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Department for Education



Department for Work and Pensions

Academic year 2023/24

# Apprenticeships in England by industry characteristics

Apprenticeship starts and achievements by employer sector and size. Official statistics including breakdowns by learner and apprenticeship characteristics.

Latest release

Next release **May 2027**

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Published

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# Headline facts and figures

Percentage of apprentice starts in SMEs in 2023/24

**37%**

unchanged from 2022/23

Enterprises with an apprenticeship start in 2023/24

**76,650**

up 1% from 2022/23

- In the 2023/24 academic year, the number of apprenticeships starts (16+) in England increased slightly (by 1%) compared to 2022/23 for employers of all sizes. The largest increase was for medium sized employers (50-249 employees) with an increase of 1,030 starts (2%).
- Apprenticeship starts have increased since 2019/20. Starts with large employers (250+ employees) account for 61% of apprenticeship starts in 2023/24 and are at their highest recorded level.
- In 2023/24 most industry sectors had more apprenticeship starts than in 2022/23, although there were some exceptions.
- For every 1,000 enterprises in England, there were 32 that had at least one apprentice start in 2023/24. This rate remained unchanged from 2022/23.
- The number of unique enterprises with at least one matched apprenticeship start in 2023/24 increased by 1% (580 employers) to 76,650.

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## About these statistics

### Background information

This publication presents statistics on 16+ apprenticeship starts and achievements in England by the industry characteristics of their employer within the 2023/24 academic year, providing further breakdowns of existing apprenticeship data.

It complements the headline [Apprenticeships 2023/24 official statistics](#) (published in November 2024), providing detailed information on the size and industry sector of the apprenticeship employers for that year.

Data from the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and Office for National Statistics Inter-departmental Business Register (IDBR) have been matched for the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years.

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## Apprenticeship starts by enterprise size

Apprenticeship starts are a count of apprenticeship programmes that begin in an academic year. Please see the methodology section for more detail on how we count starts and other definitions.

### Large employers account for the majority of apprenticeship starts

In 2023/24:

- 61% of apprenticeship starts were with large employers (250+ employees)
- 12% of apprenticeship starts were with medium employers (50-249 employees)
- 25% of apprenticeship starts were with small employers (those with fewer than 50 employees)
- No size data was available for 2% of starts

### Apprenticeship starts by employer size were broadly similar to the previous year

The number of apprenticeship starts with small employers increased by 1% (or 890 starts)

to 84,770 starts in 2023/24 . Starts with small employers peaked in 2021/22 but remain higher than at the start of the series.

Apprenticeship starts with medium employers increased by 2% (or 1,030 starts) to 42,300 starts in 2023/24. Starts with medium employers have remained broadly stable across the period.

Starts with large employers increased by 1% (or 1,160 starts) to 206,760 starts in 2023/24. Starts with large employers are now at their highest level in the series.

[Chart](#)

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## Apprenticeship starts have increased since 2019/20 and are mostly with large employers

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Small (0-49 employees)</b>	73,680	85,430	96,450	83,880	84,770
<b>Medium (50-249 employees)</b>	38,410	37,860	42,560	41,270	42,300
<b>Large (250+ employees)</b>	190,170	187,950	202,430	205,600	206,760
<b>Not available</b>	20,270	10,210	7,760	6,390	5,760
<b>Total</b>	322,530	321,440	349,190	337,140	339,580

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[Data symbols](#) 

Source: ILR-IDBR matched data

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The proportion of apprenticeship starts amongst small and medium enterprises (SMEs, 0-249 employees) remained unchanged from 2022/23 at 37%.

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## The proportion of starts in SMEs has remained stable from 2022/23

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Total</b>	322,530	321,440	349,190	337,140	339,580
<b>Small (0-49 employees)</b>	73,680	85,430	96,450	83,880	84,770
<b>Medium (50-249 employees)</b>	38,410	37,860	42,560	41,270	42,300
<b>Large (250+ employees)</b>	190,170	187,950	202,430	205,600	206,760
<b>Not available</b>	20,270	10,210	7,760	6,390	5,760

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Source: ILR-IDBR matched data

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# Apprenticeship starts by enterprise sector

In 2023/24, most industry sectors had more apprenticeship starts than the previous year (2022/23) but there were some exceptions.

