

# NEXT GEN CAREERS

## Aspirations and access

Unlocking the potential of young talent in the UK  
to meet the needs of industry.



# CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
Jon Kingsbury, Vice Chancellor - Ravensbourne University London	4
<b>The job market view</b>	<b>8</b>
Andy Durman, Executive Vice President, Global Business Unit - Lightcast	8
<b>The UK Labour market</b>	<b>10</b>
Growth industries in the next five years	10
Factors impacting the UK's future skills needs	13
The enduring value of degrees	16
<b>What do young people think?</b>	<b>18</b>
What did our survey tell us?	18
Careers clarity	22
<b>Closing observations</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>About us</b>	<b>33</b>



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**At Ravensbourne University London, we strongly believe that talent, creativity and potential should never be limited by circumstances or lack of resources.**

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## **FOREWORD**

### **VICE CHANCELLOR**

### **JON KINGSBURY**

**Ravensbourne University London is committed to equipping the next generation of young people not only with the skills needed, but with the confidence, connections and opportunities to shape their futures.**

This research was commissioned to better understand how young people perceive the world of work that they are preparing to enter and to explore what more can be done – by educators, employers and policymakers alike – to ensure that the untapped talent that young people possess can be adopted and nurtured by industry.

To inform this report, we polled 3,000 18-21-year-olds from all corners of the UK. We aimed to uncover their career aspirations and their understanding of the current employment landscape.

The world of work is changing at a lightning pace, and our research shows that young people often do not understand many of the highly specific roles that are emerging in growth areas of the economy. It is evident that young people require more support to successfully navigate rapidly changing industries.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), 13% of 18-24-year-olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET) – a figure which amounts to nearly one million young people across the country. This is an unacceptable figure – primarily because it highlights the scale of our country's underused talent.

We feel a deep sense of responsibility to help level the playing field for students from all walks of life, facilitating greater social mobility and broadening access to industries which have, historically, often been harder to enter, such as the creative and technology sectors.

Our findings highlight the pressing need for targeted interventions to provide better pathways from secondary into further and higher education and between education and employers.

Education has the power to transform lives; not merely by equipping individuals with the right skillsets, but also by unlocking the confidence, networks and opportunities that shape futures and enable young people to flourish.

Ravensbourne University London is proud of its graduates and committed in supporting their journeys into successful, fulfilling careers. Initiatives such as work-based learning, real-world project briefs and collaboration with industry to highlight career pathways, give our students an awareness of the types of roles that they can aspire to and the connections to make it happen.

We are proud to have partnered with global leaders in labour market intelligence, Lightcast, for this research campaign. We'd like to thank them for providing market data projections and insightful contributions.

I hope you enjoy reading this brief report and I look forward to working with you to help more young people reach their full potential.

**Jon Kingsbury**  
Vice Chancellor,  
Ravensbourne University London



Nearly

**60%**

of young people do not understand how to achieve their chosen career

According to our research, only

**51%**

of young people felt that they have the resources needed to succeed





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**This research by Ravensbourne University London highlights a long-standing challenge – one likely to persist unless we implement solutions that really deal with the nub of the problem.**

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## THE JOB MARKET VIEW

### ANDY DURMAN

**This research by Ravensbourne University London highlights a long-standing challenge - one likely to persist unless we implement solutions that really deal with the nub of the problem.**

That challenge is the gulf between the career aspirations of young people and the realities of the labour market they are entering. Among many other insightful findings, Ravensbourne's research shows that young people tend to cluster around a relatively narrow set of familiar careers – such as teacher, lawyer, nurse, doctor, and actor – leaving large parts of the labour market unexplored and potentially under-supplied. Additionally, the survey reveals that young people's salary expectations are significantly out of step with typical early-career earnings.

This is not, however, a uniquely British problem. Research conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) earlier this year found that students' job expectations across 80 countries have changed little since the start of the century and remain focused on a narrow band of roles.

The urgent need to address this issue cannot be overstated. While young people's career aspirations remain narrow, the labour market is undergoing rapid transformation. Technological disruption – through digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) – is reshaping work in ways that would have seemed unthinkable just a decade ago. Alongside this, national priorities such as the Industrial Strategy, Skills England and the Green Economy are reshaping the job landscape.

This mismatch has real consequences: young people with unfulfilled ambitions and limited alignment with employer needs, and employers frustrated by the lack of skilled candidates. But to return to my opening statement: what is the nub of the problem?

If young people are overlooking vast areas of the labour market; if they hold overly optimistic salary expectations; and if their ambitions aren't evolving with the labour market, then the issue is not primarily a careers gap, a job gap, or even a skills gap. It is an information gap.

Young people aspire to a narrow range of roles because they don't know what else is out there. They expect high salaries because they haven't been given accurate information about earnings. They don't adjust their ambitions to reflect labour market changes because those changes aren't being clearly communicated to them.

The solution lies in transforming the quality and breadth of information we give to young people. They need insights that show the full scope of the labour market, including alternative routes if their first choice proves unviable. They need a realistic picture of salaries, job locations, skill requirements and demand. They need up-to-date intelligence that reflects how the market is evolving.

These insights are already available, as the [UCAS Careers Quiz](#), powered by Lightcast data, demonstrates. But they need to be included earlier and more systematically in careers guidance to help young people make informed choices.

We hope that this research will be a catalyst for action across education, government, and employment, leading to better data and insights being made available to the nation's young people, so that together we can build a more resilient, inclusive and future-ready workforce.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Durman'.

**Andy Durman**  
Executive Vice President,  
Global Business Unit at Lightcast



# THE UK LABOUR MARKET

## GROWTH INDUSTRIES

### IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

It's positive to see that most industries in the UK are predicting growth, with almost one million new roles expected to be created. In theory, there will be plenty of opportunities for young people entering the labour market, as long as they select roles that are in demand.

It's interesting to note that the industry predicting the most significant percentage growth (6%) is Arts, Entertainment and Recreation. Strong growth in this industry, which was popular with people responding to our reserach, is a real positive for young people entering the labour market.

In terms of absolute growth, Human Health and Social Work Activities will see a growth of almost 200,000 in new jobs created. With an aging and growing population, demand in this area is likely to continue to be high in the years ahead.

There are a number of factors driving this change, which we will explore in more depth on the following pages. These include but are not limited to: the U.K. Government's 2035 industrial strategy; the move towards clean energy and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.



