Boosting the uptake of digital careers among early career professionals and experienced professionals

The Behavioural Insights Team, 2023

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1. Exploratory research: facilitators and barriers to the uptake of digital training and careers

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1.1. Executive summary

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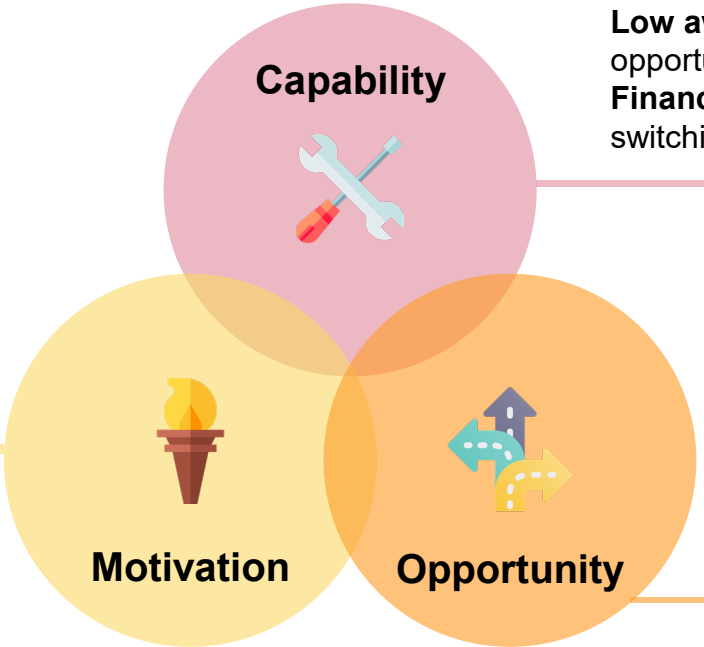
1.1 Executive Summary

1. The UK has a significant digital skills gap. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) has outlined its goal to reduce this gap in the government's agenda for digital skills policy, the UK Digital Strategy.
2. DSIT and the Digital Skills Council commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to carry out research into using behavioural insights in communications to boost uptake of digital training and careers.
3. DSIT are interested in messaging that might appeal to Early Career Switchers, aged 27-35 (ECS) and Experienced Professionals, aged 50-65 (EPs).
4. This project consists of three phases: (a) Exploratory research, (b) Message generation, (c) Message testing
5. Based on the findings from this first phase of work, we have identified eight implications for each age group for message generation. These are summarised on slides 7-10.

Barriers to the uptake of digital training and careers



Low awareness of upskilling opportunities
Financial cost of retraining and switching careers

Negative preconceptions of the tech sector:

- Difficult, complex jobs
- Long & antisocial working patterns
- High levels of discrimination

Higher number of workers leaving the labour market:

- Early retirement
- Career breaks

Lack of entry or junior level roles in digital vacancies

Early Career Switchers: Implications for message generation (1)

1. 

Highlight the availability of free retraining options

2. 
Stress the accessibility of digital jobs

3. 
Emphasise growth, flexibility and high-paying nature of tech

4. 
Show them that it’s possible to switch careers

Early Career Switchers: Implications for message generation (2)

5 

Avoid the term ‘cyber,’ be cautious with ‘digital’ and ‘artificial intelligence.’ Use ‘tech’.

6 

Communicate simple job titles to those outside tech

7 

Focus on a wide range of jobs and prosocial goals

8 

Use relatable messengers from a trusted authority

Experienced Professionals: Implications for message generation (1)

1. 
   Highlight the ‘skill’ aspect of digital skills training

2. 
   Focus on how digital skills training fit within people’s personal lives

3. 
   Emphasise the exciting nature of the tech sector

4. 
   Use pensions rather than salaries

Early Career Switchers: Implications for message generation (2)

5 

Alleviate age anxiety by showing that everyone can work in tech

6 

Avoid the terms ‘tech’ and ‘cyber’. Be cautious with ‘digital’ and ‘artificial intelligence.’

7 

Emphasise diversity of job opportunities

8 

Use relatable messengers

1.2. Background

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Context

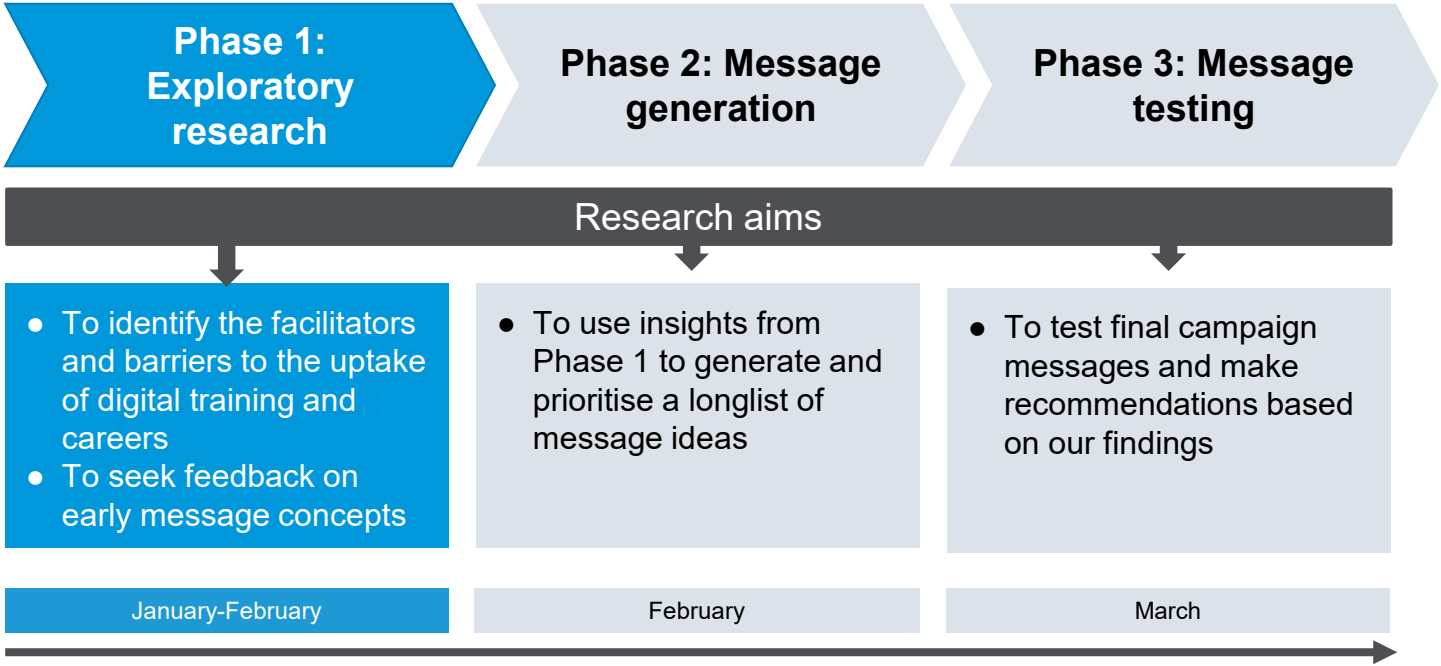
The UK has a significant digital skills gap. This gap is estimated to cost the UK economy £63 billion per year in lost potential gross domestic product (GDP).

Under half of UK employers believe that young people are leaving full-time education with sufficiently advanced digital skills. Over a third of adults between the ages of 55-64 say they lack ‘essential digital skills’.

The UK Digital Strategy sets out DSIT’s goal to work with education institutions and businesses to deliver the digital skills that the economy needs. As such, DSIT and the Digital Skills Council are investing in research and communications to encourage people to take-up digital training and careers.

Project design

DSIT and the Digital Skills Council commissioned BIT to carry out research into using behavioural insights in communications to boost uptake of digital training and careers among Early Career Switchers (27-35) and Experience Professionals (50-65). The research is split into three consecutive phases:



1.3. Methods

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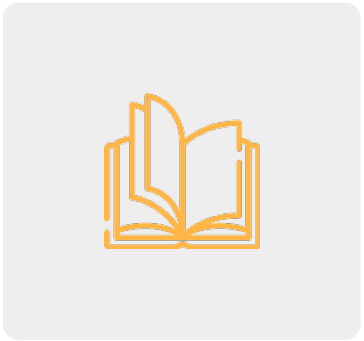
Rapid literature review



We scanned the existing evidence base relevant to the uptake of digital courses and careers amongst **Early Career Switchers (27-35)** and **Experienced Professionals (50-65).**

Our approach was pragmatic, rather than systematic, in line with the tight timelines on this project.

We focused particularly on:

1. The problem
2. Barriers to uptake
3. Potential drivers identified in the literature

Interviews with target groups

Twenty-five 30-minute interviews were conducted with two distinct groups:

1. Early Career Switchers (aged 27-35)
2. Experienced Professionals (aged 50-65)

The interviews explored:

- Participants' decision-making process for skills training
- Participant perceptions of and experiences with digital careers
- Early message testing

A breakdown of the participant sample can be found on Slide 17.

Interview sample

Notes on interpreting findings

Qualitative interviews can help us understand the *range* and *diversity* of participants' experiences, but do not shed light on the prevalence of views or experiences.

Some responses may be subject to *social desirability bias* - the tendency to answer questions in a way that is perceived to be socially desirable (e.g. presenting as more open to digital training and careers than they really are) which may differ from actual attitudes.

Sample characteristics		
Gender*	Male	10
	Female	14
	Prefer to self-describe another way	1
Age	27-35 (ECS)	18
	50-65 (EP)	7
Background**	Recently switched or considering switching jobs into the digital sector.	14
	Recently completed or considering enrolling in digital skills apprenticeship or training	12
	Not interested in digital training or in applying to a digital role	2
	Left the workforce during COVID-19	7
There were a mix of genders in both age groups* * Not exclusive* *This is not a representative sample of the UK population*	**Total in sample:**	**25**

1.4. Literature review

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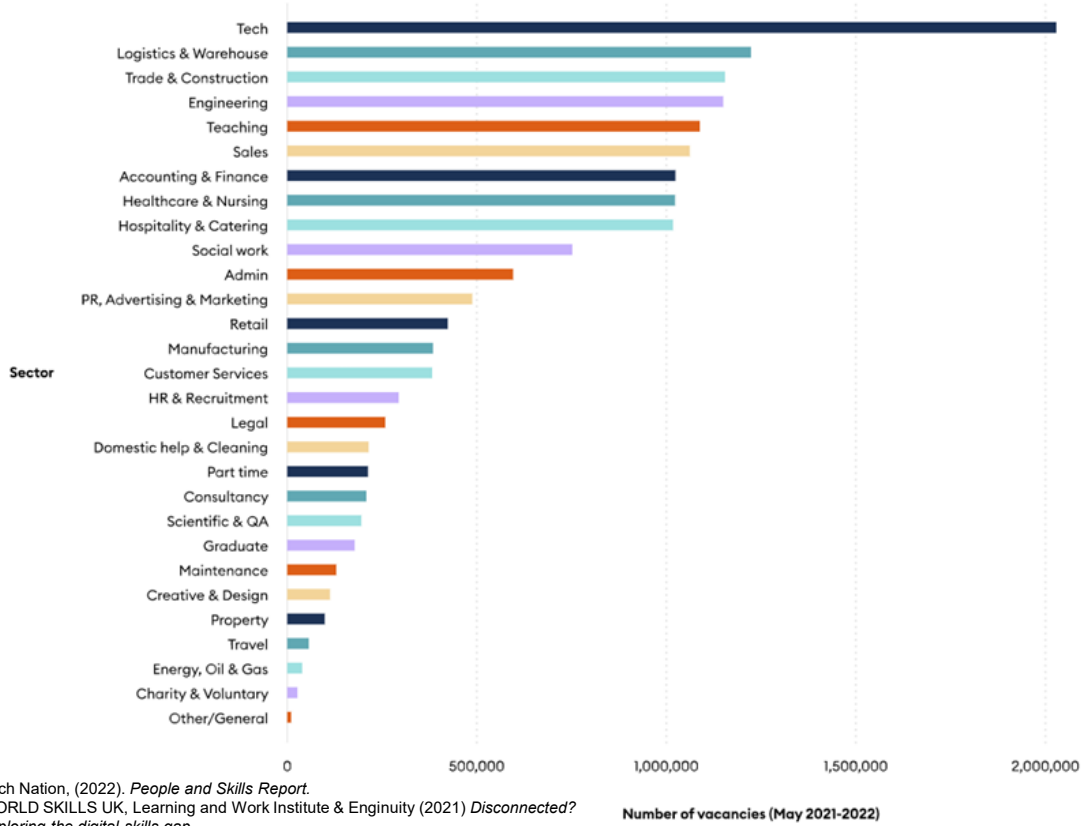
1.4.1. The problem:

There is a digital skills shortage.

This shortage impacts workers, organisations of all sizes and the economy as a whole.

We need more people to pursue apprenticeships, training and careers in the tech and digital sectors.

