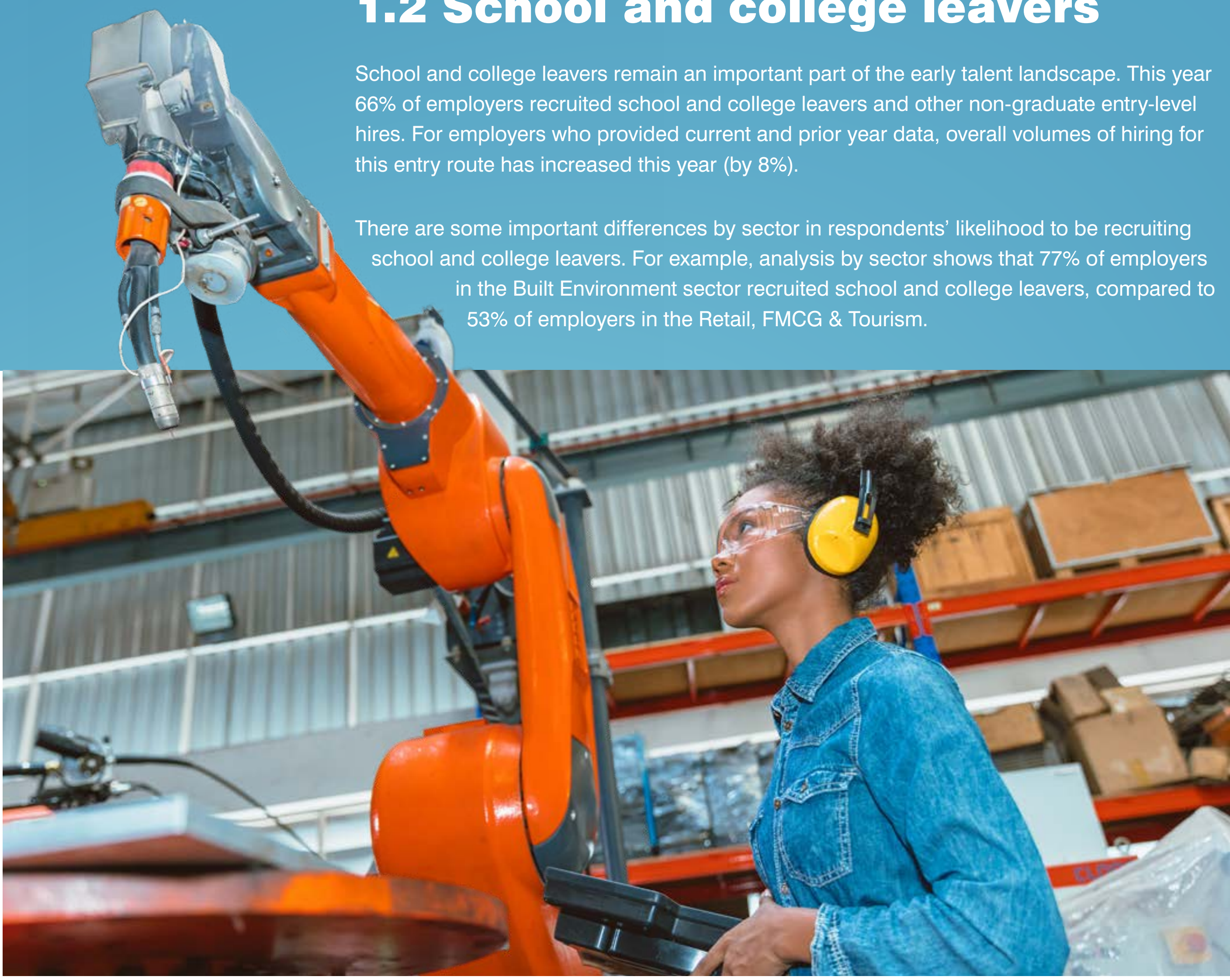
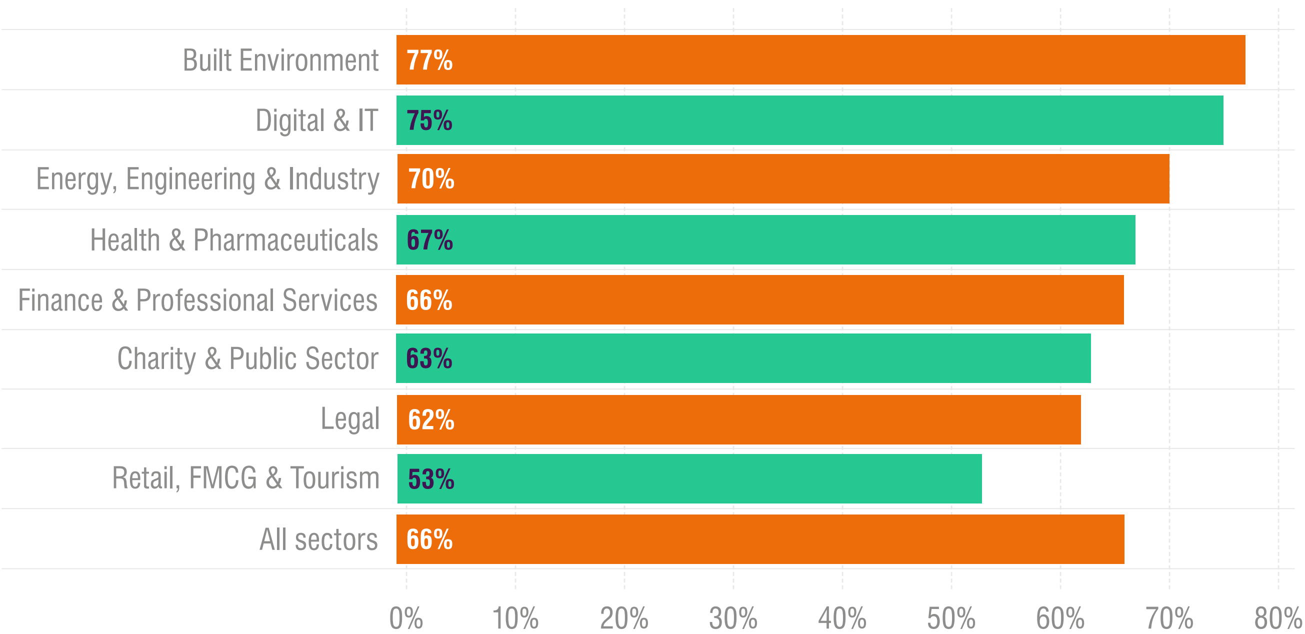


Figure 1.2.1

**Employer recruited school and college leavers and other non-graduate entry-level hires by sector**

(150 organisations)



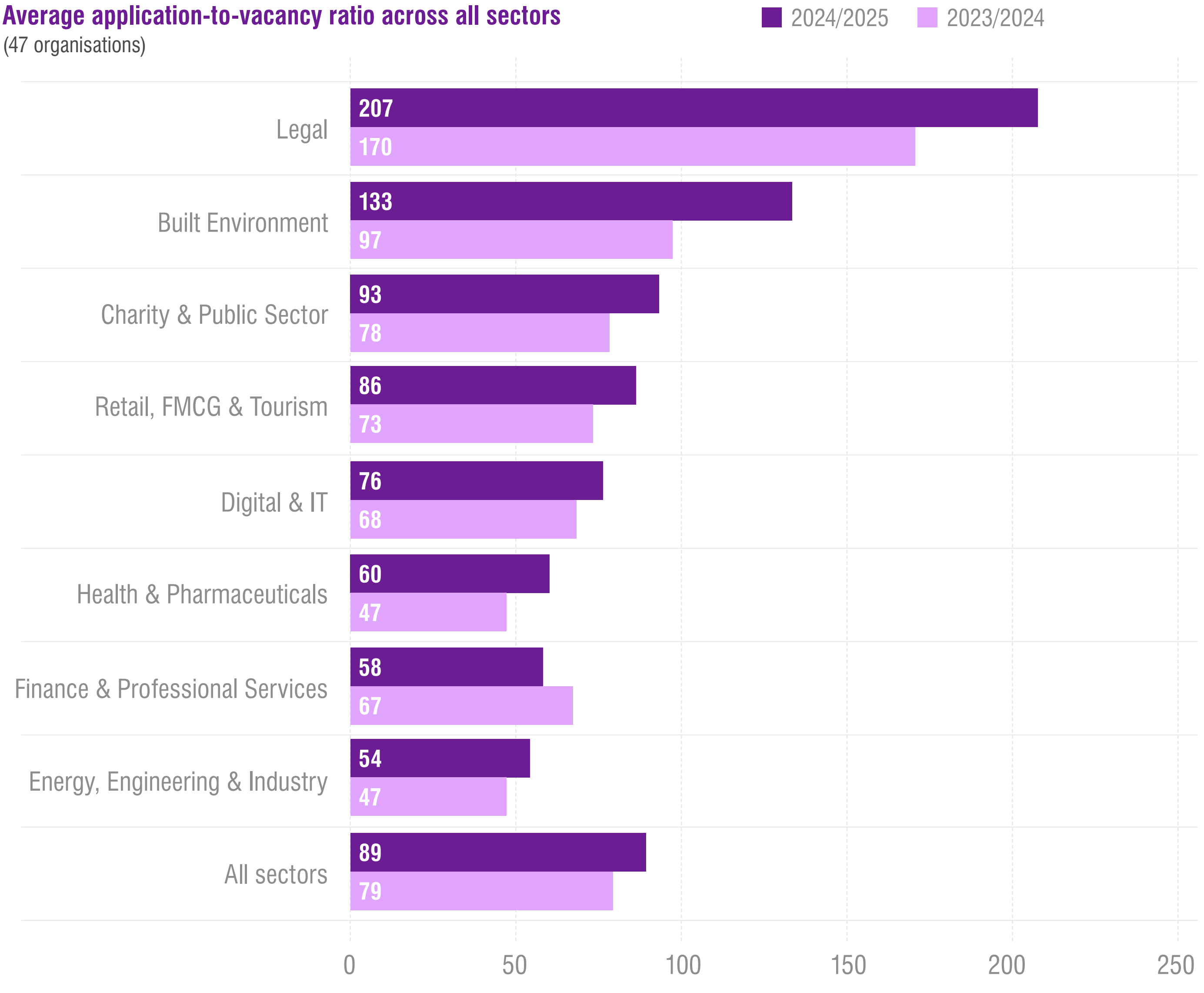
# Applications and hires

In this year's survey, we asked respondents to report the number of applications they received and the number of school and college leavers they hired, both this year and last year.

Respondents reported receiving 342,302 applications for non-graduate entry-level positions during 2024/25. Among organisations that provided application numbers for both 2023/24 and 2024/25, this represents a 13% increase compared with the previous year. This follows exceptional rises in recent years, with applications increasing by 55% reported in 2024 and by 29% reported in 2023. These sustained increases highlight the substantial growth in application volumes that recruiters are now managing and raise important questions about whether this trend will continue—and, if so, how employers can best respond.

On average, employers received 89 applications per vacancy in 2024/25. While this headline figure is lower than the 113:1 reported in last year's published results, analysis of a matched sample of employers who provided data in both years shows a 13% increase, from 79:1 in 2023/24 to 89:1 in 2024/25. The typical (median) vacancy received 61 applications, representing an 8% decrease on last year. This divergence indicates that while some employers continue to face extremely high volumes of applications, others experience far lower levels of competition. By sector, the Legal industry reported the highest applications per vacancy (207), while the Energy, Engineering & Industry sector reported the lowest (54).

Figure 1.2.2
**Average application-to-vacancy ratio across all sectors**
(47 organisations)



Overall, respondents hired a total of 4,980 school and college leavers and other non-graduates during 2024/25. Figure 1.2.3 shows how these hires were distributed across the country. Compared with last year, London continues to account for the largest share, at 38%. The South West saw the biggest drop, falling from 10% last year to just 3% this year.

Figure 1.2.3
**Geographical breakdown of school and college leaver and non-graduate hires 2024/2025**
(54 organisations)

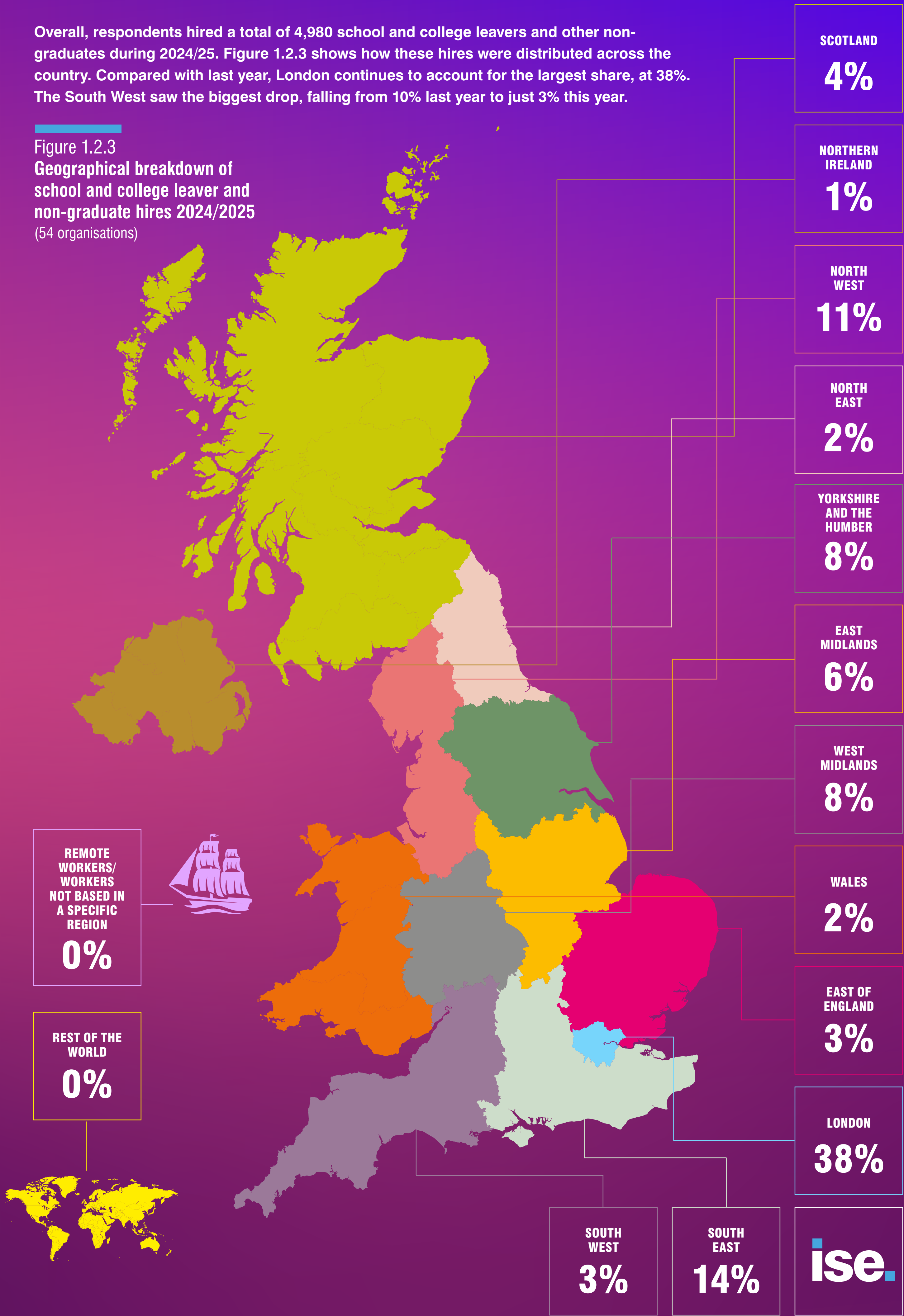
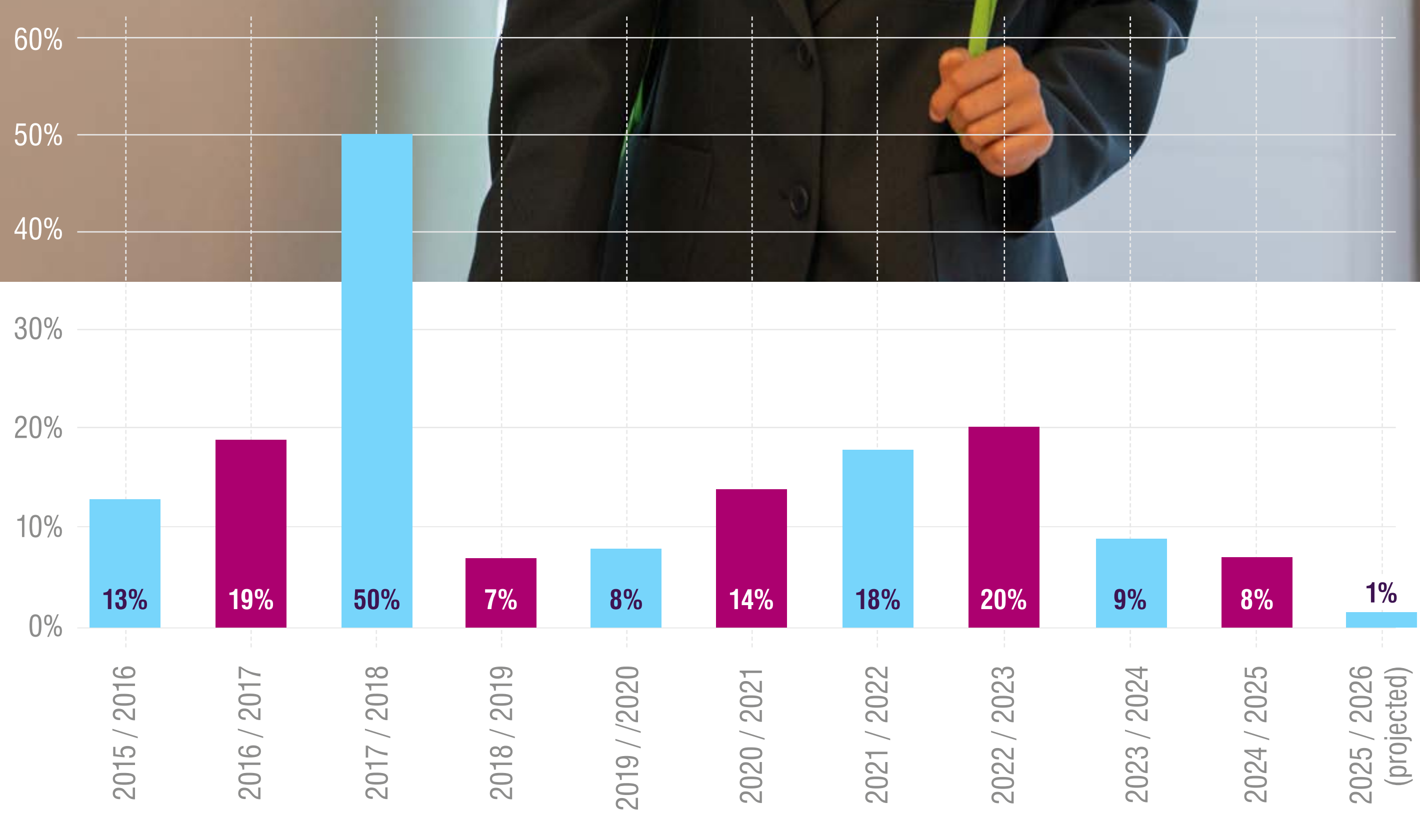


Figure 1.2.4
**Growth in the school and college leaver recruitment market**[7]




## Growth in school and college leaver market

Among organisations providing comparable data for both 2023/24 and 2024/25 (58 employers), hires of school and college leavers rose by 8%. However, this growth was uneven: while 36% of employers increased their hiring, 24% kept numbers unchanged and 40% reported a reduction. Looking ahead, projections for 2025/26 are based on a smaller sample of 41 employers, who expect hires to grow by 1%. Within this group, 44% anticipate increasing recruitment, 32% plan no change, and 24% expect a decrease. Overall, the school and college leaver market shows modest gains in hiring set against a backdrop of rising application volumes (Figure 1.2.4).

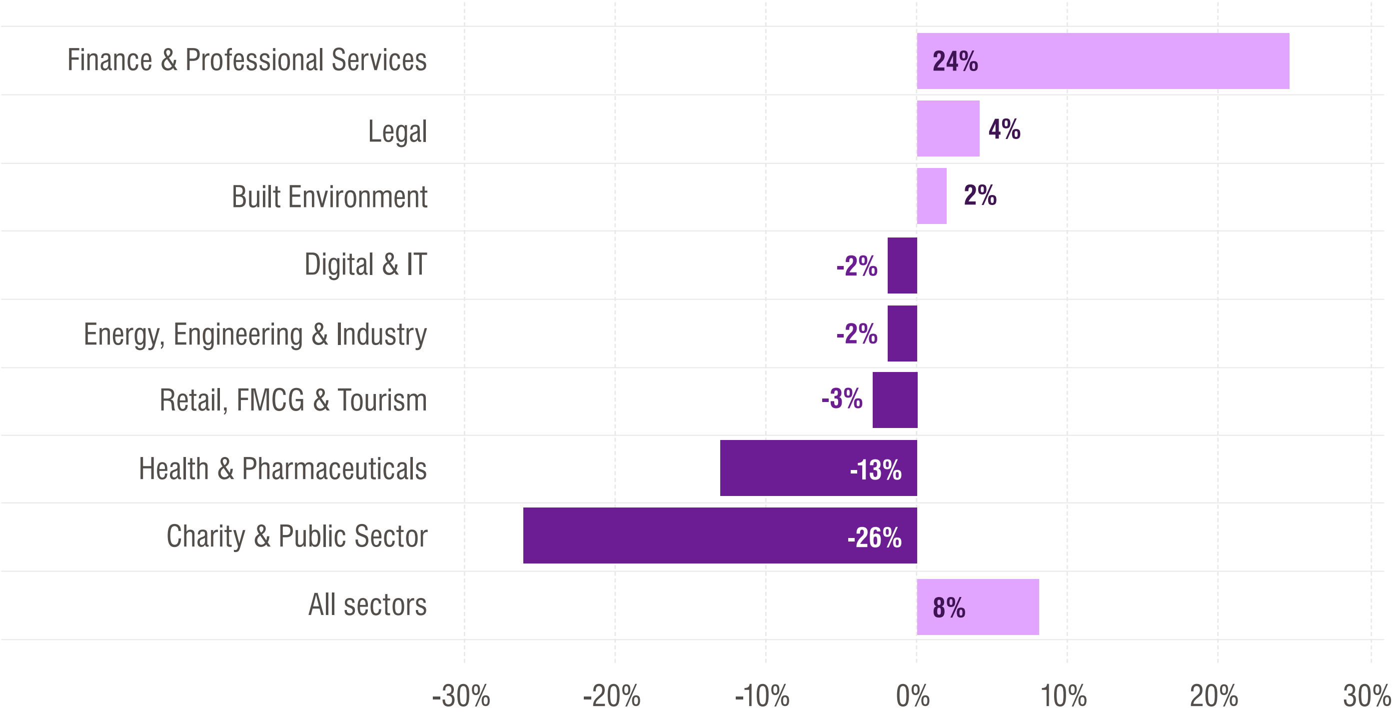
[7] Data from 2015/16 to 2023/24 is based on data published in previous ISE survey reports.