Labour market predictions by standard industrial code (SIC)  
2025 and 2050 - Lightcast

Description	2025 Jobs	2030 Jobs	2025 - 2030 Change	2025 - 2030 % Change
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	919,081	978,761	59,680	6%
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	123,766	130,440	6,674	5%
Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Mgmt and Remediation Activities	242,896	255,849	12,953	5%
Real Estate Activities	682,036	714,326	32,290	5%
Manufacturing	2,484,993	2,572,396	87,402	4%
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	2,695,275	2,798,829	103,554	4%
Information and Communication	1,479,440	1,535,821	56,381	4%
Financial and Insurance Activities	1,134,545	1,182,455	47,910	4%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	3,144,142	3,282,016	137,874	4%
Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	1,596,864	1,661,372	64,508	4%
Human Health and Social Work Activities	4,760,756	4,949,611	188,855	4%
Transportation and Storage	1,665,015	1,714,952	49,937	3%
Construction	1,633,381	1,673,617	40,236	2%
Administrative and Support Service Activities	2,777,688	2,821,124	43,436	2%
Other Service Activities	655,269	669,213	13,944	2%
Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	4,532,093	4,558,185	26,092	1%
Education	2,812,048	2,848,531	36,483	1%
Mining and Quarrying	46,159	45,898	(261)	(1%)
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	475,405	465,797	(9,609)	(2%)
	33,860,852	34,859,193	998,341	3%





# THE UK LABOUR MARKET FACTORS IMPACTING THE UK'S FUTURE SKILLS NEEDS

In the years ahead, there are some key factors that are likely to impact in-demand skills and jobs in the labour market. Understanding these main drivers allows government, businesses, educators and young people alike to be better equipped with the skills required to compete, as well as understanding the types of training and education required in the coming years to fulfil the needs of the labour market.

The primary catalysts of the change in skills demand in the forthcoming years will be the newly released Modern Industrial Strategy, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the growing emergence of artificial intelligence and sustainability.

## UK's Modern Industrial Strategy

The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy is a transformative 10-year economic growth plan focusing on eight priority sectors deemed by the Government to be high potential. These are: Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy Industries, Digital & Technology, the Creative Industries, Life Sciences, Defence, Financial Services and Professional and Business Services. The Industrial Strategy's impact on both skills and job requirements in the UK over the next decade is likely to be significant.

The Industrial Strategy places skills at the centre and young people will have access to new technical pathways, degrees, apprenticeships and work placements to allow them to gain industry-relevant experience while studying. This will help them develop the adaptability and digital fluency required in workplaces which are being increasingly shaped by automation and emerging technologies.

**11 million**  
more graduates will  
be needed by 2035

It is anticipated that there will be an increase in demand for both graduates and those with higher-level skills. The strategy relies heavily on high level skills; according to analysis by Universities UK, 64% of roles in priority sectors are graduate level and the UK will need around 11 million more graduates by 2035 (up from 52% today)<sup>1</sup>.

For young people, this is not just about preparing for existing roles but being ready to participate in industries that are still evolving. By engaging with the opportunities emerging from the Industrial Strategy now, through skills development, digital literacy and understanding the sectors set to grow, young people can position themselves for careers that are meaningful, future-focused and resilient.

<sup>1</sup> Universities UK (2025, 10 March) How graduate skills power their future success and the UK's economic growth. <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/how-graduate-skills-power-their-future>



## The Fourth Industrial Revolution

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, driven by advances in AI, robotics, biotechnology and the Internet of Things, will significantly change the skills needed in the labour market over the next decade. There will be a greater need for young people to develop advanced digital and technical skills, including coding, data analysis and confident use of emerging technologies such as AI and robotics. Digital literacy alone will no longer be sufficient; instead, young people will need to harness digital tools to solve complex problems and support decision-making across different sectors.

In addition to technical skills, there will be a growing demand for strong problem-solving and critical thinking abilities, as employers will rely on young people to interpret data, innovate and improve processes that cannot be handled by machines alone. Creativity and the ability to generate new ideas will become crucial as industries seek to develop new products, services and ways of working in response to technological change.

Adaptability and a commitment to lifelong learning will be also essential, as young people will need to update their skillsets regularly to keep pace with rapidly changing technologies and evolving job roles. The Government has recognised the need for ongoing upskilling with the introduction of new lifelong learning entitlement (LLE) funding, which learners aged 60 or under will be able to apply for from September 2026.

While Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) skills will remain important, employers will increasingly seek young people who can combine technical knowledge with creativity, communication and ethical awareness. This combination will allow them to contribute effectively in roles where technology and human-centred approaches intersect. Additionally, as industries shift towards more sustainable practices, there will be growing opportunities for young people to develop green skills related to renewable energy, sustainable design and environmental management.

## Sustainability

For young people entering the labour market in the years ahead, the rise of the sustainability and the green agenda will shape not just what jobs are available, but how careers are built. Climate transition will drive demand for roles in renewable energy, sustainable design, environmental data analysis and nature-based solutions, providing new pathways for purposeful, future-focused work. Young professionals will be expected to bring a mindset of adaptability and climate literacy into every sector, whether working in finance with a sustainability lens, contributing to green tech innovation, or supporting businesses to decarbonise operations. Sustainability will no longer be a niche, but a core part of how industries operate, giving young people the opportunity to align their careers with impact while developing skills that remain in demand globally.

This shift also means that young people will need to build digital and technical skills alongside sustainability competencies to remain competitive. Green jobs often require knowledge of data tools, energy systems, materials science and climate risk frameworks, with employers seeking graduates who can navigate environmental challenges while driving innovation and efficiency. For many, this will open doors to meaningful careers in sectors that are actively shaping a resilient, low-carbon economy, while also requiring a commitment to continuous learning as industries adapt. The green agenda, rather than limiting opportunities, will expand them for young people, empowering them to lead the transition and shape the workforce of the next decade.

**Creativity and the ability to generate new ideas will become crucial as industries seek to develop new products, services and ways of working in response to technological change.**





# THE UK LABOUR MARKET

## THE ENDURING VALUE OF DEGREES

Of the top-paying jobs likely to be available to job hunters over the next decade, 13 require a university education. This demonstrates the continuing importance of a degree to people who want a well-paid career in the future.

Additionally, data from a 2021 report by the Sutton Trust<sup>2</sup> notes that higher education continues to be a key driver of social mobility in this country. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who attend university are more likely to become socially mobile into higher income brackets and income gaps are lower between graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers compared to non-graduates.