Tech is the sector with the most vacancies in the UK

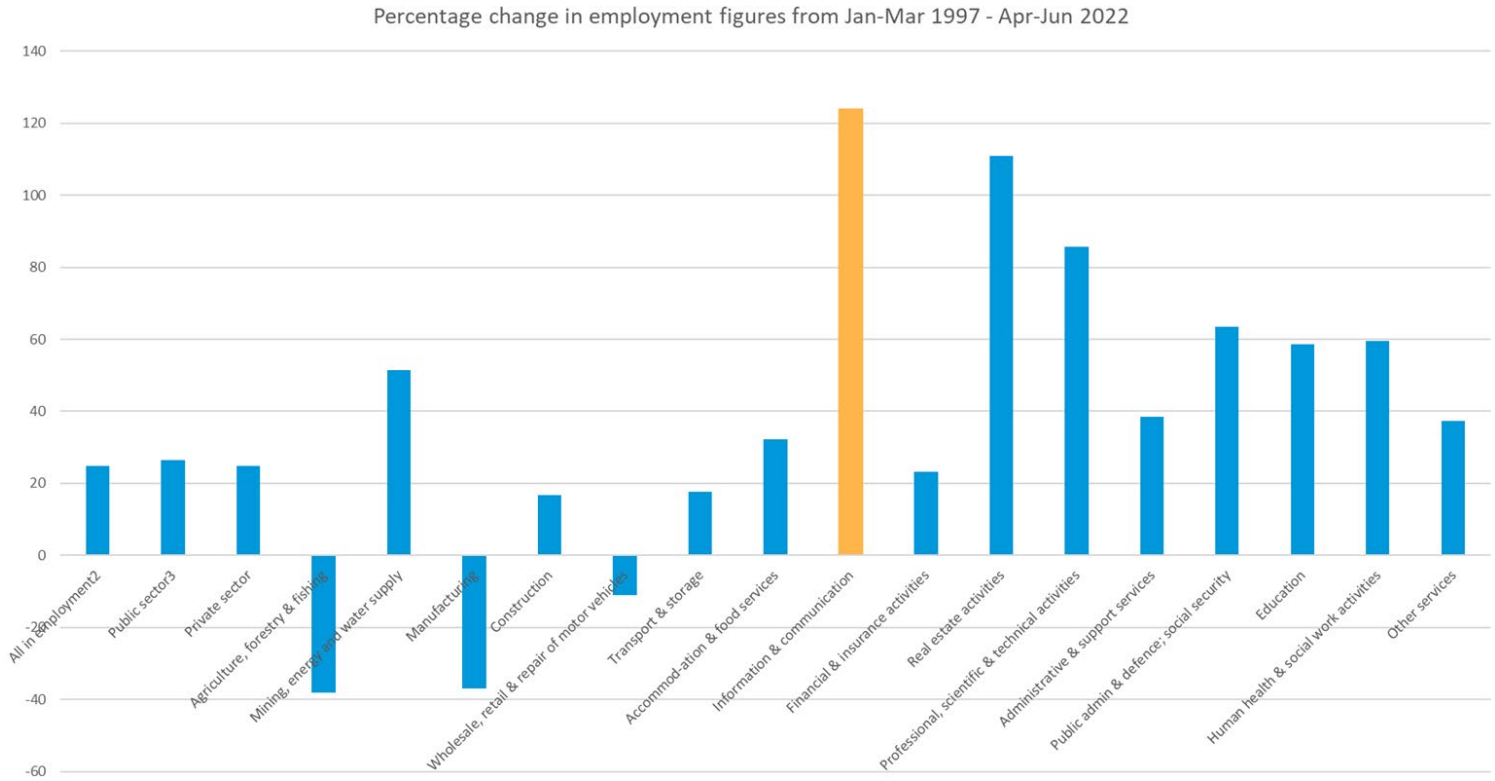


Many businesses believe their reliance on digital skills will increase in the coming years:

In a survey of over 1,000 businesses, 60% reported their reliance on advanced digital skills is set to increase over the next five years.

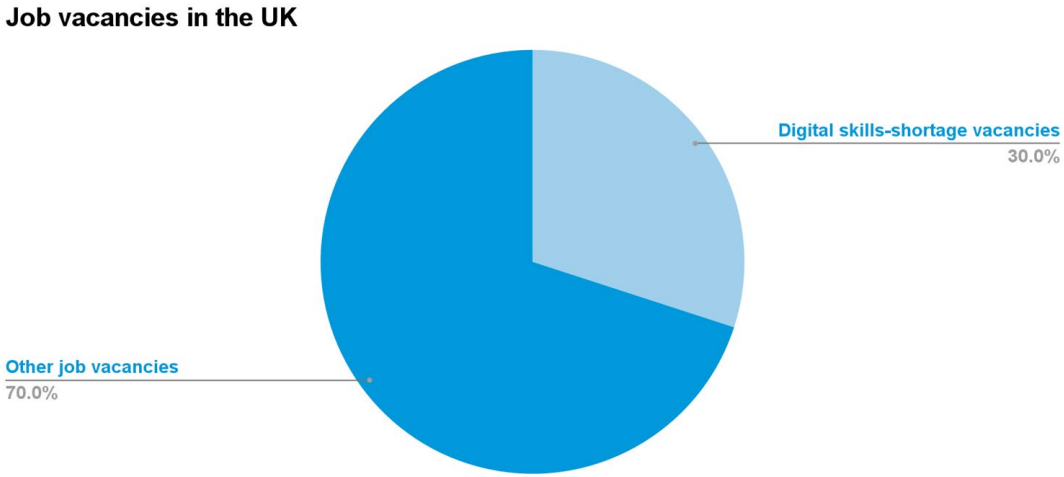
Tech Nation, (2022). *People and Skills Report.*
WORLD SKILLS UK, Learning and Work Institute & Enginuity (2021) *Disconnected? Exploring the digital skills gap*

In the tech sector, the Information and Communications industry has seen the greatest growth in employment since ONS figures began



Office of National Statistics, 2022. *Employment by industry dataset*)

Nearly a third of all vacancies in the labour market are due to digital skills-shortage



And an estimated **third** of digital skills-shortage vacancies are due to **a lack of basic digital skills.**

On top of this, **over 80%** of all advertised vacancies in the UK require **at least one digital skill.**

DCMS (2022), *Digital Skills and Productivity: The UK Digital Workforce, Skills Gap and Productivity.*
DCMS (2021), *No Longer Optional.*

The digital skills and demand mismatch is already taking a toll on the economy

It is estimated that 5 million workers are at risk of becoming severely underskilled by 2030.

Moreover, between 2018-2028, it is estimated that **the UK will lose 0.5% GDP growth per year as result of this skills mismatch**.

UK growth and productivity is **20% lower than pre-recession forecasting and lower than G7 average.**

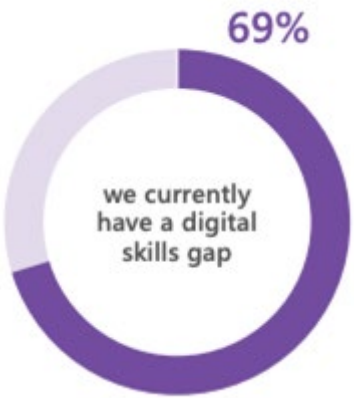
The UK also has a **lower proportion of businesses with adequate digital resources.**

This amounts to **£166 billion in GDP lost per year.**

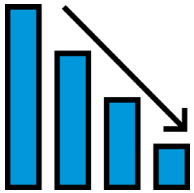
DCMS (2022), *Digital Skills and Productivity: The UK Digital Workforce, Skills Gap and Productivity.*
Industrial Strategy Council (2020). *UK Skills Mismatch in 2030.*

The lack of digital skills in the labour market has a big impact on businesses

UK leaders on their organisations digital skills gap*:



What does this mean in terms of revenue?
Digital skills hold the key to a **minimum of 2.4% of a company's bottom line**.



And forecasts for the skill gap aren't good:

70% of organisation leaders in the UK **expect to have a digital skills gap next year.**

44% of UK leaders fear the current lack of digital skills within their organisation will have a fairly negative impact on their success in the next year.

Microsoft (2022) *Unlocking the UK's potential with digital skills.*
**The leader survey was composed and had 554 respondents, all from large organisations (+250)*

Over 80% of employers who have implemented digital skills training report it brought about significant improvements for the organisations

These improvements include:

Faster innovation cycles (80% of employers)

Cost efficiencies (83% of employers)

Increased revenue (82% of employers)

Amazon, (2021). *AWS Global Digital Skills Study*

The gap also impacts small businesses

A survey carried out with 1000 small businesses found that:

83% of small businesses throughout the UK do not have enough support with digital skills

This is a huge missed opportunity: **54% of small businesses report having had their income grow by more than 5% due to tech**

Small Business Britain & BT, (2022). *Unlocking Digital Partnership*

Workers who have completed digital skills training report significant benefits as a result

73% of non-tech workers say that digital skills training has **improved their employability**

80% of non-tech workers say that digital skills training **led to higher personal satisfaction at work**

66% of non-tech workers say that digital skills training **increased their promotion opportunities**

66% of non-tech workers say that digital skills training **increased their ability to make career switches**

A study carried out by Lloyds in 2022 found that **workers with digital capabilities make up to an extra £442 per month** than their counterparts without digital skills in similar roles

Amazon, (2021). *AWS Global Digital Skills Study*

There is an urgency for more workers to complete digital skills training

85% of the UK organisations surveyed by the AWS Global Digital Skills Study say that **the pandemic has accelerated the pace of digital adoption in their organisations**

What this means for workers who have not completed digital skills training:

76% of workers in the UK feel that **they now require more digital skills** to cope with changes in their jobs due to the pandemic

70% feel that they aren't gaining digital skills fast enough to meet future career needs

An estimated 11.6 million more UK workers will require digital skills training to keep up with technological advancements and gain the new digital skills needed to succeed in their careers

This represents 35% of the country's workforce

Amazon, (2021). *AWS Global Digital Skills Study*

This urgency for is particularly acute for experienced professionals

81% of workers under 55 claim to have essential digital skills

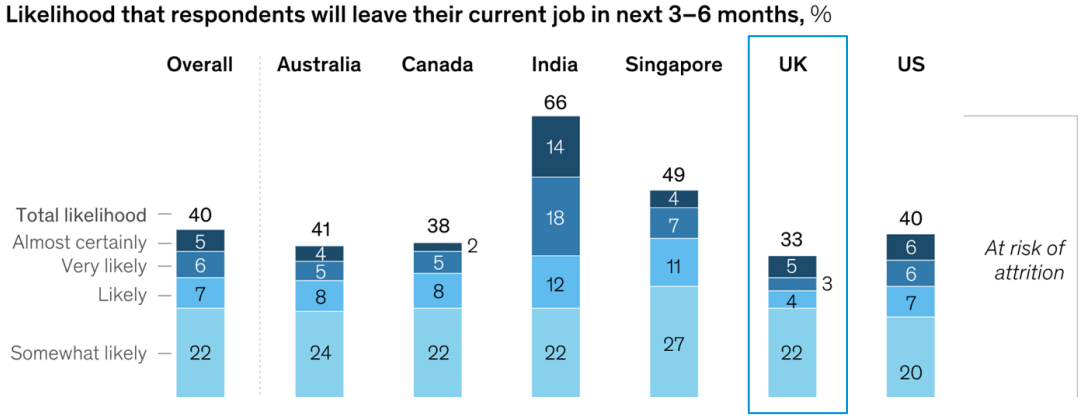
For **55-64's**, this falls to **66%**

The least common digital skills among 55-64's:

1. Ability to **improve productivity using digital tools**
2. Ability to **set up and manage accounts on professional networks/job sites**
3. Ability to **set privacy/marketing settings**

Ipsos Mori & Lloyds (2022). *Essential Digital Skills*

Data suggests there is a surge in interest in changing industries among workers



33% of workers in the UK are at least somewhat likely to **leave their current positions within 6 months**

McKinsey (2022) reported a trend among **people who leave their jobs to move to different industries (48%)** in the 6 participating countries.

McKinsey, (2022). *The Great Attrition is making hiring harder. Are you searching the right talent pools?*

ONS data points in the same direction: there was significant interest in sector / industry switching during the COVID pandemic

53% of employed people who changed jobs in 2020 **changed major industries.**

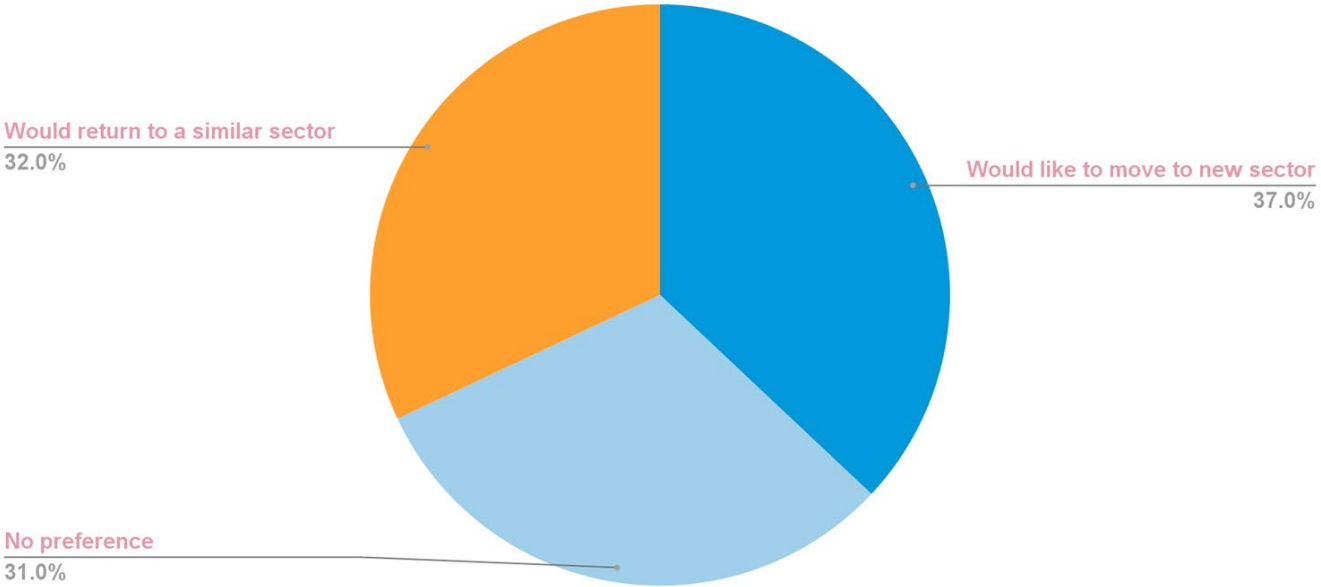
- Over 1 / 4 switchers (26.9%) **were aged 50-64.**
- **The biggest increase** of switchers between 2019-2020 was amongst **25-34 year olds (25%)**

Covid brought about a **decrease** in experienced professionals deciding to switch careers relative to other years, but an **increase** in younger professionals making the switch.

Office for National Statistics, 2020. *Coronavirus and Occupational switching dataset*

Recent data suggests that industry switching has slowed down since the end of the pandemic but remains significant

37% of people who have left their job admit to wanting to switch sectors:



According to Way, Pollard & Dennes (2022) the most common reason for leaving work among 50-54 year olds was **stress.**

Other big drivers were

1. COVID-19
2. Redundancy
3. Desire for change of lifestyle

Office for National Statistics, 2020. Coronavirus and Occupational switching dataset
Way, Pollard & Dennes, 2022. *Returning to the workplace – the motivations and barriers for people aged 50 years and over, Great Britain: August 2022*

Career switchers are interested in tech positions…

56% of non-tech workers say they plan on switching careers/industries following Covid

28% of respondents considered switching to a tech career. **Half** of this group have started the process of switching to a tech career or are looking into it.

