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FINDINGS FROM THE 2024 NATIONAL SURVEY OF APPRENTICES

SEPTEMBER 2025



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“I felt drawn to the apprenticeship course. It is one of the best decisions I have made up to this point in my life. It is a breeding ground for creativity! I love it!”

Apprentice response to the 2024 national survey



Contents

1	Survey approach and responses	7
2	Access, progression and why people are choosing the apprenticeship route	8
2.1	Introduction	8
2.2	Why choose this route	8
2.3	How respondents learned about apprenticeship options	9
2.4	What apprentices were doing prior to entering their apprenticeship	10
2.5	Beyond the apprenticeship	11
2.6	Summary of key findings on access progression and choosing apprenticeship route	12
3	On the quality of the experience	13
3.1	Introduction	13
3.2	Overall experience of learning	13
3.3	Level of satisfaction with apprenticeship experience	14
3.4	Apprentices' experience of support provided by their Senior Training Advisor/Authorised Officer	15
3.5	Apprentices' experiences in the workplace	15
3.6	Experience with education providers	16
3.7	Level of satisfaction with off-the-job training experience	17
3.8	Experience of being a female apprentice	19
3.9	Summary of key findings on the quality of apprentices experiences	20
4	Barriers to participation	21
4.1	Introduction	21
4.2	Experience in securing an apprenticeship job	21
4.3	'Staying the course' in an apprenticeship	22
4.4	Experiences of apprentices with caring responsibilities and disabilities	22
4.5	Supports available to apprentices with disabilities	23
4.6	Experience of discrimination	23
4.7	Summary of key findings on barriers to participation in apprenticeships	25
5	Using insights from the survey	26
	Appendix	27
	Profile of respondents to the 2024 national survey of apprentices	27
	Generation Apprenticeship – 2024 profile of the full apprentice population	31

List of figures

Figure 1 – Respondents’ main reasons for choosing an apprenticeship	8
Figure 2 – How respondents learned about apprenticeship options	9
Figure 3 – What respondents were doing prior to entering their apprenticeship	10
Figure 4 – Apprentices’ wishes and plans once qualified	11
Figure 5 – Apprentices’ overall experience of their learning	14
Figure 6 – Experience of apprentices in the workplace	16
Figure 7 – Apprentices’ experience of learning off-the-job	17
Figure 8 – Quality of experience of female apprentices	19
Figure 9 – Barriers experienced by 16% of respondents in securing an apprenticeship	21
Figure 10 – Reasons respondents considered withdrawing from their apprenticeship (38% of all respondents)	22
Figure 11 – Types of disability reported by 5% of respondents	23
Figure 12 – Types of discrimination experienced by 7% of respondents	24



Executive summary

This report presents the findings of the first national survey of apprentices conducted in 2024 by the National Apprenticeship Office (NAO). The survey, which forms part of the *Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025*, provides insights into the experiences, motivations, challenges, and perspectives of apprentices across Ireland. This survey establishes a baseline for future annual surveys and provides evidence to support continuous improvement of Ireland's apprenticeship system.

There was a population of 28,424 apprentices at the time of the survey. 23,039 apprentices were recorded as receiving the invitation by e-mail. 5,578 participated yielding a response rate of 24%. 3,683 of these responses were fully useable for analysis, corresponding to 16% of the overall population. The survey collected data on three main areas of apprenticeship, (i) access, progression and why people are choosing the apprenticeship route; (ii) the quality of the apprenticeship experience; and (iii) barriers to participation.

Main survey findings

Access, progression and why people are choosing the apprenticeship route

- Family and friends are the primary source of information about apprenticeships (62%), with job advertisements (12%) and existing employment (11%) also being significant channels.
- The top motivations for choosing an apprenticeship were following a specific career path (44%), gaining a qualification (36%), and the ability to earn while learning (36%).
- 86% of respondents would recommend an apprenticeship to family and friends.
- 90% of female respondents reported a positive apprenticeship experience.
- 92% of women respondents consider apprenticeships a good option for women.
- Only 22.5% of female respondents said they were encouraged to pursue apprenticeships by their teachers.

The quality of the apprenticeship experience

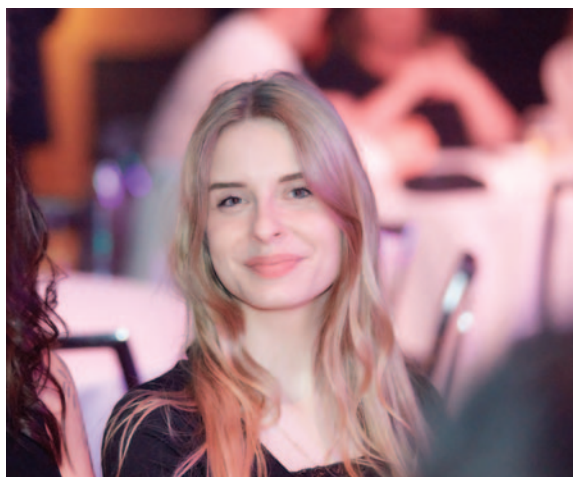
- 94% of apprentices believe their apprenticeship will provide good employment opportunities.
- 85% are glad they chose the apprenticeship route and feel part of their organisation.
- 87% are enjoying their apprenticeship experience and 84% have developed confidence in their ability to learn.
- 76% agreed that their apprenticeship includes up to date and relevant skills for employment.
- 94% of respondents showed satisfaction with their overall apprenticeship experience.
- 80% are satisfied with their learning in the workplace, and 85% agreed their employer is supportive of their development.
- 85% feel part of the organisation where they work and 94% feel they are positively contributing to the workplace.
- 38% of respondents plan to stay with their current employer after qualification.
- 24% intend to travel abroad when qualified, particularly those in craft apprenticeships.

Barriers to participation

- 38% of respondents have seriously considered withdrawing from their apprenticeship, with financial reasons being the primary concern.
- 16% reported barriers to securing an apprenticeship, with finding an employer being the most significant challenge.
- 38% of respondents felt they are being asked to undertake unrelated tasks.
- 32% of apprentices find it difficult to link theory to practice.
- 39% of apprentices report feeling overwhelmed by the study component and 40% reported challenges in catching up on the study component of their apprenticeship outside of work time.
- 7% reported experiencing discrimination, primarily in the workplace.
- 5% of respondents indicated having a disability, with 62% of these reporting a learning condition.

Using insights from the survey

Seven follow-up actions are planned to ensure maximum impact from the survey, set out in section 5 of this report. They include sharing the survey report with all apprentices, employers and training providers as well as engagement with employers, education and training providers and colleagues at second level to discuss the survey findings and to agree actions that will ensure apprentices' views have been taken on board and result in improvement of the national apprenticeship system. Progress will be measured in a further survey of apprentices in 2026.



1 Survey approach and responses

A national survey of apprentices was carried out by the National Apprenticeship Office (NAO) over four weeks spanning October-November 2024. The views of over 28,400 apprentices who were in training at the time were sought, via an online questionnaire distributed electronically via email to the apprentice group.

Survey questions focused on three main areas: access, progression and why people are choosing the apprenticeship route; the quality of the apprenticeship experience; and barriers to participation.

The survey was designed in consultation with apprentices, apprentice representatives, employers, and training providers. In addition, it drew on questions asked in an unpublished survey of apprentices in 2020 which helped to shape the *Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025*. Good practice in survey methodology was followed throughout, to support access to the survey and anonymity for respondents.

The survey responses were collected using an online questionnaire which was distributed via an individual e-mail invitation and received by 23,039 apprentices. 5,578 responses were recorded, corresponding to a 24% response rate. Following a full review of the data 3,683 of the responses or 16% were found to be fully usable and form the basis of this report. Administrative data from the National Register of Apprentices and the apprenticeship IT platform were used to check the representativeness of the responses gathered. It was confirmed that, broadly, the responses were representative of apprentices age and background. One area of exception relates to the gender of respondents, where a slightly higher proportion of women apprentices (14%) responded to the survey compared to their overall representation in the apprentice population (8%). Conversely, a slightly lower proportion of male apprentices (86%) responded to the survey compared to their overall representation (92%).

As part of the survey, respondents were invited to provide additional commentary via several open-text questions. Over 2,000 such open text responses were received. These were reviewed and have been incorporated into the thematic analysis in the report. In addition, they will be incorporated into the engagement with apprenticeship stakeholders on the survey findings over the coming months.

This report is laid out in five sections.

Section 1 – describes the survey approach and responses

Section 2 – reports on access, progression and why people are choosing the apprenticeship route

Section 3 – details the quality of experiences of apprentices

Section 4 – describes barriers to participation

Section 5 – outlines insights gathered from the survey

While the survey includes wide representation from the apprentice population, the sample may not be fully representative of the entire apprentice population, and all survey data is self-reported information. Caution should therefore be exercised in generalising the findings to the wider apprentice population. Where relevant, differences in responses among certain groups of apprentices have been highlighted throughout the report. Figures in the report are rounded to the nearest whole number or percentage. An appendix to this document provides a profile of the respondents to the survey and presents the details of the population of apprentices at the time of data collection.

2 Access, progression and why people are choosing the apprenticeship route

2.1 Introduction

The first area of focus for the survey was on access, progression and why people choose the apprenticeship route. The questions aimed to gather insights into the reasons why current apprentices made the choice they did, and the people or factors which influenced their decision. The information gathered will help in the design of promotional campaigns and strategies in areas such as recruitment and retention of apprentices.

