



Under-25s in Construction and the Built Environment

An Analysis of the Carded Workforce

Workforce Insights – powered by the CSCS Alliance



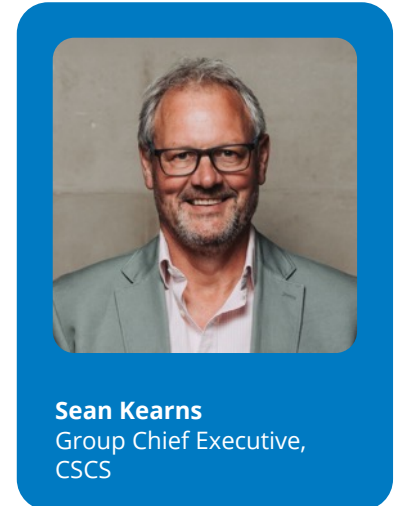


Under-25s in Construction and the Built Environment: An Analysis of the Carded Workforce

Foreword

Publishing this data represents a milestone for the CSCS Alliance. For the first time, the collective CSCS-logoed card schemes have been able to share a comprehensive and rich dataset — giving the industry a clearer view of who is entering construction, through which routes, and with what qualifications.

That is a significant step, and one made possible by the collaboration across all Alliance member schemes that underpins everything we do.



Sean Kearns
Group Chief Executive,
CSCS

What the data shows is a genuinely positive picture — and one that deserves to be told.

Under-25 card issuance reached its highest level across the three-year period in 2025, growing at a faster rate than the carded workforce as a whole.

More young people are entering construction across a broader range of trades than is often assumed, and a growing proportion are arriving with Skilled or Advanced Skilled qualifications. These are trends the industry should acknowledge and build on.

I want to be clear about what this data is and what it is not.

Cards issued data is a leading indicator — it tells us about the flow of people entering or remaining active in the industry during a given period. It does not capture the full complexity of workforce supply and demand, nor does it suggest that the industry's recruitment challenge has been resolved.

Significant work remains, and the external context set out later in this report — on youth unemployment, on skills demand, on the scale of what the industry will need to deliver in the years ahead — makes that plain.

What this data can do is inform. It can help the industry understand where younger entrants are going, where the pipeline is strengthening, and where it may need further support.

That is the purpose of sharing it, and we hope it provides a useful foundation for the conversations happening across industry, government and training providers about what comes next.



Find out more

Scan the QR code or visit
CSCSGroup.co.uk/WorkforceInsights



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Key facts at a glance...

94,444

**Under-25 cards issued
in 2025**



8.8%

**Growth in under-25 issuance,
2023 to 2025**



19%

**Under-25 share of all cards
issued in 2025, up from 17.2%
in 2023**



9.6%

**Growth in cards issued to under-
25s in skilled occupations.**



7.8%

**Growth in under-25 skilled
and Advanced Skilled cards**

Overall card issuance across all age groups fell by 1.3% over the same period.



Growth recorded across most major occupation groups...

A common assumption about younger entrants to construction is that they concentrate overwhelmingly in site labouring roles — and while labouring remains the most common entry point in terms of cards, the data tells a more varied story.

Between 2023 and 2025, growth in under-25 card issuance was recorded across most major occupation groups, with Plant Operatives, Electrotechnical Occupations, Temporary Traffic Management and Utilities all recording increases above the overall under-25 average of 8.8%.

The chart below shows the growth rate for each major occupation group against that overall figure,