Hiring trends vary significantly by sector (Figure 1.2.5). Finance & Professional Services (+24%), Legal (+4%), and Built Environment (+2%) showed the strongest growth in 2024/25, reflecting sustained demand for high-skilled talent in commercially driven industries. In contrast, hiring fell sharply in Charity & Public Sector (–26%) and Health & Pharmaceuticals (–13%). This pattern contrasts with graduate hiring and suggests that employers are increasingly differentiating their talent pipelines by entry route. In Finance & Professional Services, for example, employers appear to be placing greater emphasis on school and college leaver pathways — perhaps valuing early-entry talent that can be shaped internally. In this sector, among organisations recruiting both graduates and school and college leavers and providing comparable data across both years, the ratio of graduate to school and college leaver hires fell from 3.4:1 in 2023/24 to 2.5:1 in 2024/25. Meanwhile, in the Charity & Public Sector the ratio moved from 1.8:1 to 2.0:1 over the same period, indicating more graduate hires relative to school and college leavers and possibly reflecting growing demand for higher qualifications and specialist skills in policy, public services and non-profit work.

Figure 1.2.5

**Average (mean) change in school and college leaver hiring numbers by sector 2023/2024 to 2024/2025**

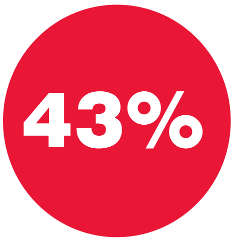
(58 organisations)




Growth projections also varied by sector with Finance & Professional Services predicting overall growth (13%), Legal expecting no change, and Energy, Engineering & Industry predicting a decline (-12%) (other sectors not reported due to fewer responses).

## School and college leaver roles

School and college leavers were recruited into a broad mix of roles (Figure 1.2.6), with IT, digital and AI, accountancy, finance and banking, and engineering emerging as the most common — consistent with last year.

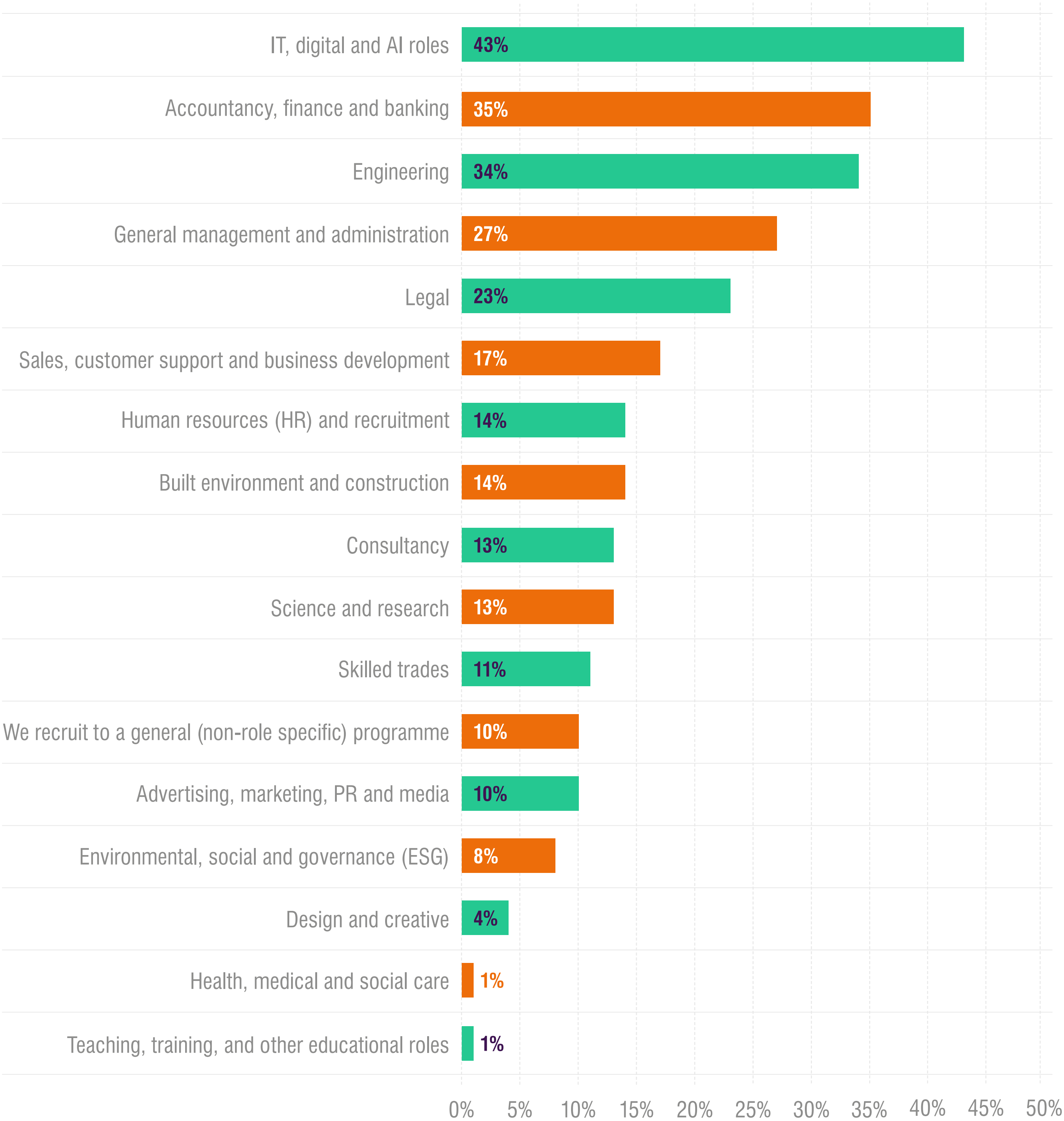



**hiring for IT, digital and AI roles**

Figure 1.2.6

**Proportion of school and college leaver employers recruiting to different occupations**

(83 organisations)



However, these roles also proved the most difficult to fill. This year, 47% of respondents reported difficulty filling at least one school leaver vacancy, up slightly from 45% last year. Engineering once again topped the list of hardest-to-fill roles, highlighting persistent demand for technical skills. The top five roles remain identical to last year, pointing to a structural rather than short-term challenge.

1. Engineering
2. IT, digital and AI roles, and Accountancy, finance and banking
3. Sales, customer support and business development
4. Skilled trades

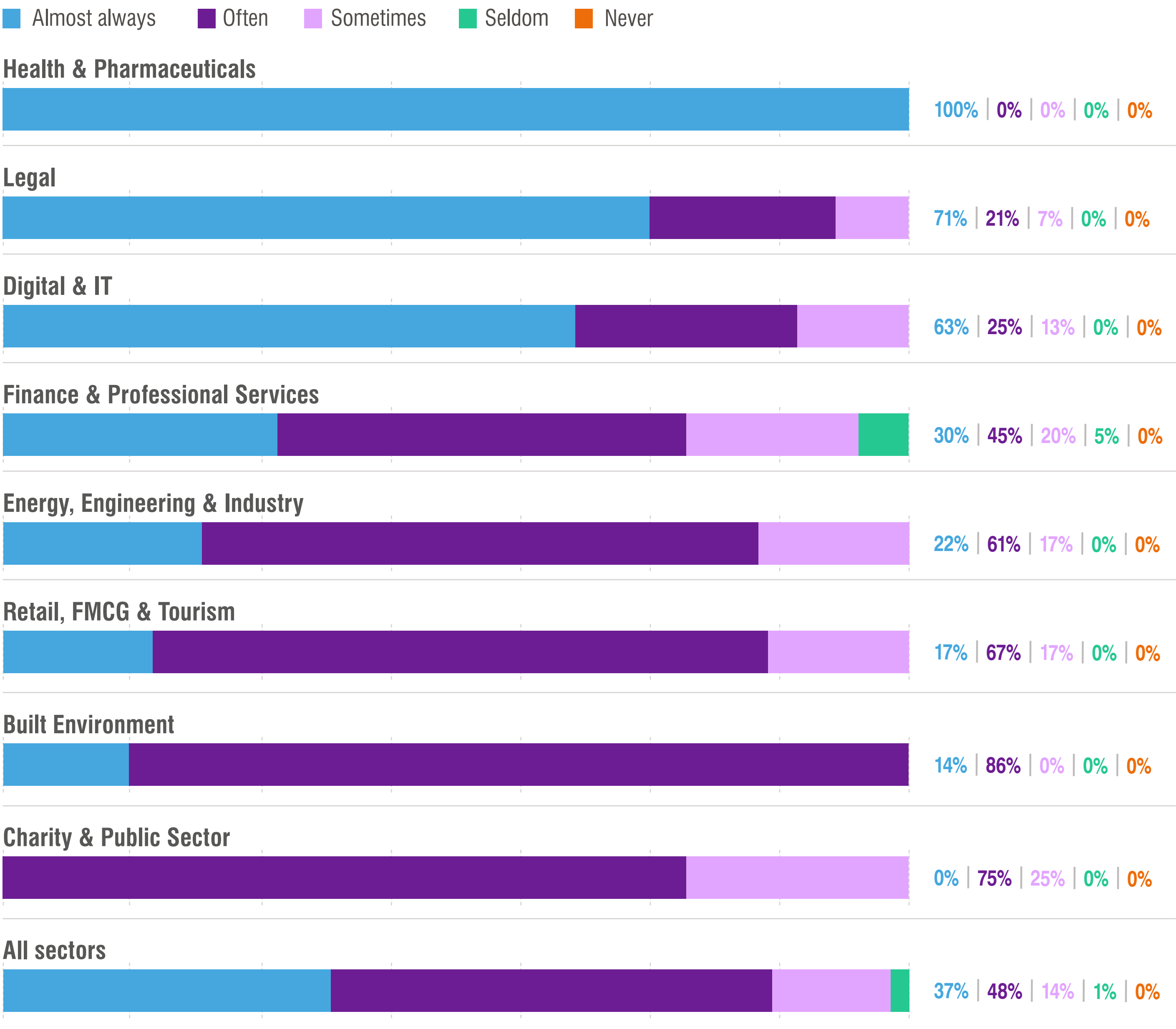
## Satisfaction with school and college leavers

Employers remain broadly satisfied with the quality of school and college leavers they recruit (Figure 1.2.7). Over one-third (37%) reported that they are 'almost always' able to secure candidates of the desired quality, while nearly half (48%) said this was 'often' the case. Satisfaction levels have remained stable over recent years, suggesting that while skills shortages exist in specific areas, the overall pool of candidates is meeting employer expectations. This is good news and suggests that recruitment processes are continuing to work despite the challenges of increasing volumes of applications.

Sectoral differences remain important. Employers in Health & Pharmaceuticals, Legal, Digital & IT reported the highest satisfaction, whereas those in Finance & Professional Services and Charity & Public Sector were less positive.


**of employers 'almost always' or 'often' able to recruit quality school and colege leavers**

Figure 1.2.7
**Ability to recruit quality school and college leavers**
(79 organisations)




# 1.3 Interns and placement students

As well as graduates and school and college leavers, employers hire students onto a range of short-term programmes. We distinguish between undergraduates who are hired for a short term (less than six months, usually over Easter or the summer break), referred to as *interns*, and those hired for a longer period (typically six months to a year), usually in the middle of an undergraduate degree (sometimes called a 'sandwich year' or a 'year in industry'), referred to as *placement students*.

In addition, this chapter looks at T-level placements (which last for approximately 45 days and are aimed at students aged 16-18 studying T-levels)[8] and work experience for school students (which can be aimed at students between 11-18 and may take a variety of different forms).[9]

The majority of respondents (71%) reported that they recruit interns, placement students, or offer work experience placements for schools or T-level providers. This is a drop from last year's 80%, suggesting a slight contraction in employer participation in these early talent programmes.

## Trends in internship and undergraduate placement availability

### University level work experiences

In 2024/2025, respondents reported hiring 4,979 interns and 1,763 undergraduate placement students. Among organisations providing data for both years, this represented an overall 1% decrease compared with the previous year. However, this overall figure masks variation with internship hiring rising by 2%, while undergraduate placement hiring fell by 4%.

Looking ahead, employers anticipate a slight contraction, with internship and placement opportunities forecast to decline by 1% overall next year (Figure 1.3.1). Within this, intern numbers are expected to rise by 1%, while placement hires are projected to fall by 3%.

[8] GOV.UK. (2022). What are T Levels? https://employers.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/4403450115474-What-are-T-Levels-

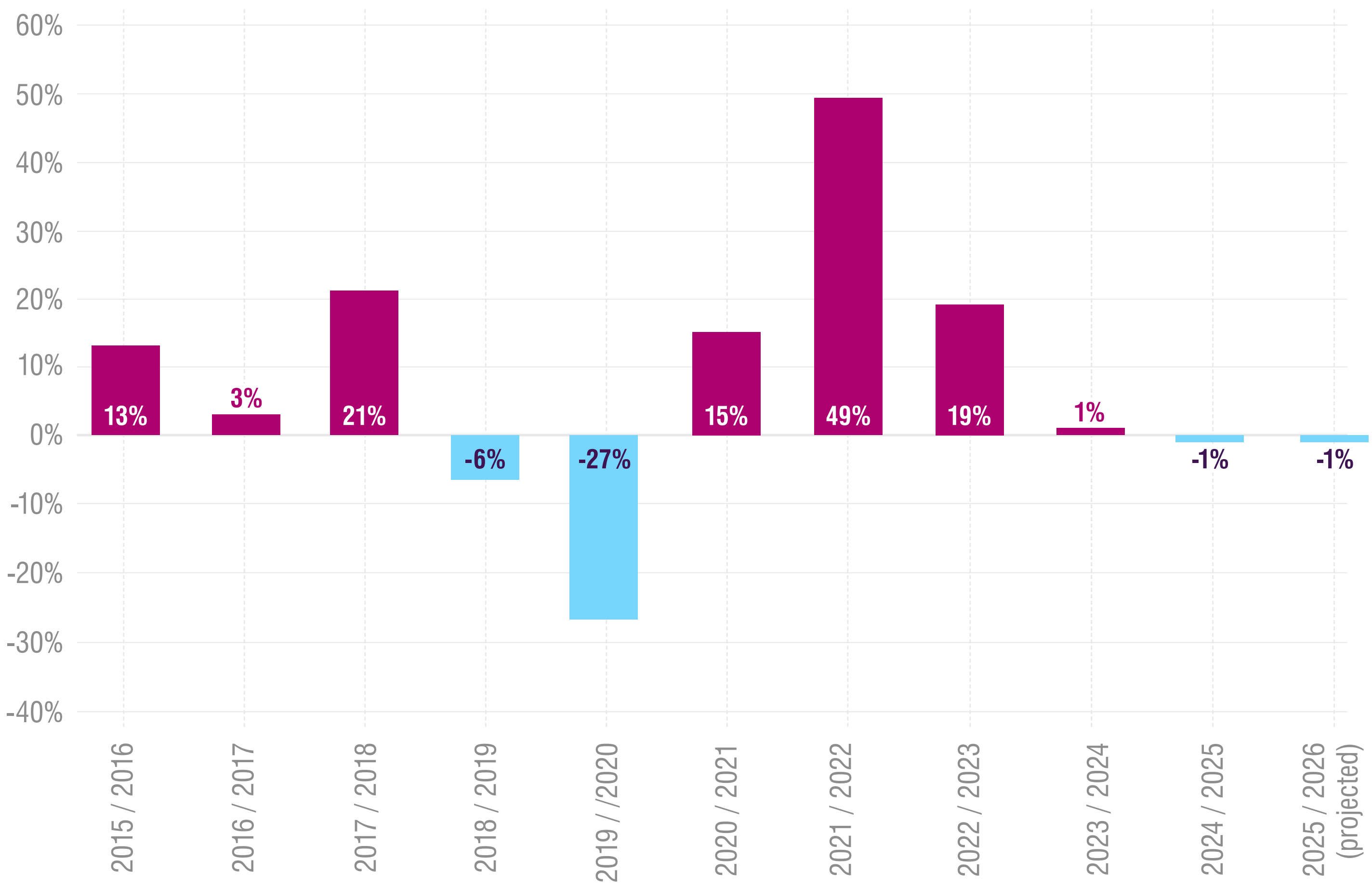
[9] Department for Education. (2025). Careers guidance and access for education and training providers. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools/careers-guidance-and-access-for-education-and-training-providers.

## School and college level work experiences

In 2024/2025, respondents reported providing 4,287 work experience placements for school students. Among organisations providing comparable data for both 2023/24 and 2024/25 (22 employers), respondents reported a 22% increase[10] in opportunities compared with the previous year.

Once again, insufficient data was available on T-levels to make reliable market-wide estimates, underlining the very limited scale of T-level placements at present.

Figure 1.3.1
**Growth or shrinkage in the internship and placement student recruitment market**



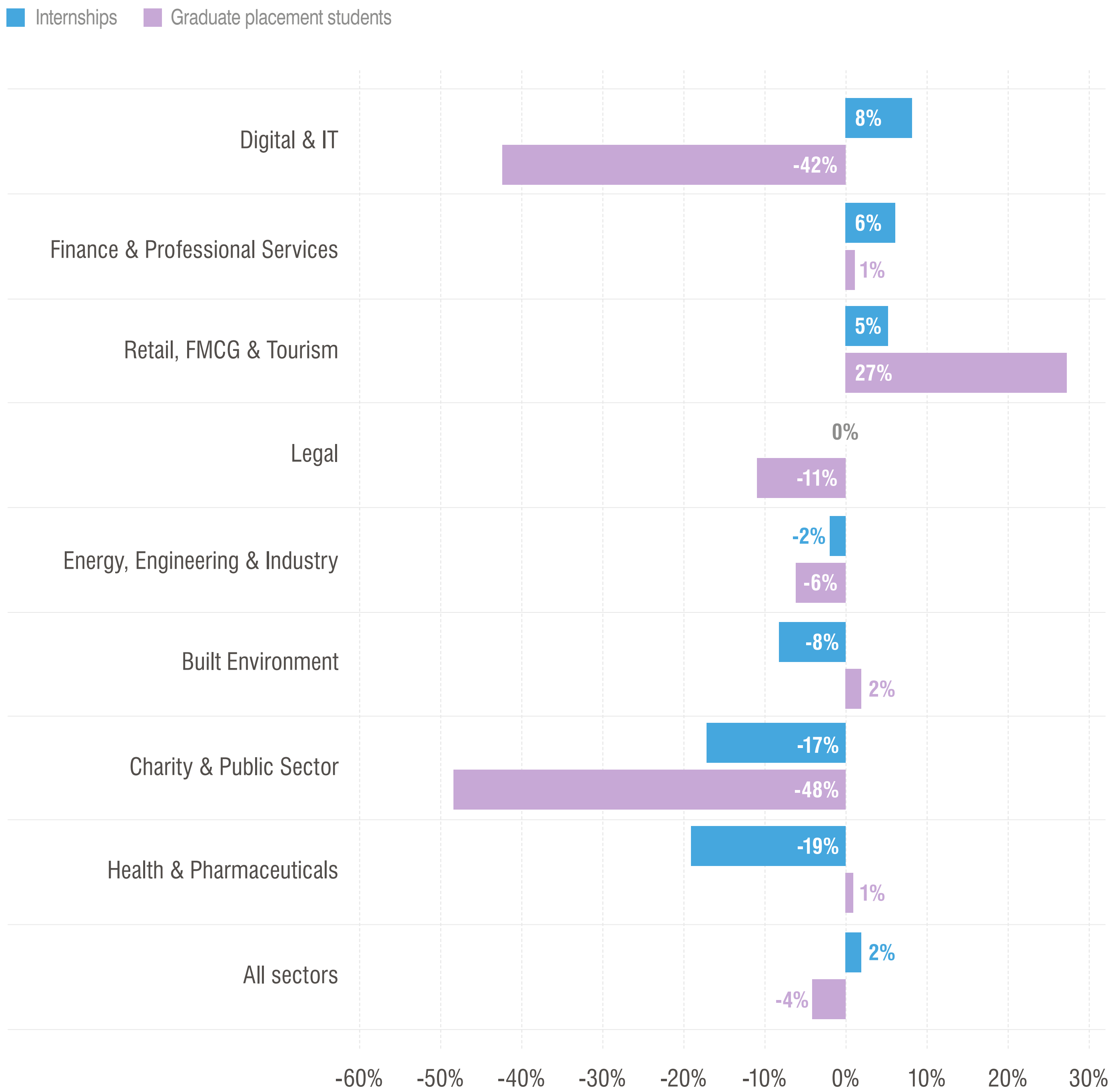

[10] This increase in school work experience opportunities is largely driven by a change in the work experience offering of a small number of employers.

Sectoral differences were pronounced. Employers in the Digital & IT sector increased internship hires by 8% in 2024/25, while the Retail, FMCG & Tourism sector saw the largest increase in placement hires (+27%). By contrast, the Charity & Public Sector experienced notable declines, with internship hires falling by 17% and placement hires down by 48% compared to last year (Figure 1.3.2).

Growth projections also varied by sector. The Built Environment sector forecasts the strongest growth, with placements expected to rise by 20%, although internships are expected to fall slightly (–6%). Energy, Engineering & Industry employers anticipate a sharp decline in placements (–31%) but a notable 15% increase in internships. In Finance & Professional Services, placements are expected to rise modestly (+4%), while internship levels are predicted to remain stable. Health & Pharmaceuticals shows a small projected fall in placements (–2%) but growth in internships (+6%). Other sectors are not reported due to fewer responses.

Figure 1.3.2

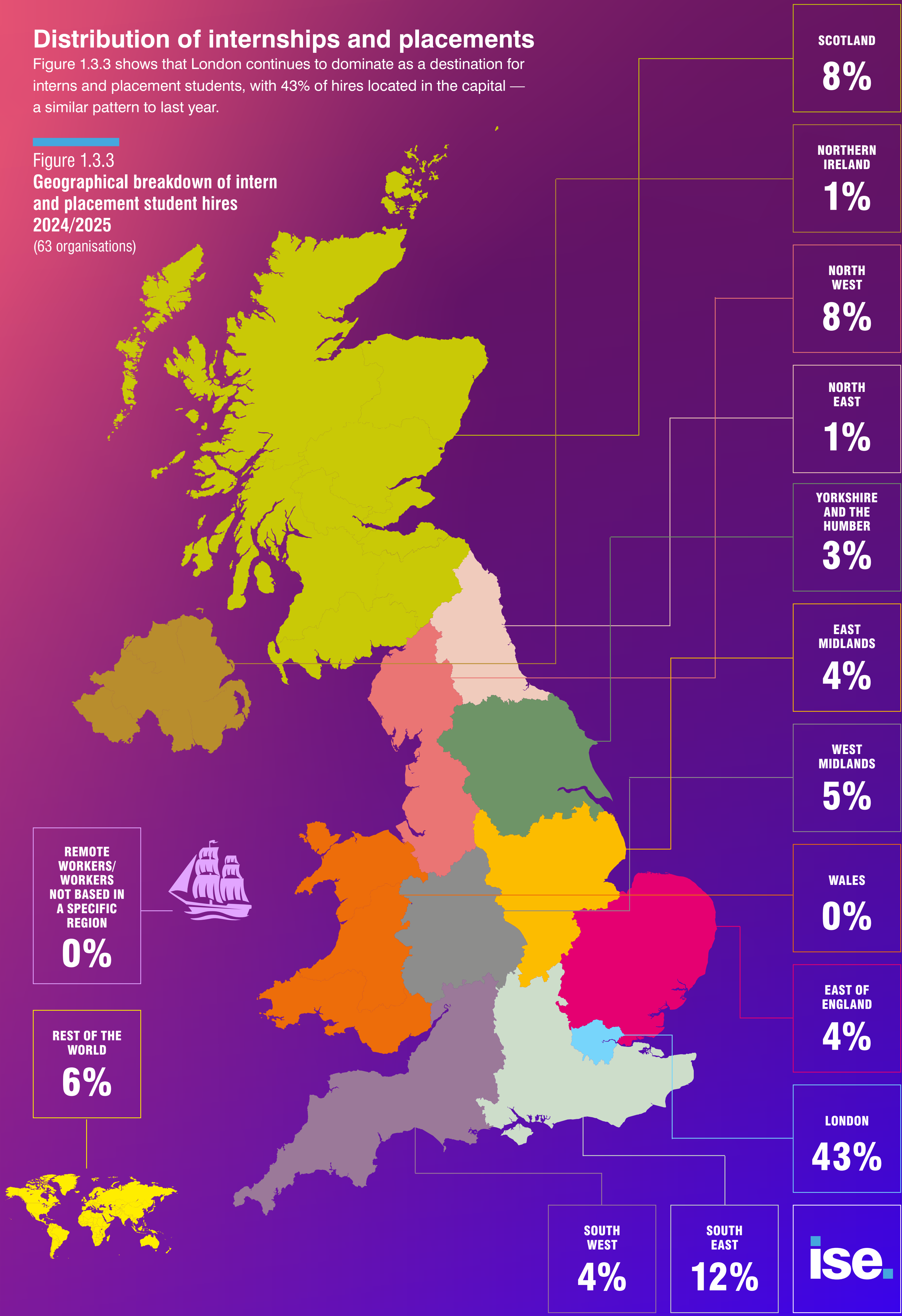
**Average (mean) change in internship and graduate placement student hiring numbers by sector from 2023/2024 to 2024/2025** (60 organisations for internship, 45 organisations for graduate placement student)



# Distribution of internships and placements

Figure 1.3.3 shows that London continues to dominate as a destination for interns and placement students, with 43% of hires located in the capital — a similar pattern to last year.