The questions spanned the following areas:

- Why choose the apprenticeship route
- How an apprentice learned about apprenticeship options
- What an apprentice was doing prior to entering their apprenticeship
- The apprentice's plans once qualified

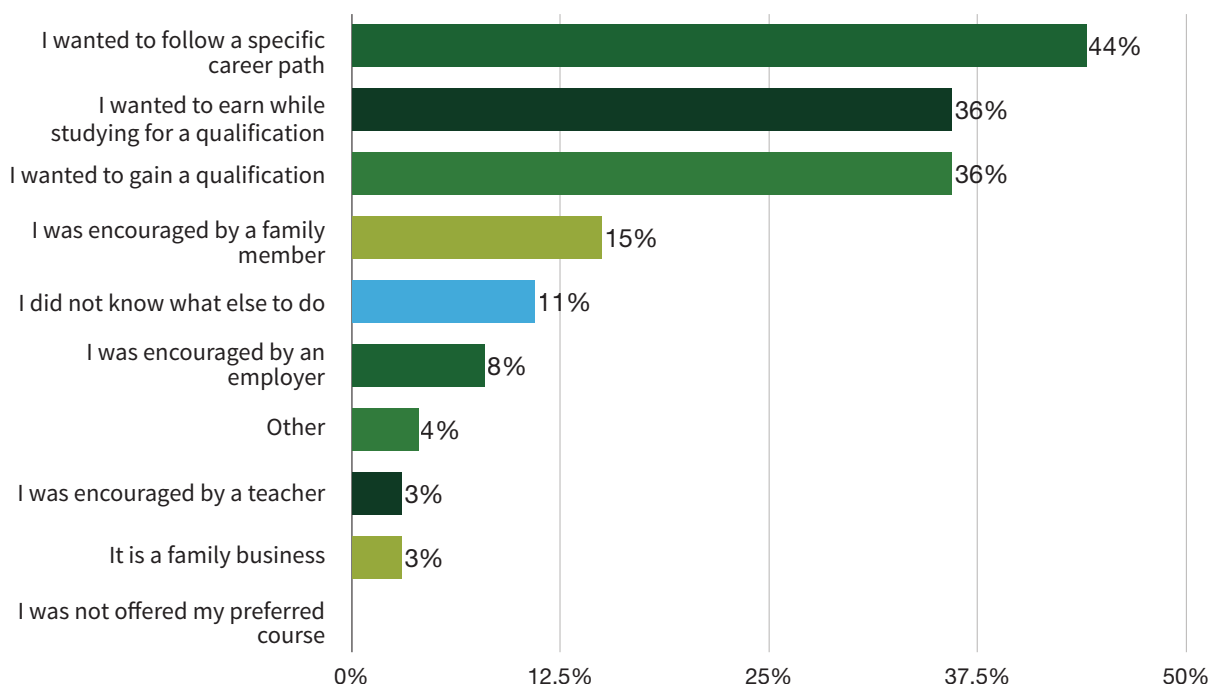
Respondents were asked to indicate their choices or levels of agreement using a number of closed-end statement items. Sections also included the opportunity to include free text responses. A summary of the overall findings is presented at the conclusion of this section of the report.

2.2 Why choose this route

In answering this question, respondents could choose more than one option. As shown in Figure 1 below, the three main reasons cited for choosing apprenticeship are (i) to follow a specific career path (44%); (ii) to gain a qualification (36%) and (ii) to be able to both earn and learn (36%). Interestingly, choosing the apprenticeship route seems to have been less influenced by family, teachers, or employers.

The question included an option 'Other' and invited a text response. 4% of respondents provided a text response, and reasons included preferring hands-on learning and practical training, dislike of school or where the purely academic route did not suit, or a wish for a new challenge.

Figure 1- Respondents' main reasons for choosing an apprenticeship



2.3 How respondents learned about apprenticeship options

62% of respondents to the survey stated that they learned about apprenticeship options from family and friends. The next most cited source was job advertisements through various channels, with 12% stating this was their route. See figure 2 below.



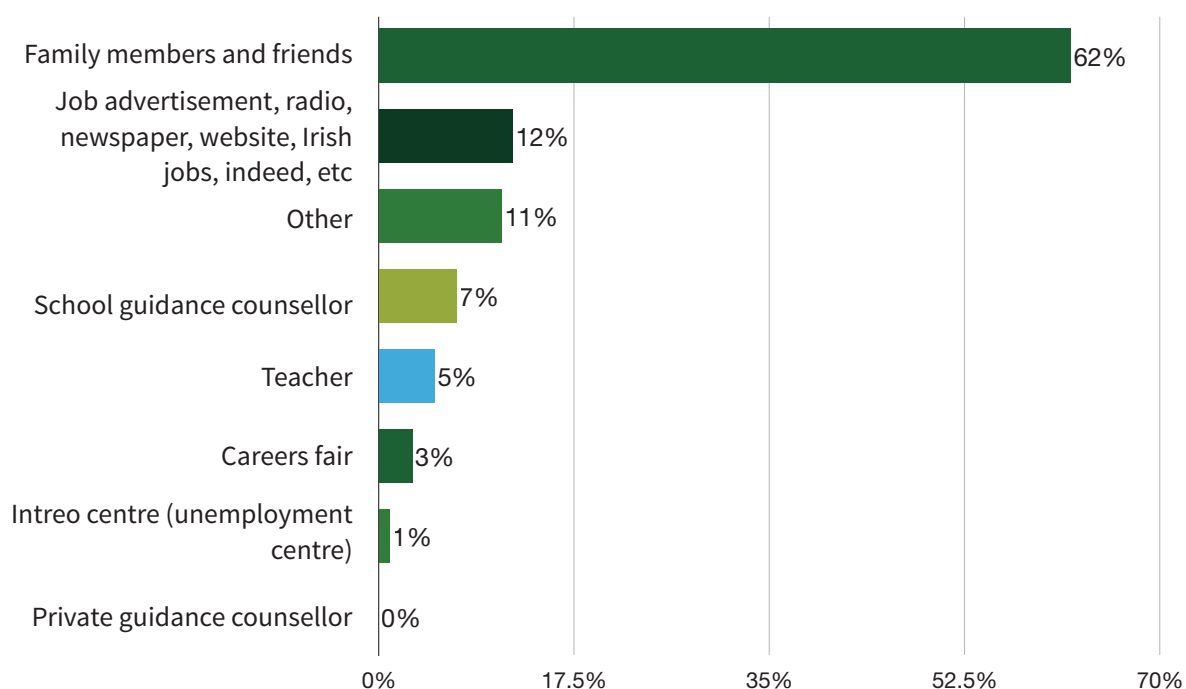
Further analysis of the data showed the source for information on apprenticeship options varied by industry sector and apprenticeship type. Within the construction and electrical areas, 72% and 73% respectively of respondents indicated that family and friends were their source of information. Conversely, only 11.4% of apprentices in hospitality sectors indicated this was their source, and only 9.5% of those in the logistics and supply chain sector.

The number of respondents learning about apprenticeship options through job advertisements was highest for those in ICT areas (36%), Finance (28%), BioPharma (28%) and Agriculture and Arboriculture (23%). This compared to Electrical (8.3%) and Construction apprentices (6%).

Open text comments gathered from respondents who indicated 'Other' (11%) as their source of information stated that they had learned about their apprenticeship options through an existing employer or other work colleagues. This finding was similar in the national survey of apprentices conducted in 2020 with 11% of respondents stating that they chose the apprenticeship route following a recommendation from their employer.

Career guidance sources did not appear to play a significant role in helping respondents to find out about apprenticeship options. Comparison with the 2020 apprenticeship survey showed a similar response with 6% of respondents learning about apprenticeship options from a guidance counsellor.

Figure 2 - How respondents learned about apprenticeship options

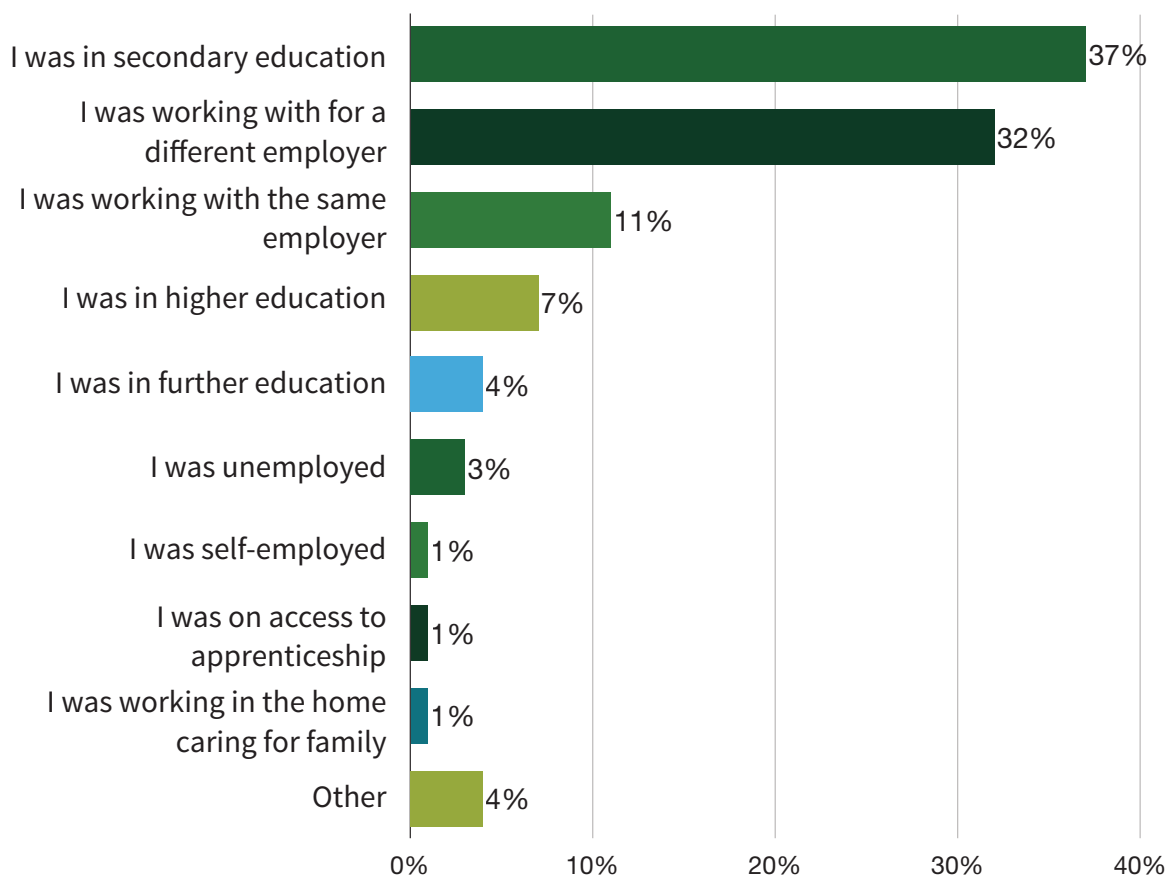


2.4 What apprentices were doing prior to entering their apprenticeship

Apprentices were asked in the survey to indicate what they were doing prior to entering their apprenticeship. As set out in Figure 3 below, just over a third of all respondents were in second level education prior to entering an apprenticeship and just under a third were in employment.