The industry sectors with the highest number of apprenticeship starts were:

- Human Health and Social Work Activities (24% of starts)
- Wholesale and Retail Trade (10% of starts)
- Education (9% of starts)

The largest proportional increases in apprenticeship starts since 2022/23 were in:

- Production (up 17%)
- Other Service Activities (up 10%)
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (up 8%)

The largest proportional decreases in apprenticeship starts since 2022/23 were in:

- Information and Communication (down 10%)
- Real Estate Activities (down 8%)
- Accommodation and Food Service Activities (down 6%)
- Public Admin and Defence (down 6%)

[Chart](#)

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**Most sectors had slightly more apprenticeship starts than in 2022/23, but there were some exceptions**

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Total</b>	322,530	321,440	349,190	337,140	339,580
<b>A: Agriculture, Forestry</b>	1,290	1,190	1,440	1,280	1,380

**& Fishing**

<b>BDE: Production</b>	2,530	2,520	2,870	2,940	3,430
<b>C: Manufacturing</b>	24,640	18,870	22,670	22,660	23,450
<b>F: Construction</b>	20,880	19,580	25,800	23,740	23,990
<b>G: Wholesale &amp; Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles/cycles</b>	33,690	33,830	37,560	35,000	33,640
<b>H: Transportation &amp; Storage</b>	8,960	9,970	11,550	11,100	11,180
<b>I: Accommodation &amp; Food Service Activities</b>	15,280	13,680	19,960	18,300	17,270
<b>J: Information &amp; Communication</b>	7,730	9,260	10,730	9,060	8,130
<b>K: Financial &amp; Insurance Activities</b>	8,790	9,310	9,030	9,980	10,090
<b>L: Real Estate Activities</b>	4,030	4,260	4,620	5,060	4,670
<b>M: Professional, Scientific &amp; Technical Activities</b>	21,340	20,550	25,780	25,910	26,700
<b>N: Admin &amp; Support Service Activities</b>	16,540	17,440	17,730	15,830	16,180
<b>O: Public Admin &amp; Defence; Compulsory Social Security</b>	26,950	28,010	28,140	29,680	27,970
<b>P: Education</b>	27,890	28,320	27,720	29,050	30,720
<b>Q: Human Health &amp; Social Work Activities</b>	67,580	80,780	80,320	77,150	80,070

<b>R:Arts, Entertainment &amp; Recreation</b>	6,130	5,100	6,120	5,770	5,920
<b>S:Other Service Activities</b>	7,810	8,290	9,200	8,060	8,870
<b>U:Activities of Extraterritorial Orgs &amp; Bodies</b>	no data	c	c	z	c
<b>Not available</b>	20,480	10,480	7,950	6,580	5,920

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Source: ILR-IDBR matched data

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# Apprenticeship starts by enterprise size and sector

**The proportion of starts by employer size varied considerably across industry sectors.**

For example, in 2023/24, 84% of apprenticeship starts in the 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing' sector were with small and medium enterprises (with 0-249 employees), whilst 100% of starts in 'Public Admin and Defence' were with large employers (with 250+ employees).