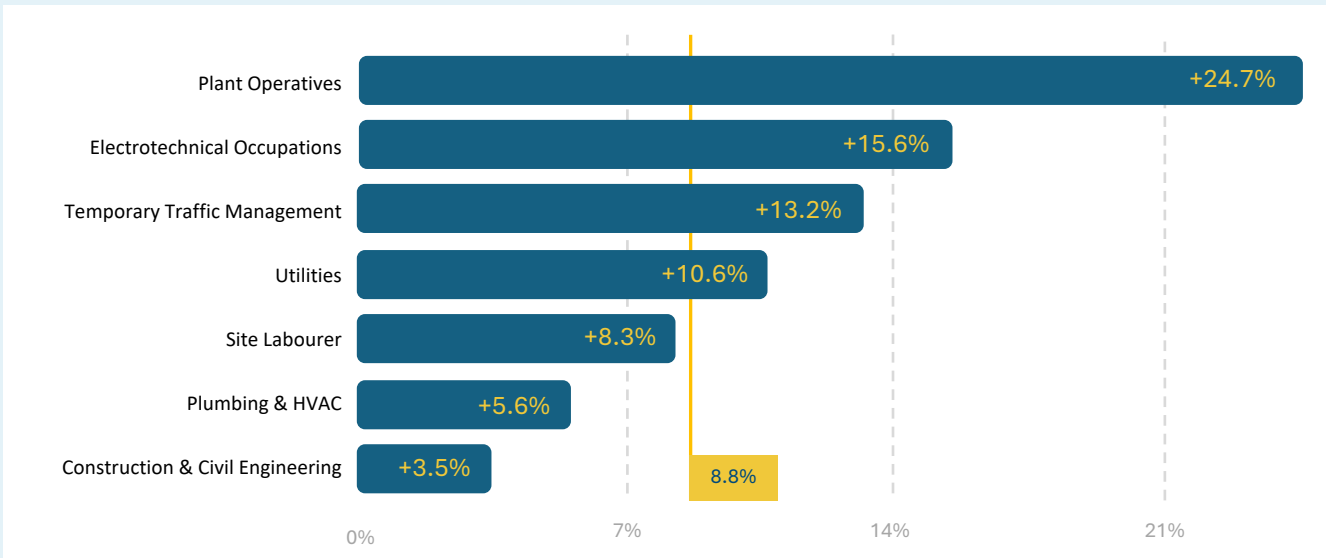
providing a picture of where younger workers are entering the industry at the fastest rate. It is worth noting that growth rate and volume tell different stories.

Some of the strongest percentage growth rates are recorded in occupation groups that start from a smaller base, while larger groups — such as Electrotechnical Occupations— show both strong volume and solid growth.

Taken together, the data suggests that younger workers are making active choices across a range of construction careers, rather than defaulting to a single point of entry.

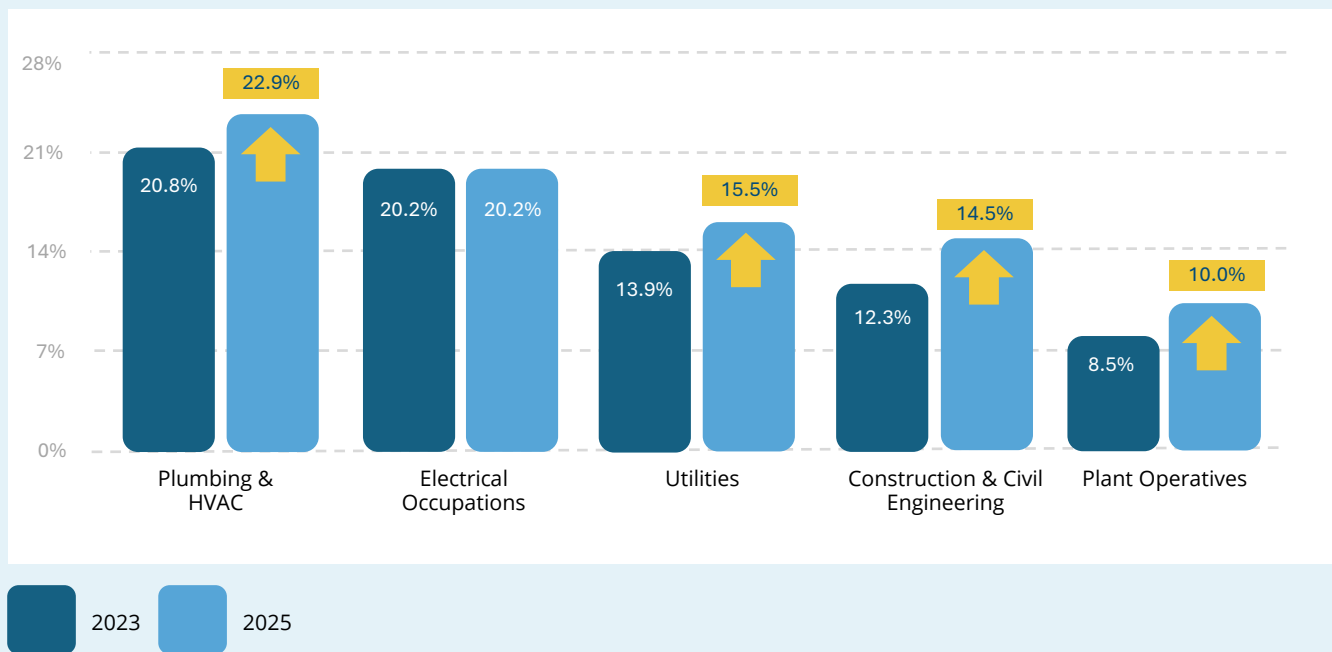
Construction Sector Growth by Role

Percentage growth in under-25 card issuance by occupation group, 2023 to 2025



Nearly one in four plumbing and HVAC cards went to someone under-25 last year...