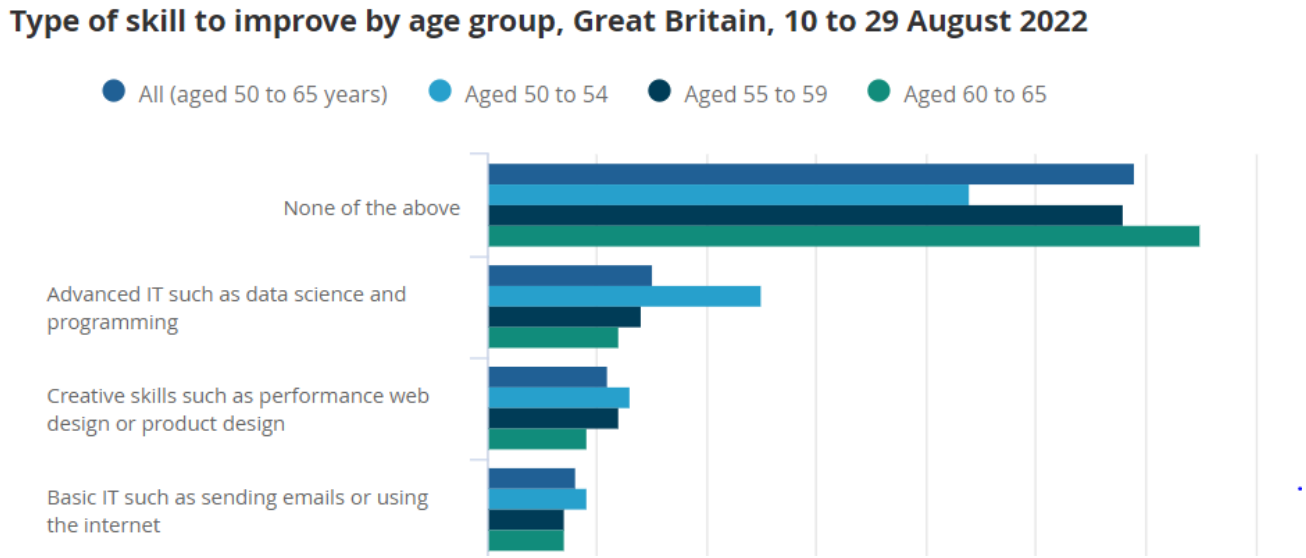
Increased availability of opportunities to train and work:
More companies e.g. Microsoft, Nationwide offering direct reskilling opportunities to transition into their tech roles.

CW Jobs, 2020. *Turning to tech.*

…Including older adults who left the workforce during the pandemic

Tech is the biggest area of interest for **reskilling among adults aged 50-65**

25% of adults aged 50-54 who left the workforce during covid would be **interested in improving their advanced IT skills**



Office for National Statistics, 2022. *Reasons for workers aged 50 and over leaving employment since the coronavirus pandemic*

The problem: a summary

1. The digital skills shortage means that billions of pounds of revenue are left hanging, taking a toll on economic growth and productivity.

2. Besides earning lower salaries compared to their digitally-skilled peers, workers who are not engaging in digital skills training are in danger of not meeting labour market needs in the future.

3. Uptake of digital apprenticeships or training seem to be at best stagnating and at worst declining.

Opportunities: a summary

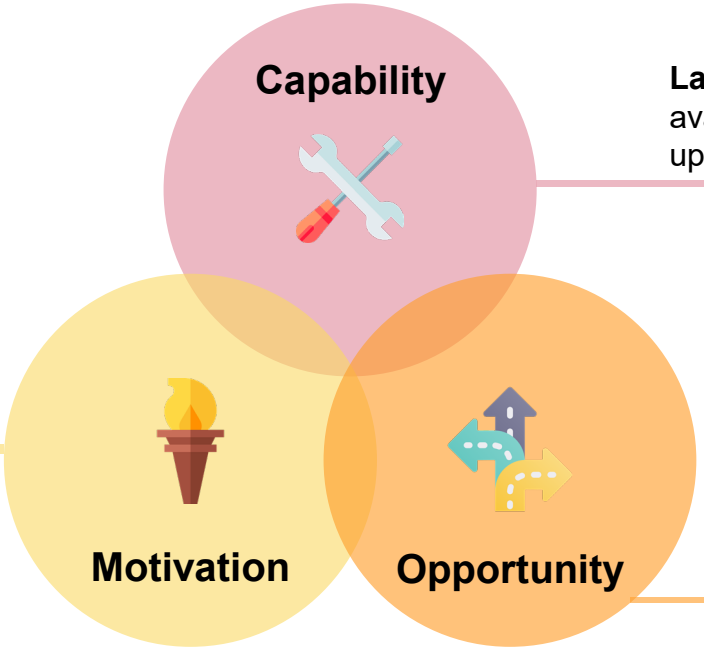
1. Tech currently has the most job vacancies of any sector in the UK.

2. More and more people are expressing interest in switching careers, especially experienced professionals aged 50-65.

3. Of those who are looking to retrain, many are interested in the digital sector.

1.4.2 Barriers to the uptake of digital training and positions

Overview: Barriers to the uptake of digital training and careers for both age groups



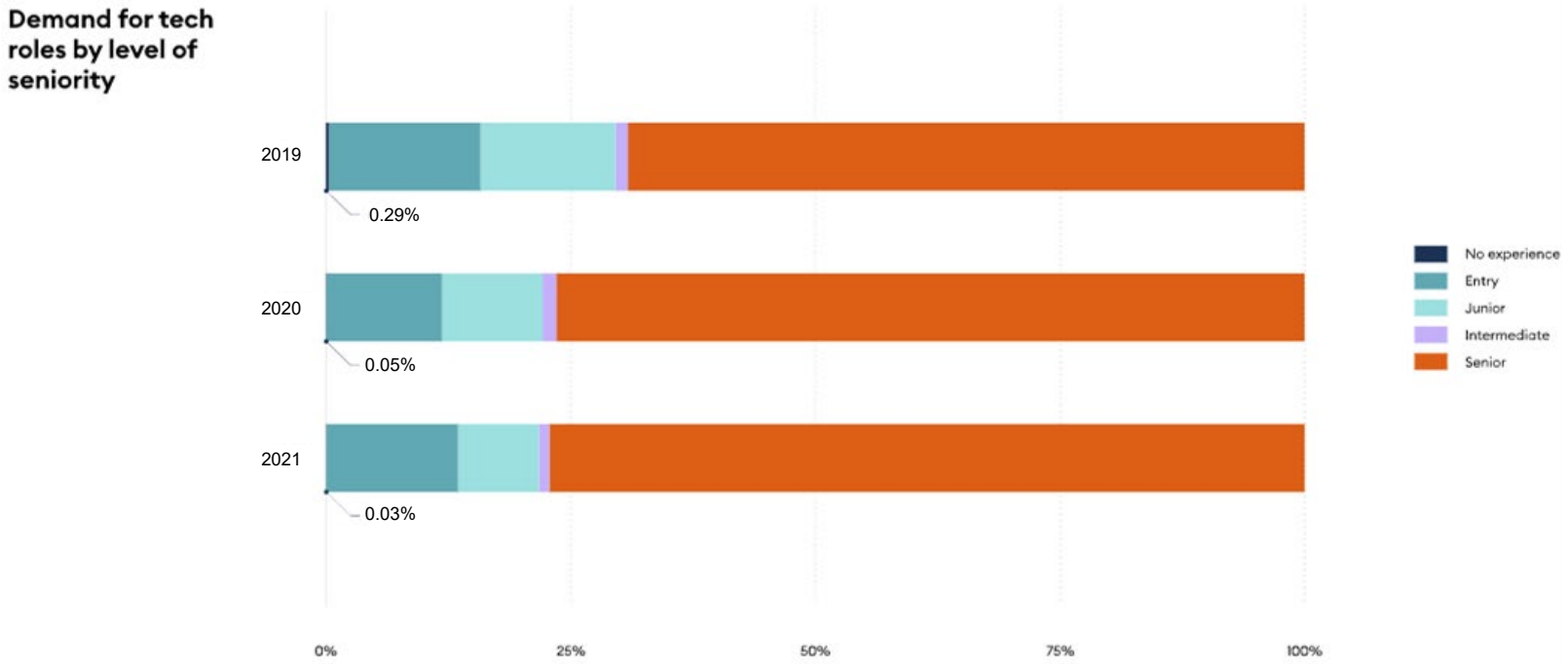
Lack of awareness about availability and options for digital upskilling

Misperceptions of ‘tech’ roles

Lack of available junior positions in tech

Tech vacancies are higher for senior roles

A **lack of entry level positions** makes competition for roles in tech a lot higher for career switchers.

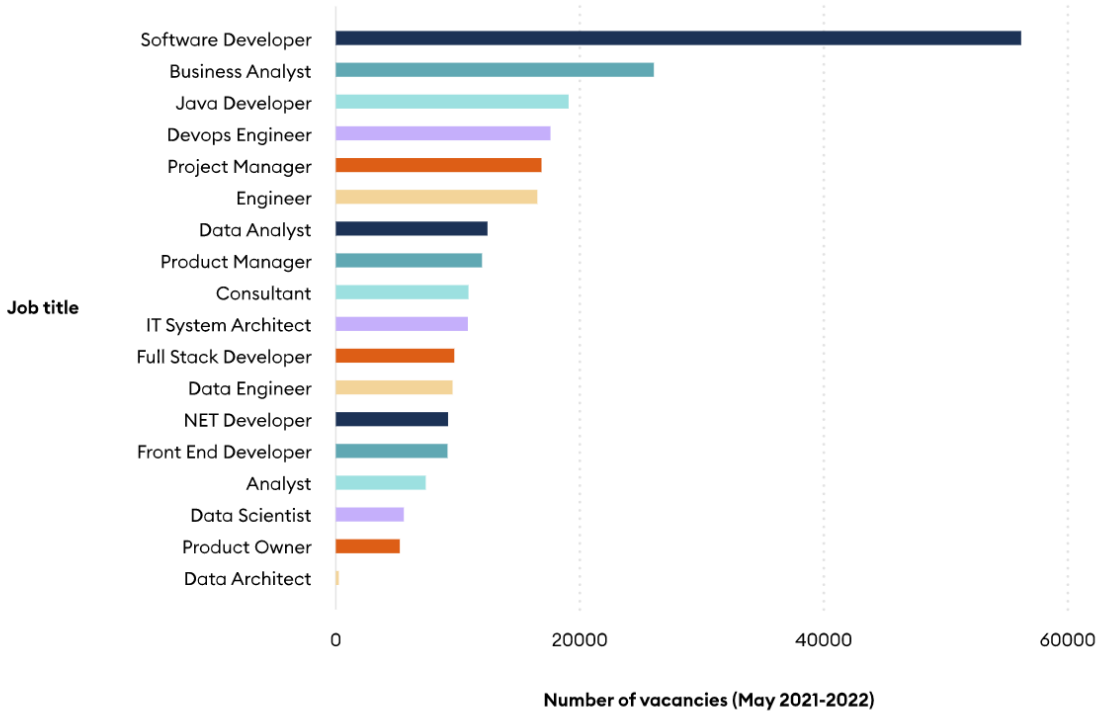


Tech Nation, (2022). *People and Skills report*.

Low awareness of the diversity in digital career opportunities

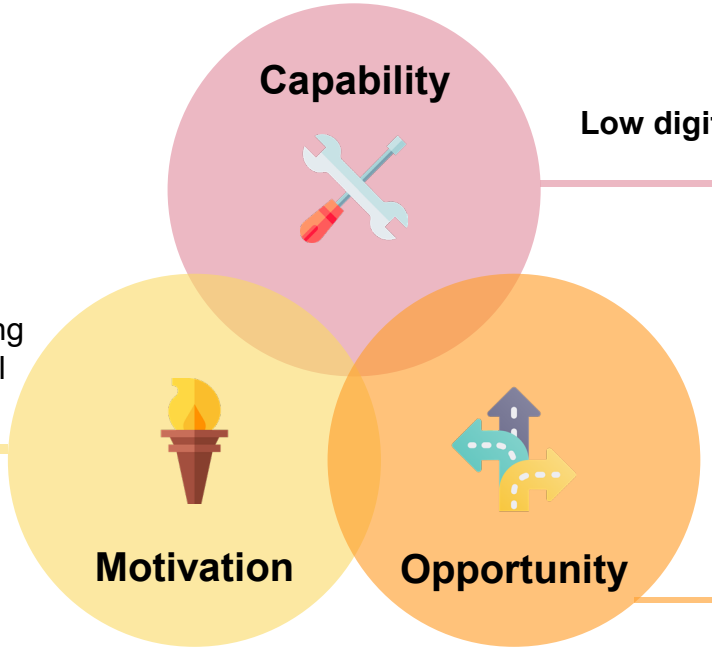
Many think ‘tech’ careers are restricted to coding, programming, or software engineering.

In reality, there is a large variety in the different roles and vacancies that need filling in the tech sector.



Tech Nation, (2022). *People and Skills report.*

Barriers to the uptake of digital training and careers for 27-35 year olds



Low digital skill levels in the UK

Negative stereotypes surrounding the workplace culture in the digital sector

Gendered social norms and expectations for young women have knock-on effects for career and training opportunities

27-35 is the peak age for career breaks, disproportionately impacting women's opportunities to retrain

43%

Of highly qualified women take career breaks.

- **44%** of which to **take care of children**
- **16%** of which to **change careers**

24%

Of highly qualified men take career breaks.