The data was analysed to determine if there was a difference in responses based on age. Younger cohorts were more likely to begin an apprenticeship directly from secondary school. Older apprentices were more likely to enter an apprenticeship from employment. 33% of those aged 23 to 30 years entered an apprenticeship from the same employment, while 48% came from a different job. This pattern was reversed in the 41 years and older cohort, where 47% came from the same employer and 30% from a different job. Within the 'Other' category (4%), apprentices indicated they had been abroad or were in other training and education schemes prior to beginning their apprenticeship.

Figure 3 -What respondents were doing prior to entering their apprenticeship



2.5 Beyond the apprenticeship

The survey also included questions on apprentices' future plans once qualified, as set out in Figure 4 below. 38% of respondents indicated they would like to stay with their current employer. 7% said they would like to look for an opportunity with a new employer, and 24% would like to travel abroad when qualified.

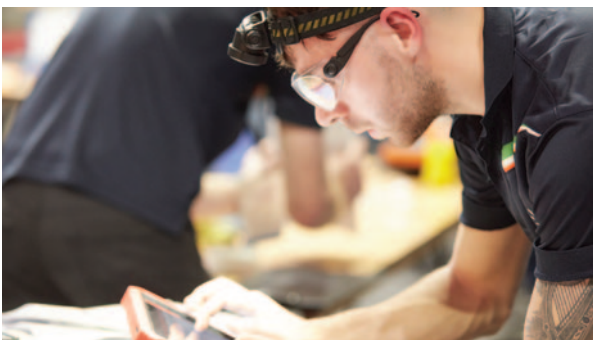
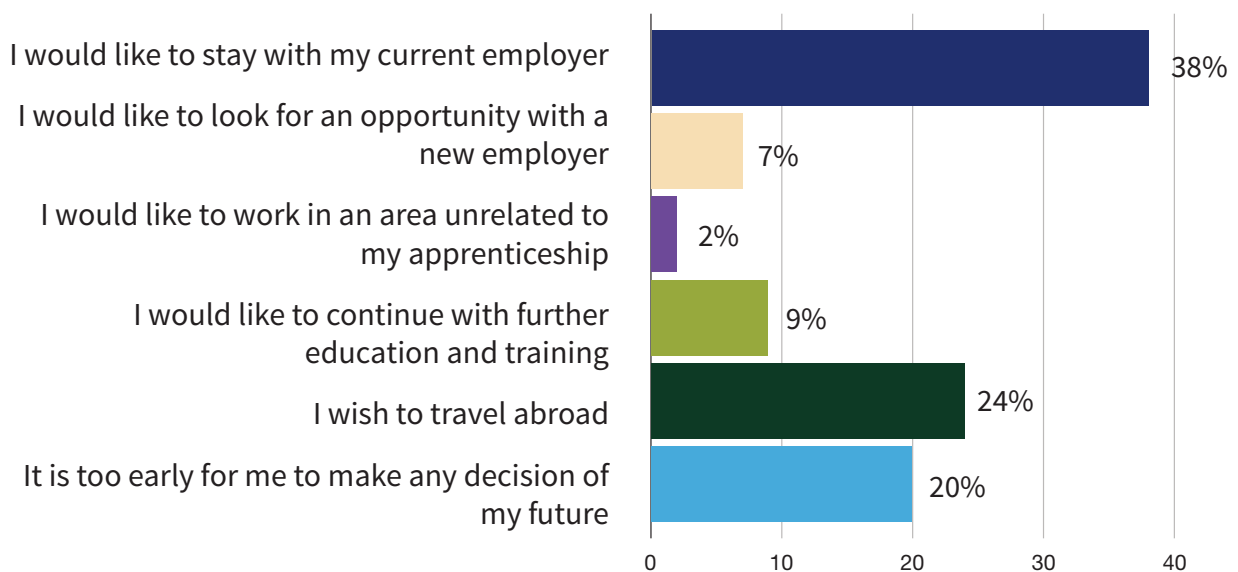
Further analysis was conducted to determine if there were notable differences in responses based on age and apprenticeship type. 56% of respondents aged 31+ years and older indicated they would like to stay with their current employer followed by 43% of those aged 18 years and younger. 30% of those 19-22 years and 38% in cohorts aged 23-30 years indicated they would like to stay with their current employer after qualifying.

Those wishing to travel abroad after qualifying was highest for those aged 19-22 years (30%) and just 13% in respondents aged 31 years and older. There were more craft apprentices who expressed a wish to travel abroad after qualification (31%) compared to apprentices on consortia lead apprenticeships (20%).

Those wishing to travel abroad were highest in construction related apprenticeships (28%), followed by electrical (28%), engineering (24%) and motor (21%).

Interest in travelling abroad after qualification was at less than 5% in the areas of sales, insurance, and ICT.

Figure 4 - Apprentices' wishes and plans once qualified



2.6 Summary of key findings on access, progression and choosing apprenticeship route

62% of respondents had learned about apprenticeship through family and friends.

11% learned about their apprenticeship options through existing employment and other work colleagues.

The ways of learning about apprenticeship options are different depending on the apprenticeship type. Job advertisements play a larger role in informing apprentices of options in consortia-led apprenticeships.

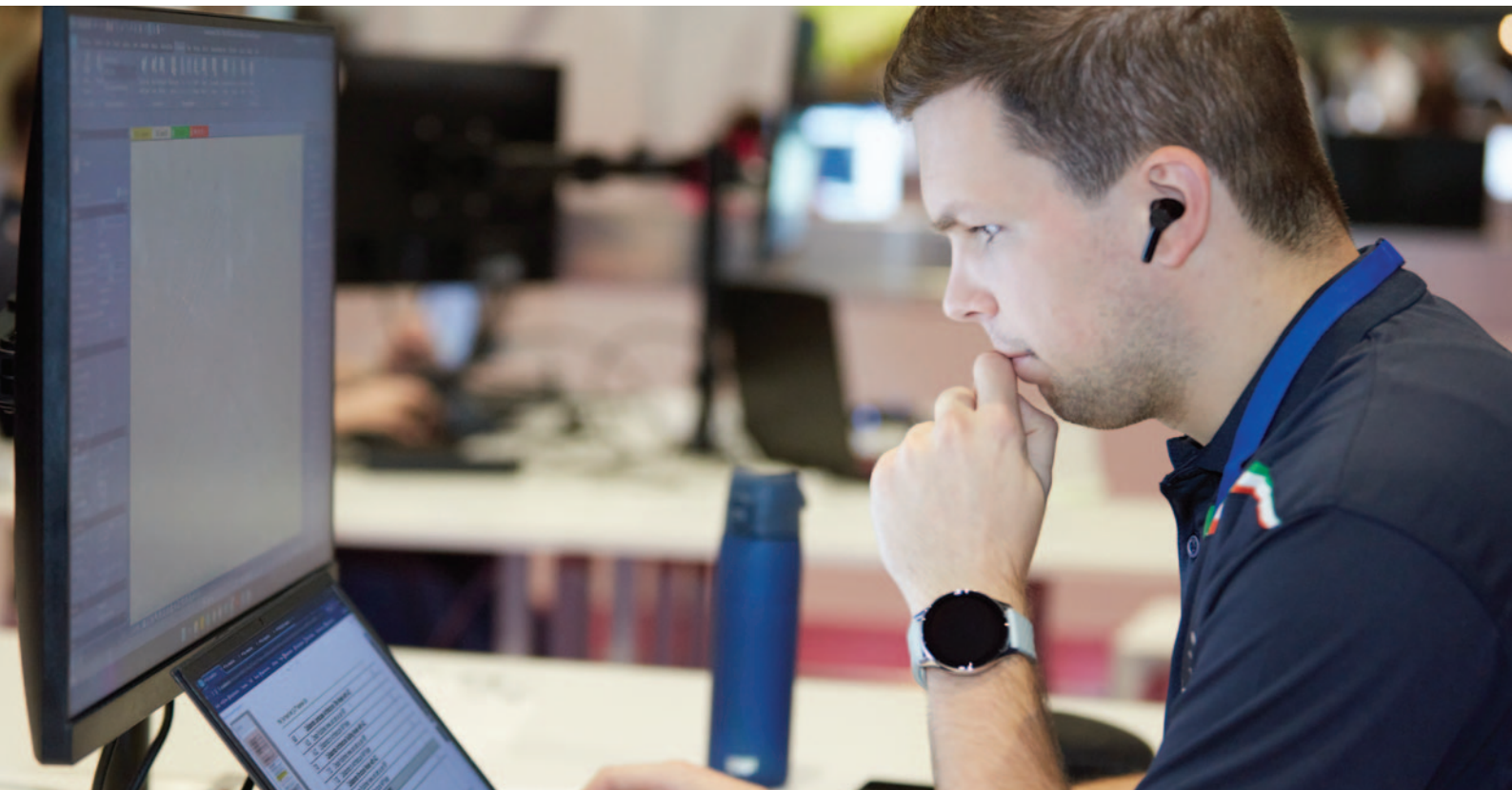
The top three answers for choosing an apprenticeship were to follow a specific career path (44%), get a qualification (36%) being able to earn and learn (36%).

Apprentices made their choice for reasons that included a preference for a more practical, hands-on approach rather than a purely academic experience.

Apprentices aged 23 years and older are more likely to be in employment with either the same or a different employer before entering their apprenticeship.

38% of respondents would like to stay with their current employer once qualified.

24% would like to travel abroad when qualified.