Figure 1.3.3
**Geographical breakdown of intern and placement student hires 2024/2025**
(63 organisations)



# Applications and hires

In this year's report, we asked respondents to report the number of applications and hires for interns, undergraduate placements, T-level placements, and school work experience for both 2023/24 and 2024/25.

## University level work experiences

Respondents received 318,252 applications for intern roles during 2024/25. Among organisations able to provide year-on-year data (52 employers), this represented a 34% increase compared with the previous year. Again, this provides substantial evidence that students' application practices are changing.

For undergraduate placement roles, 109,357 applications were recorded in 2024/25, which represented a 17% increase from the previous year among organisations providing both years' data (41 employers).

With vacancy levels broadly stable overall for university level work experience in 2024/2025, this increase in applications indicates either that a larger share of students will have failed to secure an internship or placement, and/or that students submitted more applications per person.

Competition for university-level work experience roles intensified in 2024/25. Internships attracted an average of 101 applications per hire and undergraduate placements 123 applications per hire. Both figures are higher than last year's published results (84:1 and 87:1 respectively). Analysis of a matched sample of employers who provided data in both years confirms this trend: internship ratios rose by 16% (from 87:1 to 101:1), while placement ratios increased by 27% (from 97:1 to 123:1). Median figures also point to growing competition, with the typical internship vacancy attracting 63 applications (up 29%) and the typical placement vacancy 82 (up 49%).

## School and college level work experiences

Respondents received 25,154 applications for work experience placements for school students during 2024/2025.

Using data from organisations who could provide the application numbers for school work experiences in both 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 (22 employers), this was a decrease (8%) on the previous year.

For those employers who provided both application and hiring figures in both 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 (16 employers), on average, organisations received 10 applications per hire in 2024/25 (a 1% increase from last year), while the median organisation received 8 applications per hire (a 5% increase).

There were insufficient responses on T-level placements to provide reliable application or hire averages, highlighting how limited this part of the market still is.

# **Section 2:** Recruitment strategy

**Successful early talent recruitment depends not only on the pathways employers offer but also on the strategies they use to attract, select, and hire candidates. This section looks at how organisations are structuring their approaches, covering apprenticeships, attraction campaigns, selection and assessment methods, hiring practices, resourcing models, and equity, diversity, and inclusion.**

## 2.1 Apprenticeship approach

Similar to last year (82%), employers recruited apprentices (81%) this year. The types of students being hired remained broadly similar to last year, with the majority of new apprentice hires being school and college leavers (77%) and a much smaller proportion being graduate hires (16%). Only 5% of apprentices were experienced professionals and a further 3% were other hires.

## Apprenticeship levels

Similar to last year (95%), most of the organisations (96%) that recruit school and college leavers reported enrolling them onto apprenticeships.

There was also an increase in the proportion of employers using apprenticeships for graduate hires, with 44% of respondents reporting that they enrolled graduates onto apprentice programmes this year, up from 37% last year.

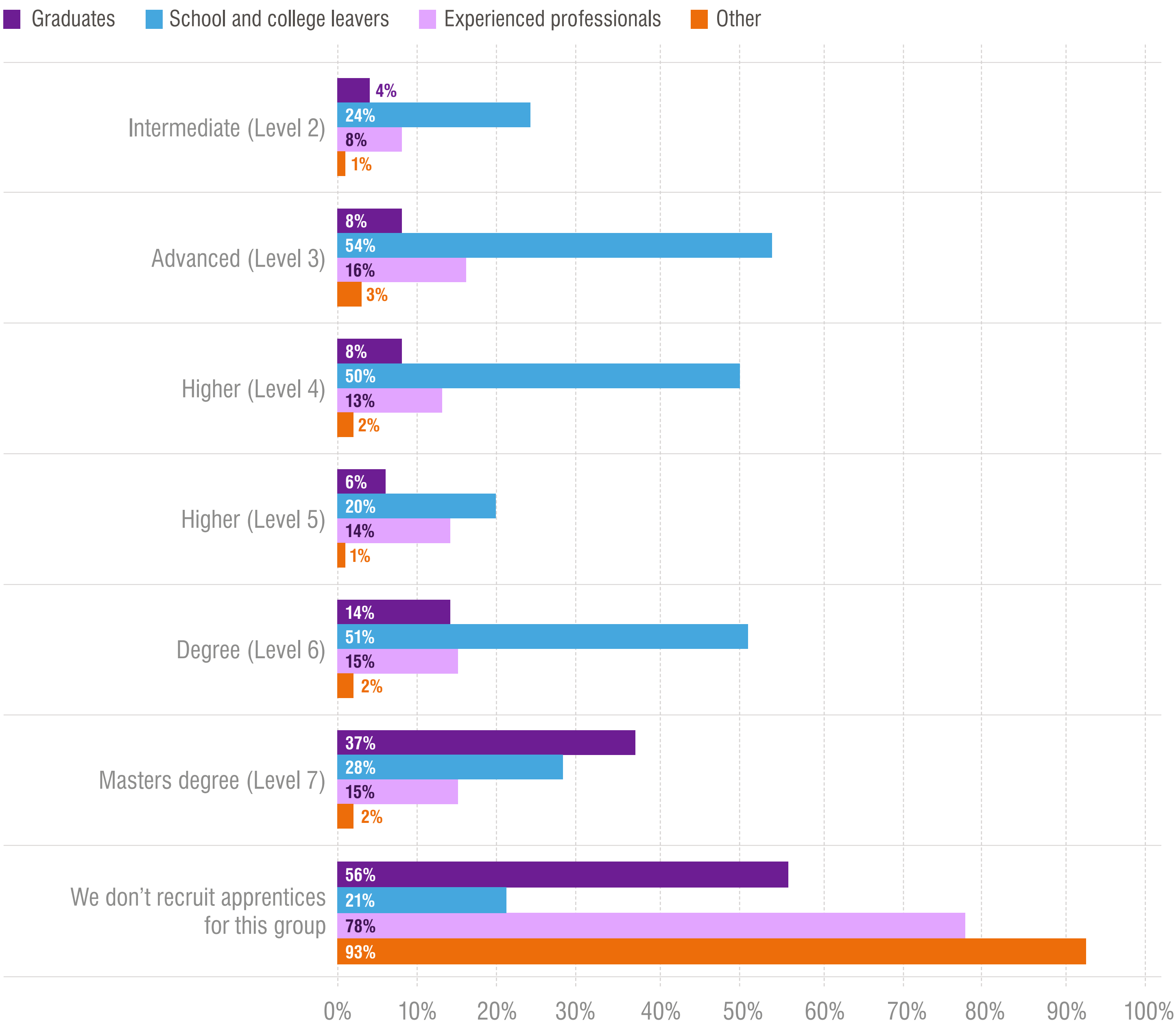
Employers placed school and college leavers onto various levels of apprenticeships, with Level 3 being the most predominant, with 54% of respondents indicating they recruited apprentices at Level 3 for school and college leavers. Level 7 was the most common for graduates with 37% of respondents saying they recruit graduates onto Level 7 apprenticeships.

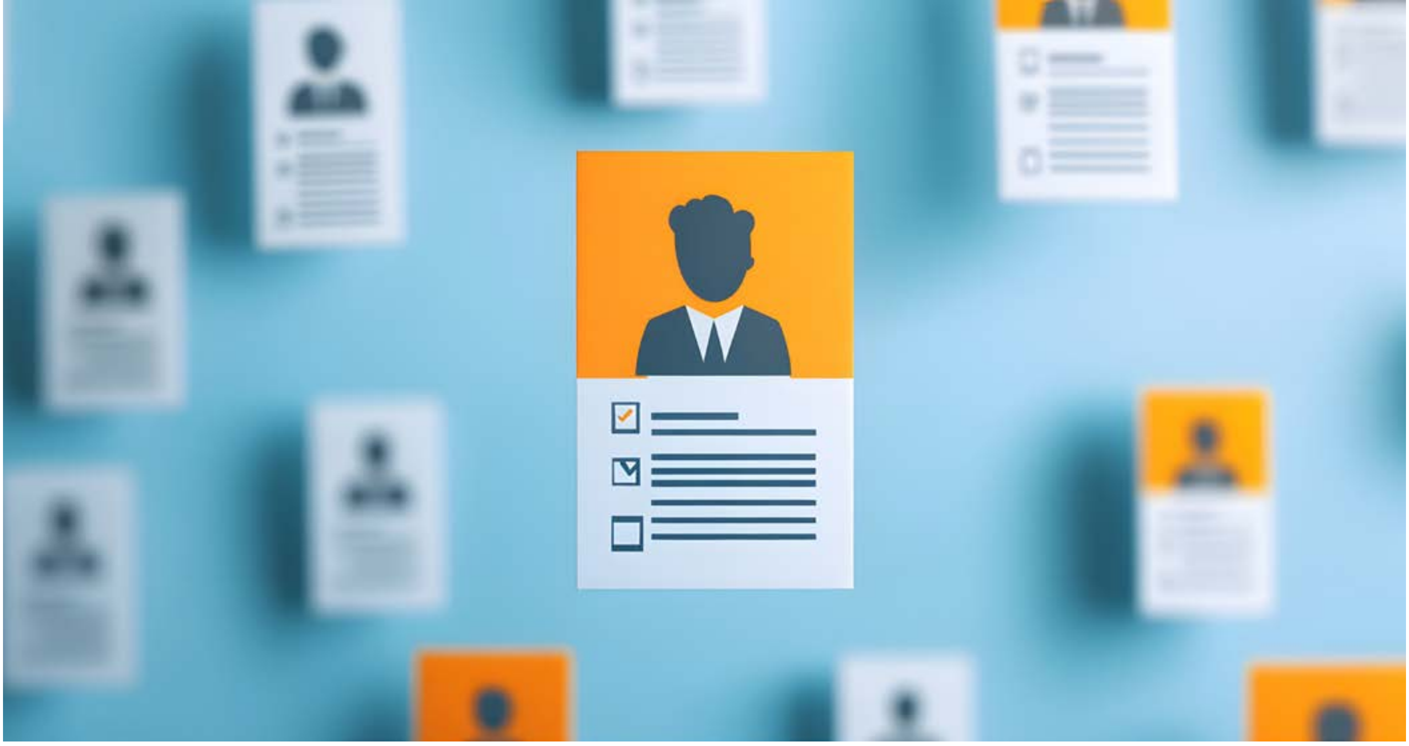
Figure 2.1.1 sets out the apprenticeship levels that employers were recruiting for, broken down by type of hire.

Figure 2.1.1

**Apprenticeship level organisations were recruiting for**

(115 organisations)





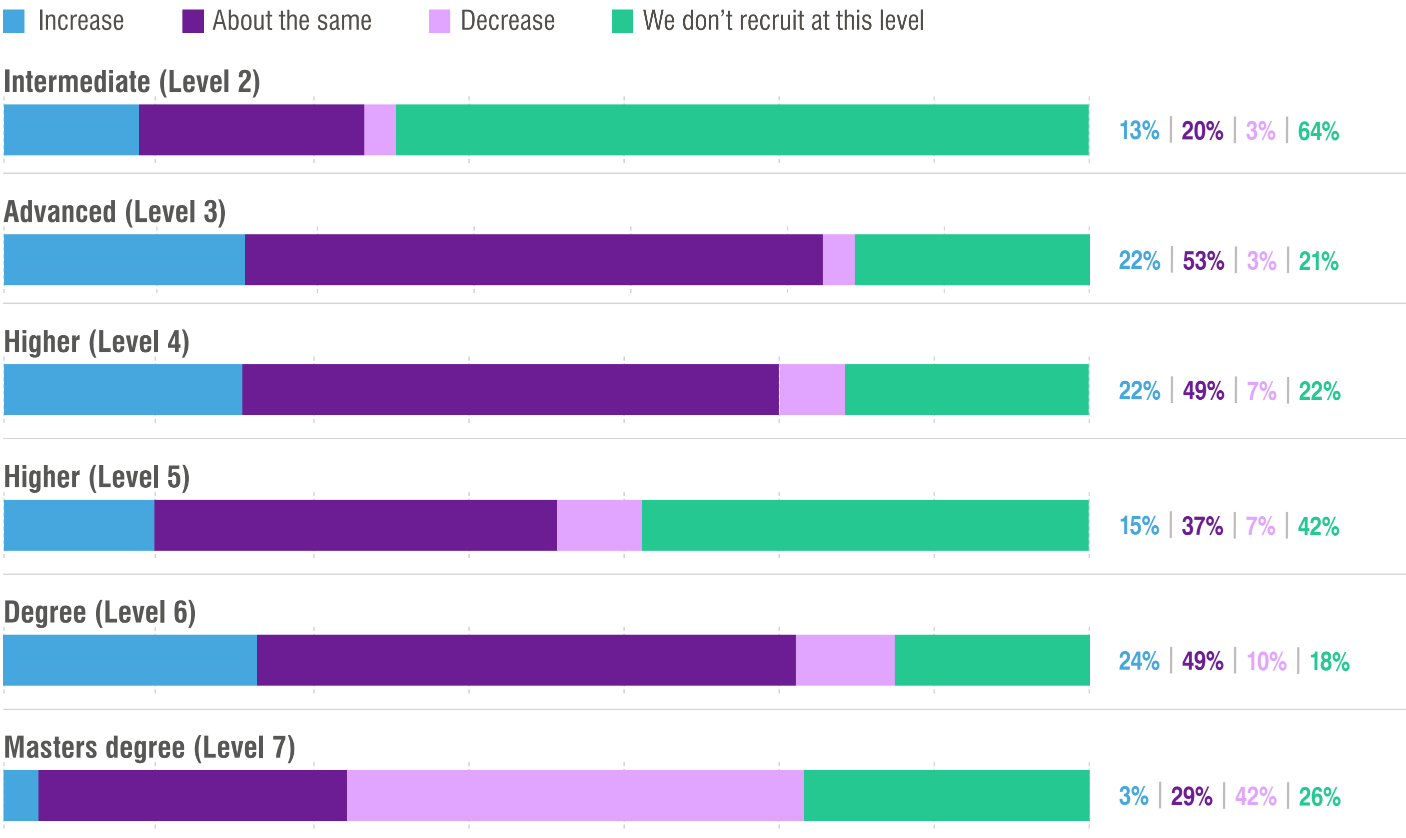
Considering the recent changes to the UK apprenticeship regime, 80% of respondents expect to offer about the same number of apprenticeships. Under the current government, apprenticeships have been reformed to refocus them on young workers and labour market entrants and de-emphasised higher level (Level 7) training.[11] However, 16% anticipate a decrease, while only 4% plan to increase their offer.

Figure 2.1.2 shows the expected change in apprenticeship recruitment, broken down by level, over the next three years. Notably, 42% of employers expect to reduce recruitment at Level 7, suggesting that the recent changes may be having a particular impact on higher-level apprenticeships.

Figure 2.1.2

**Apprenticeship level organisations were recruiting for over the next three years**

(97 organisations)




[11] Jeffreys, B. (2025). Higher-level apprenticeship funding to be scrapped as focus shifts to under-22s. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9vgd8zmpe3o

# 2.2 Attraction

**At the heart of student recruitment is the challenge of attracting students to engage with an organisation and consider applying for roles. Respondents reported using a wide range of approaches to achieve this.**

## Recruitment campaigns

In this year's survey, we asked employers how many recruitment intakes they run per year. The majority reported running a single intake—70% for graduates and 76% for school and college leavers. Smaller proportions ran two intakes (18% for graduates, 10% for school and college leavers), while only a minority conducted three or more, or operated rolling recruitment with no defined intake periods (Figure 2.2.1).

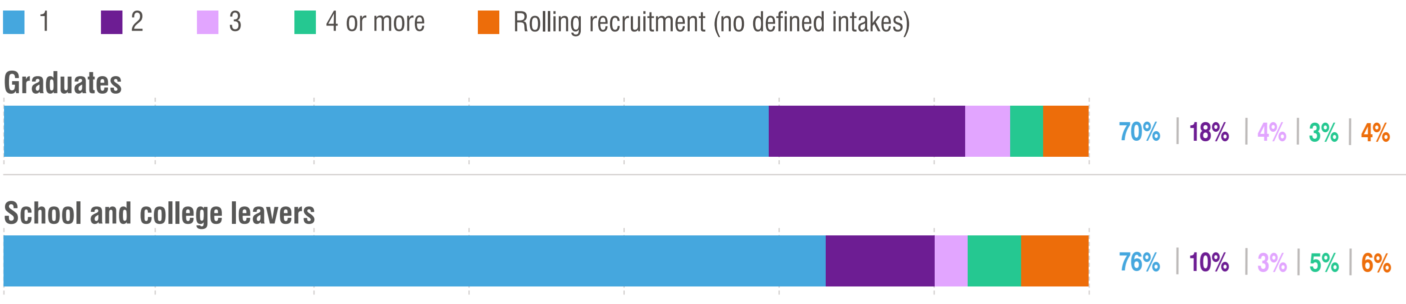
**70%**

**ran a single intake for graduates**

Figure 2.2.1

**Number of recruitment intakes per year**

(121 organisations for graduates; 94 organisations for school and college leavers)




The timing of recruitment campaigns for graduates and school and college leavers shows distinct seasonal patterns (see Figure 2.2.2). For graduates, recruitment is front-loaded in the academic year. Most campaigns open between October and December (68%), with offers peaking in January–March (47%). This suggests employers aim to secure graduate talent early, often before students complete their studies, and aligns with the traditional university careers calendar. Campaign closures are more evenly spread, but a third still end within the first quarter of the year.

For school and college leavers, the cycle is shifted later. While many campaigns still open in October–December (48%), a substantial proportion launch in January–March (38%). Offers peak in April–June (52%), which coincides with the end of the school year and exam periods. Campaign closures mirror this pattern, with the majority finalised in spring and early summer.

This divergence reflects the different educational timelines of the two groups. Graduate recruitment prioritises early engagement to secure top talent before competing offers are made, whereas school and college leaver hiring is more responsive to the academic completion dates of younger candidates.

Although most graduate campaigns open between October and December, sector-level patterns differ in when offers and closures occur. For example, in Finance & Professional Services sector, a majority of graduate offers (61%) are made as early as October–December, compared with the overall peak in January–March. By contrast, in the Built Environment sector, half of campaigns (50%) close in April–June, later than the typical first-quarter end.

A similar story is seen in school and college leaver recruitment: openings are broadly consistent across sectors, but offer and closure timings diverge. In Finance & Professional Services sector, 46% of offers are made in January–March, earlier than the overall spring peak. Meanwhile, in the Built Environment sector, 71% of campaigns close in April–June, again later than the overall trend.

Figure 2.2.2

**Recruitment campaign schedules**

(115 organisations for graduates, 85 organisations for school leavers)

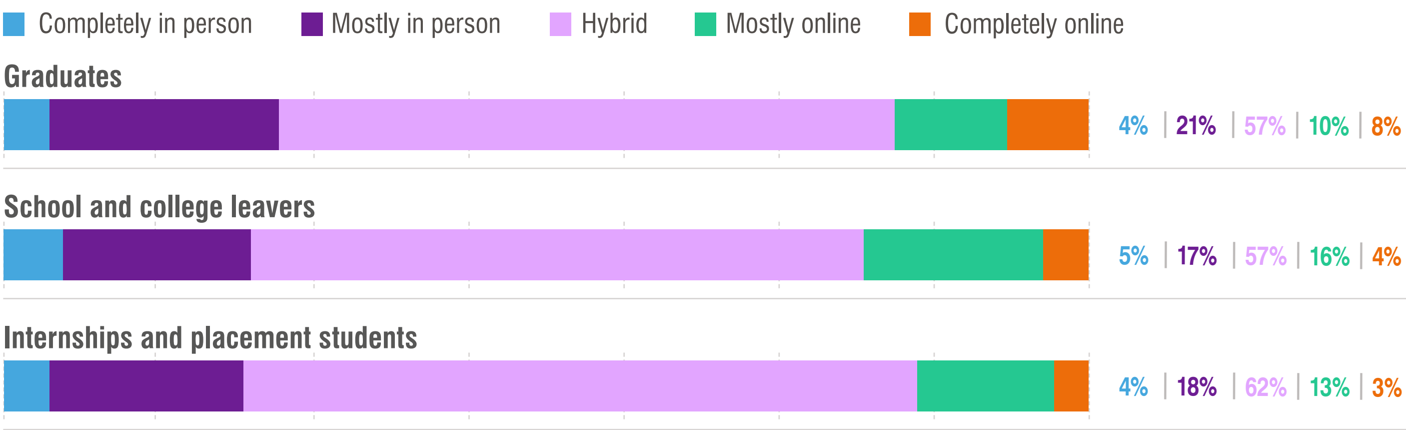
| | | October - December | January - March | April - June | July - September |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Graduates** | **Opened campaign** | **68%** | 7% | 1% | 24% |
| | **Made the most offers** | 26% | **47%** | 18% | 9% |
| | **Closed campaign** | **31%** | **30%** | 24% | 14% |
| | | **October - December** | **January - March** | **April - June** | **July - September** |
| **School leavers** | **Opened campaign** | **48%** | 38% | 4% | 11% |
| | **Made the most offers** | 6% | 39% | **52%** | 4% |
| | **Closed campaign** | 5% | **46%** | 40% | 10% |

This year, we examined the delivery of attraction and marketing activities. For graduates, more than half (57%) of respondents reported using a hybrid approach (mixing in-person and online). Similar patterns were reported for school and college leavers, internships, and placement students (Figure 2.2.3). This shift towards hybrid delivery reflects post-pandemic adjustments to meet candidate preferences and maintain flexibility.