- **12%** of which to **take care of children**
- **29%** of which to **change careers**

Career breaks affect women's opportunities to switch careers:

- Less **time** to access courses / training
- Less **opportunities** to reskill
- **Cost** of career breaks presents a **financial barrier** to pay for retraining

Hewlett, S. & Buck Luce, C. (2021). *Off-Ramps and On-Ramps: Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success. Harvard Business Review,*
Amreen, T. (2019). *Emerging Adult Career Pathways: Understanding Aspirations and Switching*

Young workers can have negative preconceptions of tech jobs, including:

Long or anti-social working hours

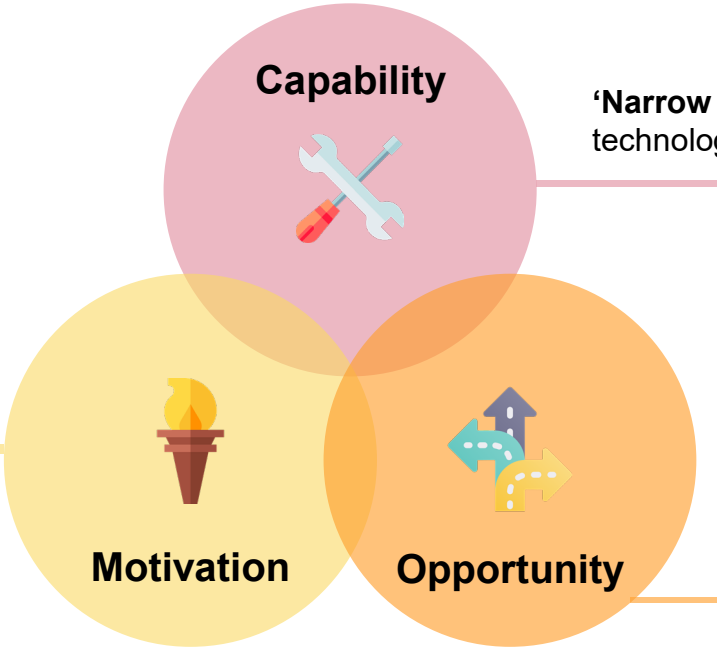
Difficult workloads

High **stress** and **loneliness**

Lack of **inclusivity**

Tech Nation, 2021. *Diversity and Inclusion in UK Tech.*
Behavioural Insights Team (2016). *Boosting uptake of online study modules.*

Barriers to the uptake of digital training and careers for experienced professionals



'Narrow users' of digital technologies

Influence of **career identity and ageing identity**
Stress avoidance
Increases in **early retirement**

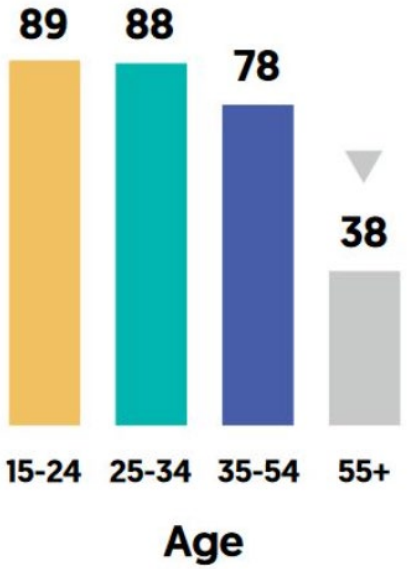
Low awareness of training opportunities geared at their age group
Discrimination in training and hiring
Lack of support

Awareness Barriers

1 in 8 **Experienced professionals** are aware of the digital training opportunities available to them.

Reasons for this could include the **marketing of training courses**. Eg. the Digital Skills Bootcamp courses are mainly advertised via social media.

However, **less than 40%** of adults aged 55+ in the UK are active on social media platforms.



Social media users by age. Source: Ipsos MORI, 2018.

Amazon, 2021. *AWS Global Digital Skills Study*
Ipsos MORI, 2018. *Q2 Technology Tracker.*
Centre for Ageing Better, 2021. *COVID-19 and the Digital Divide: Supporting digital inclusion and skills during the pandemic and beyond*

The ‘Hidden middle’ of advanced digital skills prevents them from re-entering the workforce

Experienced professionals are more likely to come into the **‘hidden middle’** or **‘narrow users’ of digital technologies.** They often have sufficient knowledge to access and use some devices, but only do so for restricted purposes. They **lack the more advanced skills necessary to work in the digital sector.**

Experienced professionals tend to minimise their online activities to specific purposes, meaning they occupy a high proportion of ‘narrow users’ in tech.

Percentage of internet users who undertake different types of online activities each week by age group.

	All internet users	16-24	55-74	74+
General surfing / browsing	86%	93%	65%	71%
Social media	71%	93%	37%	26%
Entertainment	67%	90%	45%	34%
Online Transactions	50%	90%	45%	34%
Communication	89%	97%	76%	64%

Catch22 & Nominet (2021). *Digital Disadvantage - Barriers to Digital Skills and Access. Insights Paper 1: Opportunities and Barriers.*
AgeUK, (2016). *The Internet and Older People in the UK – Key Statistics*
Centre for Ageing Better, (2021). *COVID-19 and the Digital Divide: Supporting digital inclusion and skills during the pandemic and beyond*

Ageism in the hiring process prevents older adults from starting new careers or re-entering the workforce

52%

Of jobseekers aged 50+ think their age would make them **less likely to receive job offers**

17%

Of workers aged 50+ have **experienced ageism during the hiring process**

12%

Of workers **hired in the last year** in OECD countries **were aged 50-64**

Negative stereotypes against older employees include:

- **Unreliability** due to declining health
- Seen as less **'tech-savvy'**
- Less able or willing to **upskill, retrain and respond to technological innovations.**

Cicphr, 2021. *Workplace discrimination in 2021 - UK.*
OECD, 2019. *Working better with Age.*
Department for Work and Pensions, 2017. *Fuller Working Lives: a Partnership Approach.*

Lack of support for age-specific needs of experienced professionals increases the likelihood of early retirement

3 in 5 Adults aged 50+ are **carers for a spouse or relative.**

Older working adults are also **more likely to suffer from chronic health conditions.**

This creates a need for **better healthcare benefits** and **more flexible working patterns.** Unfortunately, these needs are not always met by employers, prompting **older adults to retire at a younger age.**

Brown-Wilson, 2011. 'The Role of Age in Career Progression: Motivation and Barriers to Fulfilment in Older Employees', in; Parry, E. and Tyson, S. (eds.) *Managing an Age Diverse Workforce.*
Department for Work and Pensions, 2017. *Fuller Working Lives: a Partnership Approach.*

Attitude & Identity changes can affect EP's self-image, negatively impacting their motivations to take up new skills

- **Low self-belief**

Experienced professionals tend to adopt an '*ageing identity*'. This then bleeds into their mindset, making them are less confident in their digital skills.

Ageing Identity: As people age, they increasingly perceive themselves through the lens of social norms and expectations for their age group, eg; mental & physical incompetency, unproductivity, unwillingness to learn new things.

- **Risk aversion & fear**

Some EPs exhibit less trust in digital platforms, which can translate into a tendency to avoid engaging with them to minimise risk.

Brown-Wilson, 2011. 'The Role of Age in Career Progression: Motivation and Barriers to Fulfilment in Older Employees', in; Parry, E. and Tyson, S. (eds.) *Managing an Age Diverse Workforce.*
Catch22 & Nominet, 2021. *Digital Disadvantage - Barriers to Digital Skills and Access. Insights Paper 1: Opportunities and Barriers.*

As their careers progress, the extent to which they identify with their professions decreases

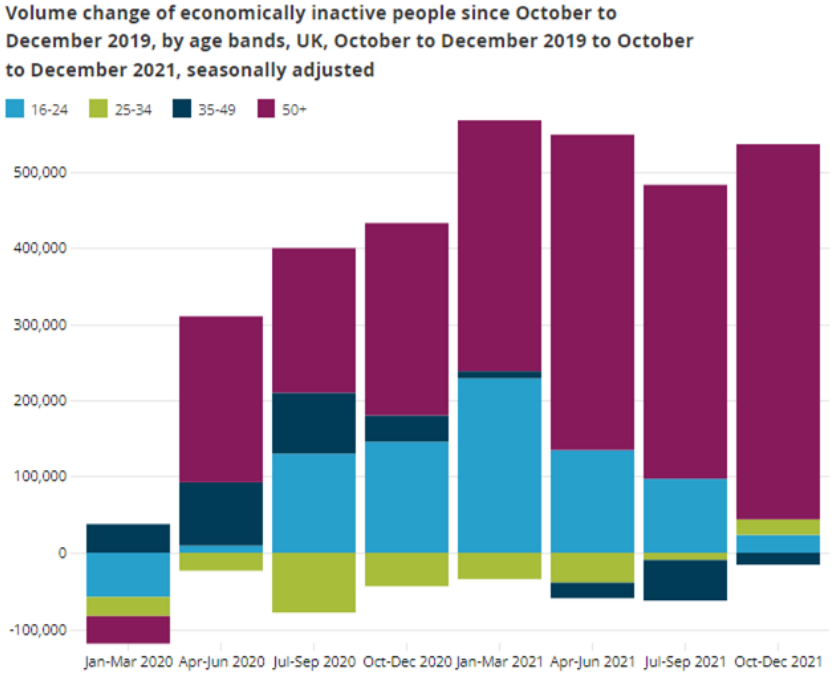
- Evidence suggests that ***Career Identity*** goes down with age.
- This means older workers look to **prioritise other aspects of their life,** such as family, travel or hobbies.
- This also exhibits itself in a tendency to seek **better work-life balance,** discouraging ageing workers from taking up new skills training and avoiding career changes.

Career Identity: The extent to which people define themselves in relation to their job, skills, and professional achievements

Brown-Wilson, 2011. 'The Role of Age in Career Progression: Motivation and Barriers to Fulfilment in Older Employees', in; Parry, E. and Tyson, S. (eds.) *Managing an Age Diverse Workforce.*
CWJobs, 2020. *Turning to tech.*

People aged 50+ were the only age group to see an overall increase in economic inactivity since the pandemic

- Pre-2019, workers aged 50+ were among the **highest group of career switchers.**
- After the pandemic, an **additional 87,000 workers aged 50-70 moved from economic activity to inactivity** compared to previous years, the highest increase since records began.
- Reasons cited for this included **vulnerability** to the virus (including long COVID sufferers), redundancy, **inability or lack of motivation to work remotely**, and desire to **change lifestyle.**



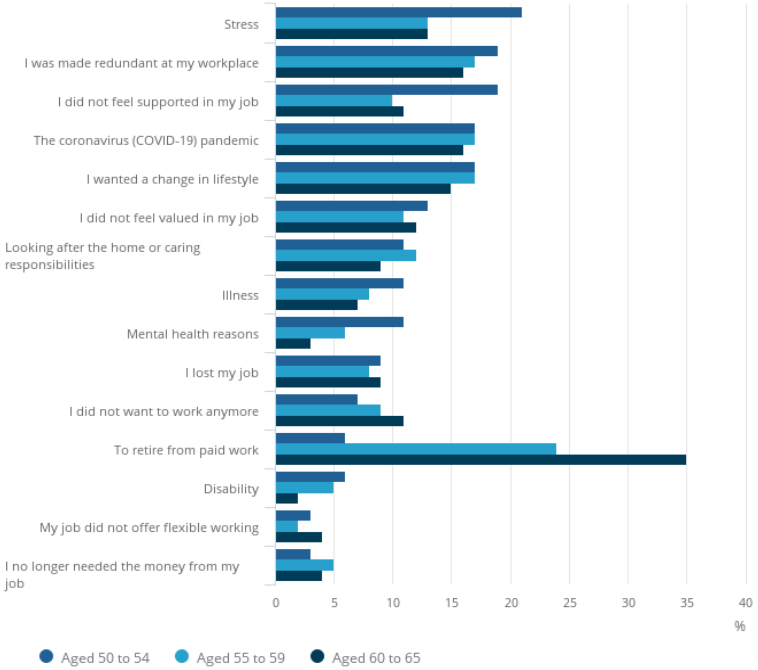
Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

ONS, 2020. *Coronavirus and occupational switching: January to June 2020.*
ONS, 2022. *Movements out of work for those aged over 50 years since the start of the coronavirus pandemic*
Way, Pollard & Dennes, 2022. *Returning to the workplace – the motivations and barriers for people aged 50 years and over, Great Britain: August 2022*
IFS, 2022. *The rise of economic inactivity among people in their 50s and 60s.*

Stress is one of the most common drivers for early retirement among 50-54 year olds

Figure 1: Leaving their previous job to retire was more common among those aged 50 to 54 years and 60 to 64 years compared with 6% of adults aged 50 to 54 years

Proportion of adults aged 50 to 65 years who have left their previous job since the pandemic and would consider returning, by age group, Great Britain, 10 to 29 August 2022



Office for National Statistics, 2022. *Over 50s Lifestyle Study*.

Summary of barriers to the uptake of digital careers and training, by age

Key barriers for **both age groups**

Awareness

Negative preconceptions

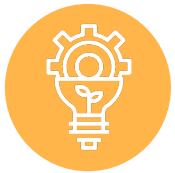
Key barriers **for early career professionals**

Career breaks

Gender norms

Key barriers to switch to industries **for experienced professionals**

Attitude & Identity



Skills gap

Health

Discrimination

1.4.3 Facilitators for the uptake of digital training and careers

Financial benefits from switching to the digital sector

Salary

Salaries for tech jobs are up to **80% higher** than other industries in the UK.
The average salary in tech is **£62,000 compared to £35,000** for other industries.

Building financial resilience

In the wake of the cost of living crisis and Covid recovery, the digital sector could help people **build resilience to further economic instability.**

Boost Pension

For those aged 50+ considering early retirement, extending their career by switching to tech could help them **earn an extra £200k before retirement,** and **boost their pension pot by 50%.**

Average salary for tech and non-tech sectors. Source: TechNation, 2022.