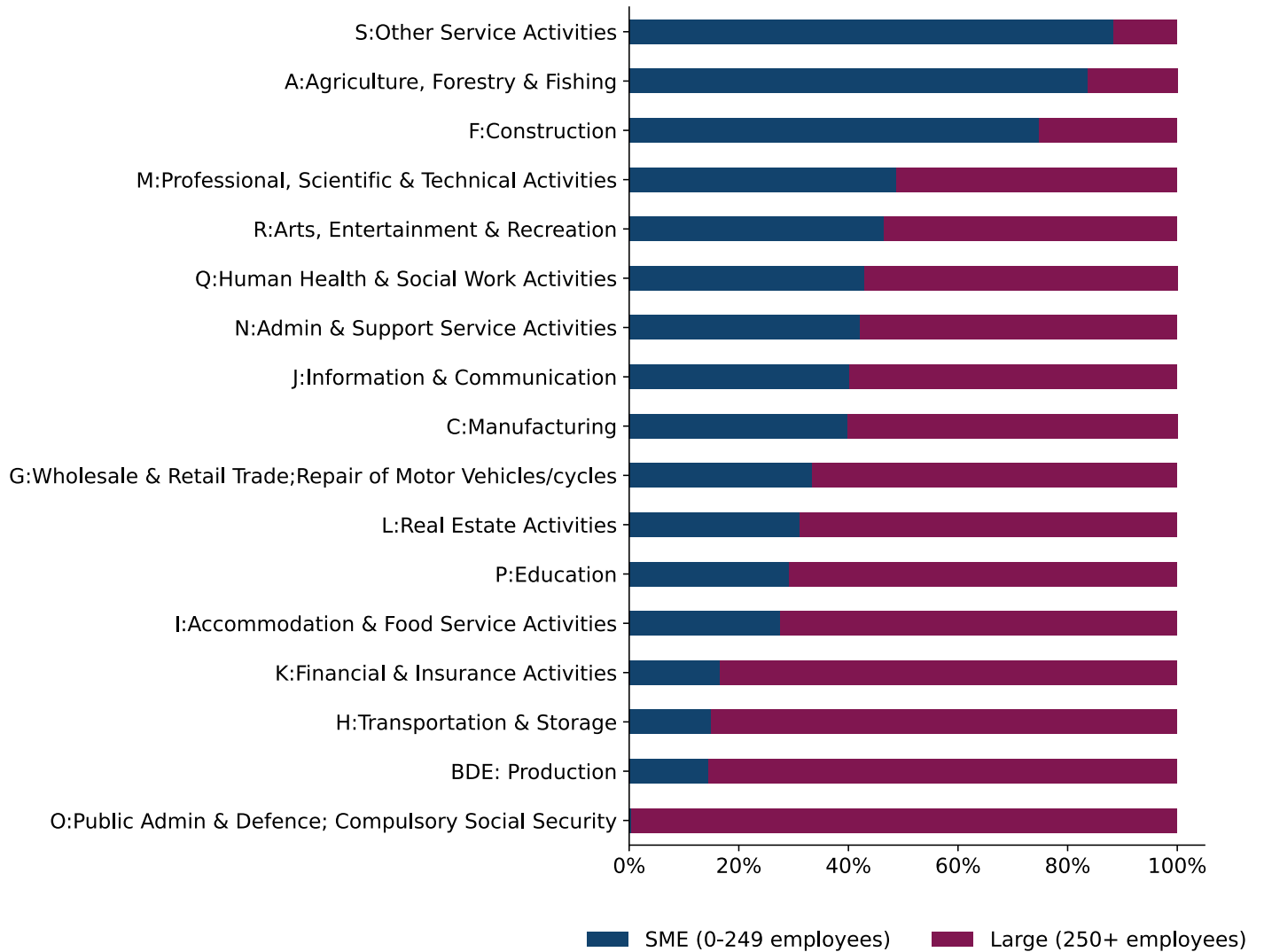
Chart Table

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## The proportion of starts by employer size varied considerably across industry sectors

Apprenticeship starts by enterprise size and industry sector, 2023/24



Source: ILR-IDBR matched data

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## **Apprenticeship starts remained broadly stable from the previous year, with small increases overall and mixed patterns across sectors and employer size.**

Among small and medium enterprises (SMEs), growth in apprenticeship starts since 2022/23 was generally modest. The largest proportional increases were seen in:

- 'Other Service Activities' and 'Public Admin and Defence' (both up 13%)
- 'Financial and Insurance Activities' and 'Transportation and Storage' (both up 7%)

In contrast, SME starts declined in several sectors, including:

- Information and Communication (down 16%)
- Accommodation and Food Service Activities (down 7%)
- Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (down 5%)

Among large employers, year-on-year changes were also mixed. The largest increases were in:

- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (up 40%)
- Production (up 18%)

Some sectors experienced declines in large employer starts including:

- Wholesale Retail and Trade (down 8%)
- 'Other Service Activities' and 'Real Estate Activities' (both down 7%)