3 On the quality of the experience

3.1 Introduction

The second area of focus for the survey was on the quality of apprentices' learning experience. The questions aimed to gather information that would help inform future apprenticeship policy, education and working practices. The questions fell into four main headings, as follows:

- An apprentice's overall experience, including engagement with the Authorised Officer network
- What an apprentice values most about their learning experience in the workplace
- What an apprentice values most about their learning experience off-the-job with the education provider
- Particular experiences of women apprentices

3.2 Overall experience of learning

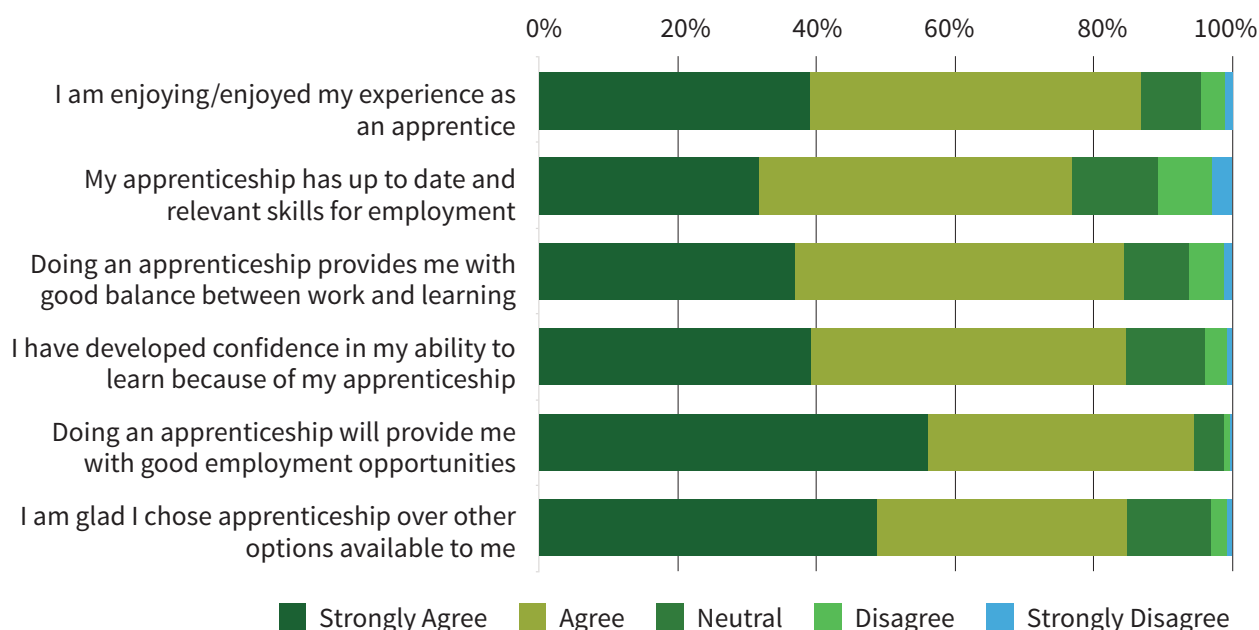
Information on the overall experience of apprentices was gathered by asking respondents to rate six statements on the survey Likert scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. In addition, there were opportunities for respondents to make comments in open-text fields.

As set out in Figure 4, the statements covered areas including enjoyment, work-life balance and learning, skills, and work opportunities. There were strong levels of agreement among respondents with all the statements. 87% agreed or strongly agreed that they were enjoying their apprenticeship. 84% agreed that their confidence in their ability to learn has developed because of doing their apprenticeship. 94% agreed that the apprenticeship will help with their career opportunities. 80% agreed they were glad they chose the apprenticeship route. A lower proportion of respondents, 77%, however, agreed or strongly agreed that their apprenticeship includes relevant and up-to-date skills development.

In comparing the response on relevant and up-to-date skills development with the 2020 survey, a higher number (85%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This difference may be due to a higher proportion of respondents in the 2020 survey who had yet to enter off-the-job training. Nonetheless, it is intended to follow up on this feedback as part of the next steps.



Figure 5- Apprentices' overall experience of their learning



3.3 Level of satisfaction with apprenticeship experience

As part of the data collection on apprenticeship experience, apprentices were asked to rate their overall experience on a scale of 1-10 where 10 indicated the highest level of satisfaction and 1 the lowest. Scores of 5 or greater were deemed to be 'satisfied' and a score of 7 or above 'highly satisfied'.

Using this rating scale, 94% of respondents said they were satisfied with their apprenticeship, of which 57% indicated being highly satisfied. The scoring was similar across all types of apprenticeship, with a 94% 'satisfied' rating among craft apprentices and 92% among consortia led apprentices. Levels of satisfaction in the current survey were 12% higher than satisfaction levels observed in 2020 with 83% of apprentices being very or fairly satisfied with their overall apprenticeship experience.

Analysis based on apprenticeship type shows some differences in levels of overall satisfaction levels within apprenticeship sectors. 11% of respondents in Finance and ICT areas rated their experience as 'less than satisfied' (4 out of 10 or less). This figure was 9% in the Engineering and Electrical sectors, and 8% in Construction.

Finally, when asked if they would recommend apprenticeship to family and friends, 86% of all respondents indicated that they would. This finding was lower than found in the 2020 survey where 90% of apprentices indicated that they were likely or very likely to recommend an apprenticeship to their family and friends.

3.4 Apprentices' experience of support provided by their Senior Training Advisor/Authorised Officer

Respondents were asked questions on their experience of engaging with their Authorised Officer/Senior Training Advisor. All apprentices are assigned this support person at the start of their apprenticeship. It forms an important component of the national apprenticeship system, as the Training Advisor helps to ensure the quality of the apprenticeship experience, that the apprentice is progressing, and that employers are fulfilling their training commitments. The questions explored the level of contact apprentices had with their Training Advisor and whether they felt they would benefit from more contact, support and/or communication.

53% of all respondents were satisfied with the level of contact they had with their Training Advisor and 51% agreed they would like more contact. 55% of respondents indicated that their Training Advisor provided valuable support to them. 72% of respondents agreed that they were aware of how to contact their Training Advisor while 14% disagreed.

Some differences in response were noted on these questions when analysed based on the age profile of the respondents and program type, craft or consortia-led apprenticeship. 70% of respondents aged 18 years and younger indicated they would like more contact with their advisor compared to 59% of respondents aged 31 years and older. The levels of satisfaction with contact with the advisor were higher in consortia-led apprenticeships (70%) compared to craft apprenticeship (49%).

3.5 Apprentices' experiences in the workplace

Responses to a question on apprentices' experiences of learning in the workplace were gathered via thirteen statements. Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' as set out in Figure 6 below. The statements covered apprentices' perception of their role, support, training and mentoring on-the-job.

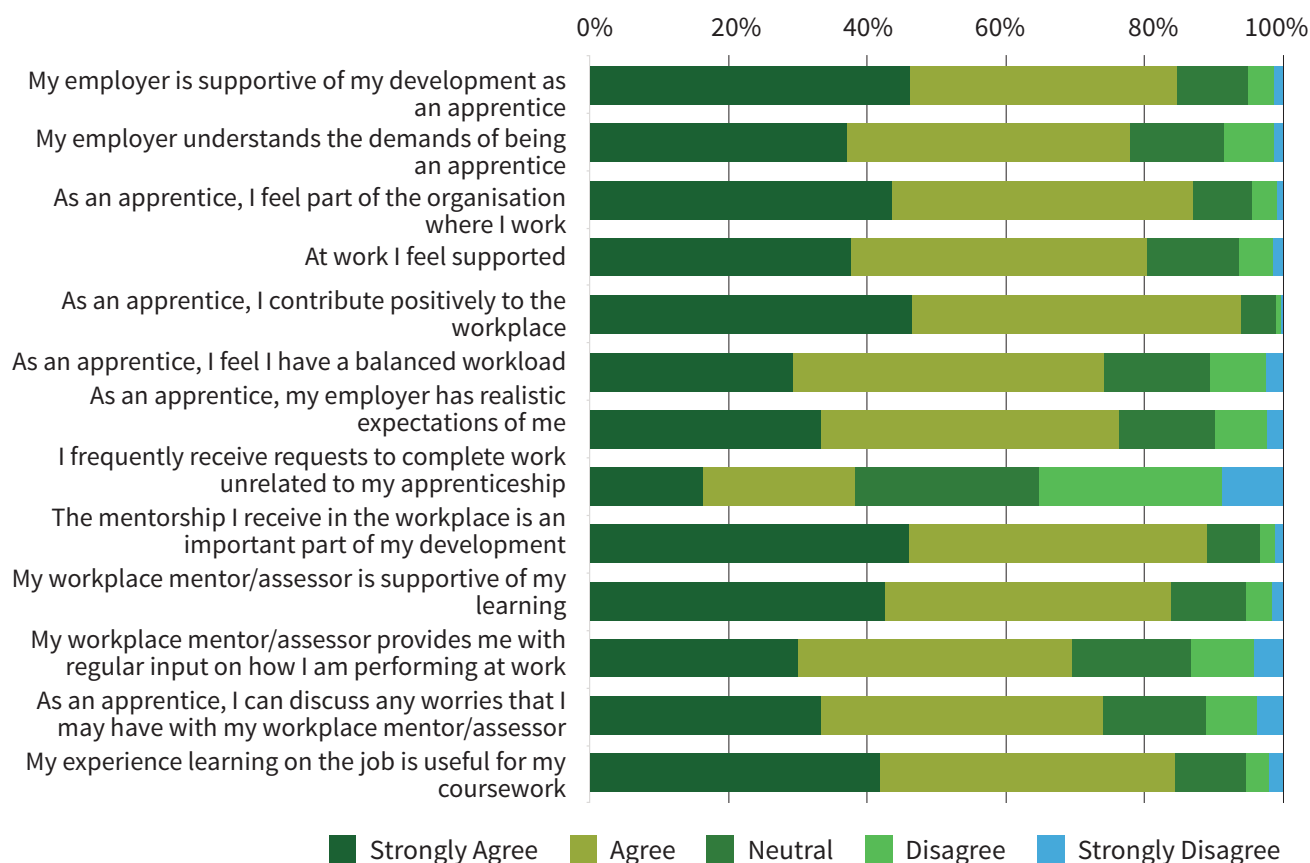
94% of apprentices agreed they were contributing positively to the workplace and 87% agreed that they felt part of the organisation where they work. 89% of respondents considered the mentoring they receive as an important part of their development. 83% agreed their mentors were supportive of their learning. A similar question asked in 2020 on how supported apprentices felt in their learning indicated that a marginally lower percentage, 82%, felt supported at that time.

70% of apprentices said their mentor gave them regular inputs on performance. However, 10% of respondents disagreed with this and 20% indicated a neutral response on this statement.