Tech Nation, 2022. *People and Skills Report.*
Piatak, 2017. *Sector Switching in Good Times and Bad*

Most career switchers move to tech to unlock better salary prospects

89% Of workers who switched to the digital sector **did so to earn more money.**

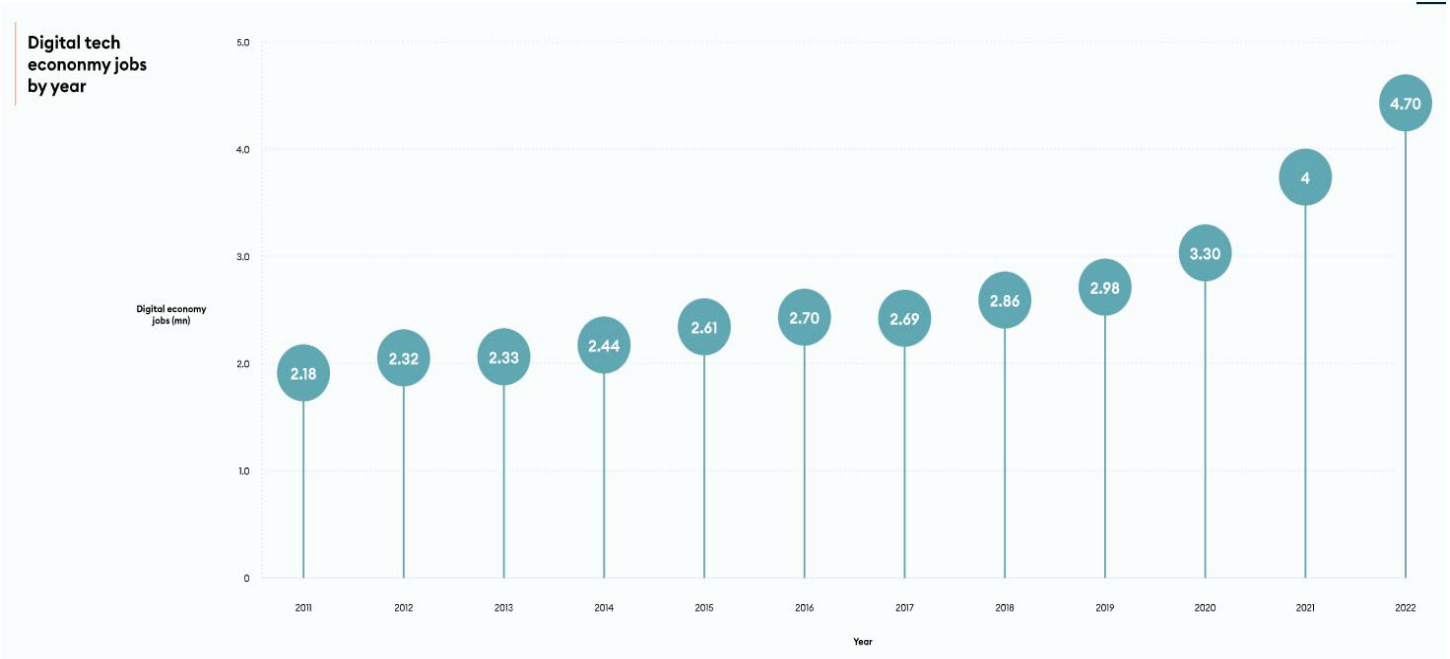
81% Of those **reported earning higher salaries** once they had made the switch.

Indeed, 2019. *Breaking into tech.*

Switching to tech to ‘future-proof’ careers

In the wake of economic instability, **1 in 4 UK workers** are looking to **move into to more resilient industries.**

The digital sector is currently **one of the most stable and fastest-growing UK industries**, making it very attractive for sector switchers.



Source: Tech Nation, 2022.

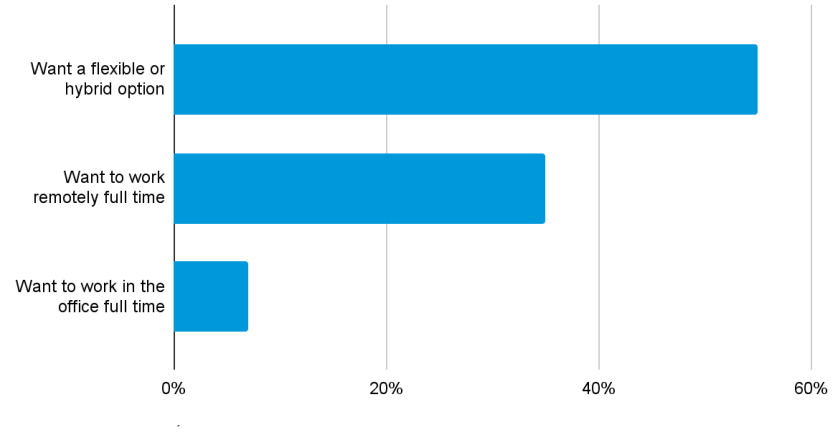
Tech Nation, 2022. *People and Skills Report.*
CWJobs, 2020. *Turning to Tech.*
Randstad UK, 2021. *The Great Resignation: 69% of UK workers ready to move jobs.*

Seeking better job flexibility and work-life balance

80% of tech workers agree that they value the industry's flexibility (20% higher than the UK average in other sectors).

Flexibility in the tech sector allows for **increased remote working opportunities** and **more adaptable working hours.**

Location preferences for tech workers planning to change jobs, 2020



McKinsey, 2022. *The Great Attrition is making hiring harder. Are you searching the right talent pools?*
Lewis, L. 2020. *How Tech workers see the future of remote work.* LinkedIn Report.

Older professionals are more likely to switch careers to get better job satisfaction, whilst early career professionals seek better salaries

Experienced professionals tend to prioritise jobs that…


Allow for more flexible hybrid working


Have less professional competition


Allow better work-life balance


Have better benefits packages

Early career professionals tend to prioritise jobs that…


Have higher salaries


Include better opportunities for training and progression


Are more resilient to times of uncertainty and fluctuation

CWJobs, 2020. *Turning to Tech.*

Summary of key facilitators for career switching

Key driver to switch to tech for **all workers**

Flexibility and resilience of the sector

Key driver to switch to tech for **experienced professionals**

More job satisfaction

Better work-life balance

Key driver to switch to tech **for early career professionals**

Higher pay and better benefits

Opportunities for training and development

1.5. Interview findings

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Recap: Interview sample

Notes on interpreting findings

Qualitative interviews can help us understand the *range* and *diversity* of participants' experiences, but do not shed light on the prevalence of views or experiences.

Some responses may be subject to *social desirability bias* - the tendency to answer questions in a way that is perceived to be socially desirable (e.g. presenting as more open to digital training and careers than they really are) which may differ from actual attitudes.

Sample characteristics		
Gender*	Male	10
	Female	14
	Prefer to self-describe another way	1
Age	27-35 (ECS)	18
	50-65 (OA)	7
Background**	Recently switched or considering switching jobs into the digital sector.	14
	Recently completed or considering enrolling in digital skills apprenticeship or training	12
	Not interested in digital training or in applying to a digital role	2
	Left the workforce during COVID-19	7
	Total in sample:	**25**

*There were a mix of genders in both age groups
** Not exclusive

1.5.1. Early Career Switchers

THE BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM

Early Career Switchers: Who are they?

The data that informs the findings in this section was gathered through **18 interviews with people aged 27-35** who at the time **met one or more of the following criteria**:

1. Were considering enrolling in digital skills training of any kind (e.g. bootcamps, apprenticeships)
2. Had recently completed digital skills training of any kind
3. Were considering switching sectors into the tech/digital industry.
4. Had recently changed sectors into the tech/digital industry.
5. Left the workforce during the pandemic.

To better understand barriers, **two of the interviews** were carried out with people who were **uninterested in digital skills training or career switching.**

1.5.1.a. The decision making process for starting training

ECS heard about digital training opportunities through personal contacts, research, and social media advertising

Someone they personally know & trust

Eg. Friends, relatives

'It was recommended to me by my aunt who completed the same one. She had really good reviews so I thought I'd give it a go'

Independent online research

'I found out through looking things up for myself. I have always been interested in tech but never really knew where to start'

Social media advertising

Eg. Instagram, Twitter

'I usually consume a lot of that stuff on social media so I might be in some kind of bubble, but that's the ads the algorithm is giving me!'

Finding trusted providers was the main consideration that ECS focused on when choosing digital skills training

ECS tend to prioritise reputable delivery organisations when deciding between digital training options.

Providers such as **AWS** or **School of Code** **bestow a sense of legitimacy to the training**.

> *What convinced me about doing that training was that it had the AWS name on it and had a high rate of applicants. It lent credence to it.*

ECS are very **wary of scams or training that will not be relevant in the labour market,** especially since they look for opportunities that are free.

> *Real learning opportunities are much harder to find when you turn 30. Adult education is often questionable, or feels like a scam. It's rare to find something that seems inherently good and is free.*

> *The recruitment process at School of Code was so thorough, it just made it look more promising in terms of finding paid employment soon after.*

1.5.1.b. Training: facilitators, barriers, and impact

The main facilitators for ECS to enroll in digital training were motivation to upskill, the effects of the pandemic, and access to free training

Facilitators

The **main motivator for ECS** that had taken digital skills training was to **gain the skills and certifications necessary to switch to the tech sector,** which they saw as having better opportunities for progression.

'I hit a glass ceiling in my current job and wanted to improve my opportunities. This industry is growing, and those jobs aren't going to go away'.

For some, COVID-19 led to **downsizing**, **less day-to-day responsibilities** or **work arrangements they could not accommodate in their current job.** For others, it highlighted the need to **develop digital skills to stay relevant in the job market** and **find resilient work to withstand changing circumstances** in the future.

'I was in the fashion industry but the manufacturing, factory type work that I enjoyed disappeared during the pandemic, so I decided to look for a different industry that felt more safe'

Availability of free training courses was an important factor. Most participants who retrained did so in bootcamps with no tuition costs (e.g. *School of Code, AWS Restart*), making the decision to enrol easier.

'Finances were an important consideration at that time, so it was very attractive to me that it was free'.

Missing out on income and lack of inclusivity were the main barriers to digital training uptake among ECS

Barriers

Lack of income during the programme

Most bootcamps are full time, meaning **ECS have to quit their jobs or take reduced hours**. This means **only those who can find a way to support themselves during the training are able to enrol.**

ECS have resorted to taking out loans, working reduced hours or being supported by partners or family members while retraining.

'A real concern for me was how I would pay my bills during that time. I had to take a loan to cover myself during that period'.

Perception that tech is not inclusive

Many ECS felt that digital training was **only for exceptionally clever people or those with previous education or experience in the field.** They were worried they **would not be able to keep up** with training or simply **didn't have the baseline abilities**.

Others felt that **people similar to them are underrepresented in tech** e.g. women of colour or people with disabilities.

'I thought tech was just for super smart people, like a very exclusive environment, but when you get there you meet people from every walk of life. I was surprised by that. It's not just for people with a computer science degree, it's also for me'.

Successfully switching into tech was most common impact of digital skills training for ECS, but not the only one

Started Career in Tech

The most commonly cited outcome of digital skills training was **finding a new career in the tech industry**. Many respondents planned for this to be a permanent change.

*'Making this switch has had a **long-term impact on my career goals**. Before, I didn't have a career plan. Now, it's become quite clear to me'.*

Community building

Many ECS describe having **become part of an active community of people working in the same field** or looking for work in the same field during their training.

*'The bootcamp introduced me to a **broader tech community.** I'm not only connected with people from the bootcamp, but also others who completed training'*

Increased confidence

Successfully completing digital skills training despite their initial self-doubt has **increased ECS' confidence in their own abilities** and capacity to meet the requirements of any role they set their minds on.

*'I'm now applying for these roles that I wouldn't have felt able to do without this training. **I've now got the skills, knowledge and confidence I need**'*

1.5.1.c. Career switching: facilitators, barriers, and impact

Better pay, industry stability and remote work opportunities were the main facilitators for ECS to switch to digital careers

Facilitators

Higher Salary

Looking to secure **better pay and long term prospects for raises** is one of the main reasons why young professionals are drawn to tech from other sectors.

The big advantage would be pay. The starting junior salary would be a lot higher than mine currently is'.

Industry Resilience

Many ECS **perceive that the tech industry will remain stable and secure**, whilst other sectors may be badly affected by external circumstances. In many cases, this stems from **negative experiences of how their previous roles were affected by the pandemic**.

'I was in the fashion industry but the manufacturing, type work that I enjoyed disappeared during the pandemic, so I decided to look for a different industry that felt more safe'

Flexibility

ECS frequently cite the prevalence of **remote and hybrid work arrangements** in the tech sector as one of its main appeals.

*'My partner, who is also a cloud engineer, heard about the bootcamp from contacts. They told him that working in tech has **better wages and more work flexibility**, so that really motivated me'.*

Other key facilitators for ECS to switch to digital careers included professional development, widespread job opportunities and job satisfaction

Facilitators

Growth opportunities

Many of the ECS perceive the tech sector as very **likely to keep on growing in the future,** which provides them with **opportunities for professional development.**

'I love my current role. It's really important for me to have career progression opportunities, which I do now. Before, I had a dead end job'

Widespread job availability

A perception that the tech industry job market is **not only stable, but constantly expanding** has been a motivation for many ECS to career switch.

'I hit a glass ceiling in my previous job and I wanted to improve the job opportunities I could consider. This industry is growing, and those jobs aren't gonna go away.'

Job satisfaction

Perceiving **work in the tech sector as more *'stimulating'* or *'engaging'*** than their current or previous role is frequently mentioned by ECS as a driver behind their decision to change sectors:.

'Work as a coder is stimulating. You have a problem, think about how to solve it, liaise with people with experience about how to solve it. It's not just mechanical like my job before'

Negative preconceptions of the tech industry and fear of taking a leap of faith were the main barriers to career switching for ECS

Barriers

Negative stereotypes of tech professionals

Prevailing negative representations the tech industry workers as **lonely** and **socially awkward** can discourage young professionals from career switching or engaging with tech at all.

'I had already done a bit of computer science when I was younger but I didn't want to be the smelly lonely coder, antisocial, isolated, like you're not talking to anyone'

'Leap of faith' element

Some ECS were scared of leaving their previous roles and not securing a new job in the tech sector. This was **especially true for those who did not personally know a successful career switcher.**

'No one I knew personally had done that route. I didn't know anyone who left their job, did a bootcamp and tried to get into the sector. I didn't know if it would get me where I wanted to be in terms of jobs'

Other key barriers for ECS to switch to digital careers include a lack of entry level positions and skepticism about the lack of diversity in tech

Barriers

Lack of junior roles increases competitiveness:
Some of the ECS who have retrained are **struggling to secure a position** and are wary that the **tech job market may be oversaturated with newly-trained career switchers** looking for junior positions in the industry, **which are already few and far between.**

'The market is becoming too competitive, especially with the Bootcamp. 150 people finish the course every 4 months with the exact same skillset. Too many people are being churned through the system at once. ***Everyone wants a junior, but they all want a junior with experience. '***

Perception of tech as not inclusive
Especially among those **not currently engaged with the tech or digital industry,** the **perception that the digital sector lacks diversity** discourages them from considering retraining and switching.