It's a more challenging labour market for young people right now. Recent research from the job search site, Adzuna, suggests that the number of entry-level UK jobs has dropped significantly since the launch of ChatGPT and similar AI-enabled tools<sup>3</sup>. A university education is one way that young people can gain a competitive advantage in the labour market.

2 The Sutton Trust, Jack Britton, Elaine Drayton, Laura van der Erve (2021, 24 November) Universities and Social Mobility. <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/universities-and-social-mobility/>

3 Canagasuriam, D. (2025, 1 July). UK entry-level jobs in decline since launch of ChatGPT according to new research. The Mirror. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/business/uk-entry-level-jobs-decline-35474583>



Top paying occupations with current typical education levels and projected job demand (2025, Lightcast data)

SOC	Description	Median Wages	Avg. Annual Openings	Typical Education Level
3511	Aircraft Pilots and Air Traffic Controllers	£94,346.25	1,050	Certificate
1137	Information Technology Directors	£85,522.75	4,438	Bachelor's degree with Honours
1132	Marketing and Sales Directors	£84,155.40	9,954	Bachelor's degree with Honours
1111	Chief Executives and Senior Officials	£81,831.66	4,128	Bachelor's degree with Honours
3512	Ship and Hovercraft Officers	£79,551.41	385	Level 3 NVQ; A Levels
1140	Directors in Logistics, Warehousing and Transport	£75,889.61	544	Level 3 NVQ; A Levels
1112	Elected Officers and Representatives	£72,316.25	484	Bachelor's degree with Honours
1139	Functional Managers and Directors n.e.c.	£69,108.31	4,343	Bachelor's degree with Honours
1131	Financial Managers and Directors	£68,122.82	17,178	Bachelor's degree with Honours
2321	Head Teachers and Principals	£67,927.52	1,207	Level 5 NVQ; Masters
2212	Specialist Medical Practitioners	£67,459.87	7,035	Bachelor's degree with Honours
1133	Public Relations and Communications Directors	£64,840.71	1,265	Bachelor's degree with Honours
8231	Train and Tram Drivers	£60,726.70	983	Level 2 NVQ; GCSE at grades A*-C
1162	Senior Police Officers	£59,931.03	496	Level 3 NVQ; A Levels
2411	Barristers and Judges	£59,333.36	971	Bachelor's degree with Honours
1135	Charitable Organisation Managers and Directors	£58,364.64	1,304	Bachelor's degree with Honours
2131	IT Project Managers	£58,207.32	2,611	Bachelor's degree with Honours
1163	Senior Officers in Fire, Ambulance, Prison and Related Services	£57,603.67	408	Level 3 NVQ; A Levels
2123	Electrical Engineers	£56,873.04	1,722	Bachelor's degree with Honours
2133	IT Business Analysts, Architects and Systems Designers	£55,444.95	6,697	Bachelor's degree with Honours

Source: Lightcast, CORE LMI data, 2025

NB: This data includes salaries for full and part-time workers which decreases median salaries in some industries



# WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE THINK? WHAT DID OUR SURVEY TELL US?

We polled 3,000 16–21-year-olds from across the UK to understand their experiences of the education and careers system as well as their hopes for the future and their career aspirations.

One of the primary findings was a lack of access to good quality careers advice.

Young people were selecting the ‘obvious’ careers with many possible routes not selected, while TikTok, peers and influencers now outrank formal guidance in shaping ambitions.

### Career aspirations

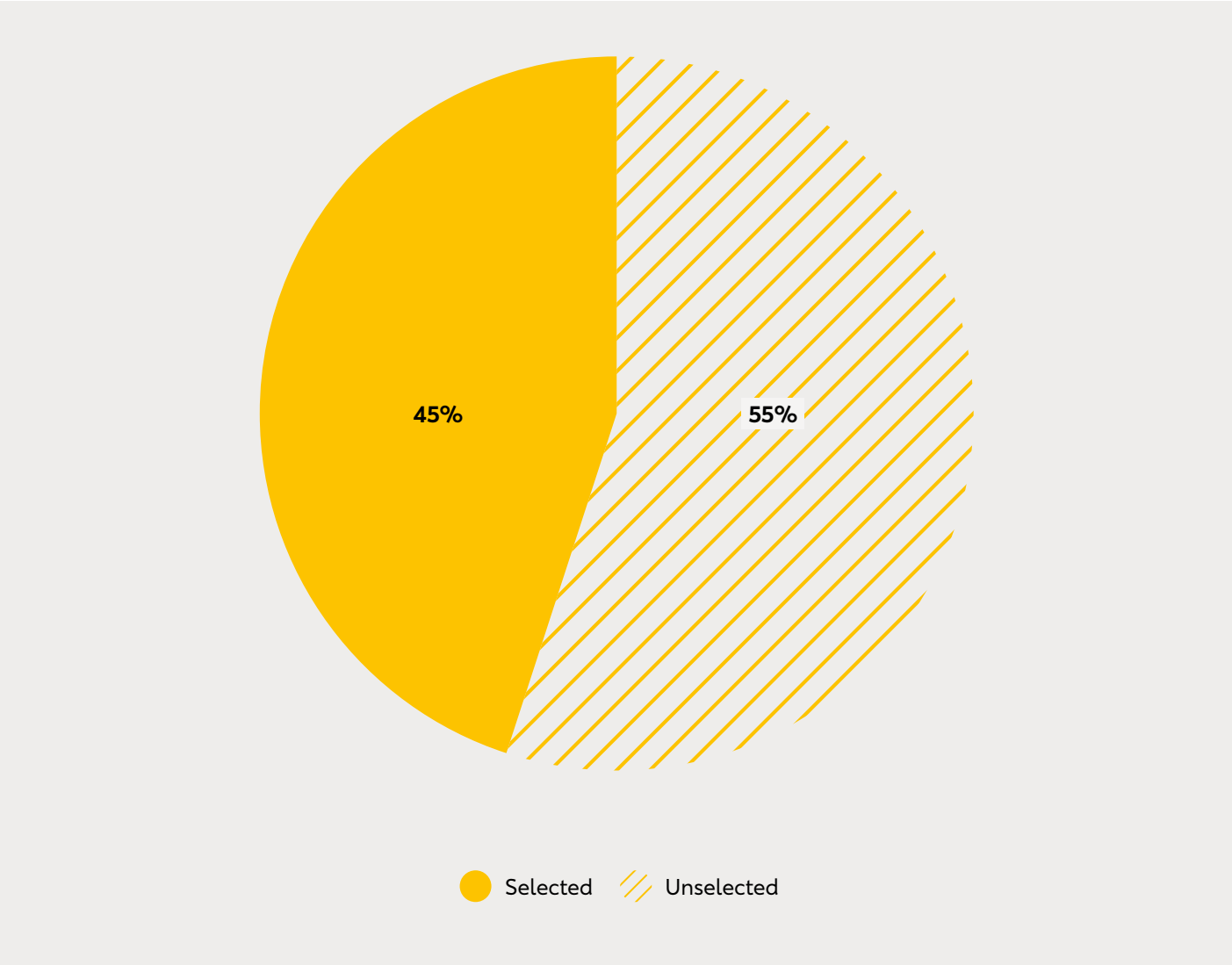
We began by asking young people what industry they would consider working in using Standard Industrial Code (SIC) data. We have juxtaposed this information below with labour market projections from Lightcast.