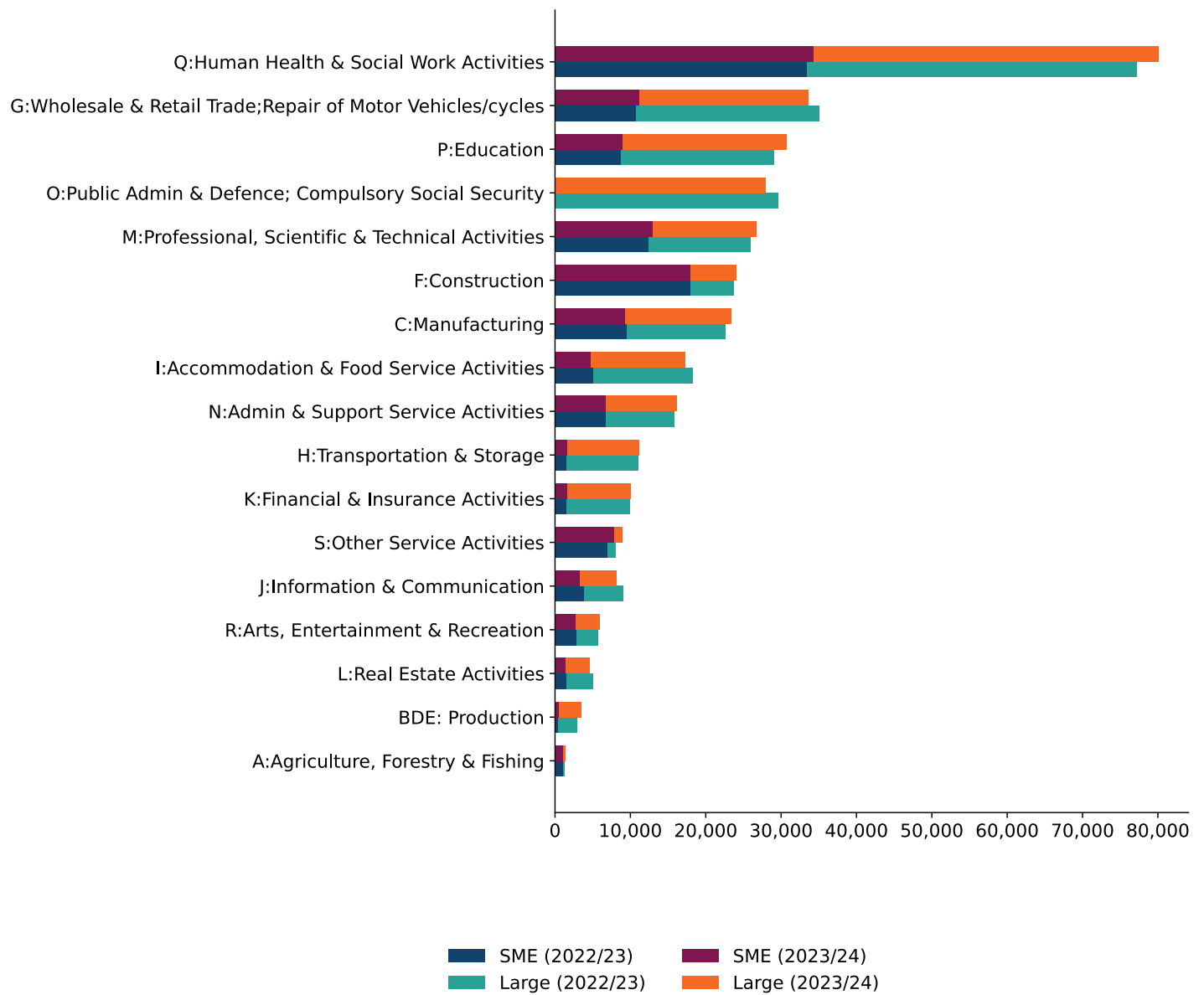
Chart

Table

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**Overall there was a small increase in starts from 2022/23, but trends were mixed across sectors and employer size**

Apprenticeship starts by enterprise size and industry sector, 2022/23 to 2023/24



Source: ILR-IDBR matched data

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# Apprenticeship starts by enterprise sector and learner demographics