Contrasting views were noted from respondents when asked if they frequently carried out tasks unrelated to their apprenticeship, 38% of apprentices agreed that they were frequently asked to conduct unrelated tasks and 35% indicated that they were not. Of the respondents who indicated that they were frequently asked to conduct unrelated tasks, the frequency was similar when compared for craft and consortia-led apprenticeships (53% versus 55%). Being asked to frequently conduct unrelated tasks was highest in the motor mechanic apprenticeship (60%) in comparison to 30% in an electrical apprenticeship.

Respondents who indicated being asked to conduct tasks unrelated to their apprenticeship showed some variation between micro, small, medium, and larger companies. Of the respondents in the cohort, 51% who were employed in micro-sized companies agreed that they had been asked to complete unrelated tasks whereas 58% of the cohort were in large organisations.

Figure 6 - Experience of apprentices in the workplace



“My employer/ mentor has helped me a lot in this journey. I feel like I have someone to go to in case I need, I get all the support necessary for my development at the company and during my apprenticeship.”

Apprentice commenting on the experience with their workplace mentor

3.6 Experience with education providers

Responses to a question on apprentices' experiences of off-the-job learning with education and training providers were gathered from fifteen statements. Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' as set out in Figure 7 below. The statements covered apprentices' experience of developing skills and knowledge, the quality of the teaching they were receiving, and how they were finding the challenge of study alongside work within the apprenticeship structure.

Not all apprentice respondents had engaged in 'off the job' training at the time of the survey and an option to capture this was included. 55% of all respondents had entered 'off the job' training at the time of the survey.

80% of apprentices reported enjoying their off-the-job learning and 82% agreed or strongly agreed that the skills they are learning off-the-job are relevant to them. 86% agree that their tutor/lecturer has the expertise needed to help them learn, however a lesser percentage of 66% agreed that their teachers had the most recent technology-related knowledge and expertise.

Responses to this question also indicated that the top three off-the-job learning challenges are linking theory to practice, feeling overwhelmed by the study component of their apprenticeship, and acquiring new information not already learned in the workplace. A notable 39% of respondents agreed that they felt overwhelmed by the study component of their apprenticeship. Following further analysis this feedback was irrespective of age profile (<2% variation).

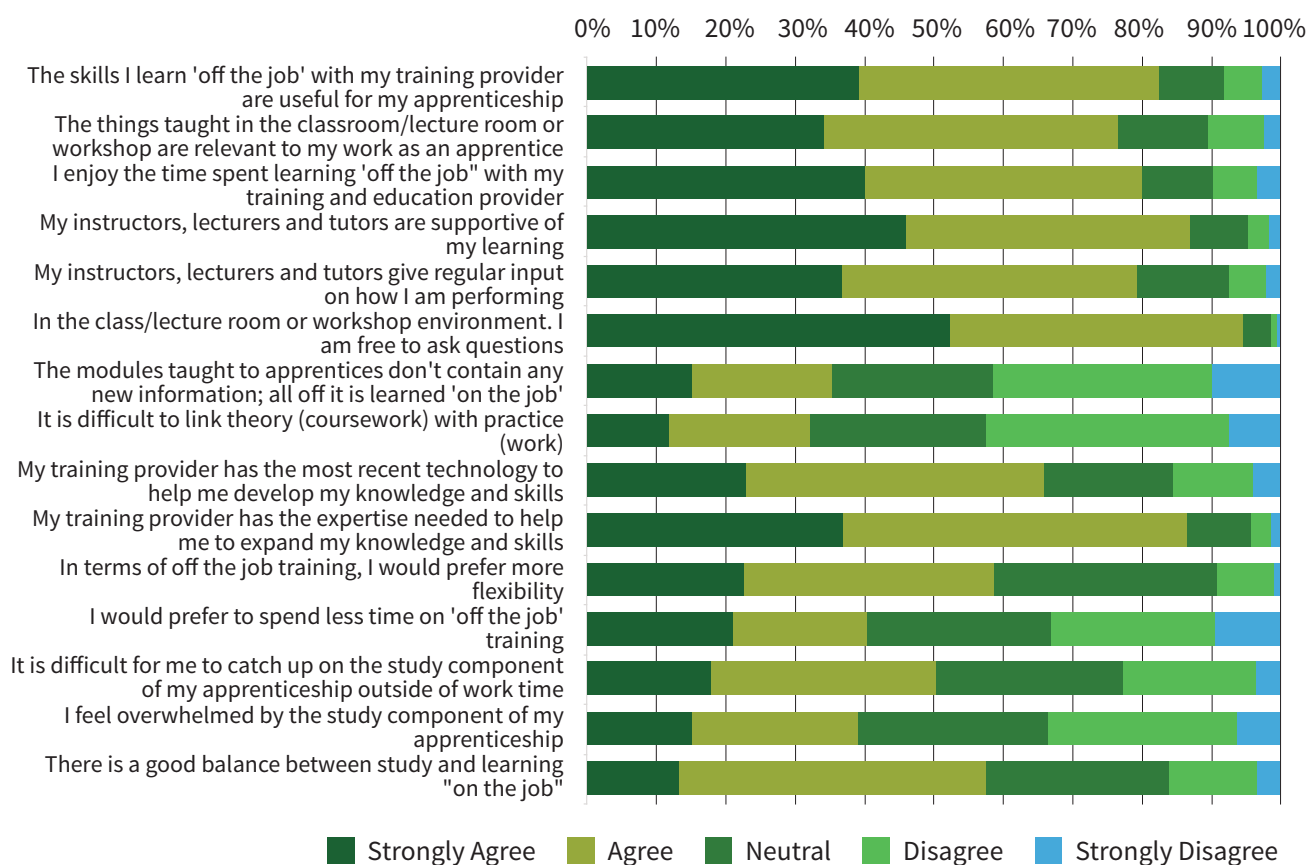
The data was analysed to determine whether age or apprenticeship type influenced the apprentice responses across the statement items.

The age of respondents was found to influence the level of agreement with the statement on finding it difficult to link theory to practice and was shown to be highest in the 18 years and younger cohort (38%) and lowest where the apprentice was 31 years and older (16%).

Of the cohort feeling overwhelmed by the study component, those in consortia-led programmes agreed to a greater extent (46%), when compared to craft apprentices (37%). Of those who found it more difficult to catch up on the study component of their apprenticeship the numbers were higher in consortia-led programmes (59%) in comparison to craft programmes (48%).

60% of respondents in craft apprenticeships would like more flexibility in off the job training compared to 53% on consortia-led apprenticeships.

Figure 7 – Apprentices' experience of learning off-the-job



3.7 Level of satisfaction with off-the-job training experience

Respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their off-the-job experience using a rating scale of 1-10 where 1 was least satisfied and 10 was most satisfied. Scores of 5 and above indicated satisfaction and scores of 7 and over were considered to show high levels of satisfaction. 89% of respondents stated that they were satisfied with their education experience, scoring 5 and above, of which 53% were highly satisfied, scoring 7 or above.

Levels of satisfaction varied somewhat by apprenticeship areas following further analysis. ICT had the lowest levels of satisfaction with the educational experience, with 30% of ICT respondents scoring 4 or less on the satisfaction rating scale.

Apprentices were invited to add additional commentary of their 'off-the-job' experience through an open-text question. 252 apprentices provided open-text responses. There were three main themes identified in this feedback, on curriculum content, quality of teaching and duration of off-the-job learning times. Some apprentices were critical of the curriculum content such as '*current regulations*' and felt that aspect need to be updated in line with industry standards. Others complained of a lack of module structure and overloaded content while other felt that improvements could be made in relating theory to practice.

Some apprentices mentioned difficulties in learning and critiqued the quality of teaching. There was reference to an emphasis on 'self-directed learning' which was considered unhelpful. Others had high praise for their tutors and lecturers:

“ Almost all of my lecturers go above and beyond to help and are always asking if we understand. If we don't, that's fine and they will explain it again. ”

“ I would like to commend my previous phase 2 lecturers and my phase 4 lecturers, for their expertise and for the honour and privilege I was given in the opportunity to learn from them. I believe they are a credit to the education system and I couldn't have asked for more knowledgeable and passionate educators. ”

Some apprentices were critical of the duration of off-the-job training. This was confined to craft apprenticeships but with contrasting views. Some believed the duration should be shorter, while others felt that it should be increased, as reflected in these two comments below:

“ Phase 4 at 11 weeks is too short. It should be a minimum of 13 weeks. You feel like you are rushing with coursework as you must get it done in the limited time you have. ”

“ The course could be condensed to two years; there have been days where we are hanging around off the job looking for something to do. ”

Certain apprentices on the newer consortia-led apprenticeships believed that off-the-job training could be adapted to a more hybrid delivery model, with less requirement for travel to training locations.

Feedback on off-the-job learning in the 2020 survey was qualitative and findings could not be directly compared with the 2024 survey. However, open text responses from apprentices in 2020 survey did reflect a similar viewpoint with apprenticeship indicating in large numbers that off the job training experiences allowed them to gain relevant learning and skills development.