'I would not want to be the only woman in the organisation'

Greater job satisfaction, opportunities for development and better flexibility were the most common impacts of career switching for ECS

Enjoyable & Purposeful work

To most ECS, their new jobs are more **challenging and stimulating** than previous roles. Some feel they are able to have **more of a positive impact on the world**.

'It's amazing to finally have something I enjoy that I can call a career'

Flexibility

Respondents valued the remote and hybrid work opportunities. They felt this led to a **better work-life balance.**

'I like that having this hybrid approach makes me more independent. I feel like I'm treated like an adult now'.

Progression

ECS enjoy the **frequent opportunities for upskilling** that their organisations provide them. They value the fact that the **demand for people with digital skills is high and the roles diverse**.

'There seem to be millions of companies that want you at the minute'

1.5.1.d. Early message concept testing

Early message concept testing

We used the interviews as an opportunity to test the understanding of and appeal of different concepts and early message ideas. This section of the interview included asking career switchers, potential career switchers, trainees and those uninterested in the tech sector about their opinions on:

- Specific terms of interest to DSIT (skills, digital, artificial intelligence, cyber and tech)
- A range of digital job role titles
- Five early message concepts

Participants aged 27-35 understand "skills" to be actionable knowledge that is intentionally developed through effort and training as opposed to innate talents

Skills are something you are well versed in, have mastered.

Skills are things you have learned through experience and education

Skills are something that you are good at intentionally, as opposed to a talent which you're born with. A skill is something you put time into deliberately.

Something you learn via education or on the job. It's learning that elevates you above who doesn't have those learnings

Perceptions of ‘Tech’ are generally positive while ‘AI’ and ‘Digital’ have mixed reviews and ‘Cyber’ is seen as outdated

Cyber

Perceived as an **outdated term** from the 90’s and early 2000’s.

Associations are generally negative. Often connected to **“cyber bullying”**, **“cyber attacks”** and **“hackers”**.

'It's a term that a dad trying to be cool would use rather than a term I believe is inherently correct'

The term is seen positively ***‘if referring to cybersecurity. Can't avoid it, that's the name’***

Digital

Perceived as **vague, exceedingly broad, outdated and somewhat meaningless**. A *‘crusty educational buzzword’* for those who aren’t in the sector.

"Digital in isolation doesn't indicate anything to me".

'It's marketing speak written by people who aren't in digital. It’s the kind of thing you hear MP’s say'.

A minority of participants associate it with **exciting, fast paced innovation**.

AI

Perceptions vary significantly:

Some participants see the term as ***‘dangerous and controversial’***.

Some see it as a ***‘buzzword’*** that is being overused recently.

Some believe it requires **too niche of a skillset**, making it unappealing in an advert.

Others view it as an exciting technology ***‘that will be everywhere in ten years’***, making it more appealing in an advert.

Tech

Seen as the **relevant and appropriate word to describe the sector**, the term used by those working in the industry. For most, it would make ads more appealing.

‘It's the word my coder friends use’.

‘It’s the word I use to describe my role and the sector’

‘It’s the word that fits for me’

Caveat: A minority of participants feel it **can be too vague and broad**, like ‘Digital’.

The appeal of job titles varied by the level of interest and experience in the tech sector

Career Switchers and potential career switchers

Roles that are perceived as highly technical and requiring more specialisation are **the most appealing**. For example:

Web Developer, AI Engineer, Cyber Security Analyst

Job titles that are perceived as less specialised and technical are **the least appealing**. For example:

Product Designer, Video Editor, Digital Marketing Manager, Digital Journalist

"Roles like Product Designer, they all feel a bit wishy washy. I want things that are the nitty-gritty, less creative"

People uninterested/inexperienced in tech

Roles that are perceived as focused on "human interaction", that sound "fun" and less reliant on tech skills are **the most appealing**. For example:

Product Designer, Digital Journalist.

Roles perceived as requiring a high degree of tech specialization are **the least appealing**. For example:

AI engineer

"AI engineer. I don't even know what that is. It sounds scary, like you need several degrees to do it. Big no"

ECS and trainees found messages mentioning high wages, a wide range of jobs and prosocial goals appealing but were cautious of overstated claims

Tech is the #1 industry in the UK with the most job opportunities. Digital skills training can unlock all kinds of exciting and highly-paid opportunities.

- Most career switchers and trainees agree it is an overall effective message. **They value the reference to higher wages**, as they see it as a key motivation.
- Many participants find the words "exciting" and "unlock" appealing. They make career switching and training feel like an adventure.
- **Caveat:** the message can come across as too good to be true. One participant goes as far as saying it feels potentially misleading.

'This is the kind of information that made me want to switch to digital. I like it'

Some organisations house the homeless, some fight for equal rights, and some advocate for refugees. To do so, they all need people with digital skills. Digital careers can help you help others.

- Most career switchers and apprentices/trainees find it appealing. They feel that **regarding tech roles as not prosocial turns people off the sector.** It matches their experience/goal of using their skills or upskilling to help others.
- The mention of **different types or organisations makes tech feel ubiquitous**, contrasts with the image of *'a bored person writing code for a fintech'*.
- **Caveat:** The message can feel a bit long and "digital skills/careers" too vague.

'Fantastic.. appeals to a large portion of people who are nervous about [moving to] tech due to preconceptions about the industry being unethical'

Even in a shifting economy and an unpredictable labour market, the digital sector is only expected to grow and need more talented people. Ensure a safe and exciting future by taking up a digital career/training.

- Most career switchers and trainees **feel mistrustful of this message**, ***'sounds like a ponzi scheme'***. One participant asked for a figure to back up the statement.
- Caution should be used when using words like *ensure* and *safe*. **Strong guarantees make participants skeptical**.
- Participants find it **less attention-grabbing** than other messages, *'too informational'*.
- A minority of career switchers and trainees like it because it makes a switch to the tech job market feel '***future-proof***'.

'Feels like you're being lied to. No one can ensure you a safe future'

Mentions of inclusiveness, diversity and relatable messengers make messages appealing, while well-known messengers can be divisive

"One of the cool things about doing digital skills training is that you are then needed in pretty much every sector, so you have opportunities across the board with all kinds of teams. I've done sustainability, research, banking and psychology"
Ilsa, 32 years old.

- Most career switchers and trainees feel positively about it. They value how transferable tech skills appear to be in this message.
- It gives a sense of stability and security, ***'you will be in demand no matter the sector'.***
- The young messenger makes it feel **relatable, personal.**
- **Caveats:** 'Digital skills' feels too broad and vague, ***'what does it even mean?'***
- It elicits a bit of skepticism: ***'yes, you're needed all across the board but not at entry level'.***

'I like that the skills are shown as transferable. It's encouraging for people who like to change their work regularly, and the quote makes it more relatable'

"Part of what made the Apple Mac computer great was that the people working on it were musicians, poets, artists, zoologists, and historians. They also happened to be the best computer scientists in the world"
Steve Jobs

- Perceptions of this message **vary significantly**.
- Many career switchers and trainees agree **it makes tech feel inclusive**, like anyone can be involved in the industry if they want to. Furthermore, they value seeing that there is **a creative element to tech**.
- It highlights that when you're in tech people can be ***'incredibly diverse and interesting'.***
- A few participants feel very negatively about Steve Jobs and it makes them immediately dislike the message ***'Ugh, I hate it, I don't like Steve Jobs'***.
- Some participants read it as an impossibly high bar: ***'it almost implies that you have to be a fantastic human being and also the best computer scientist'***

'It's encouraging for different kinds of people to apply and switch to digital because everyone has something to offer'

Relatable messengers, especially if they have successfully switched careers, are seen as the ideal information source, while perceptions of govt vary

Peers
Almost all career switchers or trainees agree they would like information about the tech sector or bootcamps to come from **someone they feel has had similar experiences and represents them** e.g. similar age, ethnicity, background and, in the case of one participant, same disability.

Someone in the tech industry
Career switchers and trainees agree that they would like to hear from someone who has first hand experience in the sector *'who knows their stuff'* and could provide them with the specific information they need, **especially if this person has retrained and successfully career switched.**

Government
Perceptions vary. Many career switchers and trainees distrust the government. They would perceive communications from it as **disingenuous** and **generic**, irrelevant to them personally. Others view the government as an **authoritative source of information** that would provide **legitimacy** and a sense of safety to the message.

Reputable organisation
Well-known companies in the sector, such as AWS or Google would *'play well'* as they are perceived as an authoritative source of information for anything tech.

A combination of the two is seen as ideal: someone that they feel represents them and successfully took the path they are considering.

The shared appeal is that they provide **a sense of legitimacy** to the opportunities being advertised. Participants are wary of scams or being misled.

1.5.2. Experienced professionals

THE BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM

Experienced professionals: Who are they?

The data that informs the findings in this section was gathered through **7 interviews with people aged 50-65** who at the time **met one or more of the following criteria**:

1. Were considering enrolling in digital skills training of any kind (e.g. bootcamps, apprenticeships)
2. Had recently completed digital skills training of any kind.
3. Were considering switching sectors into the tech/digital industry.
4. Had recently changed sectors into the tech/digital industry.
5. Left the workforce during the pandemic.

To better understand barriers to engagement with tech **one interview** was carried out with someone in the same age group who was **uninterested in digital skills training or career switching.**

1.5.2.a. The decision making process for starting training

EPs heard about digital training opportunities through someone they knew or independent online research

Someone they personally know & trust

Eg. Friends, relative, colleagues

'My manager recommended it to me because they knew I was looking for something.'

Independent online research

'I found it on Indeed.com whilst job searching. It was fully remote & free so it seemed like a great opportunity'

Learning how to use reputable platforms was the main consideration that EPs focused on when choosing digital skills training

EPs tend to prioritise digital training that focuses on the use of reputable platforms when deciding between digital training options.

Learning how to use these platforms or apps in more depth helped them gain a **sense of expertise** in an area which is sought-after in the industry.

> *'I'd heard it was the most used cloud provider in the market right now'*

This made it easier for them to **meet potential employers** and **secure job interviews** in well-known organisations that use those platforms.

> *'The course advertised collaboration with industry professionals and guaranteed job interviews at the end, so I thought it would help me get exposed to employers.'*

1.5.2.b. Training: facilitators, barriers, and impact

The main facilitators for EPs to enroll in digital training were motivation to upskill and finding more exciting work

Facilitators

The **fast-moving nature of the industry** made them consider starting training so their **skills were up to date.**

'I thought doing the training course would help me get a good sense of what has changed in the industry'. [EP who left the workforce]

Others undertook digital training in order to switch to a **more lucrative or exciting industry.**

'IT was never central to my jobs before this. It seemed like a good opportunity to switch to a better, more current sector'

Lack of time and fear that it would be too difficult were the main barriers to digital training uptake among EPs

Barriers

Lack of time

Most of the EPs in the sample had children or families, and thought that **retraining would be too time-consuming to fit around their home life.**

This is especially true for respondents that were **currently working full-time, or female respondents.**

'I have been raising my family for seven years, I never had the time until now'

Fear that digital training would be too difficult

For EPs who have been working in other industries their whole life, digital skills training was **'daunting'**.

They had preconceptions that the course would **be very technical or difficult** to engage with.

'I was weary at first that the more technical aspects of the training would not be for me, as a more hands-on kind of person'.

Acquiring the foundational knowledge necessary to succeed in tech was the most commonly cited impact of digital skills training for EPs

Knowledge acquisition

EPs agreed that the digital skills training they completed gave them a very **useful basis of expertise to enter the tech sector.**

'It's given me basic background knowledge to previously alien ways of working'.

Motivation to seek further training

The majority of EPs agreed that the training was a good foundation, but they'd like to get further accreditation in the industry.

'It's motivated me too look at what other training courses and certifications might be out there'

Sense of purpose

EPs who completed training reported having a newfound sense of direction and focus in their career.

'I now feel focused on where I want to go, where I want to take my life from here'

1.5.2.c. Career switching: facilitators, barriers, and impact

Exciting, interesting work opportunities and better pension prospects were key facilitators for EPs to switch to tech

Facilitators

Many EPs referred to the digital sector as **exciting and fast-paced**. They alluded to the **rapid growth of the sector since Covid** that has led to a burst of job opportunities.

*'It's amazing to have a fresh change in an **exciting and innovative environment**. It feels like the industry **embodies the idea of agility'**.*

Pension contributions, and other benefits packages such as health insurance, were also cited as key motivators. **Salary, however was lower down the list of drivers.**

'**The older I get, the more I prioritise the pension aspect.** If I switched it would have to have a better pension package'.

Other facilitators included stability of the tech sector and being up to date with the evolving labour market

Facilitators

EPs valued the **perceived future stability and reliability of the digital sector**, as opposed to other industries.

'The digital industry is where everything is progressing towards these days'

They emphasised the importance of **keeping up with the current trends in the workforce**.

'Switching to tech seemed like a good opportunity to get a more current job'

Age and anxiety about feeling illegitimate in the industry were the main barriers to career switching

Barriers

‘It’s too late’

EPs felt it was too late in their career to start something new, and were scared that it would be too risky.

*When you're a bit older and coming in from outside that world [tech], **it sometimes makes you feel like you don't know what you're talking about.***

Anxiety over going back to formal education

EPs had not done much formal training since university or their early career, and felt anxious about going back to this kind of learning environment after so long.

'I'm not in my 20s anymore, I might not have the mental agility to pick things up like younger people do'

Perception of tech as a ‘young people’ industry

Respondents had preconceptions of the digital sector as being dominated by young professionals at the beginning of their careers, which translated into a fear of not fitting in.

‘Young people in the tech world sometimes have issues communicating things easily to amateurs like me, so there might be an understanding barrier there’

Improved workplace culture, more interesting work, and better flexibility were the most common impacts of career switching for EPs

More exciting work

Mirroring the key drivers for retraining among OAs, those who have made the switch value the fact that their work is **exciting and interesting**.