**There were clear differences in the distribution of apprenticeship starts across sectors by sex.**

Starts by female apprentices in 2023/24 made up the largest proportions in:

- Human Health and Social Work Activities (82%)
- Other Service Activities (82%)
- Education (73%)

Starts by male apprentices in 2023/24 made up the largest proportions in:

- Construction (88%)
- Manufacturing (78%)
- Production (74%)

**Most sectors were dominated by learners aged 25 or over, although there were some notable exceptions.**

Starts by learners age 25+ in 2023/24 made up the largest proportions in:

- Human Health and Social Work Activities (66%)
- Transportation and Storage (64%)
- Education (63%)

Starts by learners age under 19 in 2023/24 made up the largest proportions in:

- Other Service Activities (59%)
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (57%)
- Construction (51%)

Chart

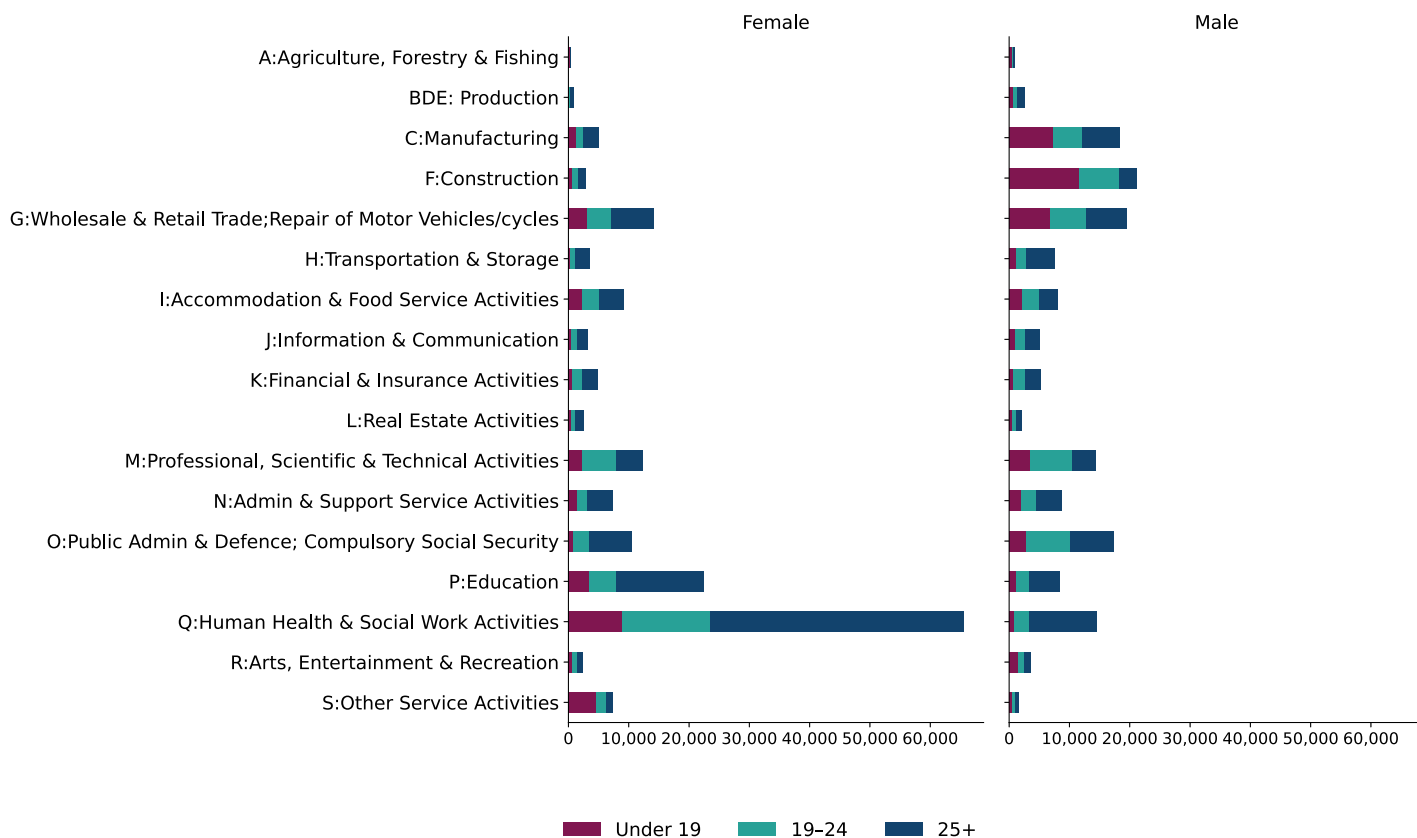
Table

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# The distribution of apprenticeship starts across sectors varied considerably by sex and age