Percentage of all cards issued to under-25s by occupation group, 2023 to 2025



Alongside the growth rate data, the proportion of cards in each occupation group going to under-25s provides a different and complementary view of where younger workers are most represented.

By this measure, Plumbing and HVAC stands out. In 2025, 22.9% of all cards issued in that trade went to workers under the age of 25 — nearly one in four. That share has risen from 20.8% in 2023, suggesting a sustained trend rather than a single-year anomaly.

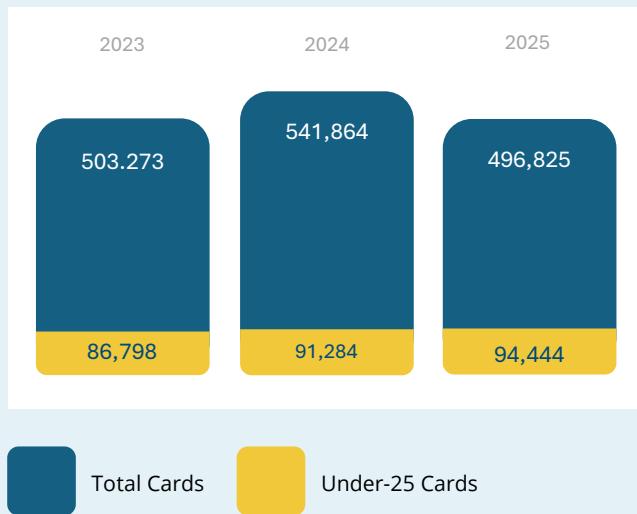
Across most major occupation groups, the under-25 share of cards issued rose between 2023 and 2025, indicating that the increase in younger entrants is not simply a reflection of overall industry growth but a genuine shift in the composition of who is entering.

By volume, Electrotechnical Occupations remain the largest sector group for under-25s, with 13,584 cards issued in 2025. The combination of high volume and a 20.2% under-25 share makes it one of the clearest indicators of how younger workers are shaping the future of the trade workforce.



Under-25 card issuance continues to rise...

Total cards issued vs under-25 cards issued across 2023, 2024 & 2025



The chart opposite sets the under-25 data in its broader context. Total card issuance across all age groups fell marginally by 1.3% between 2023 and 2025, while under-25 card issuance rose by 8.8% over the same period.

The two lines in the chart — one declining marginally, one rising — illustrate what makes the under-25 trend particularly notable: it is not simply tracking overall industry activity, but moving against it.