'I like feeling up to date with the current world, especially with how interesting data knowledge can be'.

Workplace culture

New switchers cite their newfound improved working culture as an **unexpected bonus arising from making the switch to tech.** They enjoy having **better support from managers and colleagues.**

'I like being able to reach out to different colleagues and teams for support. It's a very supportive environment'

Flexibility

Successful switchers value the flexibility of **being able to work from anywhere**, which gives them **more independence and a better work-life balance.**

'I like that I can work from anywhere on my computer. My previous job I had to be in person on a daily basis, which doesn't match my personality'.

1.5.2.d. Early message concept testing

Early message concept testing

We used the interviews as an opportunity to test the understanding and appeal of different concepts and early message ideas. This section of the interview included asking career switchers, potential career switchers, trainees and those uninterested in the tech sector about their opinions on:

- Specific terms of interest to DSIT (skills, digital, artificial intelligence, cyber and tech)
- A range of digital job role titles
- Five early message concepts

We tested slightly different message concepts with the EPs than with the ECS group.

Participants aged 50-65 understand "skills" as something you have learned to do exceptionally well, that can help you be more efficient

A skill is something you feel confident using, that helps you to do things. Something you bring to the job.

A combination of training and experience.

A set of abilities that allow you to complete your tasks and duties. The more skilled you are, the better you can perform things.

Almost all EPs defined skills in relation to their professional experience and training.

Perceptions of ‘Tech’ and ‘Cyber’ are generally negative among EPs, whilst ‘AI’ and ‘Digital’ have mixed reviews

Tech

Reactions were mostly negative. EPs associated the term with **complex, difficult subject matter.**

‘It sounds more like coding to me, more complicated’.

The majority of EPs found the term **uninteresting**.

‘It’s a nothing word, it feels outdated’.

Those who had **already made the switch had a less negative reaction**;

‘12 months ago, I would’ve thought that’s not for me, but now it might be more appealing’.

Cyber

EPs had **similar reactions to this term as the ECS.** They found it to be too **vague** and **broad**.

‘It’s a science fiction term. It sounds more like a fantasy than a real job term’.

They also associated it with **cybersecurity**, which was perceived as more complex.

‘It’s not interesting to me, it sounds like it would be too difficult or intense’.

However, one EP claimed *‘I know cybersecurity gets a lot of money’.*

One EP had a more **neutral** reaction, citing the *‘eye-opening extent to which it is used throughout the industry’.*

AI

Perceptions vary significantly.

Some see it as **scary** and **unfamiliar**.

There were also perceptions of it being a very **advanced** and **complicated** field.

‘It’s intimidating, it seems very advanced. You need to know a lot to get involved in it.

Others emphasised the fact that it’s a very **exciting** and **fast-growing field.**

‘It feels very trendy, at the top of the tech agenda’.

‘It is terrifyingly good sometimes. If you can’t beat them join them, which is why I think I should get more involved.

Digital

Perceptions were **mostly negative,** alluding to the term being too **vague**. Although it **best encompassed the industry as a whole,** it lacks specifics.

‘It’s abstract. It means anything and everything’

‘It’s just not clear. What kind of work would you end up doing?’

One respondent liked this term as he felt it **resonates well with the training he completed.**

‘Most of the bootcamps are called digital skills training in some way, so if I saw this in a job I would be drawn to it’.

Messages mentioning the diversity of job opportunities within the digital sector were by far the most appealing among EPs

***Digital roles are #1 in the UK for most job opportunities**. Whether it's healthcare, fashion, journalism or sports, digital careers open the door to all kinds of exciting, creative and highly-paid opportunities.*

The majority of respondents were **pleasantly surprised by the mention of different industries within digital opportunities.**
'It includes a lot of things that people might not think of, it's intriguing'

They particularly liked the implication that **different kinds of skills and expertise could still be relevant.**
'Whatever field you work in, your current skills are already relevant'

One EP who had already switched **disagreed with the idea of it being a 'highly paid' industry.**
'Maybe for people starting their careers it's highly paid, but for someone my age who has been working for 30 years or so, it can be quite a big step down'.

This was the only message with an overall positive response.

Messages mentioning future prospects and prosocial goals provoked more mixed reactions

Some organisations house the homeless, some fight for equal rights, and some advocate for refugees. To do so, they all need people with digital skills. Digital careers can help you help others.

- Most EPs agreed with the message, and liked the fact that it highlighted **lesser-known aspects of the digital industry.**
- *'Its interesting to know there's more diversity in your options in the sector'.*
- However, some said that **social impact is not a key motivator in their careers.**
- They found this message to be **appealing to a slightly younger audience,** stating that **it didn't feel as 'relevant' to them.**

"That's for young people. My reasons for wanting to change careers are not this selfless. I want a better pension and better pay if possible'.

Tech is the #1 industry in the UK with the most job opportunities. Digital skills training can unlock all kinds of exciting and highly-paid opportunities.

- Most respondents found this message **too vague or ambiguous**. *What kind of opportunities?*
- Some **questioned the truthfulness of tech being the #1 industry in the UK.**
- A majority liked that it suggested the **benefits** of doing digital skills training.
- One respondent suggested that it could be seen as **misleading**, emphasising that ***digital training is not a golden ticket to highly paid jobs, especially for older working adults.***

'Highly paid is good, but it wouldn't necessarily make me want to retrain'

Even in a shifting economy and an unpredictable labour market, the digital sector is only expected to grow and need more talented people. Ensure a safe and exciting future by taking up a digital career/training.

- A majority **agreed** with the idea that the tech sector will likely carry on **growing**.
- However, this message **didn't feel as relevant to their age group**. They stated that **financial uncertainty and planning for the future weren't as big a concern for them compared to younger workers.**
- Some were **hesitant to endorse the idea of digital careers being 'safe' in the wake of recent tech layoffs**. *'Maybe replace "safe" with "stable". Safe seems to be overpromising'.*

'This doesn't speak to me personally. It's for younger people who don't know what to do with their lives'

Messages highlighting flexibility in the digital sector were very divisive

Tech offers excellent remote working opportunities: 80% of tech workers agree that they value the flexibility of their career.

Respondents **who currently work from home or flexibly had a very positive reaction** to this message.

'This is definitely true, I'm surprised it's not 100%!'

'This is definitely great for me as a mother of three. I have the time to drop my kids at school, do household chores and still work full time'.

'I don't see myself going back full time to an office at my age'.

Some disagreed, stating they **prefer structure** and **felt too isolated at home.**

'I personally find it exhausting working from home'

A few felt **neutral** about this message.

'It wouldn't convince me to switch'.

'It's not actually relating to anything concrete about tech.'

Similarly to ECS respondents, relatable messengers, especially if they have successfully career switched, are seen as the ideal source of information

Someone in the tech industry

The majority of EPs stated they would prefer to hear from someone who had **made the same career switch to tech.** They felt this group would be **best placed to give them advice, or evaluate their skills.**

Peers

EPs highlighted the value of seeing the experiences of someone their age who worked in tech. *'Someone in a similar part of life, a similar age who would know I'm a good fit for this job or industry.*

Government

Most EPs claimed they **wouldn't value** a message about career switching from the government. *'It would feel less personal, like I'm being lumped together with everyone. How is this relevant to me?'*

A combination of the two is seen as ideal: someone that they feel represents them and successfully took the path they are considering.

1.6. What might boost uptake?

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Boosting uptake for both groups: Implications for message generation

1

Use relatable messengers

EPS and ECs prefer hearing from professionals in the field for specific, accurate information, especially if that person has switched careers themselves.

2

Emphasise diversity of job opportunities

Messages should explain that the digital industry is vast, and composed of more than ‘coders’.

Early Career Switchers: Implications for message generation (1)

1

Highlight the free nature of (some) retraining

Training communications could focus on cost-free programs to reduce the perceived financial burden of retraining. These messages should signal legitimacy as young people are wary of scams.

2

Stress the accessibility of digital jobs

Messages should emphasise that the tech industry is not just for those with exceptional cognitive capabilities. Further, it should be highlighted that opportunities are available to women, people of colour and people with disabilities.

3

Emphasise growth, flexibility and high-paying nature of tech

Messages should highlight the prospect of pay raises, remote work and industry growth, as they are major reasons why young professionals jump industries. These messages should be fact-based as some were wary of messages overpromising.

4

Show them that it's possible to switch careers

Communications should focus on highlighting successful career transition stories. This will alleviate the fear that some career switchers may have about leaving their current role for the tech industry, especially for those who don't know someone who has successfully made the switch.

Early Career Switchers: Implications for message generation (2)

5

Avoid the term ‘cyber,’ be cautious with ‘digital’ and ‘artificial intelligence.’ Use ‘tech’.

Cyber is perceived as outdated, and connected to negative associations such as cyber bullying. Digital is perceived as exceedingly broad. Artificial intelligence elicits a range of responses from being intimidating and dangerous to exciting. Tech is generally seen as positive and relevant, though perceived by some as broad, and so should be used thoughtfully.

6

Communicate simple job titles to those outside tech

Messages should use job titles that aren’t intimidating. For those outside tech, jobs with less technical skills are more appealing, but for those in tech, specialised roles are more desirable

7

Focus on prosocial goals

Messages should emphasise that professions in tech can be prosocial, and help others.

Experienced Professionals: Implications for message generation (1)

1

Highlight the ‘skill’ aspect of digital skills training

Communications should highlight the upskilling opportunity of training, as older adults are motivated by possessing relevant skills and feeling up-to-date.

2

Focus on how digital skills training fit within people’s personal lives

Messages should showcase how skills training can be convenient and achievable. Older adults are afraid digital skills training may not fit in their personal schedule, or that is too hard.

3

Emphasise how exciting tech is

Participants find the sector exciting and innovative. They expressed their satisfaction with the interesting nature of their work and the supportive environment of their new workplaces. Communications should emphasise this.

Early Career Switchers: Implications for message generation (2)

4

Use pensions rather than salaries

Messages should spotlight pension packages. While ECS were motivating by the high-paying nature of digital jobs, older participants reported being attracted by the security that a better pension package would offer.

5

Alleviate age anxiety through showing that everyone can work in tech

Messages should focus on reassuring older adults their age does not prevent them from working in the digital sector, or learning relevant tech skills.

6

Avoid the terms ‘tech’ and ‘cyber’. Be cautious with ‘artificial intelligence’ and use ‘digital’ carefully

‘Tech’ is perceived as uninteresting, ‘cyber’ is seen as vague and broad, ‘artificial intelligence’ elicits a range of responses from being scary and unfamiliar to exciting and trendy. ‘Digital’, while more positive, is also seen as vague, and therefore needs to be contextualised**.**

2. Testing the impact of messages on boosting uptake of digital training and careers: results

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2.1. Executive summary

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2.1 Executive summary

BIT ran an online experiment with a sample of 2,561 early career switchers (people aged 27 to 35) and 2,513 experienced professionals (people aged 50 to 65) in England from 10 - 19 March 2023 to **test how different messages influence uptake of digital courses and careers.**

Key Findings:

1. **1 in 5 experienced professionals clicked to find out more about training opportunities, compared to 1 in 20 early career switchers.**

2. **For experienced professionals, the 'Value' messages almost doubled clicks to learn more about training opportunities, despite lower sentiment scores.** The 'Diversity' and 'Testimony + Passion' messages boosted intent to consider a digital career, though this was not significantly different from the control.

3. **For early career switchers**, **the 'Testimony' and 'Job Demand' messages boosted intent to consider a digital career,** though this was not significantly different from the control, no message arm. The 'Testimony' message also boosted people's intent to consider a training course to improve digital skills for their current career.

4. **Over 9 in 10** in both age groups who would consider a digital career **would consider retraining for it**.

The messaging itself was **perceived positively by most participants.**

1. 6 in 10 people said the messages made them feel that digital careers were achievable.

2. 1 in 2 early career switchers and 1 in 3 experienced professionals thought it was relevant and made a career

MESSAGES TESTED: EARLY CAREER SWITCHERS

Ease

"I was worried that I might need to complete a degree to change career, but switching to tech was a surprisingly quick and easy process." Imogen, 33 years old.

Social Impact

Don't just work for a living - work for a cause. From virtual healthcare to online education, tech jobs are at the forefront of positive social change. Switching to a career in tech can help you help others.

Testimony

"One of the great things about doing digital skills training is that your skills can be useful in pretty much every sector, so you have opportunities across the board with all kinds of teams. I've worked in sustainability, research, banking and psychology" Ilsa, 32 years old.

Job Demand

Recent data shows that tech roles are #1 in the UK for most job opportunities. Whether it's in healthcare, fashion, journalism or sports, there are digital roles that offer all kinds of exciting, creative and highly-paid opportunities.

MESSAGES TESTED: EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS

Testimony + Never too late

"It's never too late to switch to the digital sector. I did a coding bootcamp last year and had a job in tech shortly after. It's kept me up to date with the current world, and the future seems good in the industry." Aisha, 50 years old.

Diversity

The UK digital sector needs people of all ages and backgrounds to keep on growing and innovating. No matter your age or background, there's a place for you in digital.

Value

The digital job market values experience and soft skills, making it the perfect fit for experienced professionals looking to explore new career paths.

Testimony + Passion

"I was worried that digital skills training might not be for me, but I ended up loving it. It was really helpful to learn from people who work in the industry. I wouldn't be where I am now without it" Aisha, 50 years old.

Attitudes towards digital courses/apprenticeships and careers.

Overall, attitudes towards digital courses and careers were positive.

8 in 10 Thought they are not boring, offer equal opportunities, and are creative.
However, **1 in 2** thought they are difficult and only **4 in 10** thought they are social.

% who think that digital careers...