What we discovered was a significant mismatch between aspiration and labour market predictions.

Unless addressed, young people’s mismatched aspirations could perpetuate industry skill shortages in areas where there is a significant lack of interest such as retail and wholesale trade. Also, such mismatches might lead to unemployment in oversubscribed fields with young people potentially training to go into industries where roles do not exist.



### Selected vs unselected jobs



### A mismatch in job aspiration vs labour market reality

We also asked young people what job they would ideally like to do in the next five years. Only 185 out of 412 possible Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) coded occupations were noted as being desirable over the next five years, leaving 55% of the occupational landscape unselected.

If, as the data suggests, young people favour a narrow set of roles and overlook a broad range of jobs and industries then this is likely to have adverse effects on both the UK labour market and the prospective candidates themselves.

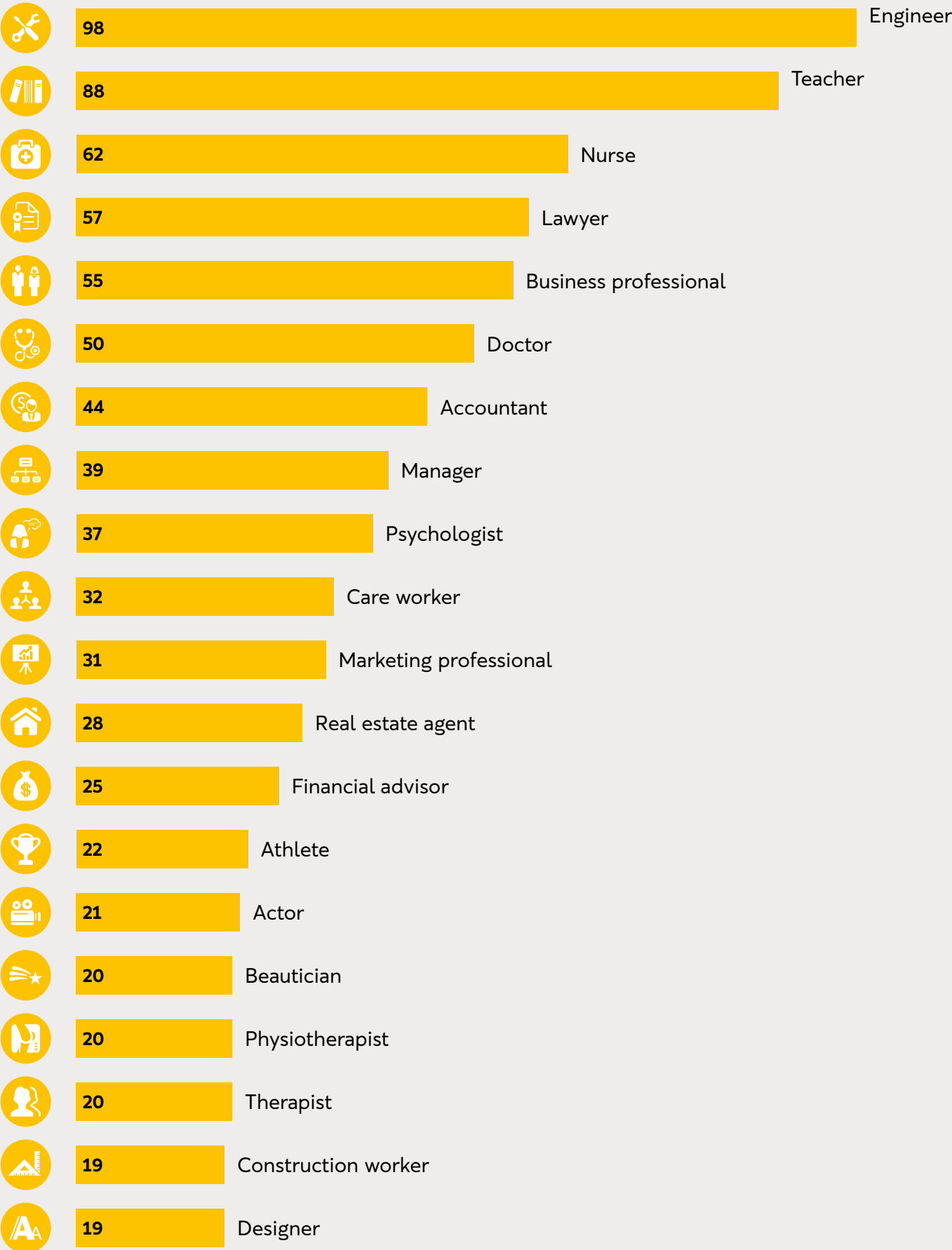
### Skills mismatch risk

If young people predominantly aspire to a limited set of occupations, sectors that house jobs within the 55% of unselected SOC codes may struggle with talent shortages. Even among selected areas, job roles such as tech and environmental consultancy were selected by just one respondent, while only two indicated aspirations for a career as a data analyst. This could exacerbate existing gaps in sectors critical for infrastructure, green transition and public services.

Regions which are heavily reliant on occupations within the unselected roles may face further economic imbalances if local young people do not aspire to enter these sectors, risking localised labour shortages and reduced economic mobility.



**Top 20 most selected jobs - from unpromoted free text.**  
**Total number of respondents.**



**Increased competition in popular sectors and job roles**

The concentration of interest in some areas may lead to oversupply of candidates in sought after areas, increasing underemployment or driving young people into adjacent fields reluctantly, potentially impacting job satisfaction and productivity.