Apprenticeship starts by industry sector, apprenticeship sex and age, 2023/24



Source: ILR-IDBR matched data

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# Apprenticeship achievements by enterprise size and sector

## Explore data on apprenticeship achievements by industry characteristics

You can create your own tables looking at achievements by using the table builder tool to explore the underlying data files.

The following tables also offer a range of useful breakdowns:

### File subject

### What is available in the file

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[Apprenticeship achievements by industry sector and size, 2019/20 to 2023/24](#)

**Academic year:** 2019/20 to 2023/24

**Indicators:** Achievements

**Filters:** Size, Sector

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[Apprenticeship achievements by detailed industry sector \(2 digit SIC\) and size, 2019/20 to 2023/24](#)

**Academic year:** 2019/20 to 2023/24

**Indicators:** Achievements

**Filters:** Size, Sector, 2 digit sector code of enterprise

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[Apprenticeship achievements by industry sector, size and apprenticeship type, 2019/20 to 2023/24](#)

**Academic year:** 2019/20 to 2023/24

**Indicators:** Achievements

**Filters:** Size, Sector, Apprenticeship type

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# Enterprises with apprenticeship starts by size

**The number of unique enterprises with at least one matched apprenticeship remained stable from 2022/23, after peaking in 2021/22.**

The number of enterprises with apprenticeship starts in 2023/24 increased by just 1% (580 employers) from 2022/23.

The largest change was in large enterprises which increased by 3%, compared to increases of 2% for medium enterprises and less than 1% for small enterprises.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

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**The number of enterprises with at least one apprenticeship start increased to a peak in 2021/22, before declining and stabilising**

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Total</b>	66,930	74,780	85,290	76,070	76,650
<b>Large (250+ employees)</b>	7,170	7,330	7,840	8,100	8,350
<b>Medium (50-249 employees)</b>	12,450	12,650	14,490	14,120	14,330
<b>Small (0-49 employees)</b>	47,910	55,160	63,420	54,380	54,430

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## Footnotes

1. Category totals may not sum precisely. Around 1% of enterprises are recorded with different sizes or sectors across the two tax years covering the academic year. These enterprises may be included in multiple categories, but are only counted once in the overall total.

Source: ILR-IDBR matched data

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Whilst the majority of apprenticeship starts occur in large employers, most employers with at least one apprenticeship start are small. This reflects the broader business environment, where most enterprises employ fewer than 50 people.

In 2023/24, 71% of employers with at least one apprenticeship start were small (0-49 employees). Although only 11% of employers were large (250+ employees), 61% of apprenticeship starts were with large employers.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

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## Enterprises with at least one apprenticeship start by size, 2023/24

	2023/24
<b>Total</b>	76,650
<b>Small (0-49 employees)</b>	54,430
<b>Medium (50-249 employees)</b>	14,330
<b>Large (250+ employees)</b>	8,350

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### Footnotes

1. Category totals may not sum precisely. Around 1% of enterprises are recorded with different sizes or sectors across the two tax years covering the academic year. These enterprises may be included in multiple categories, but are only counted once in the overall total.

Source: ILR-IDBR matched data

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# Enterprises with apprenticeship starts by size and sector

The number of enterprises with at least one apprenticeship start remained broadly stable from the previous year, although trends varied by sector and enterprise size.