Figure 2.2.3

**Organisations' delivery approach on attraction and marketing activities**

(118 organisations for graduate, 92 organisations for school and college leavers, 95 organisations for internships and placement students)




Employers reported similar conversion rates from initial contact to applications across the main attraction activities. Online marketing achieved the highest average conversion (35%), followed closely by on-campus events (31%) and online events (28%). The relatively narrow range suggests that each channel can be effective when well targeted, with online marketing offering slightly stronger performance while in-person and virtual events continue to play an important role in attracting applicants. This aligns with employers' budget allocation patterns, where more than half of attraction and marketing spend is directed toward online marketing, reflecting its perceived efficiency and reach.

# 2.3 Selection

**Once students are attracted to apply, employers must decide which candidates to recruit. Organisations reported using a wide range of methods to select the right individuals, with practices evolving in response to shifts in candidate expectations, technology, and wider debates around fairness and access.**

## Minimum requirements

Most employers (77%) set some minimum requirements that a candidate must have to be able to apply for the role. Figure 2.3.1 summarises the proportion of employers who require particular qualifications or experience from their graduate hires.

**47%**

**of employers require a 2:1 degree**

Figure 2.3.1
**Minimum entry requirements for graduates**
(120 organisations)

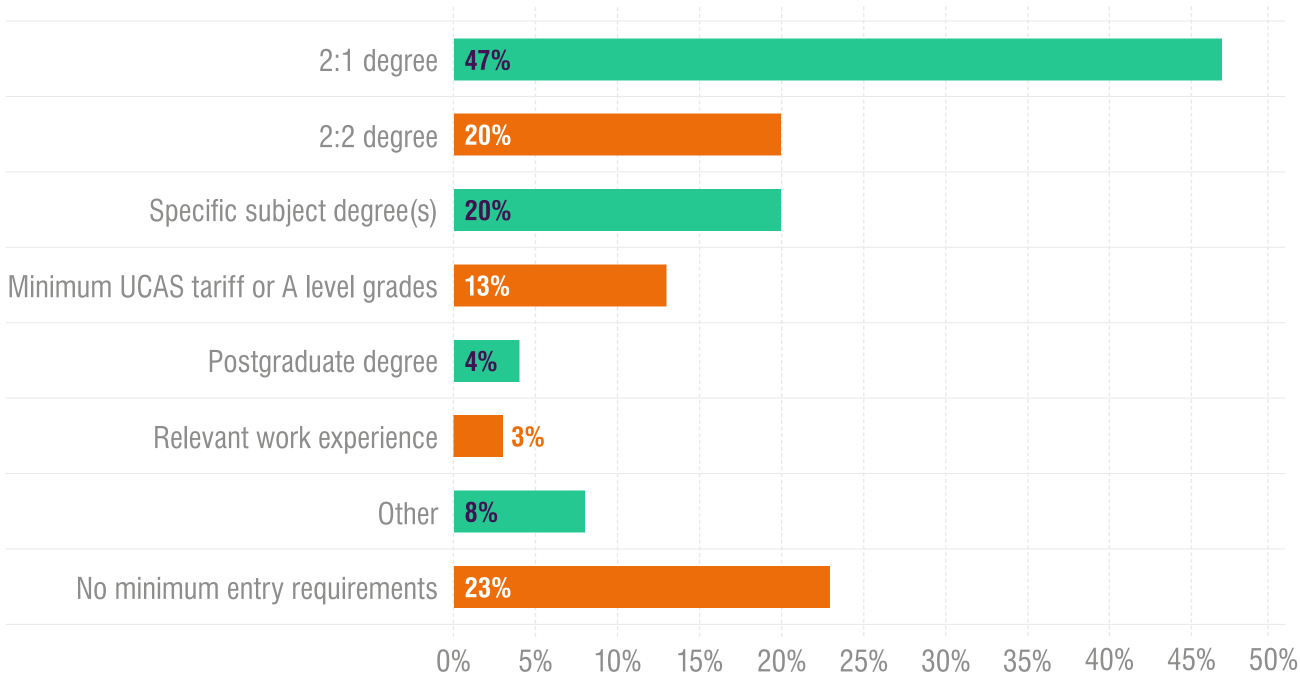
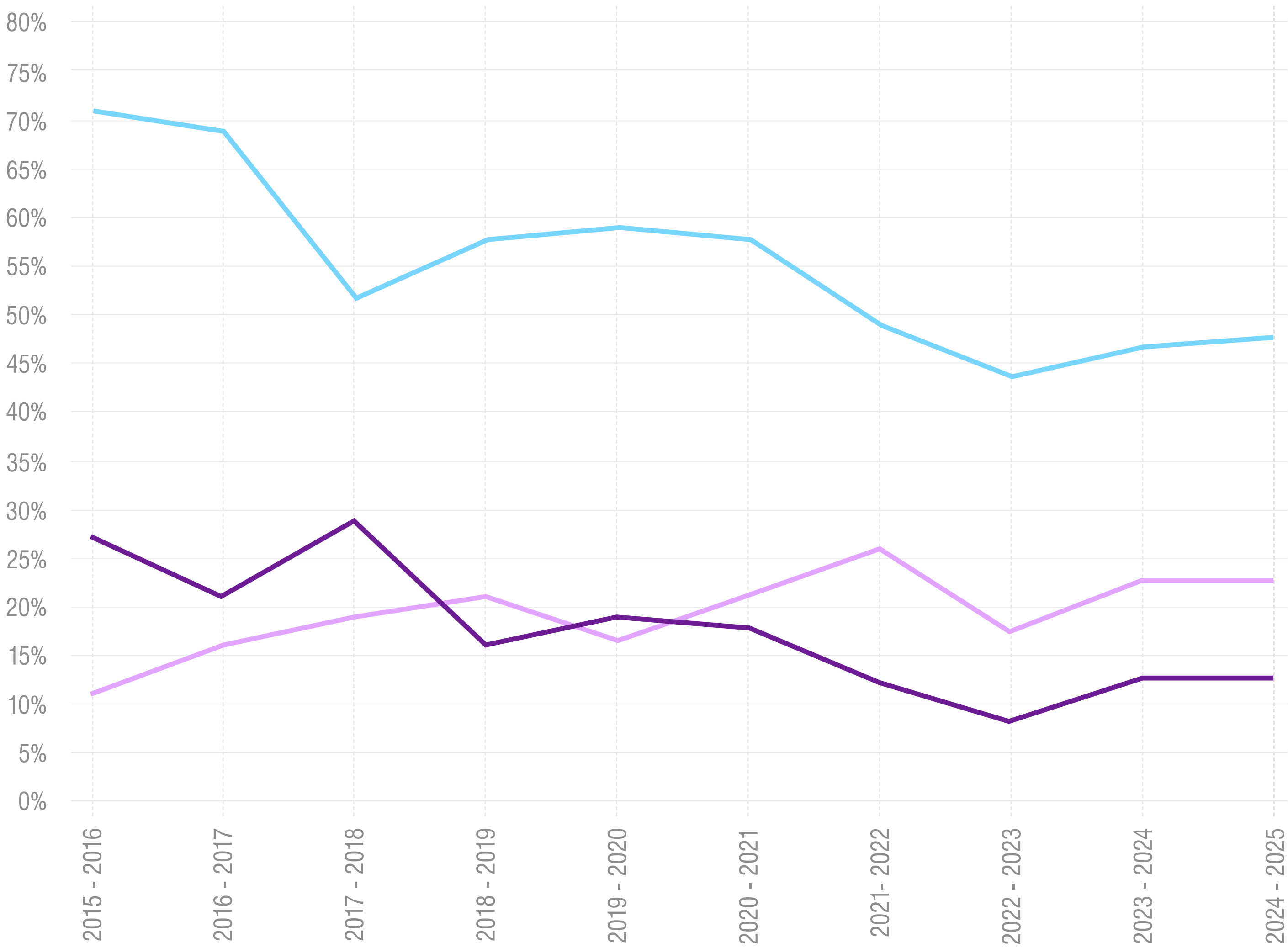


Figure 2.3.2

**Changes in minimum entry requirements for graduates over time**




| | A levels | 2:1 | No minimum |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2015/2016 | 26% | 71% | 11% |
| 2016/2017 | 21% | 69% | 16% |
| 2017/2018 | 28% | 52% | 19% |
| 2018/2019 | 16% | 57% | 22% |
| 2019/2020 | 19% | 58% | 17% |
| 2020/2021 | 17% | 57% | 21% |
| 2021/2022 | 13% | 48% | 26% |
| 2022/2023 | 9% | 44% | 18% |
| 2023/2024 | 13% | 46% | 23% |
| 2024/2025 | 13% | 47% | 23% |

Having a degree remains the most common requirement, with 47% of employers specifying a 2:1 degree and 20% accepting a 2:2 degree.

Since 2015/2016, graduate employers have steadily reduced their reliance on strict academic entry requirements. The proportion of organisations requiring specific A level grades has dropped from 26% in 2015/2016 to just 13% in 2024/2025, while the share demanding a 2:1 degree has fallen from 71% to 47% over the same period. At the same time, the proportion with no minimum entry requirements has more than doubled, rising from 11% to 23%. However, data from the last three years suggests this trend may be plateauing, with only marginal changes since 2022/2023. This stabilisation could indicate that employers have reached a new equilibrium between maintaining academic standards and broadening access through skills- and competency-based recruitment.

Employers also reported that 64% of their graduate hires held a degree or master's qualification directly relevant to the role. This varied by sector: with 77% in Built Environment sector compared with just 41% in Digital & IT.

## Selection methodologies and activities

This year, the survey reviewed selection activities in greater detail, revealing that employers draw on a wide range of methods. The most common overall were online application form questions (95%) and academic qualification screening (70%). At the initial application stage, online application form questions were most frequently used (93%). In the first assessment stage, employers commonly used behaviours, preferences, or values assessments (36%). In the second stage, online video interviews (recorded/asynchronous) (35%) were widely adopted, and when grouped with other online interviews and virtual assessment centres, the figure rises to 55%, showing a heavy reliance on virtual methods. At the final stage, however, the emphasis shifted back to in-person interaction: 53% of employers used face-to-face interviews and 52% used face-to-face assessment centres. Taken together, at least 75% of employers met candidates face-to-face before making a hiring decision, although it is possible that the true figure is higher when factoring in other potentially in-person activities such as case studies or presentations.

This progression highlights how employers are balancing efficiency and scalability in the early stages of recruitment with greater depth and human interaction at the final decision-making point. While online and automated methods help manage rising volumes of applications, in-person activities remain critical for assessing candidate quality and cultural fit before offers are made.

Figure 2.3.3

**Organisations' use of selection and assessment activities**

(124 organisations)

| Activity | Used in 2024/2025 | Initial application stage | First stage assessments | Second stage assessments | Final stage assessments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Online application form questions | 95% | 93% | 7% | 1% | 2% |
| Academic qualification screening | 70% | 63% | 10% | 3% | 1% |
| In person face to face interview | 66% | 0% | 3% | 15% | 53% |
| Face to face assessment centre | 63% | 0% | 3% | 9% | 52% |
| Group tasks | 58% | 0% | 2% | 11% | 47% |
| Online video interview (recorded/asynchronous) | 52% | 2% | 15% | 35% | 1% |
| Online live interview | 51% | 0% | 13% | 20% | 24% |
| Behaviours, preferences or values assessments | 51% | 8% | 36% | 15% | 14% |
| Situational judgement tests | 48% | 9% | 31% | 10% | 3% |
| Presentations | 45% | 0% | 2% | 10% | 36% |
| Case studies | 44% | 0% | 4% | 7% | 36% |
| CV screening | 44% | 41% | 5% | 2% | 1% |
| Virtual assessment centre | 41% | 0% | 4% | 7% | 31% |
| Numerical reasoning tests | 40% | 7% | 26% | 5% | 2% |
| Technical skill tests | 36% | 3% | 15% | 11% | 13% |
| Critical thinking tests | 32% | 7% | 16% | 7% | 8% |
| Strengths based aptitude test | 27% | 4% | 18% | 8% | 7% |
| Data analysis exercises | 26% | 0% | 6% | 2% | 20% |
| Verbal reasoning tests | 25% | 5% | 15% | 3% | 2% |
| Phone interview | 19% | 2% | 7% | 10% | 0% |
| Game based assessments | 15% | 3% | 8% | 1% | 3% |
| Online job simulation | 15% | 2% | 3% | 7% | 3% |
| Other psychometric/aptitude assessment | 15% | 2% | 10% | 3% | 1% |
| Role play | 13% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 11% |
| Email inbox exercises | 11% | 0% | 1% | 3% | 8% |
| Hybrid assessment centre | 8% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 7% |
| Virtual reality activities | 1% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

# The use of AI in recruitment

AI is increasingly influencing the world of work, particularly within recruitment and selection. Its integration is transforming traditional methods by introducing efficiencies in candidate screening, reducing bias, and supporting data-driven decision-making. At the same time, concerns remain around transparency, fairness, and the ethical implications of AI-driven tools. By gathering employer insights, this survey sought to understand the extent of AI adoption, its perceived benefits, and the challenges associated with its use in hiring.

This year, in addition to exploring employers' use of AI in recruitment and their perspectives on its benefits and drawbacks, we also examined whether they permit candidates to use AI during the hiring process.

Compared to last year (23%), a greater proportion of employers (33%) reported that generative AI was leading them to redesign their selection processes, while a further 46% said they were currently reviewing their processes in response to generative AI.

In this year's survey, we have explored automation and AI in recruitment. Automation refers to using systems with preset benchmarks or rules to perform specific routine tasks or make automatic decisions about whether to reject or progress a candidate. AI refers to using systems which scan, rank or filter more complex information to make decisions or recommendations by learning from data such as identifying the best candidates or analysing video interview responses.

While automation and AI are increasingly present in recruitment, most high-touch, interpersonal activities remain predominantly human-led. Traditional processes such as in-person interviews, group tasks, role play, and case studies are conducted almost entirely by humans (94–100% fully human), indicating that organisations still value direct human judgement for activities requiring nuanced interpersonal evaluation. Conversely, assessments that rely on clear scoring criteria—such as numerical reasoning (57% fully automated), situational judgement (53%), and verbal reasoning tests (49%)—are the most likely to be automated. This pattern suggests automation is primarily being applied to structured, rule-based evaluations rather than subjective assessments.

The use of AI-only systems remains limited, with notable presence in game-based assessments (15%), and other psychometric tests (8%). Hybrid human-system approaches are most common in strengths-based aptitude tests (42%), online job simulations (33%), and behavioural or values assessments (30%), pointing towards a transitional phase where technology supports but does not replace human decision-making. Overall, the findings highlight a recruitment landscape where automation increasingly provides efficiency in objective tests, but AI adoption is still emerging, and human oversight remains critical—particularly in stages where candidate interaction, soft skills, and cultural fit are evaluated.

Figure 2.3.4

**Automation and AI in selection and assessment activities**

(8-115 organisations)

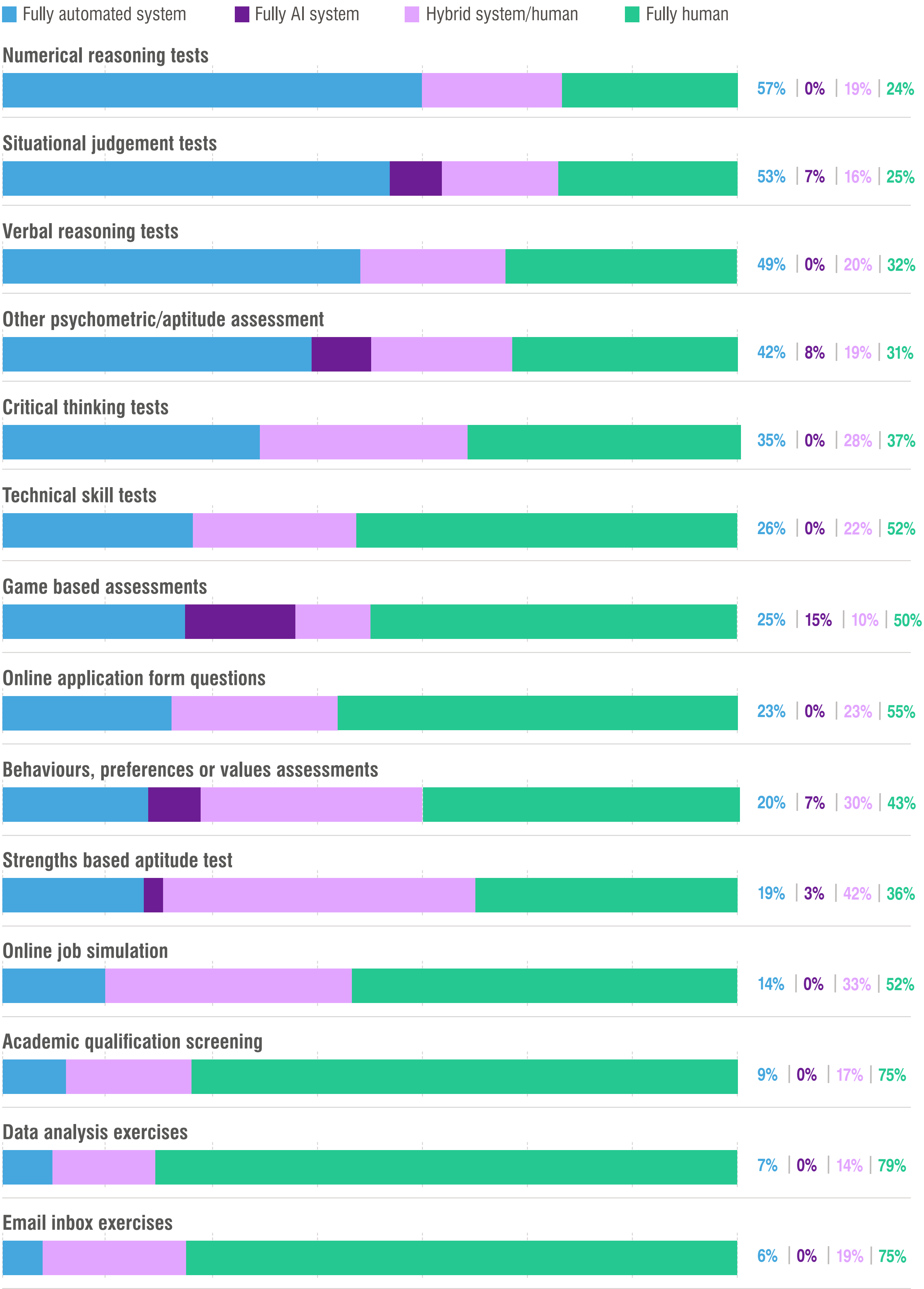
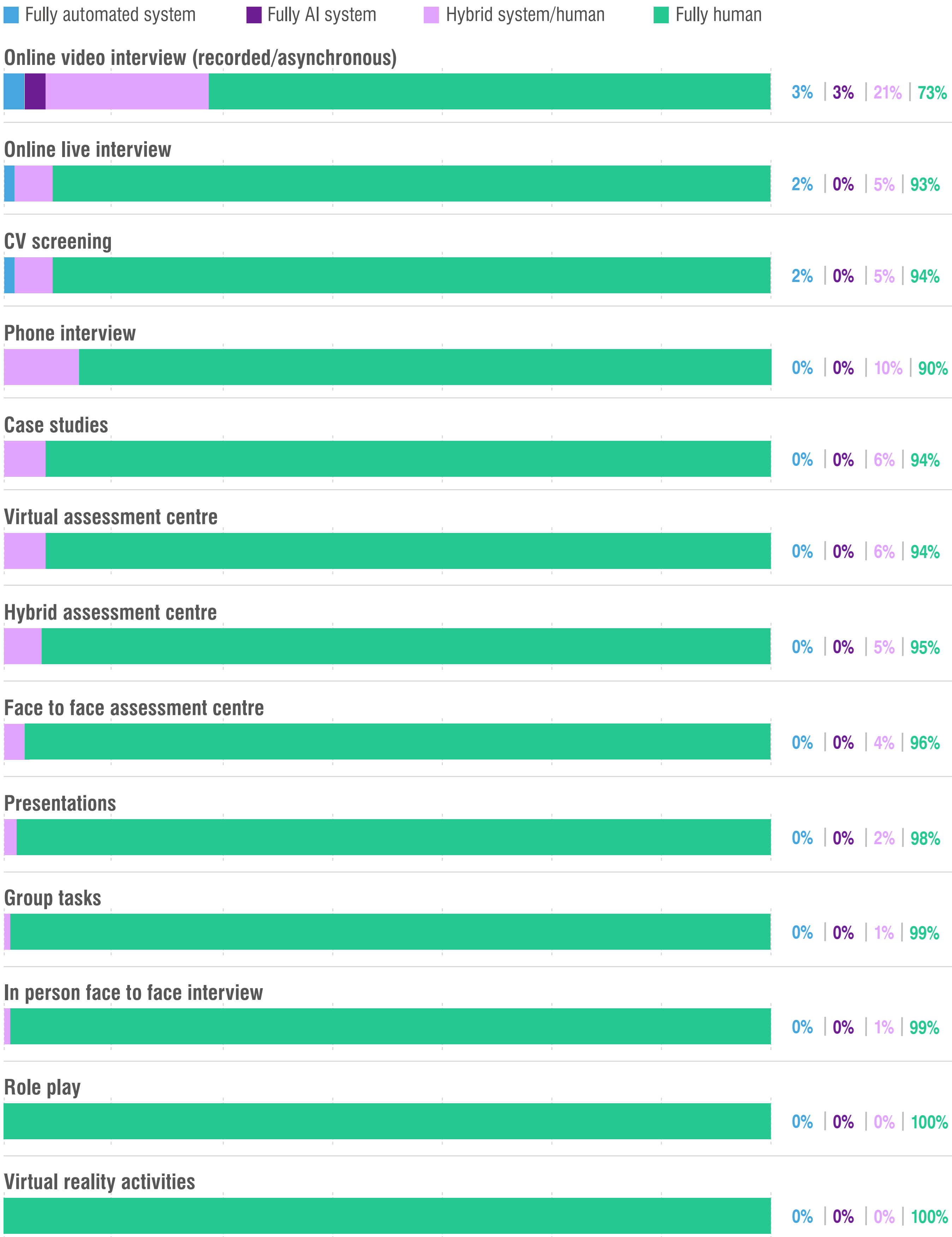


Figure 2.3.4 (Continued)

**Automation and AI in selection and assessment activities**

(8-115 organisations)




Employers also shared their insight about the benefits and drawbacks of using AI in their hiring process. Most (94%) employers reported that using AI increased speed and efficiency in the recruitment process and increased ability to analyse large volumes of data and identify patterns and trends (81%) (Figure 2.3.5). The latter shows a notable increase compared with last year, rising from 58% to 81% — a 23-percentage point gain. This suggests employers are increasingly recognising AI's potential to help manage the growing volume of applications. Perceptions of AI's costs and benefits have also shifted. A quarter (25%) of employers now see AI as cheaper than using people to perform equivalent tasks, up from just 10% last year — a 15-percentage point increase. While still a minority view, this indicates a growing awareness of AI's potential to reduce costs. As noted earlier, fewer employers reported using a recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) this year. It may be that some organisations are beginning to explore whether automation and AI can replace or supplement outsourcing, though this is a trend that will need to be tracked in future surveys.