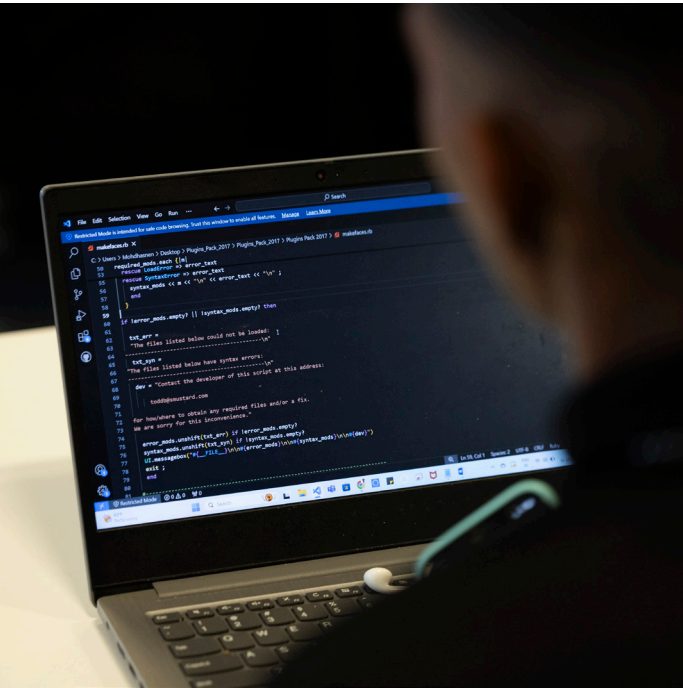
The concentration of interest in certain jobs is likely to be driven by factors such as:

**The visibility of certain roles** – for instance teachers, nurses and doctors, which most people are likely to become aware of throughout their daily lives

**Perceptions of attractiveness** – driven by people’s experiences of roles either by knowing people working in these careers, watching representations on television or via social media.

**Limited exposure to roles** – this is a particular challenge when we consider the issue of social mobility.

Overall, this signals the need for stronger, more practical careers education, employer outreach and societal narratives that broaden young people’s understanding of the wide range of viable careers available.



**Top 20 most selected jobs**

Even amongst the 185 jobs that were selected, there were some that were significantly more popular than others. Opposite we can see the jobs that were most popular amongst our respondents.

Despite the fact that 45% of the jobs were selected, at the bottom end of the scale many of the roles selected were only chosen by one person meaning that they are still likely to be undersubscribed leaving skills and job gaps that employers will struggle to fill.

**A lack of careers clarity**

When we asked young people to tell us what their dream job was, just 62% were able to name a job that they wanted to do in the next five years. 16% told us that they didn’t intend to work, while the rest said that they don’t know or it didn’t apply to them (21%). The fact that so many young people are lacking clarity around the types of jobs they want to do suggests that they are not receiving enough high-quality careers advice and guidance.

Additionally, just 42% of respondents stated that they understand how to reach the role they wanted to do. The open text answers in our research show the phrase “I’m guessing the route” or a close synonym 27 times, underscoring how guesswork is sometimes used to fill the information gap.



# WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE THINK?

## CAREERS CLARITY

Good quality careers advice and guidance is critical to young people’s futures as it helps them understand the range of pathways available, the skills required and the realities of different sectors. This enables them to make confident, informed choices about education and employment which align to their interests and strengths.

### Where did they hear about jobs?

Of the 62% of respondents who were able to name a job that they would like to do in the next five years, we asked how they had heard about that job.

We found that respondents were most likely to have heard about jobs from a family member (24%) followed closely by social media, YouTube or influencers (21%).

This reliance on social media, particularly in the context of how each channel operates, poses a number of issues. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and LinkedIn promote content and influencers based on engagement metrics which favour users with higher production values, better connections and marketable appearances<sup>4</sup>. That the algorithmic preference for content of this nature is often tied to race, class and gender norms risks a homogenous representation of certain roles.

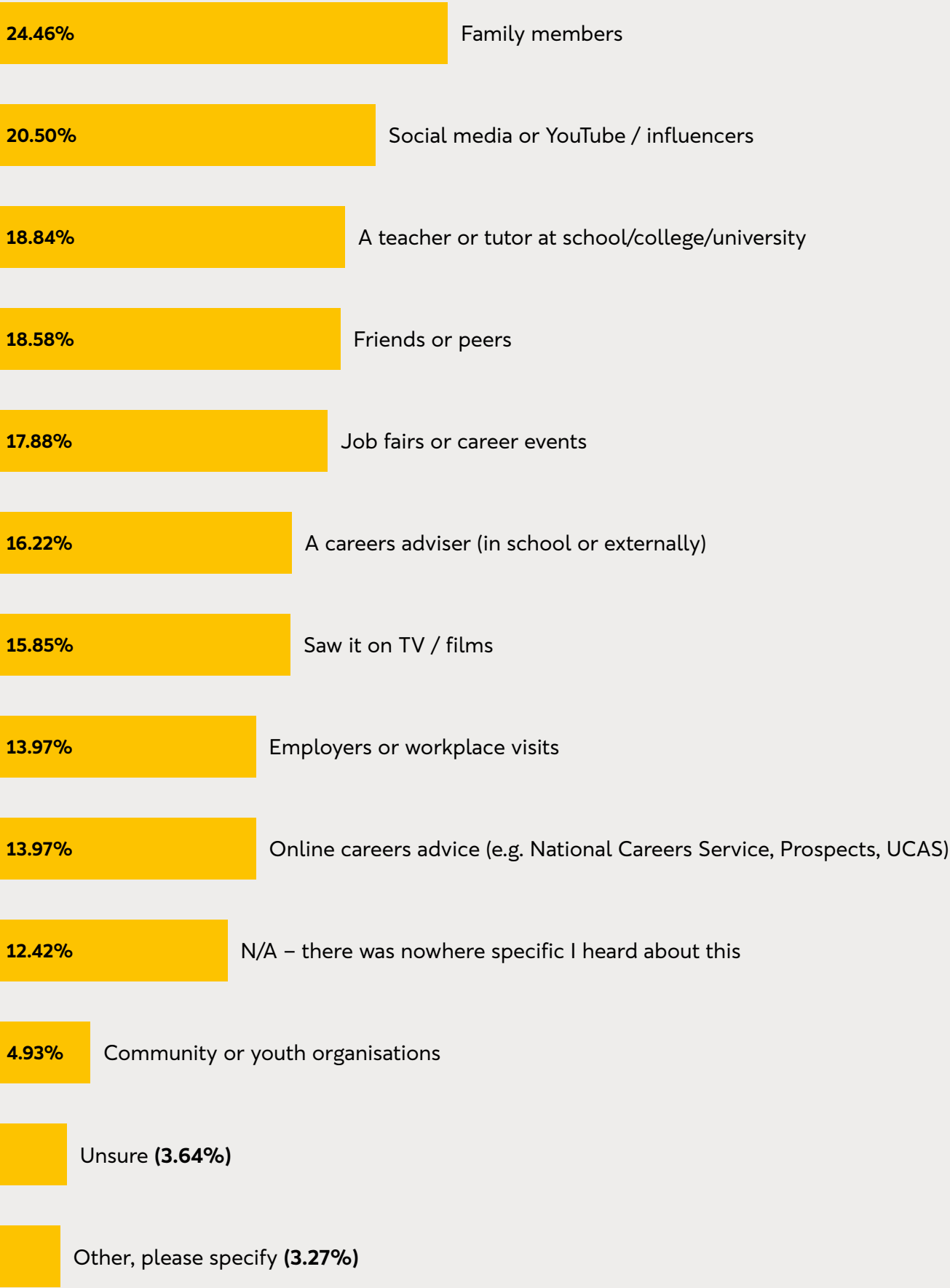
Whilst families want the best for their children, family members being the top source of careers advice can limit the range of information that young people are able to access. The Social Market Foundation reported in 2022 that careers advice varies significantly based on school context and parental wealth<sup>5</sup>. Specifically, students in wealthier areas were steered toward university, while those in less affluent areas were directed toward vocational pathways, regardless of individual ability. This reinforces inequality by shaping routes based more on parental income and background than talent.