For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the largest proportional increases compared to 2022/23 were in:

- Production (up by 16%)
- Public Administration and Defence (up by 9%)
- Financial and Insurance Activities (up by 7%)

The largest proportional decreases for SMEs compared to 2022/23 were in:

- Information and Communication (down by 9%)
- Real Estate Activities (down by 7%)
- Accommodation and Food Service Activities (down by 6%)

For large enterprises, increases were more widespread. The largest proportional rises were observed in:

- Accommodation and Food Service Activities (up by 8%)
- Information and Communication (up by 7%)
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (up by 7%)

In some sectors, including 'Accommodation and Food service Activities' and 'Information and Communication', SME declines were accompanied by growth in large enterprises, suggesting a shift towards larger employers.

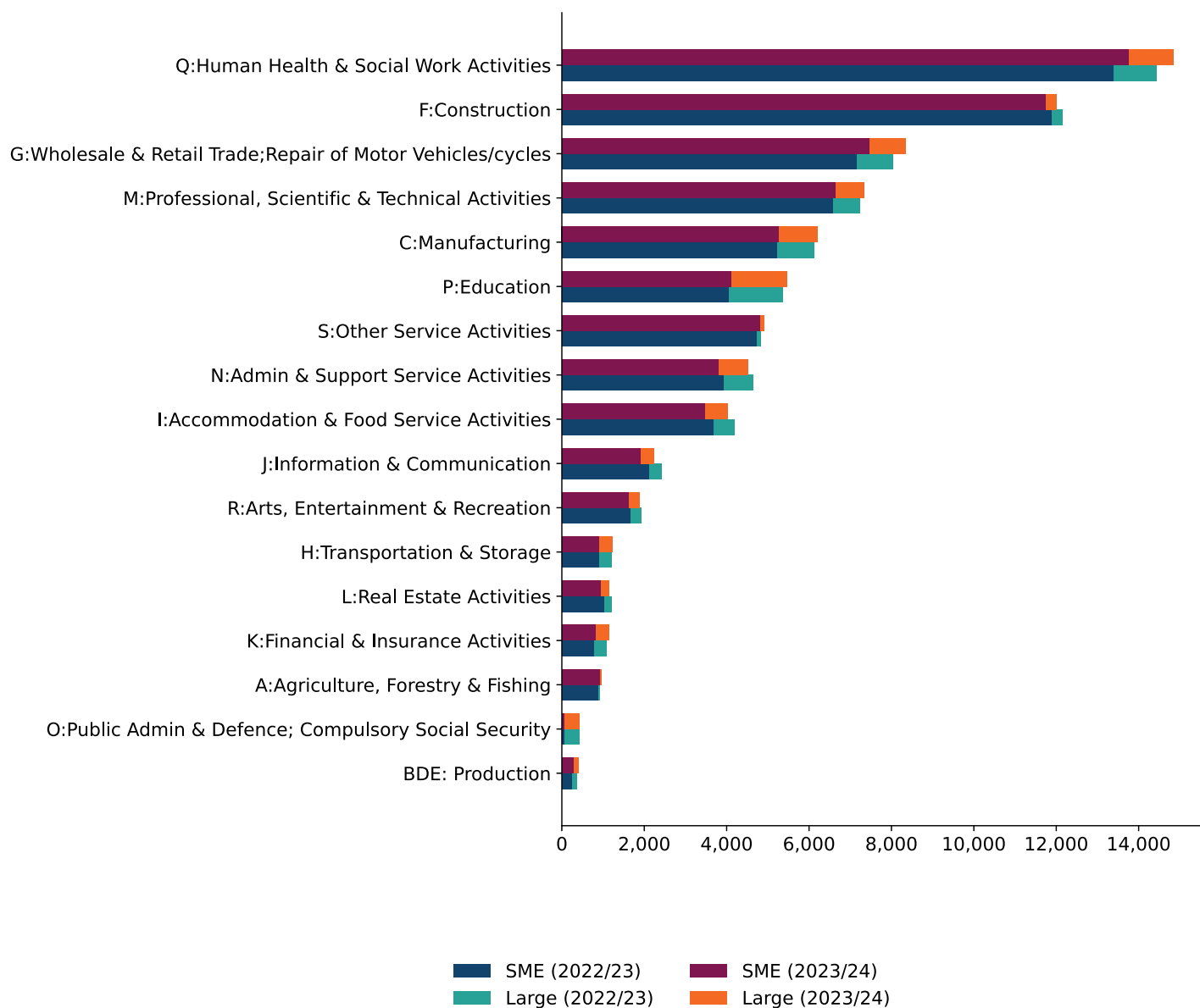
Chart

Table

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## The number of enterprises with apprenticeship starts remained broadly stable but trends varied across sectors

Enterprises with apprenticeship starts by size and industry sector, 2022/23 to 2023/24



## Footnotes

- Category totals may not sum precisely. Around 1% of enterprises are recorded with different sizes or sectors across the two tax years covering the academic year. These enterprises may be included in multiple categories, but are only counted once in the overall total.