For the disadvantages of using AI, 71% of employers reported that they preferred a more human-centric approach in the recruitment process and worried about the potential for bias in AI decision-making (67%). (Figure 2.3.6)

Figure 2.3.5
**Advantages of using AI** (118 organisations)

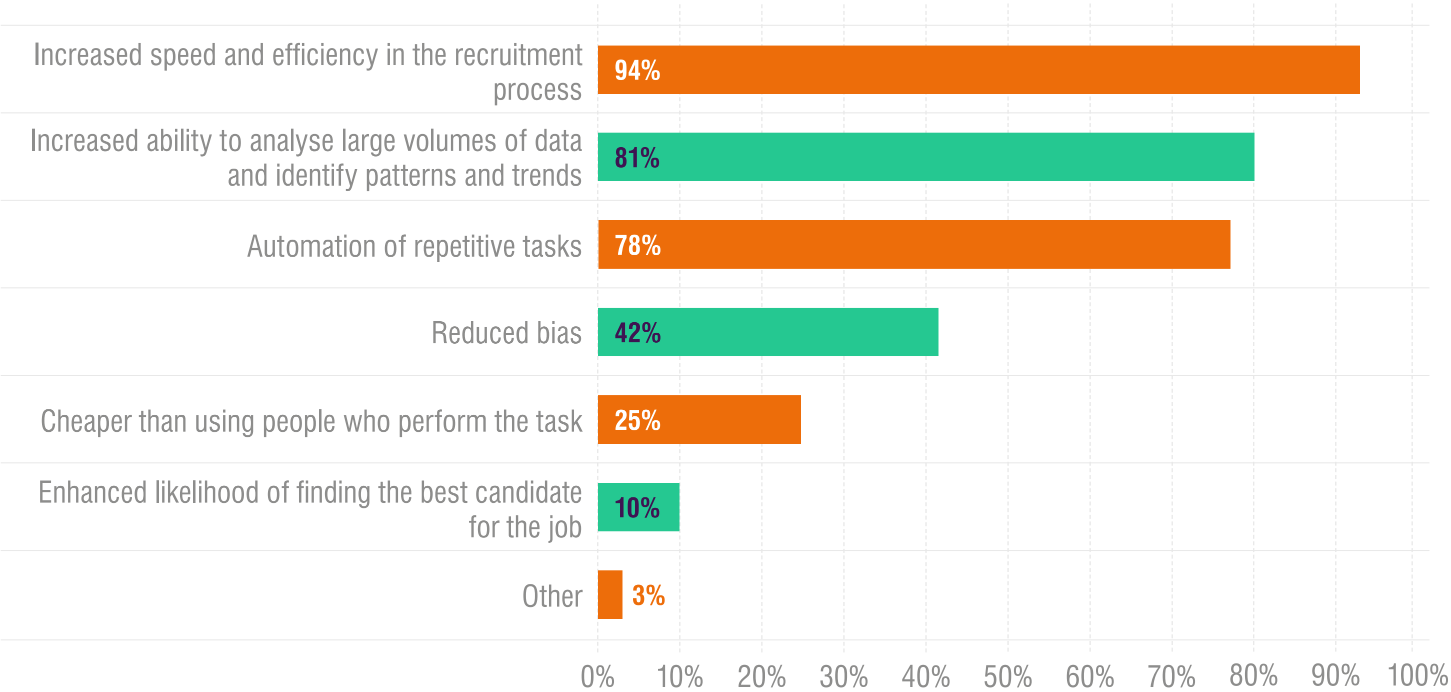
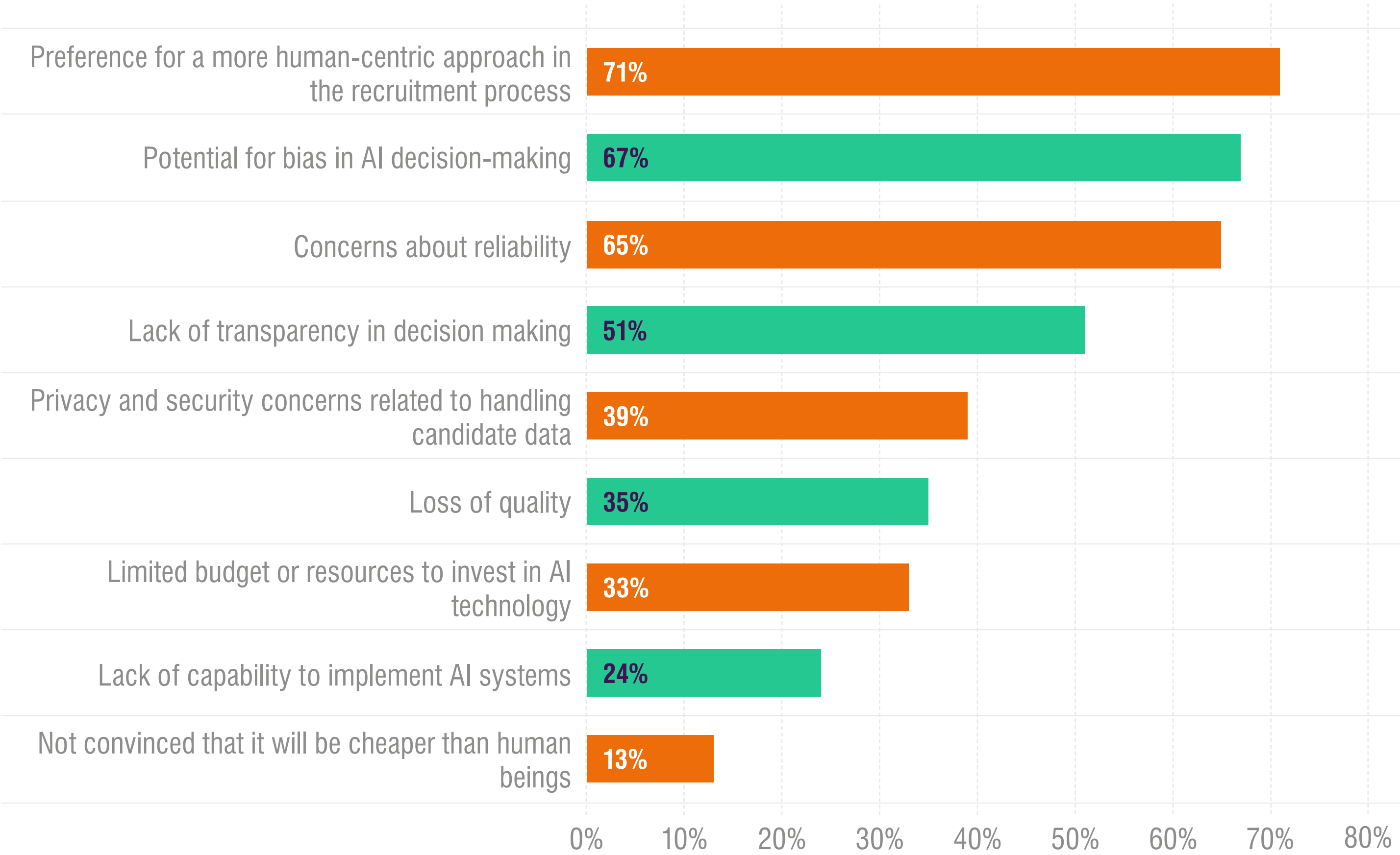
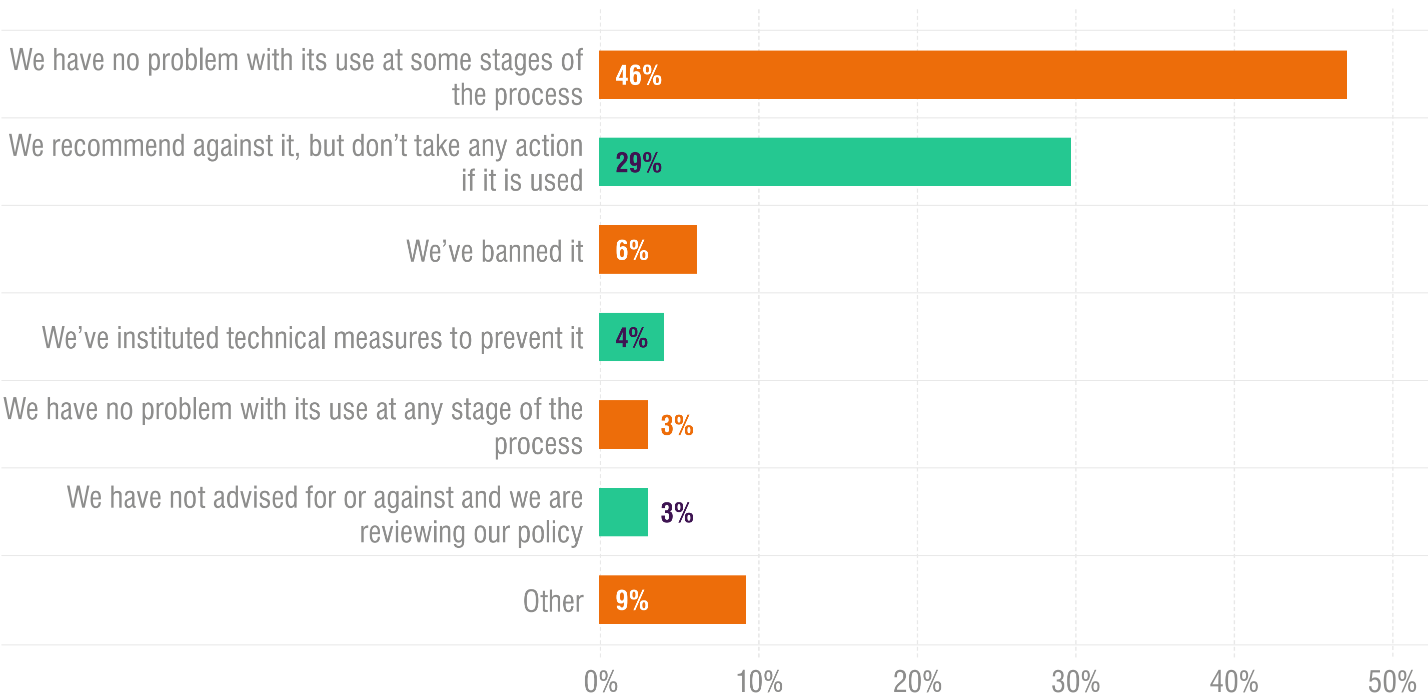


Figure 2.3.6
**Disadvantages of using AI** (119 organisations)



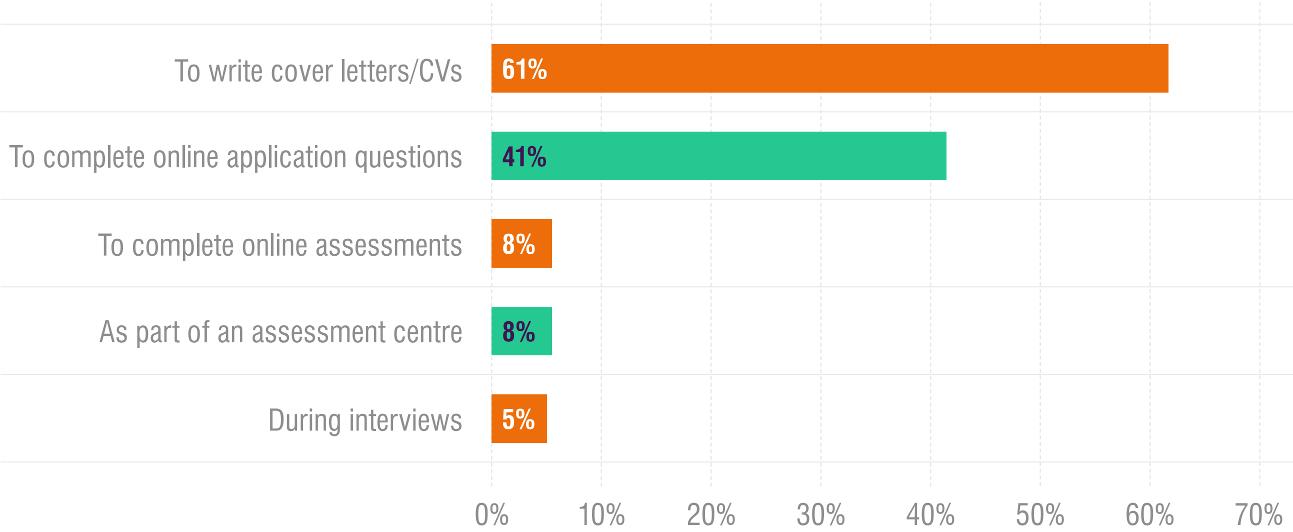

This year, we also asked employers about their views on candidates using AI in the recruitment process. Almost half (46%) reported that they have no problem with candidates using AI at some stages of the process. A further 29% recommended that candidates do not use AI in the recruitment process but did not take any action if candidates used it (Figure 2.3.7).

Figure 2.3.7
**Attitude to candidates using AI in the hiring process** (121 organisations)



However, 45% of employers said they had not provided applicants with any guidance on when it was or was not appropriate to use AI. Among employers who permitted AI use, the most common applications were in writing cover letters or CVs (61%), followed by completing online application questions (41%) (Figure 2.3.8).

Figure 2.3.8
**AI use allowed in selection and assessment** (79 organisations)



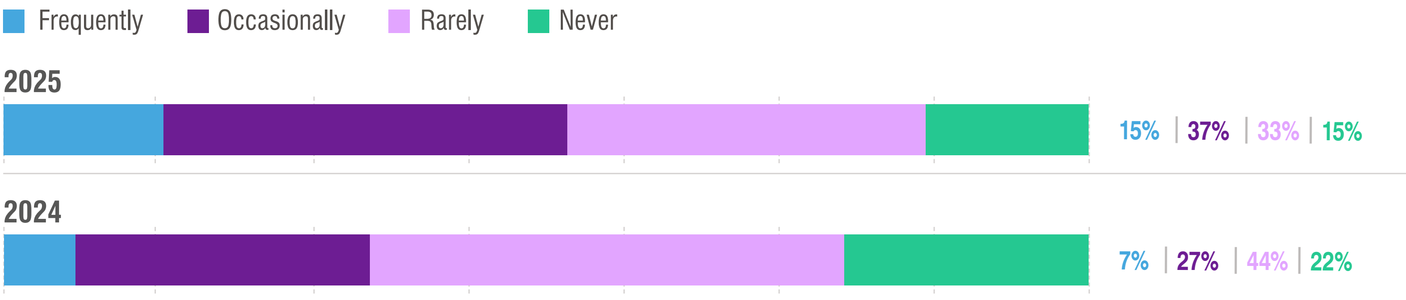

Looking to the future, more than half of employers (62%) expect to use AI in their recruitment processes, and 70% anticipate increasing their use of automation in selection over the next five years. This indicates that AI is set to play a growing role in early careers recruitment. Some commentators have also argued that AI is playing a role in the number of applications continuing to increase as candidates are using AI tools to speed up or scale their applications.[12] While this remains an emerging trend, it suggests that employers may need to balance the benefits of AI adoption in their own processes with the challenges it creates in managing higher application volumes. This is an area that will require closer attention in the coming years.

## Ensuring integrity in assessments

As the recruitment landscape evolves with the integration of AI and other digital tools, employers are placing increasing emphasis on fairness and transparency in selection processes. However, the use of AI by candidates during assessments has introduced new challenges in maintaining integrity.

Compared with last year (22%), only 15% of employers in 2025 reported that they had never suspected or identified cheating in assessments—indicating that suspected misconduct is becoming more common. Furthermore, the proportion of employers who said they frequently encountered cheating more than doubled, rising from 7% last year to 15% this year (Figure 2.3.9). The most commonly reported form of misconduct was candidates using AI during interviews without disclosure or permission, cited by 61% of respondents (Figure 2.3.10).

Figure 2.3.9
**Frequency of employers suspecting candidate misconduct** (121 organisations in 2025; 118 organisations in 2024)

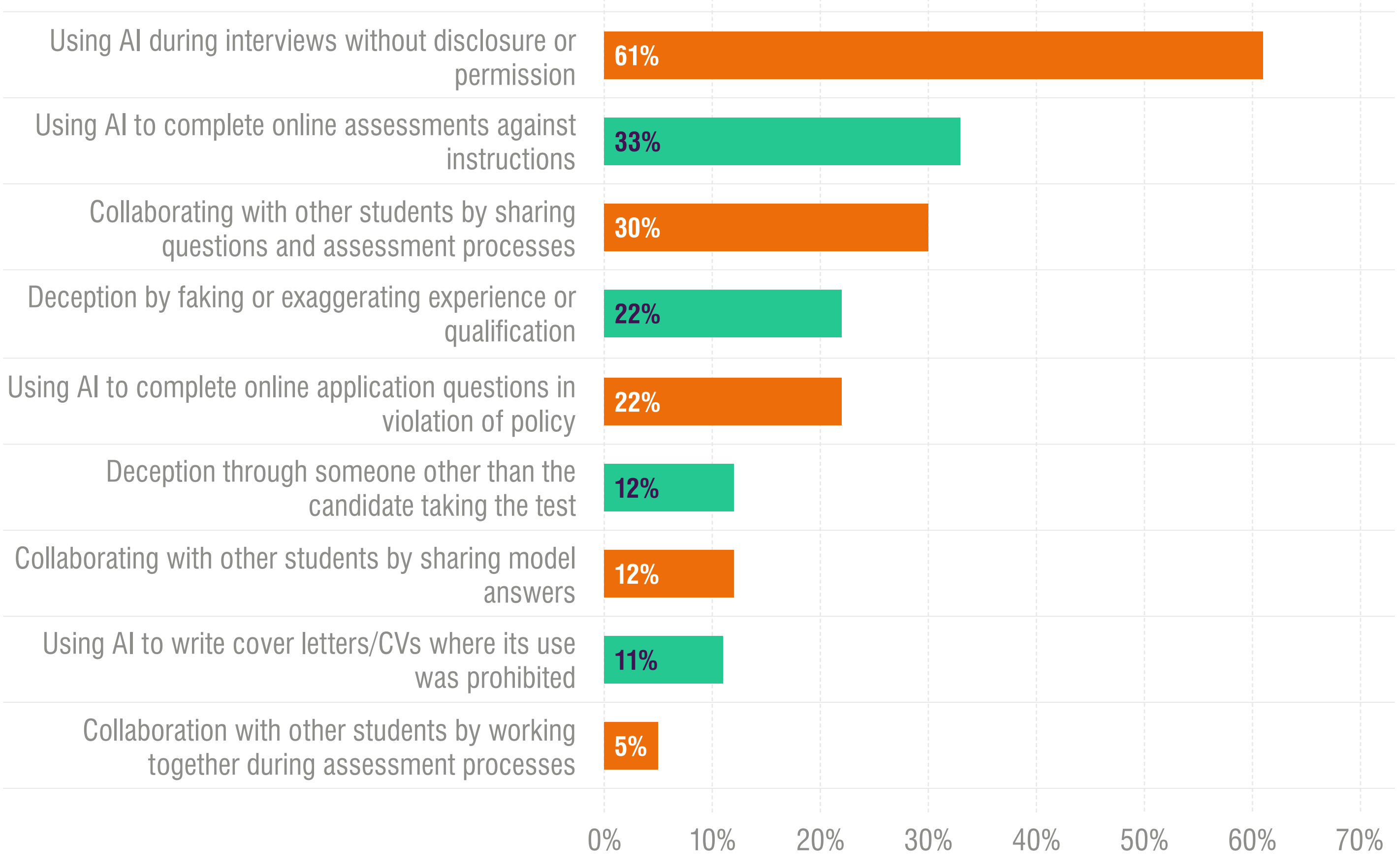


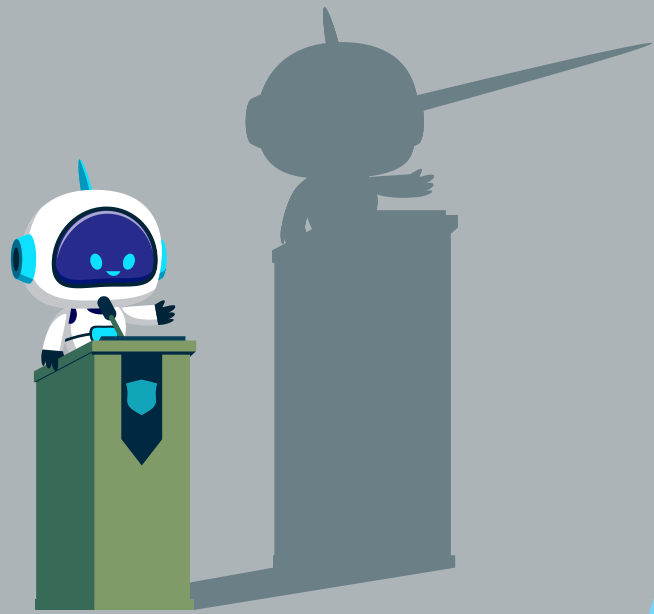

[12] Forsdick, S. (2025). How are hiring teams coping with the influx of AI-generated job applications? *Raconteur.* https://www.raconteur.net/future-of-work/ai-job-applications-recruitment-challenge

Figure 2.3.10

**Forms of cheating detected by employers during the recruitment process**

(92 organisation)





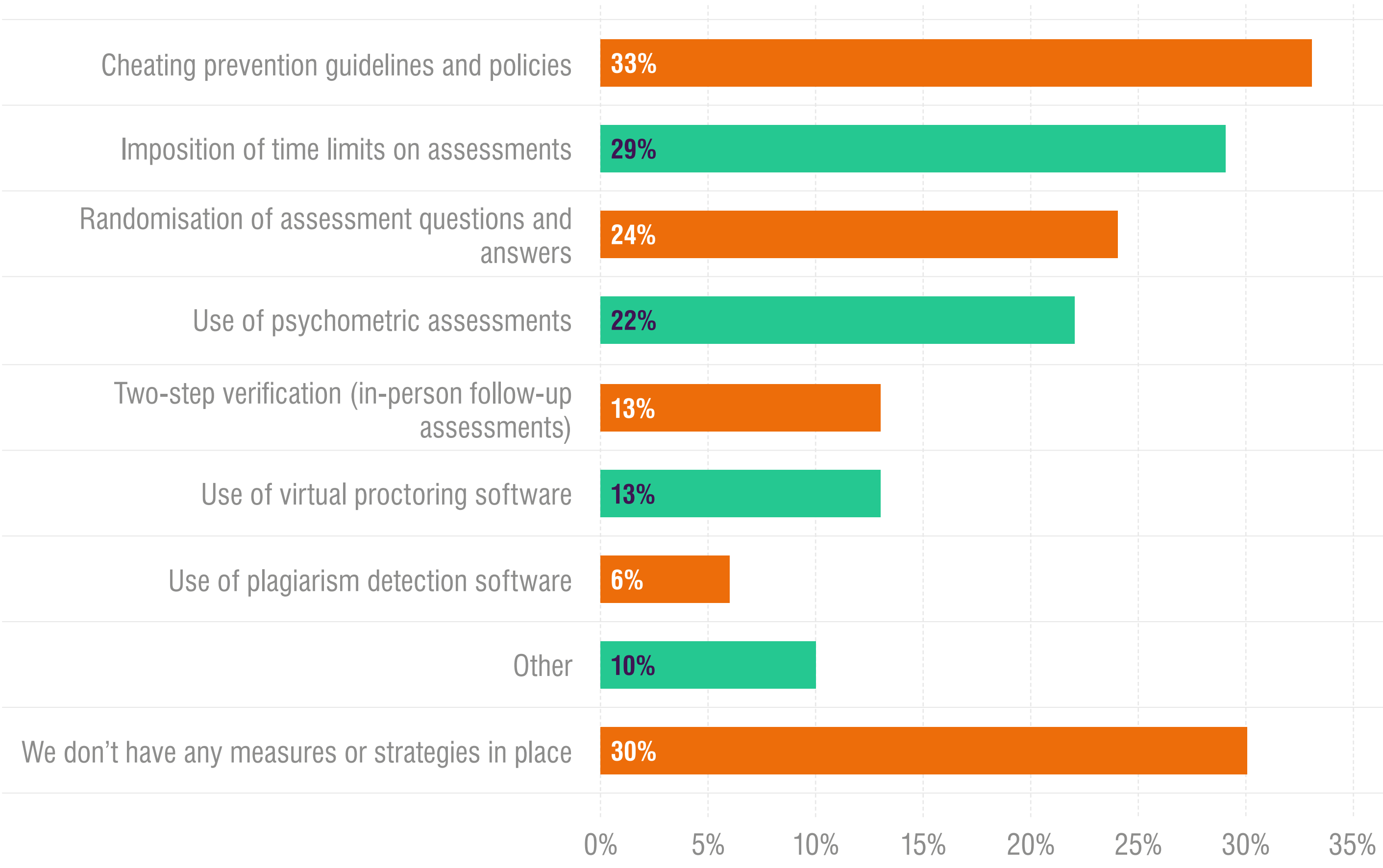
**30%**

**of employers did not have any approach to detect or address misconduct**

When taken with our discussion of AI in the last section, this suggests that the development of and increased access to AI is having major implications for the student recruitment market. This is likely to continue to be a hot topic while both candidates and recruiters explore the possibilities and drawbacks of AI further.