Additionally, family advice is not always equitable; when parents lack diverse career exposure, the advice they offer can narrow ambitions. Such advice can emphasize safer, lower-reward routes or undervalue academic and vocational opportunities, biasing decisions.

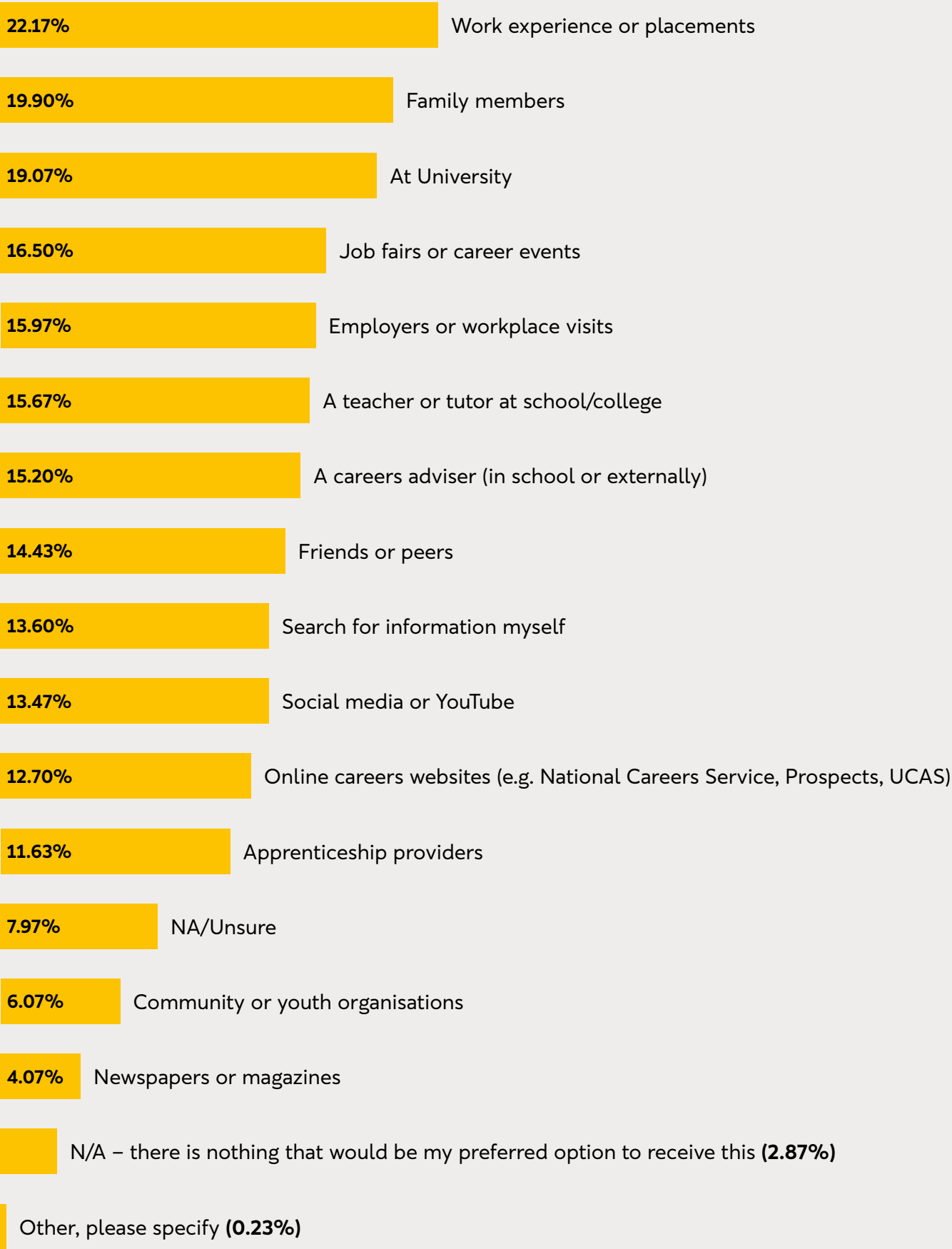
4 Noble, 2018; Algorithms of Oppression; NYU Press  
5 Geraghty, L. (2022, 1 April) Careers advice is pushing young people into jobs based off their parents’ wealth, think tank warns. Big Issue. <https://www.bigissue.com/news/employment/careers-advice-is-pushing-young-people-into-careers-based-off-their-parents-wealth-think-tank-warns/>

### Where did you hear about the job you’d like to be doing in the next five years? (Select all that apply)





What is your preferred option to receive careers advice and/or guidance?  
(Select up to 3 options)



22% wanted to receive careers advice and guidance from employers

Where do they want to get careers information from?