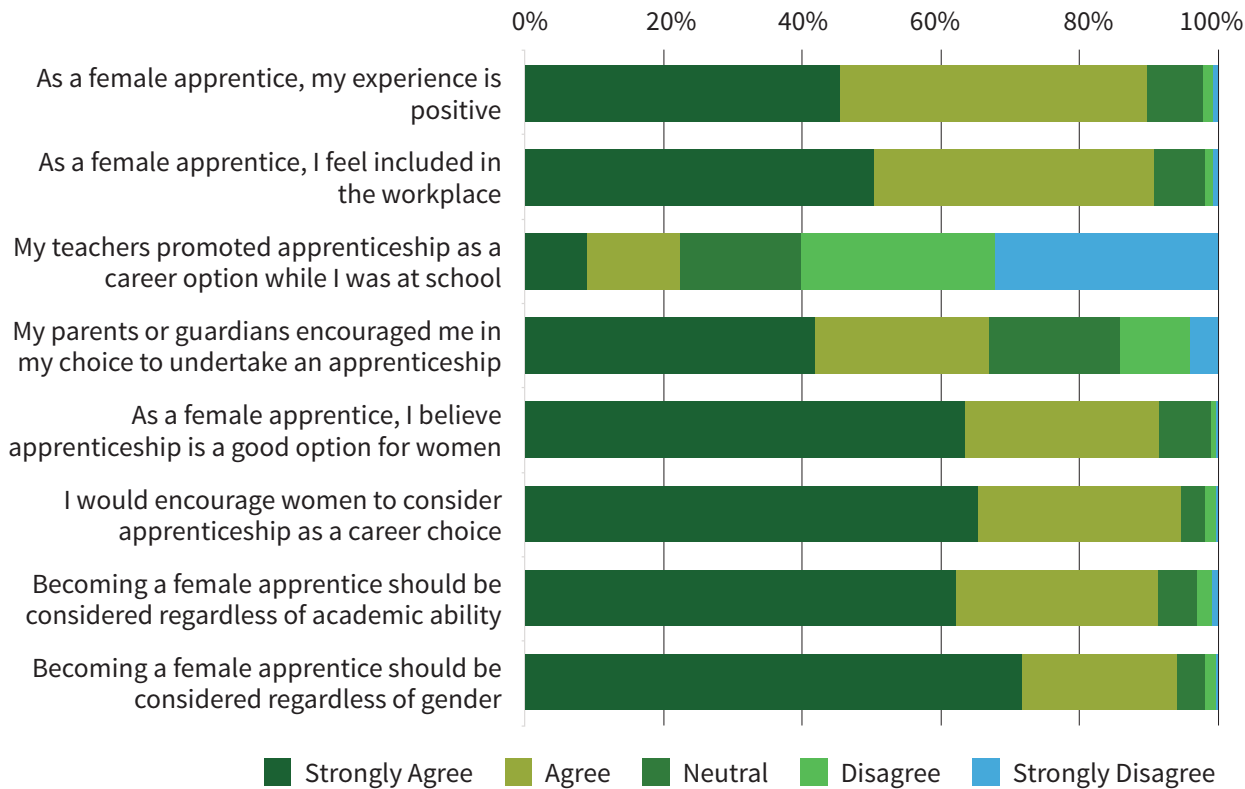
3.8 Experience of being a female apprentice

Female respondents were asked some additional questions in the survey to help gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. Females are underrepresented in many apprenticeship programmes and particularly in traditionally male-dominated fields like construction and engineering. While there has been progress to-date with more women entering, the overall number remain low compared to men. Statements were prepared to help evaluate the quality of female apprentices' experiences, their choices, and the extent of encouragement or otherwise that they received. Respondents were also asked to indicate their overall level of satisfaction on a sliding scale of 1-10 (most satisfied) and provide additional context through an open-ended question. Score of 5 and above were considered satisfied while those scoring 7 and above highly satisfied.

Figure 8 below shows that 90% of female respondents were having a positive experience and 92% consider the apprenticeship route a good option for women. 94% would encourage other women to choose the apprenticeship route.

In a concluding question, female apprentices reported high overall levels of satisfaction, with 96% of respondents stating they were satisfied (scoring at least 5 out of 10) and of these, 68% are highly satisfied (scoring 7 out of 10 or higher).

Figure 8 - Quality of experience of female apprentices



3.9 Summary of key findings on the quality of apprentices' experiences

- 94% of apprentices believe doing an apprenticeship will provide them with good employment opportunities
- 85% of apprentices are glad they chose the apprenticeship route, and had developed confidence in ability to learn
- 87% of respondents are enjoying the apprenticeship experience
- 77% of apprentices agree that their apprenticeship has up-to-date and relevant skills for employment
- 94% of respondents feel they are contributing positively to the organisation where they work, and 74% agree they have a balanced workload.
- 90% of female respondents are having a positive apprenticeship experience
- 94% would encourage other women to choose an apprenticeship route
- 70%+ Greater than 70% of all respondents indicated agreement that skills learned were useful, relevant, enjoyable and that tutors were knowledgeable, supportive and gave feedback on performance.
- 38% of respondents felt they were frequently asked to conduct unrelated tasks
- 86% of all respondents indicated that they would recommend an apprenticeship to family and friends.



4 Barriers to participation

4.1 Introduction

The third area of focus for the survey was on barriers or challenges apprentices have experienced. The questions fell into three main headings, as follows:

- The experience of securing an apprenticeship job
- Experiences in the programme and 'staying the course'
- The experiences of apprentices in a variety of circumstances, including for those with disabilities, with caring responsibilities, and those experiencing discrimination.

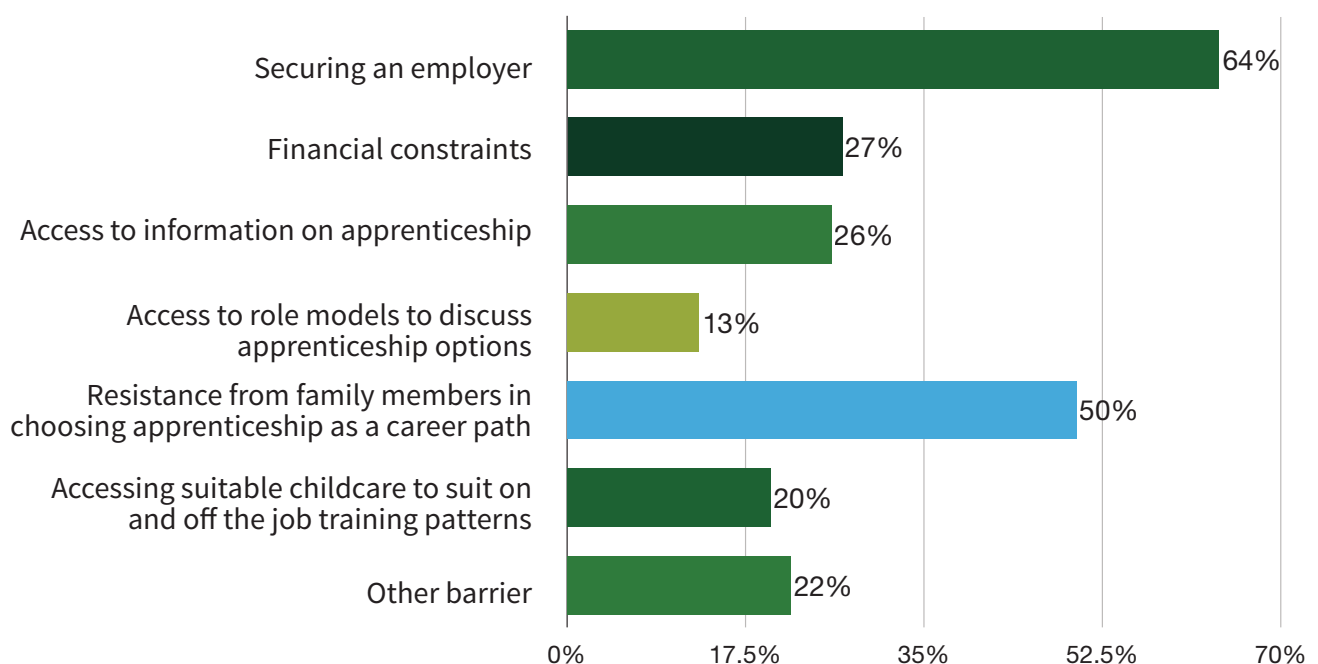
4.2 Experience in securing an apprenticeship job

As part of the survey, respondents were asked if they had experienced barriers in securing their apprenticeship. 16% of respondents indicated that they had, this compares to 40% in the 2020 survey. Of this 16% in 2024, respondents were then presented with several statements on the barriers experienced. They could select more than one option in their response. An 'Other' option was also provided for additional open text comment that had not been captured in the earlier statements.

As set out in Figure 9 below, the top three barriers were securing an employer (64%), financial constraints (27%) and access to information on apprenticeship (26%).

Open text responses collected through the 'other' option (22% of the 16% of respondents) included apprentices not achieving minimum academic requirements, being female, employers not providing apprentices with timely registration as an apprentice, and apprentices having not completed Safe Pass and/or manual handling training prior to recruitment. Some cited the Covid-19 pandemic as the main barrier in securing their apprenticeship.

Figure 9 - Barriers experienced by 16% of respondents in securing an apprenticeship



4.3 'Staying the course' in an apprenticeship

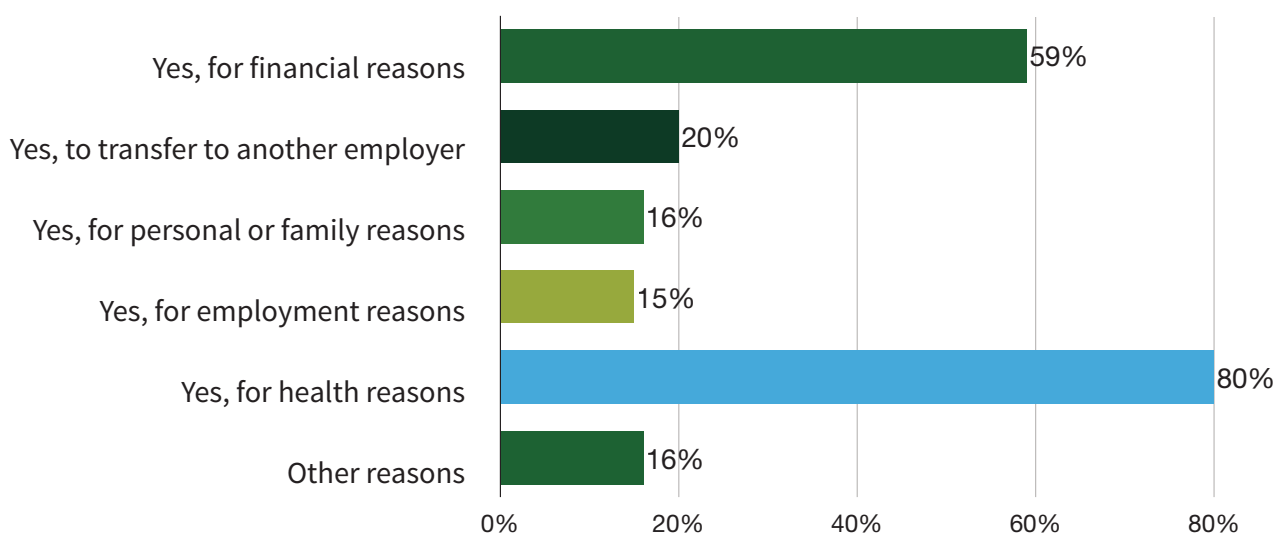
Respondents to the survey were asked if they had ever seriously considered withdrawing from their apprenticeship. 38% of respondents had indicated that they had. These respondents were then invited to select all options that applied to their situation by selecting a statement or indicating 'Other' and providing an open text response.