While most employers have strategies to detect or address misconduct, 30% reported they did not have any approach to do this. Among those with measures, the most common were the creation of cheating prevention guidelines and policies (33%) and the use of time limits on assessments (29%) (Figure 2.3.11)

Figure 2.3.11
**Measures to prevent or detect misconduct during assessment**
(109 respondents)



# 2.4 Hiring

## Applications and acceptances

Employers reported strong success in filling roles during 2024/25, with 97% of graduate positions and 94% of school and college leaver positions filled. These figures are similar to the previous year (97% and 96% respectively), suggesting stability in employers' ability to convert applicants into hires.

However, challenges persist in candidate engagement. As in 2024/25, 12% of candidates actively withdrew from the recruitment process, while a further 7% disengaged without explanation, ceasing communication with the employer.  This is broadly consistent with recent years (14% withdrew and 9–10% disengaged in both 2022/23 and 2023/24), suggesting that higher application volumes have not translated into greater candidate attrition during the process. The possible explanation is that the tighter labour market discourages candidates from withdrawing or disengaging, while employers have also become more proactive in maintaining engagement and communication to reduce dropout rates.

Figure 2.4.1 shows the proportion of job offers that are accepted, rejected, reneged or deferred. 86% of graduates and 91% of school leavers accepted the jobs that they were offered. This is similar to last year where 84% of graduates and 90% of school and college leavers accepted jobs. This demonstrates consistently strong conversion, though with some notable sectoral variation. For example, employers in Finance & Professional Services reported lower acceptance rates and higher levels of reneges compared to other industries, highlighting the competitive nature of these sectors where candidates may receive multiple offers or reconsider after acceptance (Figure 2.4.2 and Figure 2.4.3).

Figure 2.4.1
**Average responses to a job offer**
(92 organisations for graduate, 58 organisations for school and college leavers)

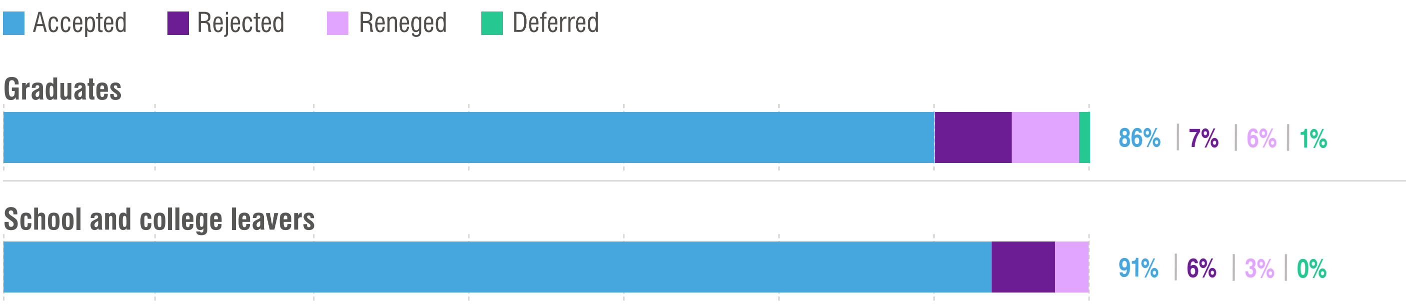
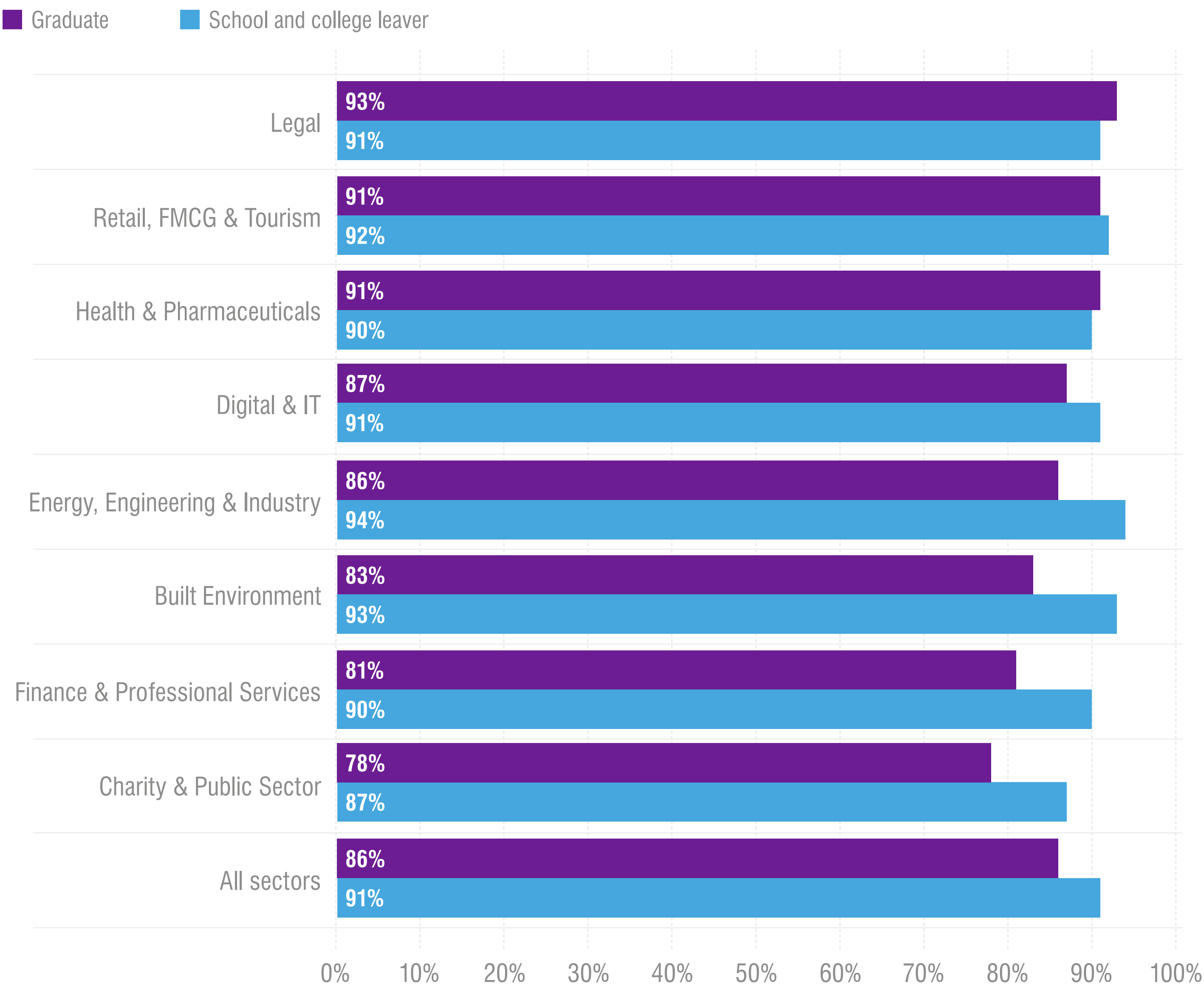


Figure 2.4.2

**Acceptance rates by sector**

(92 organisations for graduate, 58 organisations for school and college leavers)



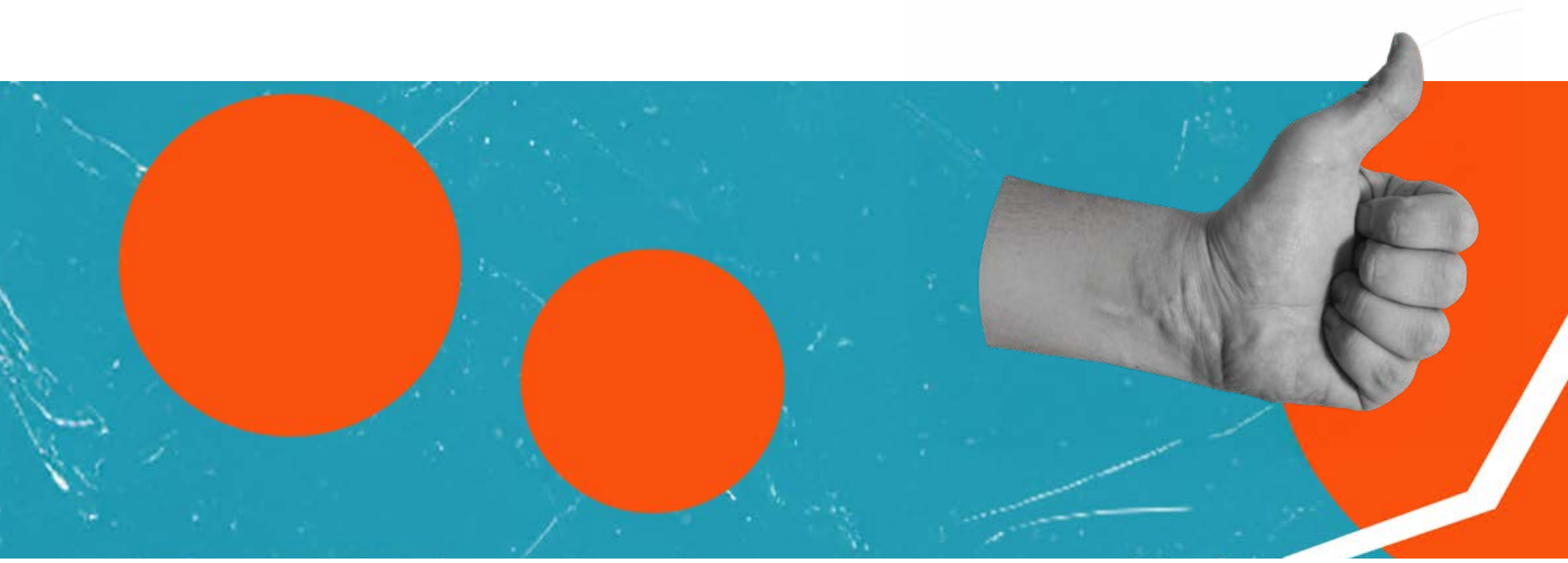
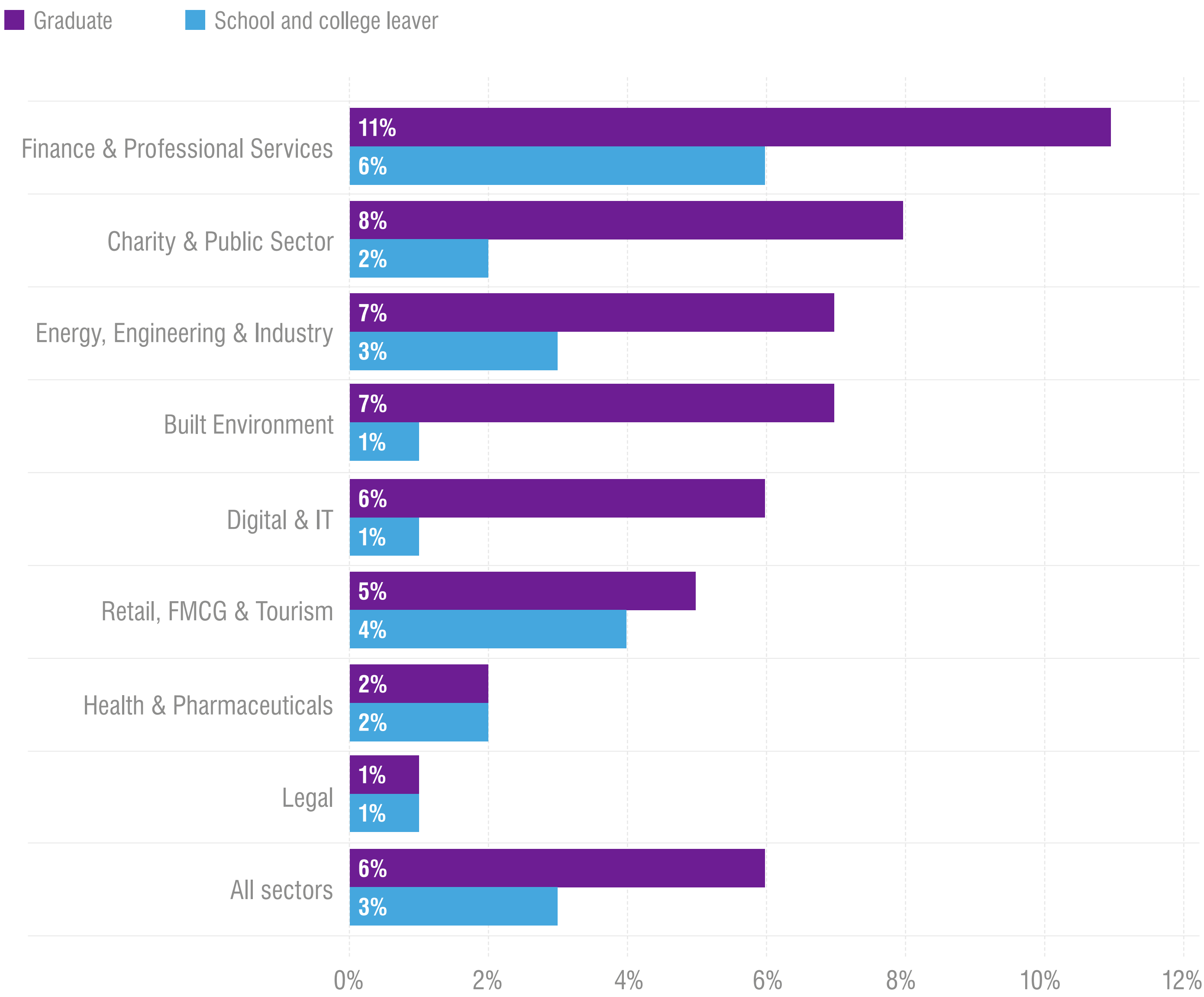
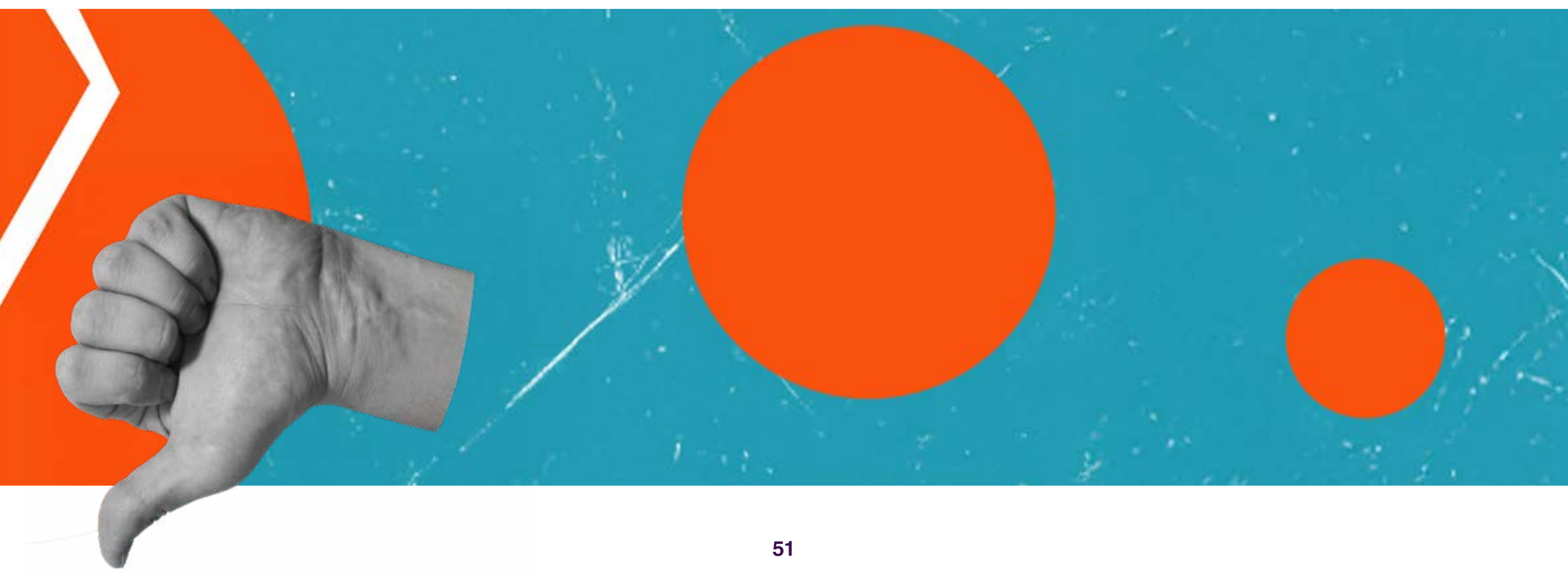



Figure 2.4.3

**Renege rates by sector**

(92 organisations for graduate, 58 organisations for school and college leavers)



In the past year, 40% of employers reported an increase in graduates applying for school and college leaver roles, while only 2% noted a decrease. Around a third (32%) saw no change, and 26% were unsure. This suggests that a growing number of graduates may be competing for entry-level roles traditionally targeted at school and college leavers—potentially due to a challenging graduate job market, cost-of-living pressures prompting candidates to prioritise securing any role quickly, or increased willingness to consider alternative career entry points.

Employers also reported a decline in the pipeline of hires from internships and placements. In 2024/25, 50% of former interns and 44% of former placement students were converted into graduate roles, down from 54% and 49% in 2023/24. While this still represents a significant proportion, the dip may partly reflect changes in the sample or shifts in the balance between intern and graduate vacancy numbers, rather than a definitive downward trend. Nonetheless, given pressures on recruitment teams to manage large volumes efficiently, internships and placements are likely to remain an important and cost-effective source of future graduate hires.

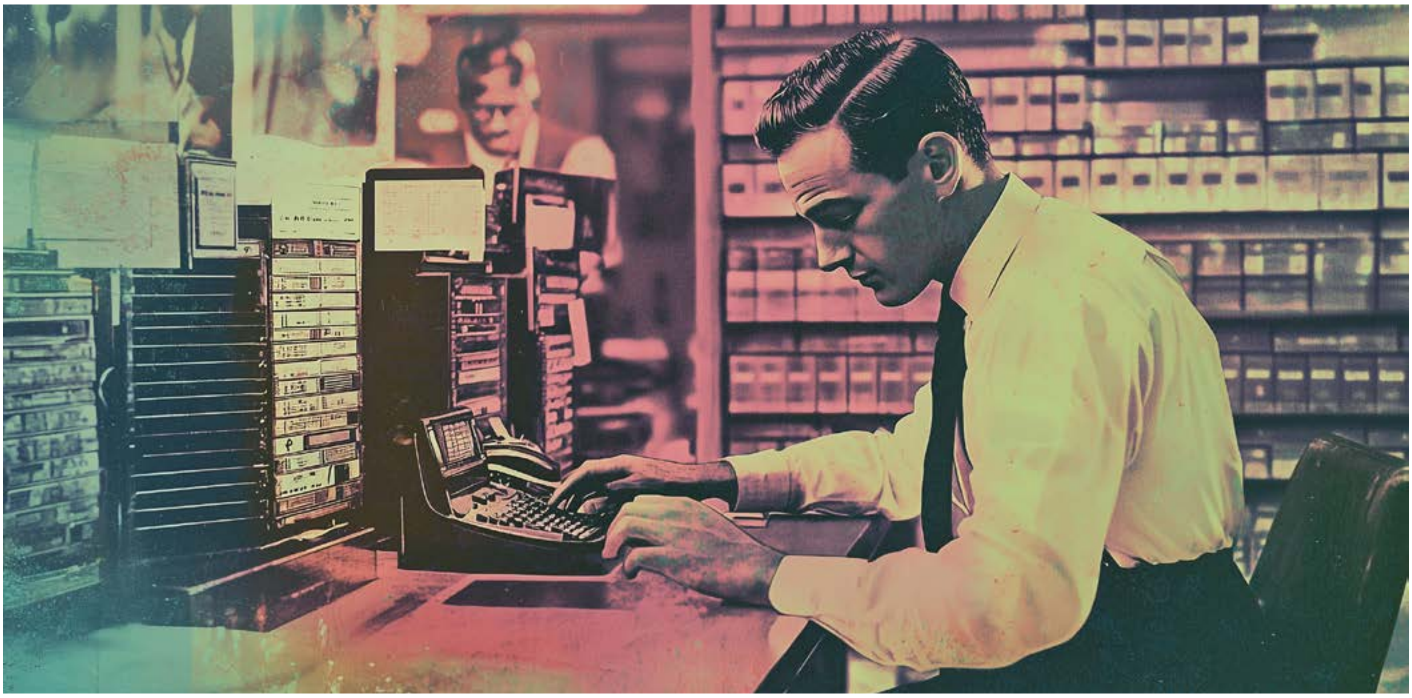
## Salaries

Salaries remain a pivotal factor in both attracting graduates and school and college leavers to roles and in securing offer acceptance.

In 2024/2025, the typical (median) starting salaries reported were £33,000 for graduates (a 2% increase from last year), £24,000 for school and college leavers (up 3%), £26,000 for interns (up 5%), and £25,500 for placement students (up 2%).

Salary progression for students employed by ISE members continues to be strong. During the first three years of their career graduates can expect their salary to rise from an average of £33,000 at entry to £45,146 after three years—a 37% increase. School and college leaver salaries follow a similar trajectory, rising from £24,000 to £33,250 over the same period, representing a 39% increase.[13]

Figures 2.4.4 to 2.4.7 present the detailed salary comparisons for graduates, school and college leavers, interns, and placement students between 2023/2024 and 2024/2025. For graduates and school and college leavers, these figures also capture median salaries after three years.



[13] We previously captured data on salaries after 3 years in our annual Development Survey. From 2025 onwards, data on both salaries on hire and after 3 years will be captured and reported in our annual Recruitment Survey.