Given the choice, young people told us that they would ideally like to get careers advice and guidance via work experience placements (22%), ahead of family members (20%) and university mentors (19%).

Giving young people access to work placements, particularly those where they can see other people like them can be transformative, allowing them to see that it is possible to succeed in careers that have traditionally had less diverse workforces.



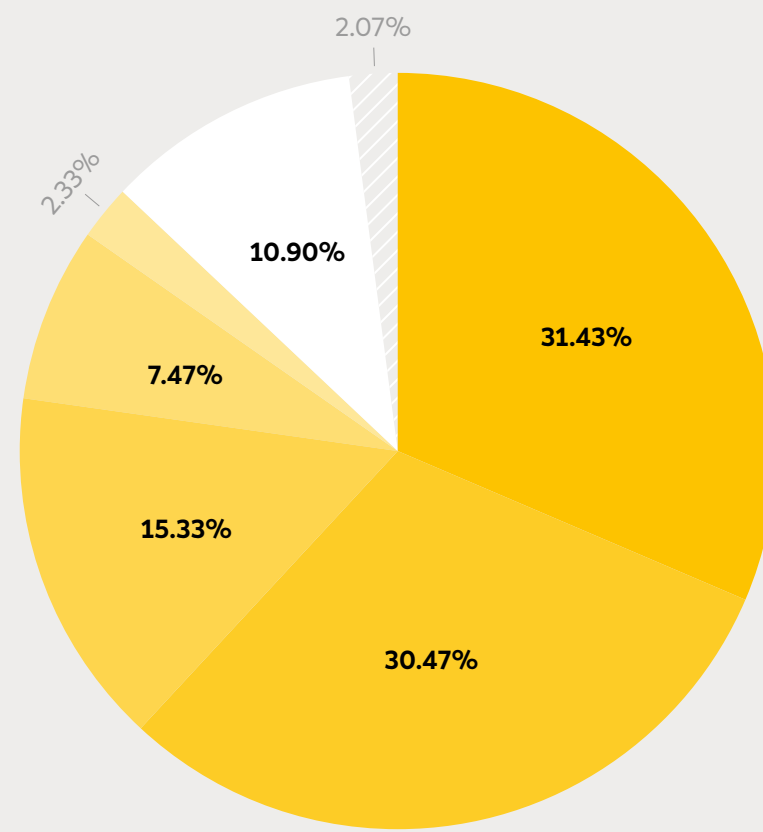
Just 62% of respondents were able to name a job they would like to do

As we can see, many young people ideally wanted to receive information about careers directly from employers (22%). This compares to 14% who had actually received information about their favoured career this way.

Additionally, young people were keen to get advice from trusted voices such as family members (20%) and via their university (19%). While we have evidenced opposite that getting careers advice from family members has its flaws, it's understandable that young people favour getting advice from a trusted sourced.



How do people feel about the careers advice and guidance they have received?



- I have received clear, helpful careers advice/guidance and feel confident about my future.
- I've had some useful careers advice/guidance, but I still feel unsure about my next steps.
- I've received some careers advice/guidance, but it wasn't very helpful or relevant to me.
- I haven't received much careers advice/guidance.
- I haven't received any careers advice/guidance at all.
- N/A/Unsure
- I'm not sure if I've had careers advice/guidance or not.

Respondents were asked to select one statement

When we asked the respondents to rate the quality of the careers advice and guidance that they had received to date, less than a third stated that they had received clear and helpful advice (31%). Moreover, 38% stated that they had either received poor quality advice, not much, couldn't remember if they had received any or hadn't received any at all. This suggests a significant quota of young people are not getting access to the support and guidance they need to thrive in their future careers.

These figures underline the critical importance of ensuring that all young people are able to access high-quality careers advice and guidance to facilitate equal opportunities to get fulfilling and gainful jobs in the future.



31% received high quality careers advice

38% received insufficient careers advice or couldn't remember



What do people plan to study next?

Our research found that ambition is high among young people, with 57% telling us that they are targeting a Level 4 qualification or higher within two years. This is an encouraging statistic, as Lightcast projections indicate that 70% of UK growth roles will require a Level 4 qualification or above by 2030.

There is also a marginal gender divide, with our data demonstrating that women are more likely to pursue a bachelor’s degree or higher (34% vs 27% of men). Meanwhile, men tend to favour Level 5 technical credentials (22% vs 14% of women). Overall, aspiration for reaching Level 6 qualifications, such as a bachelor’s degree or equivalent, sits at 41%.

Sector preferences and gender – early divisions and lasting gaps

Sector ambition divides along familiar gender lines. Our research found that men tend to gravitate more towards STEM sectors such as finance (16%), construction (14.8%) and manufacturing (11%), whereas women are more likely to select sectors such as health and social care (27.7%), education (22.7%) and the arts (18%). Just 6% of respondents selected rapidly growing fields such as AI, data science or green engineering.

By 2030 70% UK growth roles will need a level 4 or higher - Lightcast.