Source: ILR - IDBR matched data

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# Rate of enterprises with apprenticeship starts

**For every 1,000 enterprises in England, there were 32 that had at least one apprentice start in 2023/24 . This remains unchanged from 2022/23.**

The sectors with the highest rate of enterprises with apprenticeship starts per 1,000 enterprises in 2023/24 were:

- Health (148 per 1,000 enterprises)
- Education (124 per 1,000 enterprises)
- Public Administration and Defence (62 per 1,000 enterprises)

These were the same sectors with the highest rates in 2022/23.

Changes from the previous year (2022/23) at sector level were minimal. The largest changes in the rate of enterprises with apprenticeship starts were in:

- Public Administration and Defence (increased from 58 to 62 per 1,000 enterprises)
- Production (increased from 50 to 52 per 1,000 enterprises)
- Health (decreased from 150 to 148 per 1,000 enterprises)

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**The rate of enterprises with at least one apprenticeship start remained broadly stable across most sectors**

	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Total</b>	32	32
<b>Accommodation &amp; food services</b>	29	28
<b>Agriculture, forestry &amp; fishing</b>	10	11
<b>Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services</b>	42	42
<b>Business administration and support services</b>	23	22
<b>Construction</b>	37	36
<b>Education</b>	123	124
<b>Finance &amp; insurance</b>	20	21
<b>Health</b>	150	148
<b>Information &amp; communication</b>	14	13
<b>Production</b>	50	52
<b>Professional, scientific &amp; technical</b>	19	19
<b>Property</b>	12	11
<b>Public administration &amp; defence</b>	58	62
<b>Transport &amp; storage (inc postal)</b>	11	12
<b>Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles</b>	23	24

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# Rate of apprenticeship starts by enterprise sector

**Apprenticeship start rates remained broadly stable but varied across sectors.**

The highest rates of apprenticeship starts in 2023/24 occurred in:

- Public Administration and Defence (22 starts per 1,000 employees)
- Health (21 starts per 1,000 employees)
- Construction (18 starts per 1,000 employees)

The lowest rates of apprenticeship starts in 2023/24 occurred in:

- Information and Communication (6 starts per 1,000 employees)
- Business Administration and Support Services (7 starts per 1,000 employees)

The biggest change in apprenticeship start rate from 2022/23 was for 'Public Administration and Defence' which fell from 25 to 22 starts per 1,000 employees in 2023/24.

[Chart](#)

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**Apprenticeship start rates remained broadly stable but varied across sectors**

	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
<b>Total</b>	12	12
<b>Accommodation &amp; food services</b>	9	8
<b>Agriculture, forestry &amp; fishing</b>	9	10
<b>Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services</b>	11	12
<b>Business administration and support services</b>	7	7
<b>Construction</b>	18	18
<b>Education</b>	12	13
<b>Finance &amp; insurance</b>	11	11
<b>Health</b>	21	21
<b>Information &amp; communication</b>	7	6
<b>Production</b>	11	12
<b>Professional, scientific &amp; technical</b>	10	10
<b>Property</b>	10	9
<b>Public administration &amp; defence</b>	25	22
<b>Transport &amp; storage (inc postal)</b>	8	8
<b>Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles</b>	9	9

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If you have a specific enquiry about Apprenticeships in England by industry characteristics statistics and data:

### Skills Policy Analysis

Email: [hannah.keogan@education.gov.uk](mailto:hannah.keogan@education.gov.uk)

Contact name: Hannah Keogan

### Press office

If you have a media enquiry:

Telephone: 020 7783 8300

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