Figure 2.4.4
**Graduate salaries**
(110 organisations)

Retail, FMCG & Tourism - median salary 3 years after employer recruited them

**£45,000**

| | Annual starting salary in 2023/2024 | Annual starting salary in 2024/2025 | Annual salary 3 years after employer recruited them |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Built Environment** | | | |
| Minimum | £25,500 | £28,500 | £32,000 |
| Maximum | £31,650 | £32,000 | £45,000 |
| Mean | £28,878 | £30,072 | £39,026 |
| Median | £29,250 | £30,000 | £39,000 |
| **Charity & Public Sector** | | | |
| Minimum | £26,985 | £25,397 | £31,650 |
| Maximum | £36,000 | £36,000 | £53,000 |
| Mean | £30,189 | £30,274 | £43,038 |
| Median | £29,500 | £30,000 | £42,408 |
| **Digital & IT** | | | |
| Minimum | £27,000 | £27,000 | £40,000 |
| Maximum | £45,000 | £45,000 | £60,000 |
| Mean | £35,617 | £35,925 | £47,936 |
| Median | £34,466 | £35,000 | £44,808 |
| **Energy, Engineering & Industry** | | | |
| Minimum | £22,000 | £25,000 | £34,800 |
| Maximum | £40,039 | £41,721 | £60,000 |
| Mean | £31,159 | £32,076 | £43,280 |
| Median | £30,500 | £31,500 | £44,009 |
| **Finance & Professional Services** | | | |
| Minimum | £25,134 | £25,726 | £34,000 |
| Maximum | £65,000 | £65,000 | £80,000 |
| Mean | £36,480 | £36,539 | £49,545 |
| Median | £33,250 | £33,000 | £47,750 |
| **Health & Pharmaceuticals** | | | |
| Minimum | £27,000 | £27,000 | £40,000 |
| Maximum | £34,400 | £35,000 | £41,500 |
| Mean | £30,467 | £32,133 | £40,500 |
| Median | £30,000 | £34,400 | £40,000 |
| **Legal** | | | |
| Minimum | £30,000 | £26,500 | £60,000 |
| Maximum | £56,000 | £57,000 | £175,000 |
| Mean | £45,403 | £46,250 | £104,200 |
| Median | £47,500 | £48,500 | £100,000 |
| **Retail, FMCG & Tourism** | | | |
| Minimum | £28,000 | £29,900 | £36,000 |
| Maximum | £47,350 | £47,350 | £55,000 |
| Mean | £34,386 | £34,746 | £45,450 |
| Median | £32,000 | £32,000 | £45,000 |
| **All sectors** | | | |
| Minimum | £22,000 | £25,000 | £31,650 |
| Maximum | £65,000 | £65,000 | £175,000 |
| Mean | £35,744 | £36,335 | £59,279 |
| Median | £32,500 | £33,000 | £45,146 |

Figure 2.4.5

## School and college leaver salaries

(63 organisations)[14]

| | Annual starting salary in 2023/2024 | Annual starting salary in 2024/2025 | Annual salary 3 years after employer recruited them |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Built Environment** | | | |
| Minimum | £18,000 | £20,000 | £25,580 |
| Maximum | £24,000 | £26,650 | £35,000 |
| Mean | £21,897 | £23,192 | £30,116 |
| Median | £22,308 | £23,000 | £28,000 |
| **Charity & Public Sector** | | | |
| Minimum | £19,850 | £21,043 | £25,340 |
| Maximum | £25,340 | £25,340 | £34,000 |
| Mean | £23,548 | £23,846 | £29,780 |
| Median | £24,500 | £24,500 | £30,000 |
| **Digital & IT** | | | |
| Minimum | £21,840 | £22,950 | £33,730 |
| Maximum | £28,350 | £28,350 | £45,000 |
| Mean | £25,138 | £25,596 | £38,322 |
| Median | £25,083 | £25,963 | £37,400 |
| **Energy, Engineering & Industry** | | | |
| Minimum | £15,869 | £16,666 | £24,355 |
| Maximum | £25,216 | £24,016 | £37,000 |
| Mean | £18,930 | £20,417 | £29,786 |
| Median | £18,810 | £21,000 | £27,500 |
| **Finance & Professional Services** | | | |
| Minimum | £19,976 | £20,674 | £28,500 |
| Maximum | £28,000 | £27,158 | £40,000 |
| Mean | £24,062 | £24,339 | £34,339 |
| Median | £23,675 | £25,038 | £34,000 |
| **Legal** | | | |
| Minimum | £21,000 | £23,000 | £25,150 |
| Maximum | £28,000 | £29,000 | £50,000 |
| Mean | £24,487 | £25,613 | £35,021 |
| Median | £24,500 | £25,500 | £33,000 |
| **Retail, FMCG & Tourism** | | | |
| Minimum | £15,000 | £15,000 | £30,000 |
| Maximum | £24,375 | £25,125 | £36,000 |
| Mean | £21,522 | £22,804 | £33,000 |
| Median | £23,356 | £24,897 | £33,000 |
| **All sectors** | | | |
| Minimum | £15,000 | £15,000 | £24,355 |
| Maximum | £28,350 | £29,000 | £50,000 |
| Mean | £22,791 | £23,599 | £32,800 |
| Median | £23,310 | £24,000 | £33,250 |

**£34,000**

Finance & Professional Services - median salary 3 years after employer recruited them


[14] Data for the Health & Pharmaceuticals sector has not been included due to a very small sample size (only one respondent), which makes it unsuitable for reliable analysis.

Figure 2.4.6
## Intern salaries
(58 organisations)[15]

| | Annual starting salary in 2023/2024 | Annual starting salary in 2024/2025 |
|---|---|---|
| **Built Environment** | | |
| Minimum | £20,000 | £21,000 |
| Maximum | £24,351 | £26,689 |
| Mean | £22,031 | £24,220 |
| Median | £21,000 | £24,311 |
| **Digital & IT** | | |
| Minimum | £24,660 | £24,000 |
| Maximum | £34,000 | £36,000 |
| Mean | £28,332 | £28,568 |
| Median | £28,000 | £27,704 |
| **Energy, Engineering & Industry** | | |
| Minimum | £18,150 | £19,240 |
| Maximum | £22,906 | £25,294 |
| Mean | £21,005 | £23,159 |
| Median | £21,158 | £23,658 |
| **Finance & Professional Services** | | |
| Minimum | £22,000 | £24,000 |
| Maximum | £60,000 | £60,000 |
| Mean | £30,540 | £31,394 |
| Median | £26,155 | £26,750 |
| **Health & Pharmaceuticals** | | |
| Minimum | £24,000 | £26,000 |
| Maximum | £26,572 | £27,000 |
| Mean | £25,191 | £26,524 |
| Median | £25,000 | £26,572 |
| **Legal** | | |
| Minimum | £26,000 | £27,040 |
| Maximum | £31,200 | £33,800 |
| Mean | £27,733 | £29,380 |
| Median | £26,000 | £27,300 |
| **Retail, FMCG & Tourism** | | |
| Minimum | £18,343 | £19,391 |
| Maximum | £33,000 | £33,000 |
| Mean | £25,870 | £26,169 |
| Median | £25,438 | £25,813 |
| **All sectors** | | |
| Minimum | £18,150 | £19,240 |
| Maximum | £60,000 | £60,000 |
| Mean | £26,904 | £27,792 |
| Median | £24,830 | £26,000 |

**£26,572**

**Health & Pharmaceuticals Sector - median starting salary in 2024/2025**

[15] Data for the Charity & Public sector has not been included due to a very small sample size (only one respondent), which makes it unsuitable for reliable analysis.

Figure 2.4.7
**Placement student salaries**
(52 organisations)[16]

| | Annual starting salary in 2023/2024 | Annual starting salary in 2024/2025 |
|---|---|---|
| **Built Environment** | | |
| Minimum | £20,000 | £21,000 |
| Maximum | £24,351 | £26,689 |
| Mean | £22,557 | £24,236 |
| Median | £23,250 | £24,475 |
| **Digital & IT** | | |
| Minimum | £25,000 | £24,000 |
| Maximum | £29,500 | £32,000 |
| Mean | £26,917 | £27,136 |
| Median | £27,000 | £27,000 |
| **Energy, Engineering & Industry** | | |
| Minimum | £18,150 | £19,240 |
| Maximum | £33,000 | £25,294 |
| Mean | £22,704 | £23,777 |
| Median | £21,912 | £24,210 |
| **Finance & Professional Services** | | |
| Minimum | £21,929 | £22,786 |
| Maximum | £60,000 | £60,000 |
| Mean | £29,662 | £29,887 |
| Median | £26,530 | £27,000 |
| **Health & Pharmaceuticals** | | |
| Minimum | £20,000 | £26,250 |
| Maximum | £25,850 | £27,000 |
| Mean | £22,925 | £26,625 |
| Median | £22,925 | £26,625 |
| **Retail, FMCG & Tourism** | | |
| Minimum | £21,000 | £21,000 |
| Maximum | £26,500 | £27,000 |
| Mean | £23,896 | £24,821 |
| Median | £24,188 | £25,313 |
| **All sectors** | | |
| Minimum | £18,150 | £19,240 |
| Maximum | £60,000 | £60,000 |
| Mean | £25,864 | £26,743 |
| Median | £25,000 | £25,500 |

**£24,475**

**Built Environment Sector - median starting salary in 2024/2025**

[16] Data for the Charity & Public and Legal sectors have not been included due to a very small sample size (no respondent in the Charity & Public sector and only one respondent in the Legal sector), which makes it unsuitable for reliable analysis.

A significant difference can be seen across regions when we look at percentage changes in starting salaries and salaries after three years. For graduates, the most substantial salary growth occurs in London (56% increase) and Northern Ireland (50% increase) after three years, reflecting strong career advancement opportunities in these regions. Meanwhile, Wales shows the smallest increase at just 21%, indicating slower wage growth in this country. For school and college leavers, London also leads with a 35% salary increase, suggesting a strong upward trend in London for both graduates and school and college leavers. On the other hand, West Midlands (11% increase) and Wales (15% increase) report the smallest increase, indicating more limited salary progression in these areas (Figure 2.4.8).

Figure 2.4.8
## Median starting salaries and salaries after 3 years by region
(81 organisations for graduates, 47 organisations for school and college leavers)

Graduates | School and college leavers

N/A - Not applicable

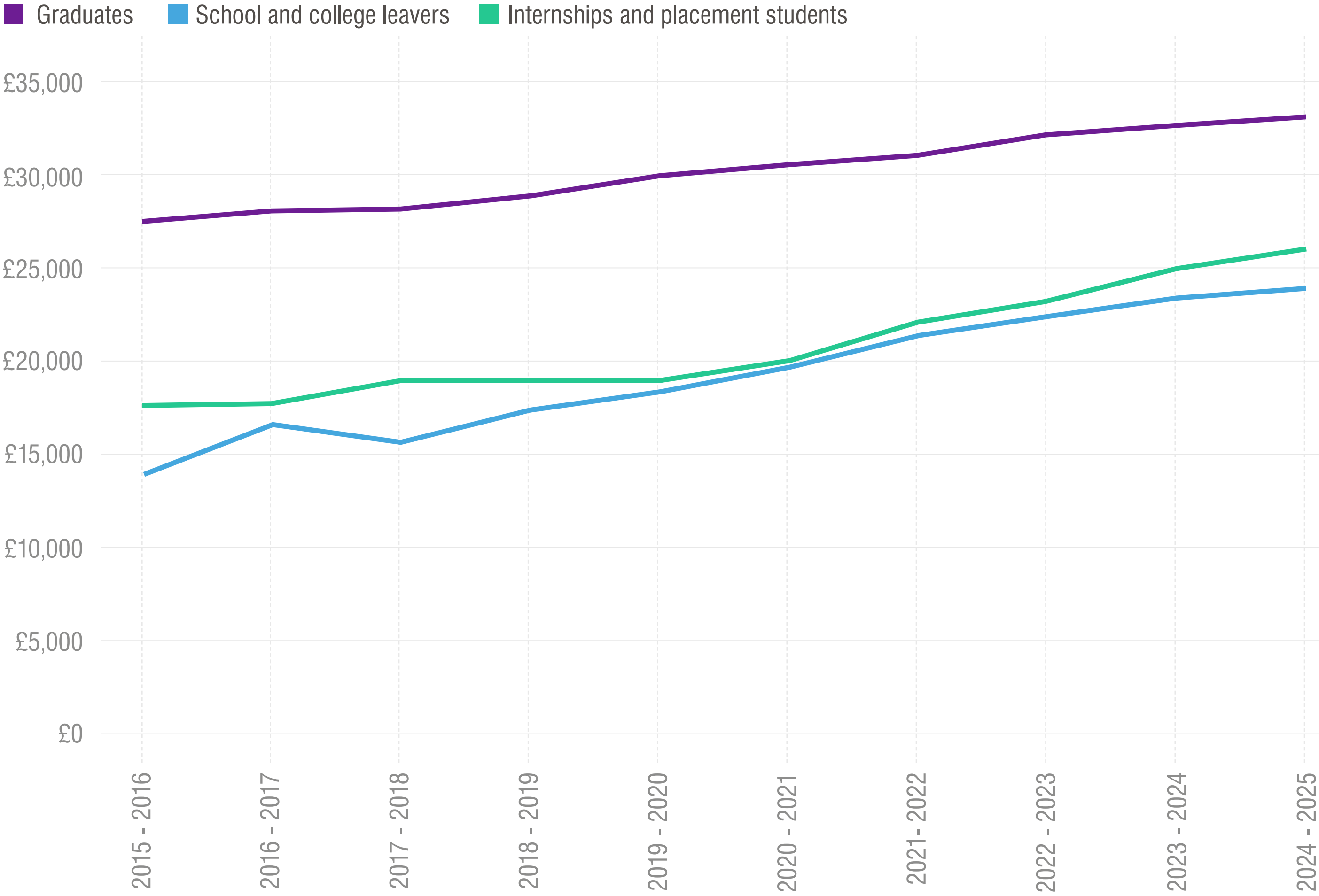
| | Median starting salary in 2024/2025 | Median salary 3 years after employer recruited them | % change in 3 years |
|---|---|---|---|
| London | £35,200<br>£26,000 | £55,000<br>£34,988 | 56%<br>35% |
| South East | £31,800<br>£24,375 | £44,000<br>£29,858 | 38%<br>22% |
| South West | £31,000<br>£24,000 | £43,630<br>£28,000 | 41%<br>17% |
| East of England | £31,000<br>£24,000 | £43,000<br>£31,000 | 39%<br>29% |
| East Midlands | £30,725<br>£24,000 | £44,505<br>£29,429 | 45%<br>23% |
| West Midlands | £31,000<br>£24,000 | £43,000<br>£26,700 | 39%<br>11% |
| North West | £32,028<br>£24,000 | £44,000<br>£31,779 | 37%<br>32% |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | £31,313<br>£24,000 | £43,625<br>£29,000 | 39%<br>21% |
| North East | £31,000<br>£24,250 | £44,000<br>£29,179 | 42%<br>20% |
| Scotland | £31,625<br>£23,801 | £43,000<br>£30,506 | 36%<br>28% |
| Wales | £30,500<br>£22,935 | £36,000<br>£26,294 | 18%<br>15% |
| Northern Ireland | £30,000<br>£24,000 | £45,000<br>£28,500 | 50%<br>19% |
| Remote workers/Workers not based in a specific region | £35,000<br>£23,840 | £50,000<br>N/A | 43%<br>N/A |
| Rest of the world | £38,500<br>£26,000 | £48,000<br>N/A | 25%<br>N/A |

East of England - Norwich

Figure 2.4.9 shows how the median salaries reported to ISE have increased over the last 10 years.

Figure 2.4.9

**Typical starting salaries reported to ISE over time**[17]

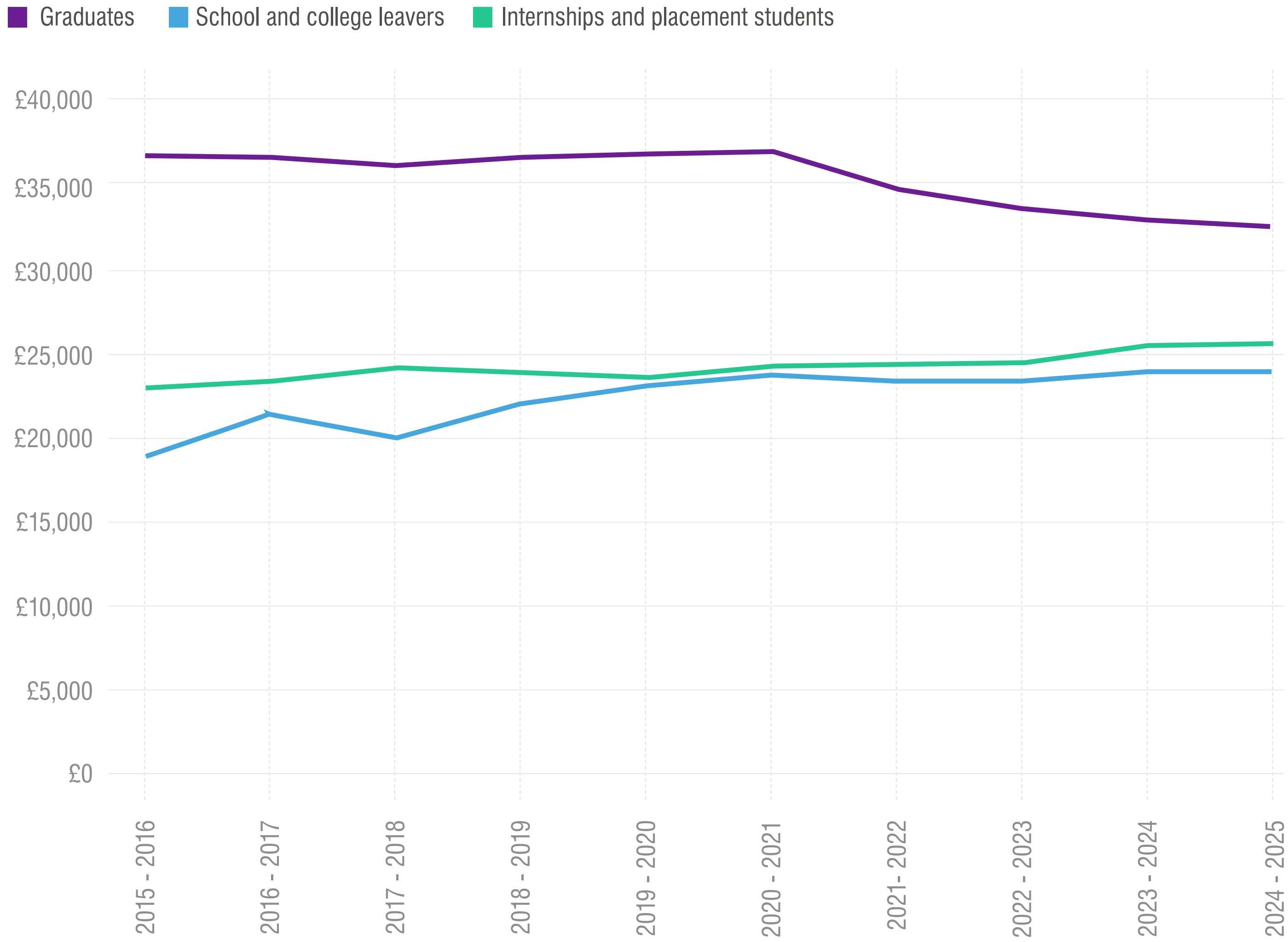



| | Graduate | School and college leaver | Internship and placement student |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2015/2016 | £27,500 | £14,683 | £17,553 |
| 2016/2017 | £28,000 | £16,517 | £17,857 |
| 2017/2018 | £28,250 | £15,750 | £18,915 |
| 2018/2019 | £29,000 | £17,417 | £19,000 |
| 2019/2020 | £29,667 | £18,450 | £19,000 |
| 2020/2021 | £30,500 | £19,489 | £20,000 |
| 2021/2022 | £31,000 | £21,000 | £21,750 |
| 2022/2023 | £32,000 | £22,000 | £23,153 |
| 2023/2024 | £32,500 | £23,310 | £24,915 |
| 2024/2025 | £33,000 | £24,000 | £25,750 |

[17] The salary data shown for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 were collected in this year's survey, then combined with the salaries reported in previous ISE recruitment survey reports from 2022/203 and earlier. This means that we have brought together multiple ISE datasets that include a variety of different employers from the last decade to create this longitudinal analysis.

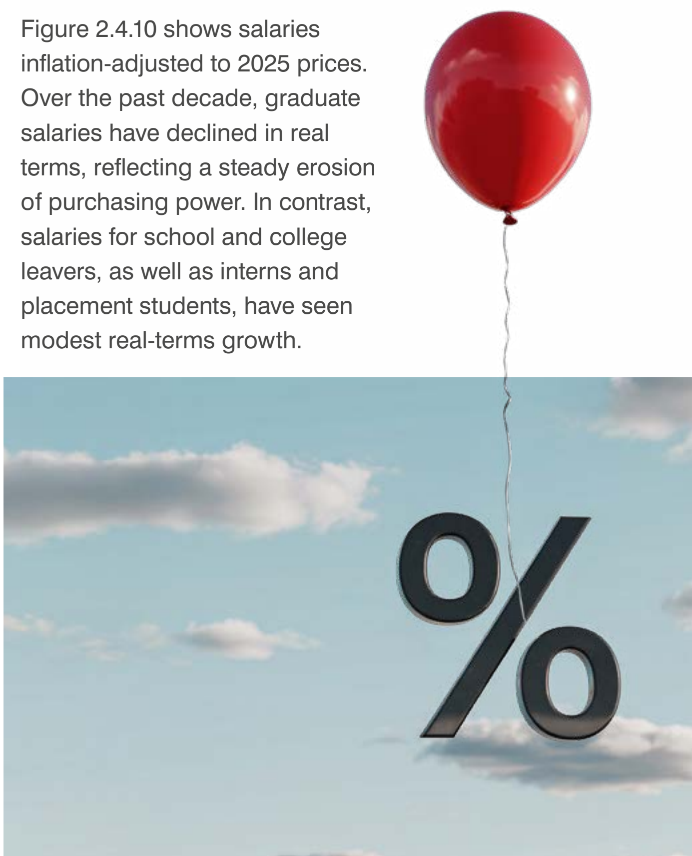
Figure 2.4.10

**Typical starting salaries reported to ISE over time (inflation adjusted to 2025 prices)[18]**




| | Graduate | School and college leaver | Internship and placement student |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2015/2016 | £37,248 | £19,888 | £23,775 |
| 2016/2017 | £36,973 | £21,811 | £23,579 |
| 2017/2018 | £36,458 | £20,326 | £24,410 |
| 2018/2019 | £36,801 | £22,102 | £24,111 |
| 2019/2020 | £37,268 | £23,177 | £23,868 |
| 2020/2021 | £37,387 | £23,890 | £24,516 |
| 2021/2022 | £35,193 | £23,841 | £24,692 |
| 2022/2023 | £34,040 | £23,403 | £24,629 |
| 2023/2024 | £33,454 | £23,994 | £25,646 |
| 2024/2025 | £33,000 | £24,000 | £25,750 |

Figure 2.4.10 shows salaries inflation-adjusted to 2025 prices. Over the past decade, graduate salaries have declined in real terms, reflecting a steady erosion of purchasing power. In contrast, salaries for school and college leavers, as well as interns and placement students, have seen modest real-terms growth.



[18] CPIH Index. https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/timeseries/l522/mm23

## 2.5 Resourcing

Effective early talent recruitment depends not only on strategy but also on the people and resources dedicated to delivering it. This section looks at how organisations structure and resource their student recruitment activity, including the size and composition of teams, and how these compare across employers.