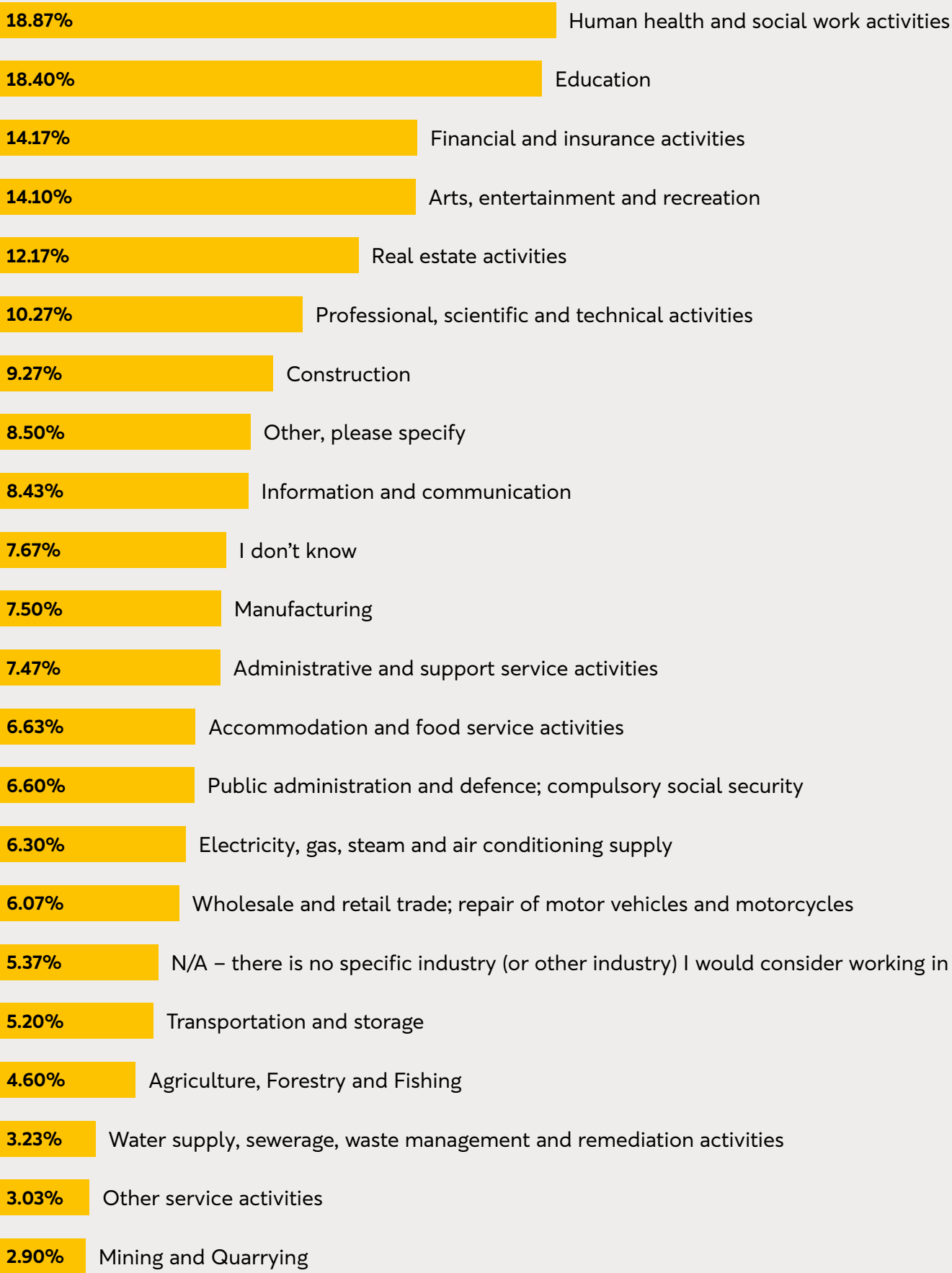
There is a clear disparity between the regions. Londoners shortlist an average of 4.2 sectors, benefitting from a more varied labour market, whereas their peers in the North East only selected 2.1 industries on average.

Representation and workplace culture

More than one in four respondents (29%) stated that they do not see people like themselves represented in their desired field. This lack of visible diversity intensifies for neurodivergent learners (34%), care-experienced youth (38%) and refugees (44%).

The dearth of representation, particularly in the case of those from the above backgrounds, highlights the importance of striving for a more diverse and varied labour market. With visible role models who have similar backgrounds to them, young people will hopefully be instilled with increased confidence to follow the same pathway into their chosen field.

What industry do young people want to work in? (Select up to three)







# CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

## **When helping young people to build future-ready careers creativity, collaboration and representation matter**

If readers only take away one key message from this research, it should be the critical need for closer collaboration between educators, industry and government. Employers, in particular, have a huge role to play in building strong future-facing talent pipelines. They can offer real insight into the jobs and skills that are in demand, but beyond that, they can also provide hands-on experiences that make career options feel tangible for young people.

High-quality work placements, mentorship programmes and employer-led projects give young people a realistic sense of what different paths look like and what it takes to succeed.

The research reveals that a generation brimming with skills yet facing uncertainty and confusion about which career paths to pursue, compounded by inconsistent experiences of careers advice and guidance. The findings suggest that if educators, legislators and industry collaborate to support young people in obtaining access to high-quality careers advice, which reflects real-world opportunities and evolving skills needs, then the boundless potential of the UK's young talent can be fully realised. This collaboration is essential if we are to close widening skills gaps and ensure that employers can access the talent that they need for the future.

It's also vital that employers communicate with potential future talent pipelines through the channels they utilise most. Increasingly, young people are turning to platforms like YouTube, TikTok and Reddit for career advice and inspiration. Employers should consider how they can use these channels to share authentic, engaging stories about career journeys, day-in-the-life experiences and practical entry routes.

Additionally, role models play a crucial role in shaping young people's aspirations. It is vital that they see individuals who look like them and share similar backgrounds thriving in the careers that they hope to pursue. This visibility can be especially powerful in the sectors that historically might have lacked diversity, helping to break down perceived barriers and inspire young people to expand their sense of what is possible.

On the next page we have listed some recommendations which we believe are key for piecing the puzzle together and ensuring the best outcomes for young people, education and industry.



## Recommendations

### For employers

- Engage proactively with the education system by providing structured, paid work placements, mentoring and micro-placements, especially in emerging sectors.
- Capitalise on youth-friendly communication (i.e. social media, short-form videos, day-in-the-life stories), particularly to showcase lesser-known jobs to young talent.
- Collaborate with educators to co-create curriculum content, industry insight days and employability programmes that align with future skills needs.
- Collaborate with education providers to align training with real industry needs and to design tailored skill development pathways for young employees entering the workforce.

### For Government

- Fund targeted initiatives to support all young people in accessing high quality careers education and careers.
- Use consistent, joined-up messaging across government careers services and youth hubs to ensure all young people receive clear signals about future growth sectors.
- Make it more attractive and simpler for employers to engage with building future talent pipelines
- Promote greater use of data-driven career guidance to support young people and those that advise them in making informed decisions in a rapidly evolving economy.



# ABOUT US

## Ravensbourne University London

Ravensbourne University London is a dynamic institution at the intersection of creativity, business and technology. Based in London's Design District in the heart of North Greenwich, we are home to a diverse, global community in one of the world's most vibrant business and creative hubs.

We learn with industry; industry learns with us and together we transform lives. With cutting-edge facilities and strong industry links, we empower students with the skills, knowledge, experience and connections needed to thrive in their careers and lives. Our courses foster collaboration, innovation, and real-world learning, preparing graduates to become leaders in their fields.

Recognised for excellence, we have been ranked in the Top 10 in the UK for student employability by Uni Compare, named as a top 5 University in London by Student Crowd, hold a Silver rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and are the only university worldwide to receive RIBA accreditation for both Architecture and Interiors courses.

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