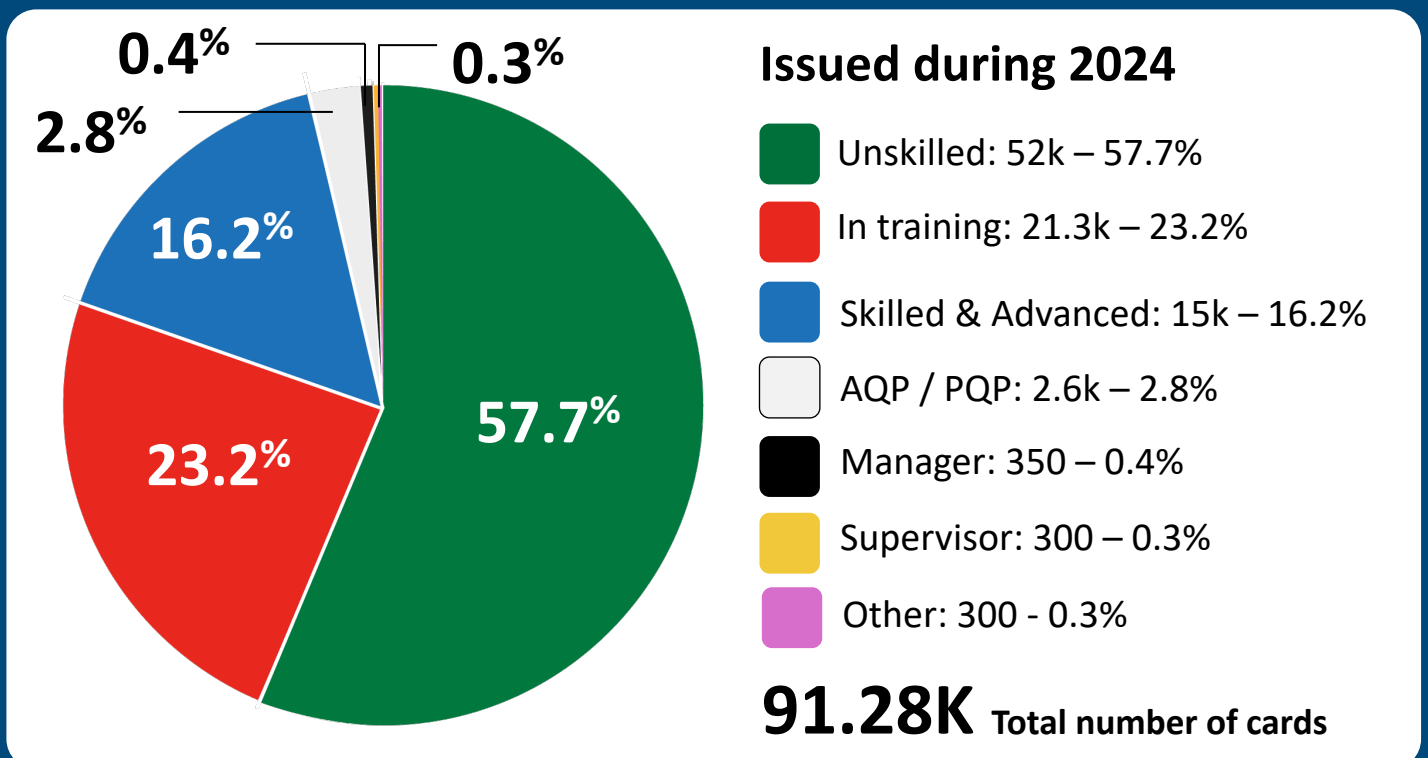
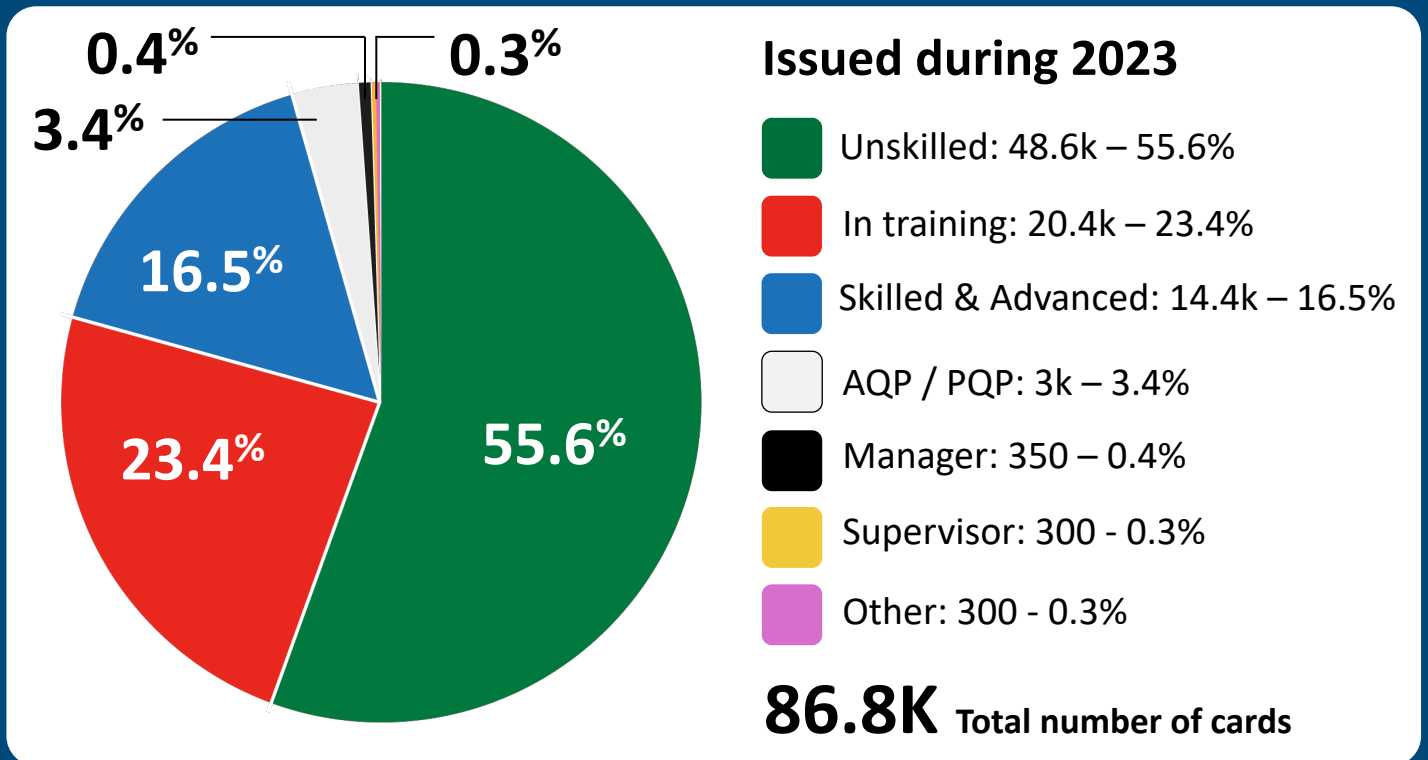
Cards issued data captures the flow of new and renewing cardholders entering or remaining active in the industry during a given period. It is a leading indicator of workforce entry rather than a measure of total workforce size.