Student recruitment teams vary substantially in size across organisations. This year's respondents reported an average (mean) team size of 11 people, up from 9 last year, while the more typical median team size remains at 5 people.

To understand the efficiency of these teams, it is useful to examine the ratio of recruiters to hires. In 2024/25, a recruiter typically was responsible for 17 hires (median) or 28 hires (mean). This represents a decrease compared with last year (median: 25; mean: 33), suggesting recruitment teams are being tasked with fewer hires per person — indicating greater capacity per recruiter.

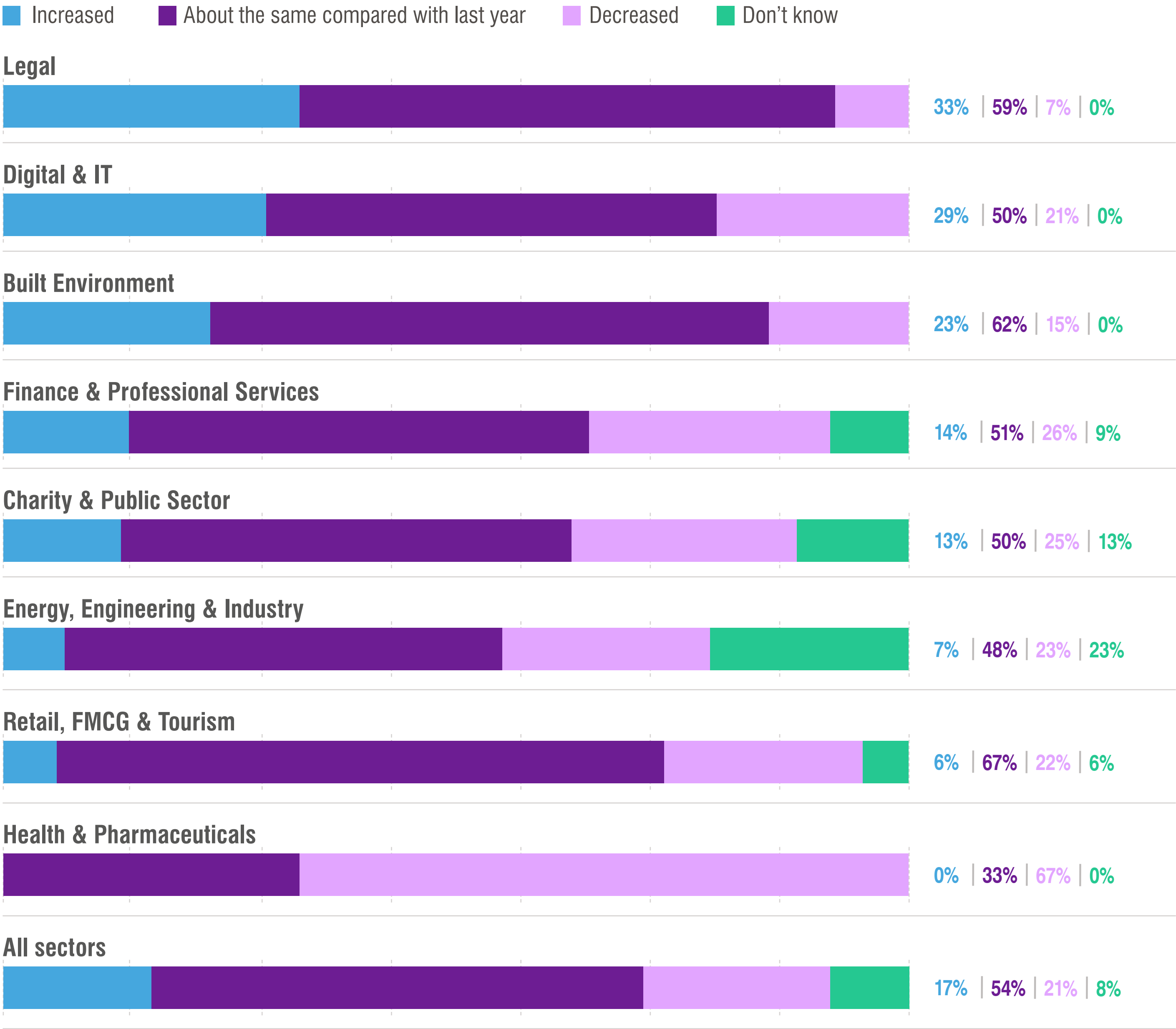
In addition to an organisation's recruitment team size, the level of budget allocated is a key indicator of investment levels in early career hiring, The average (mean) budget is around £560,367 while the typical (median) budget is £224,516.

Figure 2.5.1 shows that most respondents (54%) kept their budget stable this year. However, 21% of respondents have reduced their budget. This varied across sectors: for example, 26% of respondents from Finance & Professional Services sector reduced their budget this year, whereas 33% of respondents from Legal sector increased budgets.

Figure 2.5.1

**Budget changes compared to previous year**

(149 respondents)[19]




[19] There were only 3 respondents to this question from the Health & Pharmaceuticals sector. Readers should notice the limitation on interpretation for this sector given the small response rate.

The typical (median) cost per hire—covering graduates, school and college leavers, interns, and placement students—stands at £1,961, down from £2,158 last year[20]. This year's survey also asked employers to provide separate figures by entry route. The typical (median) cost per hire is £2,600 for graduates and £1,950 for school and college leavers.

Figure 2.5.2 shows the recruiter ratio[21] and the cost-per-hire[22] by sector.

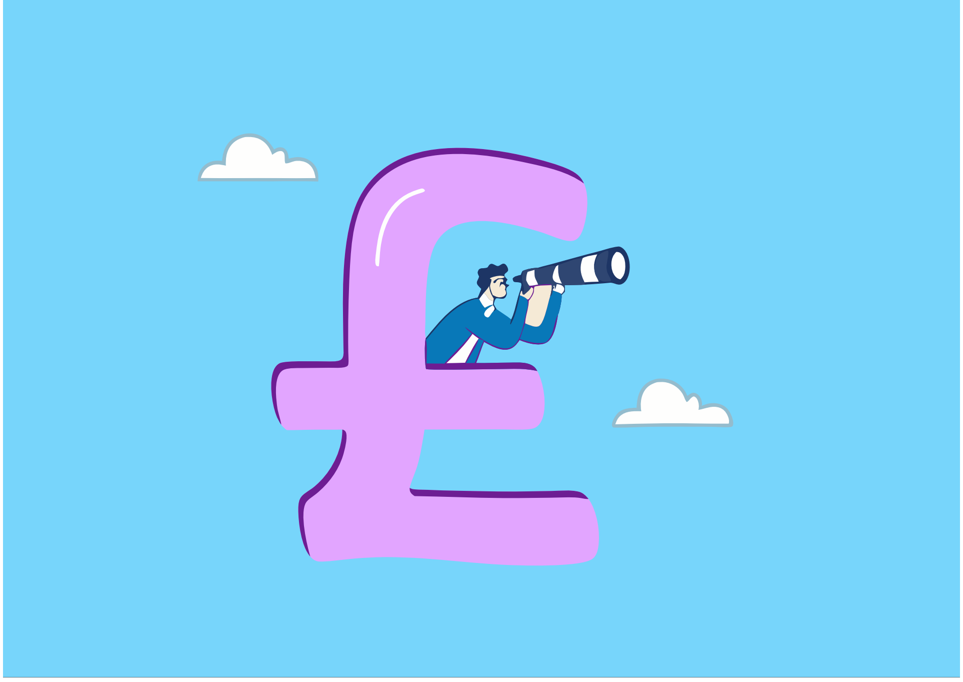


Figure 2.5.2
**Resourcing by sector**
(118 organisations)

| Sector | Recruiter ratio | Cost per hire |
|---|---|---|
| Built Environment | **31** | **£641** |
| Charity & Public Sector | **18** | **£1,045** |
| Digital & IT | **20** | **£2,268** |
| Energy, Engineering & Industry | **10** | **£1,136** |
| Finance & Professional Services | **38** | **£2,047** |
| Health & Pharmaceuticals | **42** | **£1,333** |
| Legal | **11** | **£9,501** |
| Retail, FMCG & Tourism | **25** | **£2,125** |
| All sectors | **17** | **£1,961** |

Energy, Engineering & Industry
**£1,136**
Cost per hire

[20] This year, to aid comparability. we have requested that employers provide their annual budget for early careers hires 'excluding staff costs'. This change in methodology may account for some of the observed reduction in cost per hire from £2158 last year to £1961 this year.

[21] Recruiter ratio is calculated as the recruiter-to-hire ratio, showing how many student hires (graduates, school and college leavers, interns, and placement students) one member of recruitment staff is responsible for.

[22] Cost per hire for each employer is calculated by dividing their total budget for recruiting student hires (excluding staff costs) by the total number of student hires (graduates, school and college leavers, interns, and placement students). The median figure for each sector is presented in Figure 2.5.2

Organisations' recruitment budgets are typically divided into three main areas: attraction and marketing (engaging prospective hires), selection and assessment (determining which candidates to employ), and offers and 'keep warm' activities (maintaining candidate engagement until they start their roles).

Consistent with last year's findings, employers allocated the largest share of their budgets to attraction and marketing (47%), followed by a substantial investment in selection and assessment (35%). In contrast, only 9% of budgets were directed toward offers and 'keep warm' activities, with a further 9% allocated to other recruitment-related activities (Figure 2.5.3).

When examining how attraction and marketing budgets were spent, online marketing accounted for the largest share (55%), followed by on-campus events (26%), online events (11%), and other activities (8%). This breakdown reflects a continued emphasis on digital channels, while maintaining a significant in-person presence through campus-based engagement.

Compared to last year (49%), fewer employers (43%) used a recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) organisation or similar outsourced provision to support the recruitment process in this year.

The use of RPOs varied by organisation size. Around a third of small and medium organisations (51–1,000 employees, 35%) and mid-sized large organisations (1,001–10,000 employees, 40%) reported using RPOs. However, this rose to over half (56%) among the very largest employers (10,000+ employees). RPOs were mainly used to support employers with candidate screening and assessment activities.

Figure 2.5.3
**Recruitment budgets by activity**
(120 organisations)

- Attraction and marketing **47%**
- Selection and assessment **35%**
- Offers and keep warm activities **9%**
- Other **9%**

**Recruitment budgets - Offers and keep warm activities**

**9%**

# 2.6 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Figure 2.6.1

**Employer approaches to EDI in early careers**

(121 organisations)

- There is no change to our commitment to EDI initiatives **66%**
- We are increasing our commitment to EDI initiatives **13%**
- We are reviewing our commitment to EDI initiatives **7%**
- We have reduced our commitment to EDI initiatives **1%**
- We are not changing our commitment to EDI but are reviewing some of our practices, e.g. levels of reporting **13%**

Despite the heightened public debate about EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) initiatives and changes in policy from the US government[23], ISE members (66%) report no change in their commitment. A further 13% are maintaining their commitment but reviewing certain practices (e.g. levels of reporting), while another 13% are increasing their commitment. Meanwhile, 7% are actively reassessing their stance on EDI, and just 1% have reduced their commitments.

These results indicate that developments in the US have had limited impact on UK student recruiters' overall commitment to EDI, despite some wider reports that UK businesses would follow the shift in US policy.[24] The majority of respondents to the survey remain steadfast, and a notable proportion are either reinforcing or fine-tuning their approach. The small minority reducing commitments (1%) suggests that, while some employers are adapting to changing contexts, EDI remains a core priority across much of the UK employment landscape.

[23] Trump, D. (2025). Ending radical and wasteful government DEI programs and preferencing. https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/

[24] Abdi, M. (2025). US EDI rollback to impact British workplace. *Corporate Adviser.* https://corporate-adviser.com/us-edi-rollback-to-impact-british-workplace/

# Appendix A: About the study

ISE's recruitment survey is an annual omnibus survey of ISE members covering all aspects of student recruitment. For this year's survey, ISE is collaborating with the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby. The ISE and iCeGS reviewed and revised the survey this year and made recommendations for improvements; however, many of the questions remain stable to allow us to compare with previous years and report change over time.

Any prior year comparisons for application volumes, number of hires and salaries presented in this report are produced using data from a consistent sample of employers. Other comparisons between data in this survey report and previous years' survey reports may be influenced by changes in sample composition over time. We recommend members use these other data points for broad benchmarking purposes only rather than interpreting them as a detailed indication of trends.

To provide an overview of the comparability of the survey sample in the 2024 and 2025 reports, 61% of the 155 employers who responded to the 2025 survey also responded to the 2024 survey. The 2024 survey was based on usable responses from 145 employers. 50 of these did not respond to the survey in 2025, and a further 60 new employers responded to the survey in 2025, totalling 155 useable responses for 2025.

The survey ran from 30 June till 30 July 2025. Based on the 187 responses received, we were able to analyse 155 usable responses covering 1,873,655 applications and 31,604 hires and work experience placements for schools or T-level providers.[25] Figure i shows the relative size of hires for graduates, school and college leavers, interns, graduate placement students, T-level placements and school work experience placements covered by the survey. Figure ii presents a breakdown of the 155 respondents by sector, and Figure iii displays the breakdown by organisation size. The size of the organisations involved in the research reminds us that the ISE membership, who responded to this survey, mainly comprises larger organisations with limited representation from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

[25] The data was cleaned to remove responses with no usable data. Numbers were adjusted to make it possible to calculate them. E.g., for ranges the mid-point was taken and for approximate figures the nearest number was selected, so 30+ was recorded as 31. 'Other' categories were reviewed and re-coded to existing codes where possible. Figures given in currencies other than pounds sterling were converted using Google currency converter on 30th July 2025. Where salaries were given on an hourly basis an annual figure was calculated using https://www.thesalarycalculator.co.uk/hourly.php.

Figure i
**Total student hires and work experience placements for schools or T-level providers in 2024/2025**
(155 organisations, 31,604 hires and placements)

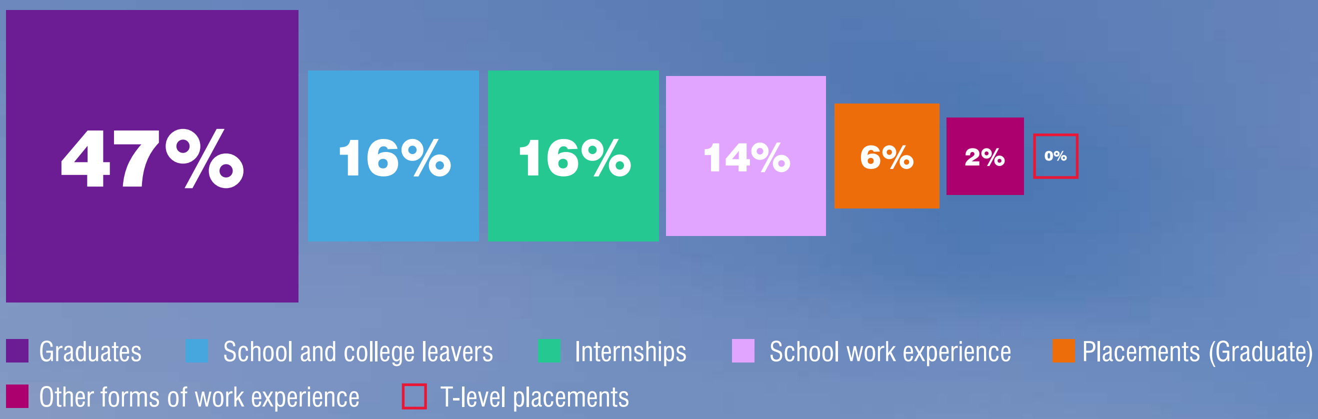
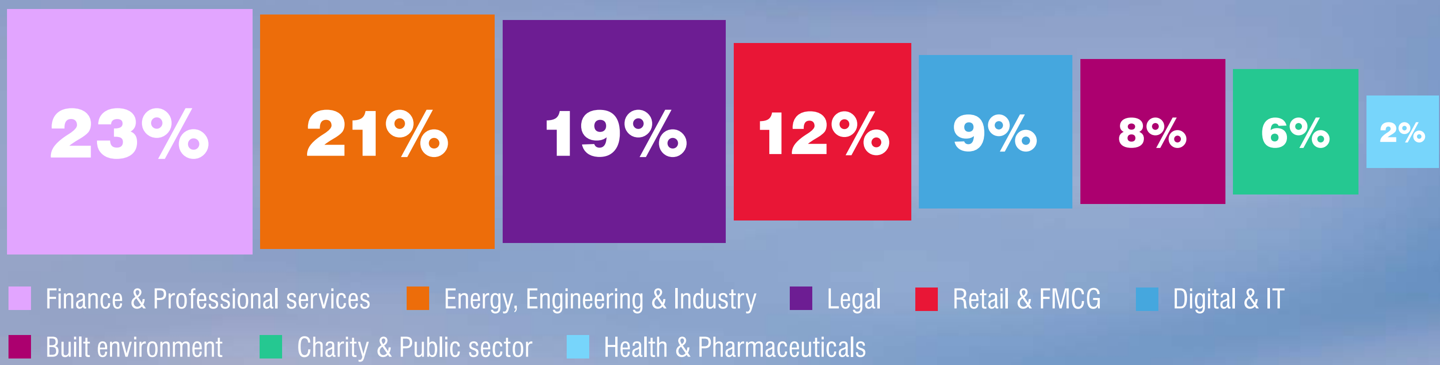
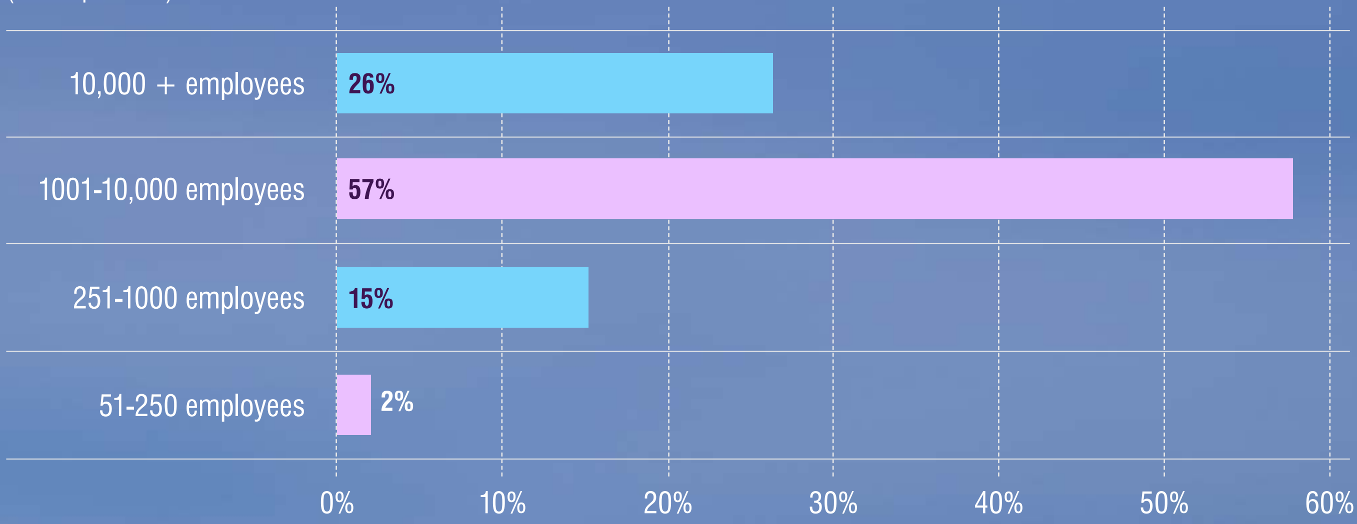



Figure ii
**Proportion of survey responses by sector**
(155 respondents)

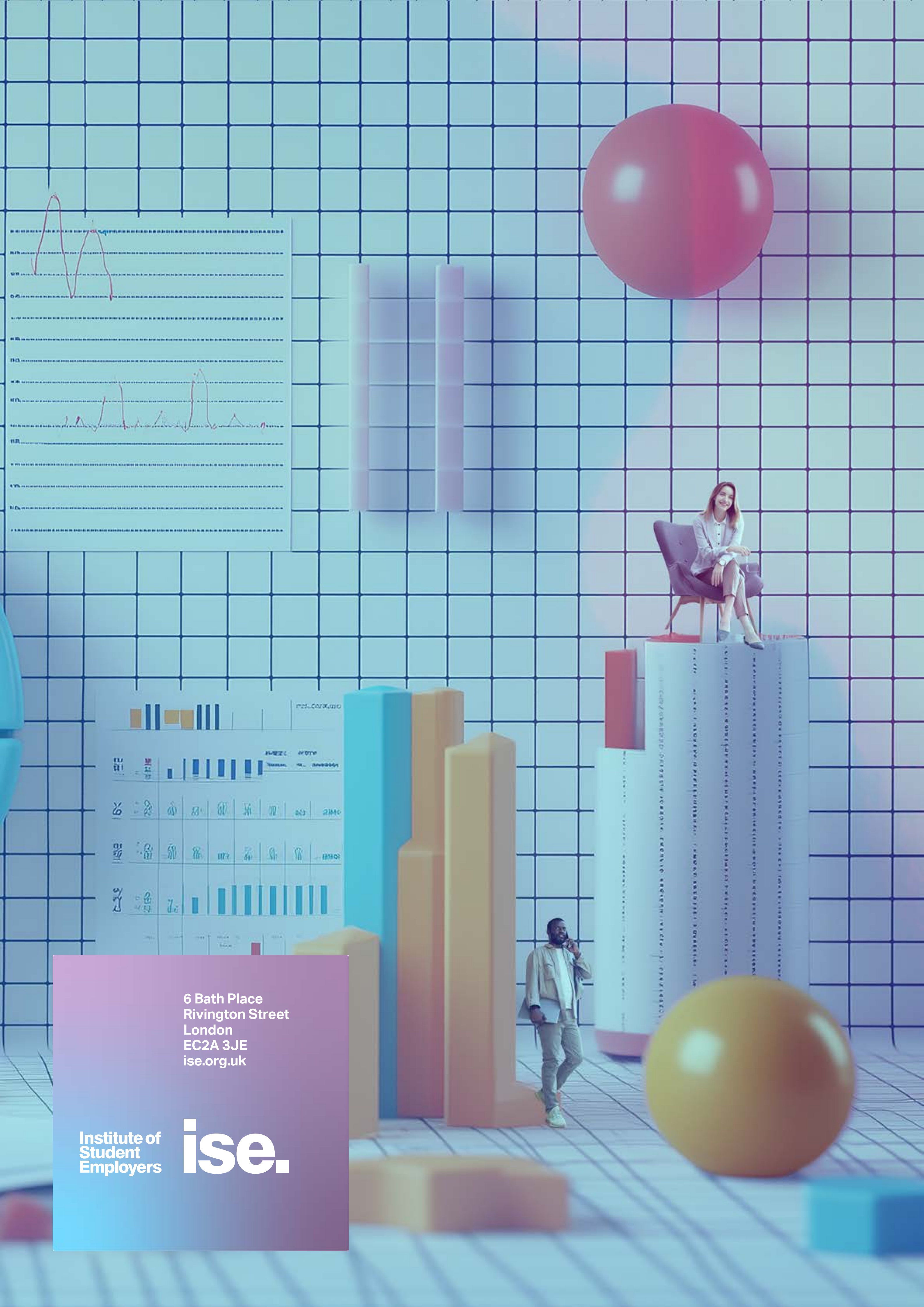



South West - Bristol

Figure iii
**Proportion of survey responses by organisational size**
(155 respondents)




# Appendix B: List of figures

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