Figure 10 below shows that financial challenges scored the highest (58%) among respondents, followed by transfer to another employer (20%) and personal and family circumstances (16.4%). 'Other' reasons were provided by 16% of respondents though open text comments and included reasons such as taking up other opportunities in further and higher education, long waiting times for phase 2 training, difficulties with off the job learning, poor motivation, relocation or commuting for off the job training.

There was a substantial proportion of open text comments on financial challenges experienced by apprentices, particularly among those participating in craft apprenticeship programmes. These included feedback on the disparity in rates of pay and training allowances and claims that the financial support available for travel and subsistence costs is insufficient. A significant proportion of apprentices stated that they had experienced financial hardship and felt this was attributed to the low level of pay as an apprentice. One apprentice considered low levels of pay to be a '*major disruption*' to enjoying an apprenticeship'.

Apprentices felt that the contribution they made to their organisations justified being paid at least the minimum wage. This viewpoint was also strongly reflected in the feedback obtained in the 2020 survey.

Figure 10 – Reasons respondents considered withdrawing from their apprenticeship (38% of all respondents)



4.4 Experiences of apprentices with caring responsibilities and disabilities

Apprentices and caring responsibilities

Respondents were asked a question relating to their caring responsibilities, including care for family members and children. 16% of the total respondents indicated they had caring responsibility. When categorised and analysed by gender, this was higher in the female population at 27.2% versus 18.3% in male population.

Apprentices with disabilities

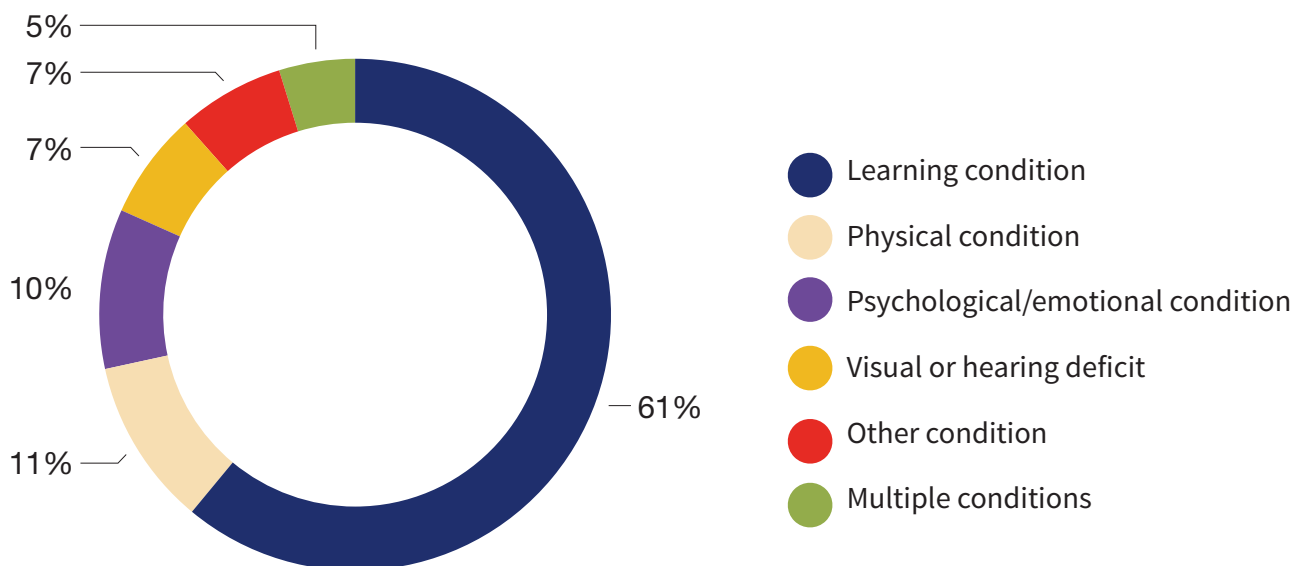
Respondents were asked about disabilities. 5% indicated that they had a disability and a further 1.7% preferred not to say. For those who indicated they had a disability further information was requested using the national disability profile classification, as set out in Figure 11 below.

4.5 Supports available to apprentices with disabilities

Respondents indicating a disability were asked if they were aware of learning support or other reasonable accommodations available. Within the 5% of respondents, 76% stated that they were aware of learning support and reasonable accommodations as an option for them. 58% of respondents with disabilities indicated that they knew how to access support.

32% of respondents had requested support. Of these, 20% confirmed receiving reasonable accommodation in the workplace, 63% received reasonable accommodations in off-the-job training, and 48% received learning support as part of off-the-job training.

Figure 11- Types of disability reported by 5% of respondents



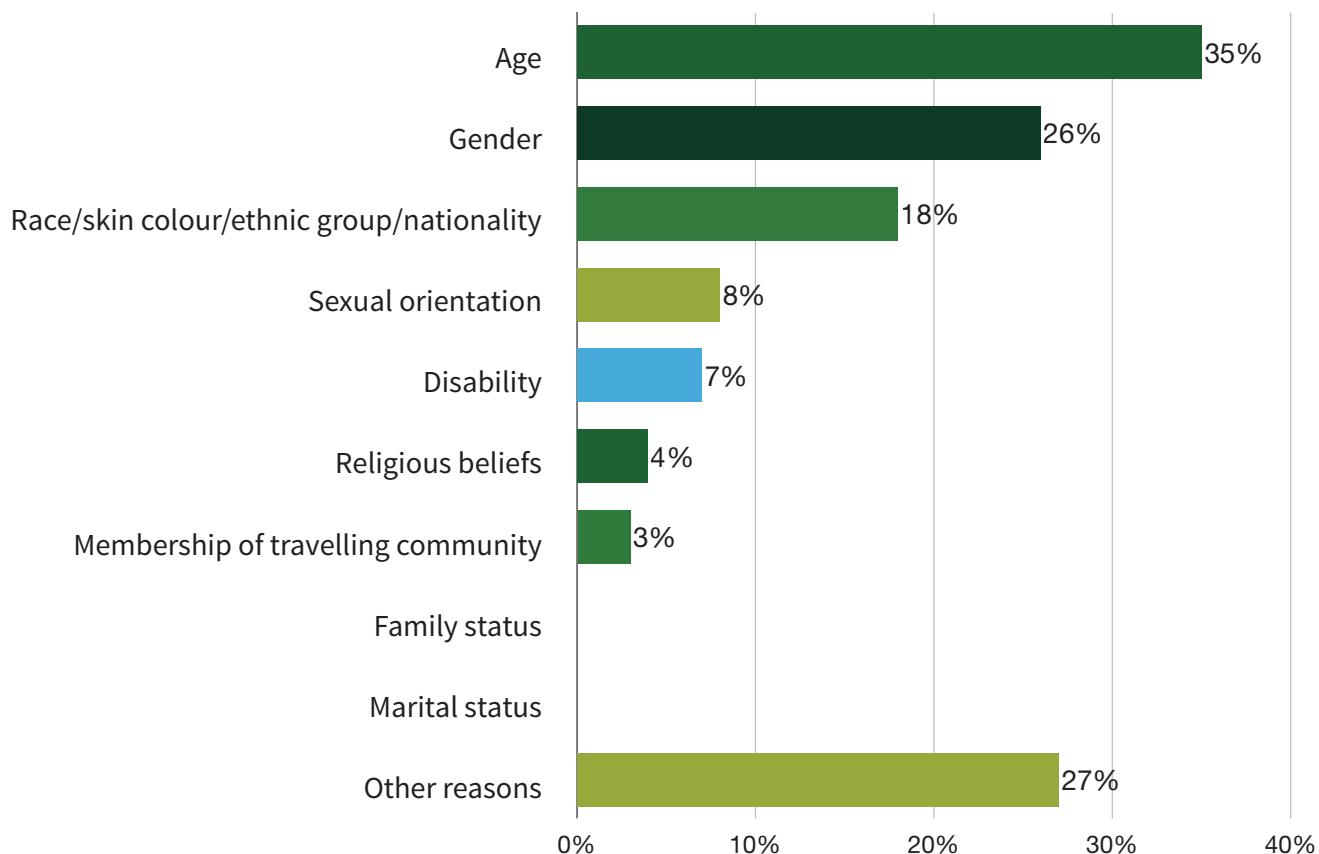
4.6 Experience of discrimination

Respondents were asked questions regarding any experience of discrimination as an apprentice. 87% of respondents stated that they had no such experience, while 7% stated they had. 3% of respondents opted not to complete this question and 3% stated that they did not know.

Among the 7%, equating to 244 respondents, who indicated they had experienced discrimination, 69% of this was in the workplace. 22% indicated it was both in the workplace and off-the-job. 9% indicated the discrimination had happened solely off-the-job.

Figure 12 below sets out detail of the responses from the 7% of respondents on the type of discrimination they had experienced. Respondents were asked to choose one option. They could also provide further details in an 'Other' option with an open text field. Open text responses included commentary on a sense of an employer disliking an apprentice or treating them unfairly, experiencing unwelcome comments or references to their social or economic status, and negative comments made related to their previous education attainment and academic ability.

Figure 12- Types of discrimination experienced by 7% of respondents



Those respondents who indicated experiencing discrimination were asked to indicate the effect of discrimination on them by indicating if it had ‘little or no effect’ ‘some effect’ ‘a serious effect’ or a ‘very serious effect’.