Viewed in that light, the sustained growth in under-25 issuance — reaching 94,444 in 2025, the highest level in the three-year period — points to a strengthening pipeline of younger workers entering construction, even at a time when the overall carded workforce contracted.

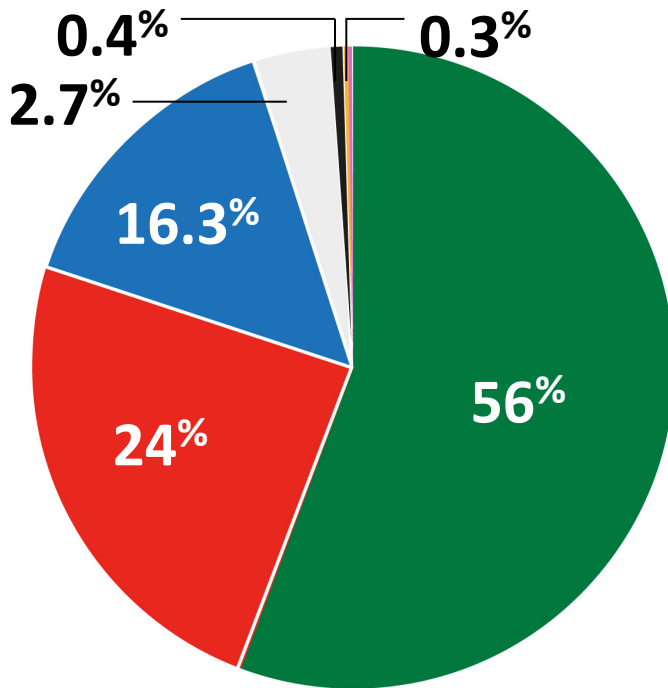
Under-25s now account for 19.0% of all cards issued, up from 17.2% in 2023.



Under-25 card types issued by year...



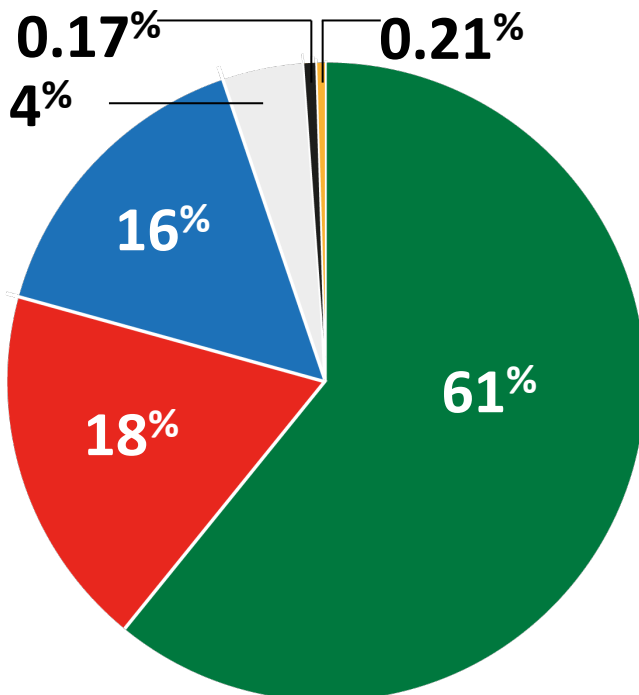
Under-25 card types issued by year...