31%

of respondents indicated that it had little or no effect

49%

of respondents indicated some effect

15%

indicated that it had a serious effect

5%

indicated a very serious effect



4.7 Summary of key findings on barriers to participation in apprenticeships

- 16% of respondents indicated a barrier in securing an apprenticeship.
- 64% of respondents who reported a barrier stated that this was about finding an employer. Other barriers reported by respondents through open text comment.
- 22% included the challenge of achieving the minimum academic requirements for an apprenticeship and of completing additional training such as Safe Pass and manual handling.
- 38% of respondents had considered withdrawing from their apprenticeship.
- 58% of respondents who considered withdrawing from their apprenticeship cited financial challenges as the main reason.
- 16% of respondents indicated they have a caring responsibility.
- 5% of respondents indicated they had a disability, with 62% of these respondents indicating a learning disability.
- 58% of those with a disability knew how they could access supports, while just 32% had actually accessed a support.
- 7% of respondents reported experience of discrimination.



5 Using insights from the survey

This survey includes valuable feedback from apprentices on their experiences of the Irish apprenticeship system in 2024. Seven follow-up actions are planned to ensure maximum impact from the survey. These are as follows:

1	Share the findings with apprentices
A copy of the survey will be sent to all current apprentices and those who have graduated in the past 6 months. Apprentices will be invited to join an online seminar on the findings, hosted by the National Apprenticeship Office.	
2	Discuss the findings with employers, industry representatives and worker representatives
A copy of the survey will be sent to apprenticeship employers, industry and worker representative bodies, including the trade unions with relevant key findings highlighted, such as the importance of quality mentoring on-the-job, and the findings on experiences of discrimination. An online seminar on the findings is hosted by the National Apprenticeship Office. Representatives of particular industry sectors are offered tailored survey findings for their sector.	
3	Discuss the findings with education and training providers at second level and in further and higher education
A copy of the survey will be sent to education and training providers involved in apprenticeship provision and partners at second level, including the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and staff representative bodies. Relevant key findings will be highlighted, including the responses from apprentices on how they chose their apprenticeship route and on their learning experiences. An online seminar on the findings is hosted by the National Apprenticeship Office.	
4	Build the feedback into national development projects and policy formation
The advice and feedback received from apprentices on communications and technology is incorporated into the new IT platform, national communication strategies and review and updates to apprenticeship policy.	
5	Incorporate apprentices' feedback on the Authorised Officer/Training Advisor role
The survey feedback is incorporated into the review of the AO network that is underway.	
6	Tackle barriers to participation through the national Access and Inclusion subcommittee
The findings on barriers to participation in apprenticeships are a particular focus of this subcommittee of the National Apprenticeship Alliance during 2025 and 2026.	
7	Measure again in 2026
The national survey of apprentices is conducted again in October-November 2026 and compared with the 2020 and 2024 findings.	

Appendix

Profile of respondents to the 2024 national survey of apprentices

The details below on the profile of apprentice respondents includes details of gender, age range, stage in apprenticeship, type of apprenticeship, ethnicity, highest education level, geographic location of apprentices and of their employers, employer size, area of industrial activity.

Gender			
N=3,683	Respondents	Apprentices on craft programmes	Apprentices on consortia-led programmes
Male	86%	95%	5%
Female	14%	50%	50%
Other	<1%	-	-
Age range			
N=3,683	Respondents	Apprentices on craft programmes	Apprentices on consortia-led programmes
<18 years	9.5%	10.3%	6.1%
19-22 years	53.5%	59.4%	30.1%
23-30 years	24.1%	23.1%	28.3%
31-40 years	8.3%	5.6%	18.9%
41+	4.5%	1.5%	16.7%
Median age of respondents	21years (range 16-60 years)	20.5years (range 16-51 years)	25years (range 17-60 years)
Stage in apprenticeship			
Apprentices on craft programmes		Apprentices on consortia-led programmes	
Phase 1 = 42.6%		Year 1 = 45.6%	
Phase 2 = 16.2%		Year 2 = 44.2%	
Phase 3 = 24.8%		Year 3 = 7.8%	
Phase 4 = 4.8%		Year 4 = 2.3%	
Phase 5 = 5.9%			
Phase 6 = 3.2%			
Phase 7 = 2.5%			

Ethnicity	
Respondents	
White Irish	88.7%
White Irish Traveller	0.5%
Any Other White background	6.6%
Black or Black Irish African	1.1%
Black or black Irish -any other background	<0.5%
Asian or Asian Irish	<0.5%
Asian or Asian Irish – any other background	1.0%
Other including mixed background	1.6%

Highest educational level			
	Respondents	Of which are craft	Consortia-led
Postgraduate Level 9/10 NFQ	1.4%	<0.5%	5.9%
Degree level 7 or 8 (NFQ)	6.38%	3.9%	16.4%
Certificate/Diploma level 5 or 6 (NFQ)	9.91%	6.3%	24.3%
Leaving Certificate/ equivalent	64.73%	70.8%	41.1%
Leaving Certificate Applied	5.16%	5.9%	1.6%
Leaving Certificate Vocational	1.41%	1.5%	1.0%
Junior Certification/Intermediate Certificate	7.66%	8.6%	3.8%
Certificate Level 3 or 4 (NFQ)	0.79%	0.7%	1.1%
Access to Apprenticeship programme	1.36%	1.2%	1.9%
Primary Education	2.6%	<0.5%	0.7%
Other	-	<0.5%	2.2%

Geographic location of apprentices	
	Respondents
Carlow	2.0%
Cavan	2.3%
Clare	2.4%
Cork	14.6%
Donegal	2.1%
Dublin	18.5%
Galway	5.1%
Kerry	2.5%
Kildare	5.3%
Kilkenny	2.3%
Laois	2.0%
Leitrim	0.7%
Limerick	3.3%

Geographic location of apprentices	
	Respondents
Longford	0.8%
Louth	2.5%
Mayo	2.8%
Meath	5.6%
Monaghan	1.9%
Offaly	1.9%
Roscommon	1.3%
Sligo	1.4%
Tipperary	4.7%
Waterford	3.2%
Westmeath	2.3%
Wexford	4.1%
Wicklow	4.1%

Employer size			
	Respondents	Of which are craft	Consortia-led
Less than 10 employees	31.1%	33.8%	20.8%
10-50	26.9%	28.3%	21.3%
51-200	15.7%	15.8%	15.4%
More than 250 employees	20.3%	15.9%	37.7%
Unsure	5.95%	6.3%	4.8%

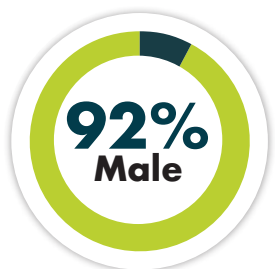
Employer industrial activity	
	Respondents
<i>Agriculture, forestry, and fishing</i>	2.0%
<i>Manufacturing</i>	19.5%
<i>Construction</i>	54.1%
<i>Distribution, transport, hotels, and restaurants</i>	7.7%
<i>Information and communication</i>	1.5%
<i>Finance and insurance activities</i>	3.3%
<i>Real estate activities</i>	1.7%
<i>Professional, administration and support services</i>	3.6%
<i>Public administration, education, and health</i>	2.5%
<i>Art, entertainment, and other services</i>	4.0%

Geographical location of employer (region)	
	Respondents
Carlow	2.1%
Cavan	2.2%
Clare	2.2%
Cork	14.5%
Donegal	1.8%
Dublin	24.3%
Galway	5.2%
Kerry	2.7%
Kildare	4.3%
Kilkenny	2.4%
Laois	1.4%
Leitrim	0.8%
Limerick	4.8%
Longford	0.7%
Louth	2.0%
Mayo	3.0%
Meath	3.8%
Monaghan	1.9%
Offaly	1.2%
Roscommon	1.0%
Sligo	1.3%
Tipperary	3.8%
Waterford	4.4%
Westmeath	2.1%
Wexford	3.5%
Wicklow	2.6%

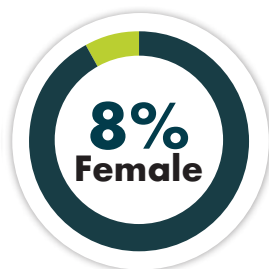
Cluster/family of apprenticeships represented by respondents	
	Respondents
Arboriculture and Horticulture	0.8%
Biopharma	0.8%
Construction	22.5%
Electrical	36.3%
Engineering	13.2%
Finance	2.3%
Hair	2.5%
Health and Social care	<0.5%
Hospitality and Food	1.6%
ICT	2.1%
Insurance	1.6%
Logistics	1.2%
Motor	11.7%
Property service	1.2%
Recruitment	<0.5%
Sales	1.5%

Generation Apprenticeship – 2024 profile of the full apprentice population

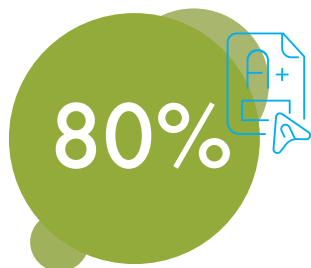
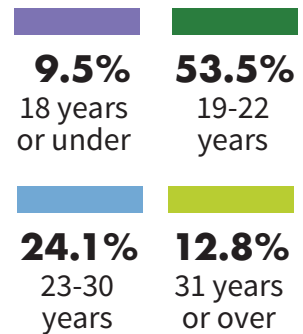
(From the national apprenticeship database as of October 2024)



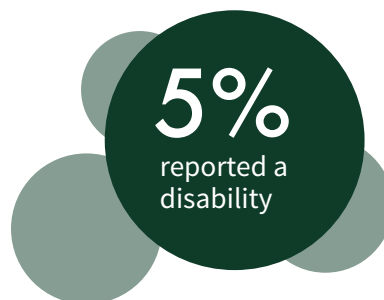
of apprentices are male



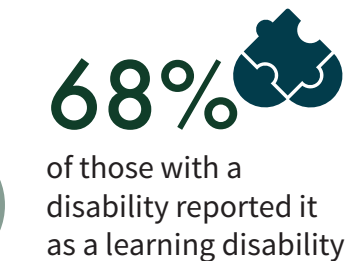
of apprentices are female



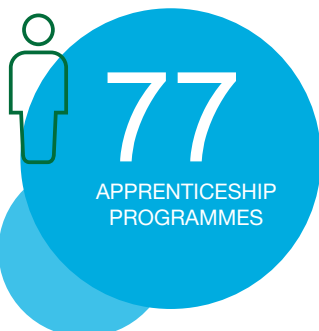
have completed the Leaving Certificate or a more advanced qualification



reported a disability



of those with a disability reported it as a learning disability





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