Issued during 2025

- Unskilled: 53.2k - 56%
- In training: 23k - 24%
- Skilled & Advanced: 15.5k - 16.3%
- AQP / PQP: 2.5k - 2.7%
- Manager: 350 - 0.4%
- Supervisor: 350 - 0.4%
- Other: 300 - 0.3%

94.44K Total number of cards



Live cards as of Jan 2026

- Unskilled: 232k - 61%
- In training: 69k - 18%
- Skilled & Advanced: 61k - 16%
- AQP / PQP: 14k - 4%
- Manager: 415 - 0.17%
- Supervisor: 503 - 0.21%

377.20K Total number of cards

Young entrants are increasingly arriving qualified...

“This data is an encouraging sign for the industry. More young people are choosing careers in construction than in recent years, across a broad range of occupations, and an increasing proportion are entering the sector with skilled and advanced qualifications. That is exactly the direction of travel the industry needs if it is to meet future workforce demands.



Sean Kearns
Group Chief Executive,
CSCS

“However, momentum alone is not enough. We must ensure that young entrants are supported from day one to develop the skills, competence and experience that will sustain long-term careers in construction and the built environment. Getting people onto the right carding pathway from the outset is a key part of that journey.

“Cards should accurately reflect an individual’s skills and qualifications while supporting their progression through the industry. By aligning carding with competence and career development, we can turn these positive trends into the highly skilled workforce the industry needs to thrive in the years ahead.”

Cards issued at Skilled and Advanced Skilled level to under-25s grew by 7.8%

Nearly one in six under-25 cards was issued at skilled or advanced skilled level in 2025

Growth in skilled occupations (9.6%) outpaced Labouring roles (8.3%)

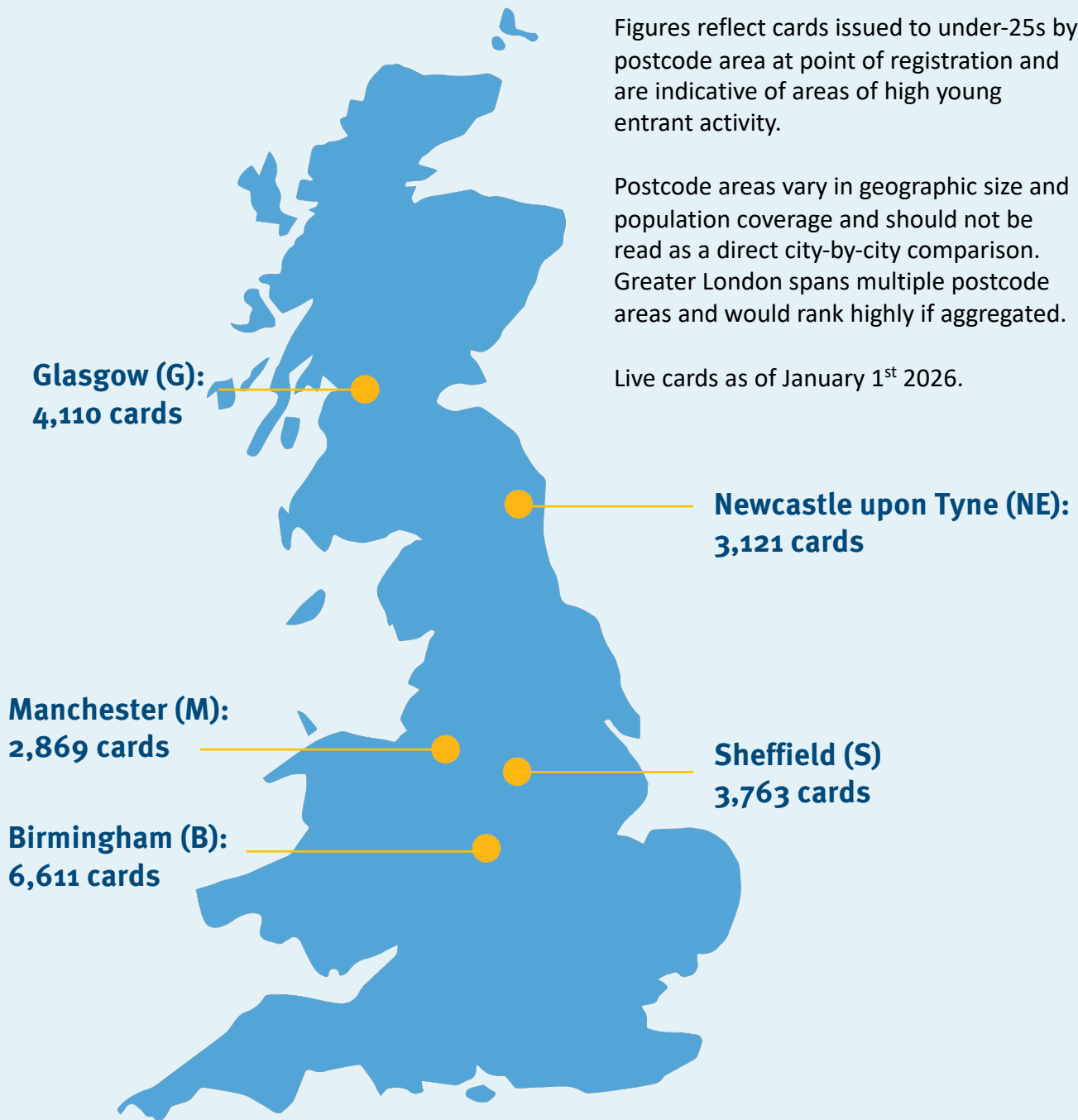
Over-reliance on the Labourer card in some areas of industry means labouring remains the most common entry point – but the gap is narrowing

Where young entrants are most active...

Figures reflect cards issued to under-25s by postcode area at point of registration and are indicative of areas of high young entrant activity.

Postcode areas vary in geographic size and population coverage and should not be read as a direct city-by-city comparison. Greater London spans multiple postcode areas and would rank highly if aggregated.

Live cards as of January 1st 2026.





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What the data sits alongside...

Alan Milburn's review of youth employment: More than one million 16 to 24-year-olds are not in education, employment or training - a lost generation, in his words, at risk of being left further behind without urgent reform.

Skills England's Sector Skills Needs Assessment for Construction: The sector's 30 priority occupations will need around one million workers by 2035, driven in large part by the government's commitment to deliver 1.5 million new homes this Parliament.

CITB Construction Workforce Outlook 2026–2030: The industry needs 41,200 additional workers per year between 2026 and 2030 to meet forecast demand.

National Audit Office — Increasing Construction Skills (July 2026): Up to 755,000 additional workers could be needed by 2030 to deliver government commitments on housebuilding, infrastructure and the Warm Homes Plan. The NAO concludes that government needs better data to understand how many workers with different skills are entering the sector — and from which routes.

The CSCS Alliance data provides a strong indicator of trends in carded workforce entry and qualification levels among younger workers as part of a much larger picture.





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“Construction is already part of the answer to one of the country's most pressing challenges— getting young people into skilled, sustainable careers.

"At a time when more than a million 16 to 24-year-olds are not in education, employment or training, this data demonstrates that the industry can attract and develop young workers at scale, and across a genuine range of trades and skill levels.

“The Alliance is committed to building on these foundations across all of its member schemes.”



Marion Marsland
CSCS Alliance Chair





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About this data...

This report is based on card issuance data from the CSCS Alliance, covering the period 2023 to 2025.

This data is separate from and complementary to CSCS Smart Check data, which is drawn from verified card scans at the point of site access and reflects the composition of the on-site workforce at a point in time.

Geographic analysis is based on cardholder postcode at registration. Occupation-level data is presented as percentage shares and trends.

Today's publication is the most comprehensive Alliance-wide dataset that has been published.

The figures presented are based on the Workforce Insights dataset available at the time of publication and excludes a small number of records equivalent to 3.5% of the total carded workforce, pending completion of data quality and categorisation activities.

As these activities are completed, totals may be revised in future publications.



Find out more

Scan the QR code or visit
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