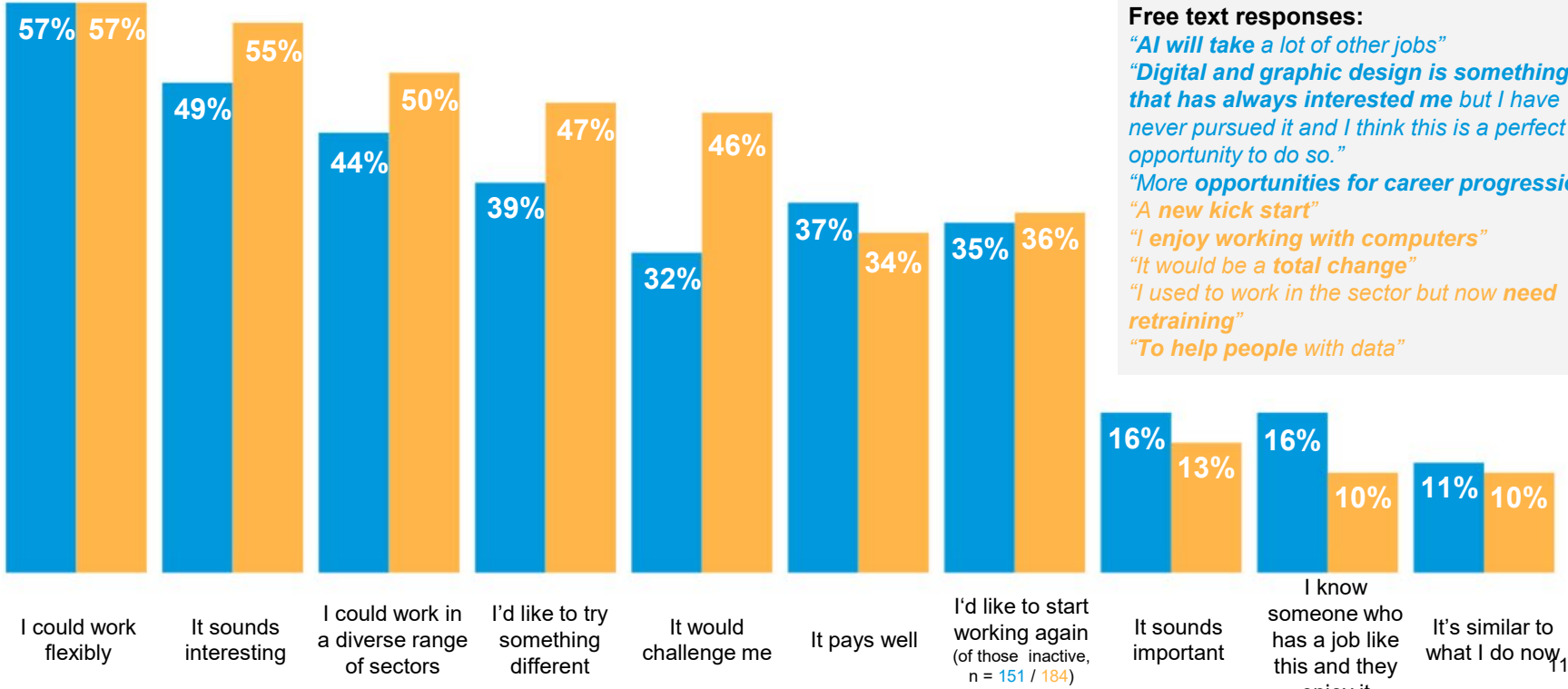
are not boring	offer opportunities to everyone*	are creative	are rewarding	are not isolating	are not difficult	are social
81%	78%	77%	70%	70%	50%	44%
85%	85%	77%	74%	74%	55%	35%

** People of all genders, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds.*
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Intent.

The top reasons for considering a digital career are: flexible working, interest, and being able to work in a diverse range of sectors.

Of those who would consider a digital career, % who would do so because… (n = 1,838 / 1,224)



Free text responses:

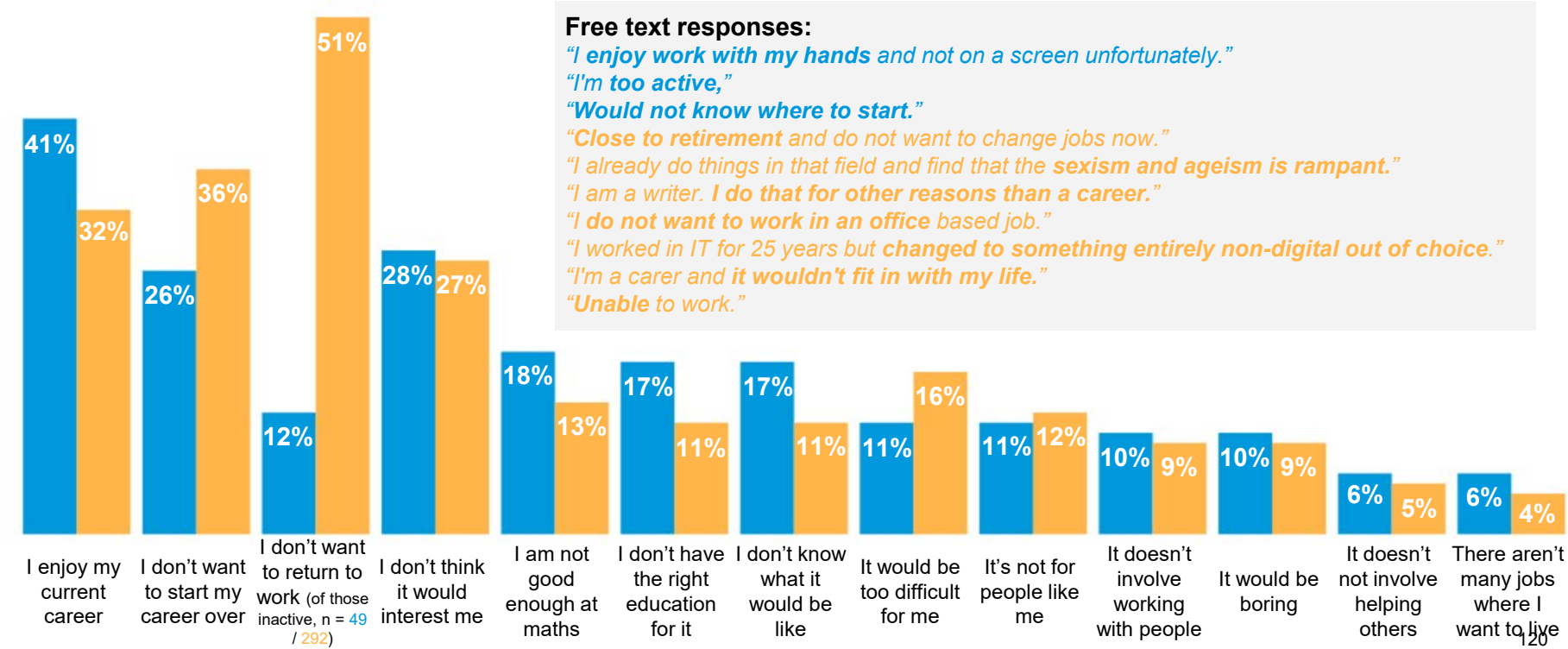
*"**AI will take** a lot of other jobs"*
*"**Digital and graphic design is something that has always interested me** but I have never pursued it and I think this is a perfect opportunity to do so."*
*"More **opportunities for career progression**"*
*"A **new kick start**"*
*"I **enjoy working with computers**"*
*"It would be a **total change**"*
*"I used to work in the sector but now **need retraining**"*
*"**To help people** with data"*

Descriptives only, not tested for significant differences. Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Intent.

The top reasons for not considering a digital course/career are: enjoying current career, not starting over, and for inactive EPs, not returning to work.

Of those who would <u>not</u> consider a digital career, % who would do so because… (n = 723 / 1289)



Free text responses:

*"I **enjoy work with my hands** and not on a screen unfortunately."*
*"I'm **too active,**"*
*"**Would not know where to start.**"*
*"**Close to retirement** and do not want to change jobs now."*
*"I already do things in that field and find that the **sexism and ageism is rampant.**"*
*"I am a writer. **I do that for other reasons than a career.**"*
*"I **do not want to work in an office** based job."*
*"I worked in IT for 25 years but **changed to something entirely non-digital out of choice.**"*
*"I'm a carer and **it wouldn't fit in with my life.**"*
*"**Unable** to work."*

Descriptives only, not tested for significant differences. Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

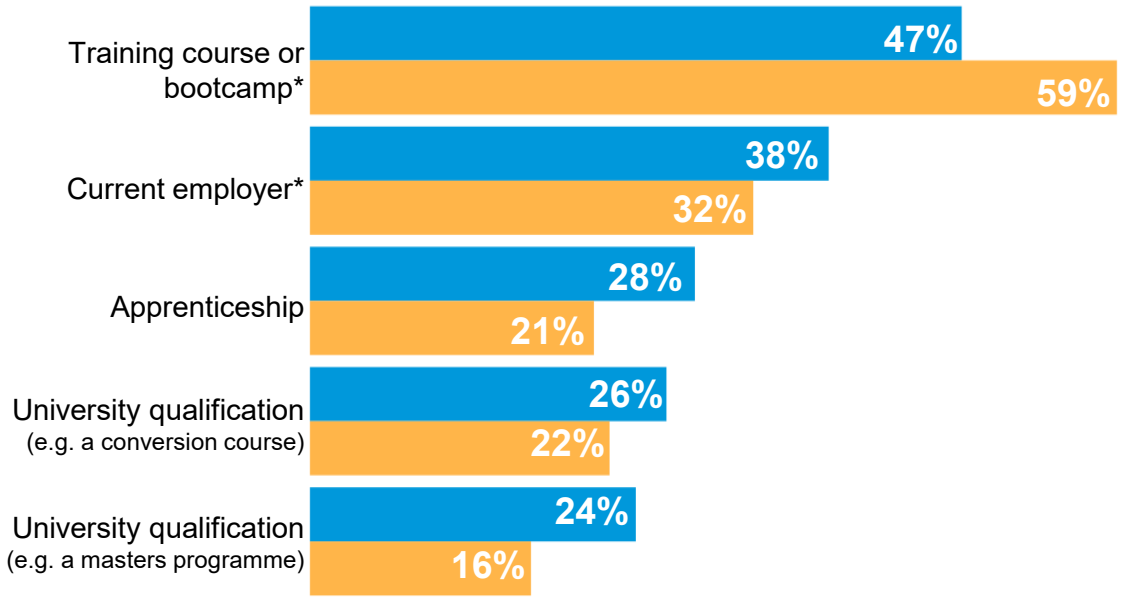
Intent.

Over 9 in 10 of those who would consider a digital career would retrain.

The most popular ways to retrain are: through a **training course**, a **bootcamp** or through their **current employer**.

95% of early career switchers and **92% of experienced professionals** who would consider a digital career would **consider retraining for it**.

% who say they would consider retraining for a digital career through…
(n = 1,838 / 1,224)



Descriptives only, not tested for significant differences.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

* 'Training course or bootcamp' refers to individuals accessing digital training in their own time, outside the workplace. 'Current employer' references training opportunities accessed or offered through the workplace.

7 in 10 early career switchers would consider a digital career and 3 in 4 would consider a training course. 'Testimony' and 'Job demand' performed best in terms of intent, but this was not better than the no message arm.

There was **no significant difference of the messages in terms of clicking to learn more** about training opportunities.

72% of **early career switchers** say they would **consider a digital career**

88% **think others would consider** a digital career

77% say they would **consider a training course to improve their digital skills** for their current career

Of early career switchers, % who…	No message (n = 557)	Ease (n = 472)	Social impact (n = 523)	Testimony (n = 505)	Job demand (n = 504)
would consider a digital career	74%	65%	70%	76%	73%
think others would consider a digital career	91%	84%	86%	89%	91%
would consider doing a training course to improve your digital skills for their current career	81%	74%	75%	79%	76%
clicked a link to find out about free skills training opportunities	5%	7%	6%	7%	7%
would consider retraining for a digital career (if they would consider a digital career, n = 1,838)	94%	95%	94%	95%	94%

Best performers in terms of intent:

Testimony	Job demand
"One of the great things about doing digital skills training is that your skills can be useful in pretty much every sector, so you have opportunities across the board with all kinds of teams. I've worked in sustainability, research, banking and psychology" Ilsa, 32 years old.	Recent data shows that tech roles are #1 in the UK for most job opportunities. Whether it's in healthcare, fashion, journalism or sports, there are digital roles that offer all kinds of exciting, creative and highly-paid opportunities.

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, p < .05.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

1 in 2 experienced professionals would consider a digital career. The 'Diversity' and 'Testimony + passion' messages performed best in terms of intent, but the 'Value' message led to significantly more clicks to find out about training opportunities.

49% of experienced professionals say they would **consider a digital career**

86% **think others would consider** a digital career

56% say they would **consider a training course to improve their digital skills** for their current career

20% of experienced professionals clicked to find out more about training opportunities, **compared to 6% of early career switchers**.

Of experienced professionals, % who…	No message (n = 562)	Testimony + never too late (n = 524)	Diversity (n = 487)	Value (n = 454)	Testimony + passion (n = 486)
would consider a digital career	51%	45%	49%	45%	52%
think others would consider a digital career	91%	84%	86%	82%	86%
would consider doing a training course to improve your digital skills for their current career	62%	53%	54%	52%	57%
clicked a link to find out about free skills training opportunities	17%	16%	23%	31%	15%
would consider retraining for a digital career (if they would consider a digital career, n = 1,224)	91%	95%	91%	92%	91%

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, p < .05. All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Value
The digital job market values experience and soft skills, making it the perfect fit for experienced professionals looking to explore new career paths.

Qualitative insights on the messages: ECS

*"Digital career sounds great, the **only issue would be the timing to learn it whilst currently working** a full time role."*

*"It's the **right length** for a general selection of people to be able to grasp and process, and finish reading to the end. The **key impressive thing is located in the last sentence (about the variety of sectors and career areas)** - I think this is very good because the last thing we read can generally be what we remember most clearly or take away with us."*

*"This survey has opened my eyes to realise I **can still do whatever I want to do and there aren't many things to stop me** from doing so."*

Qualitative insights on the messages: EPs

*"**If this is designed to encourage 50+ back into work, I think an emphasis on part time options is necessary**, particularly since the pandemic."*

*“It says **enough to get you interested and then you click on the link** to look further into it.”*

*"Somewhat intriguing. I **immediately clicked on the link** to see if it was working, it was. It did **make me interested in what was available**, also it made it very clear the courses are free."*

*"Would like to have known **what digital role/career the person concerned eventually took up**. I am 53 and **feel like I am getting left behind, and maybe too old to retrain, so to read that she is 50 is quite positive**. It also appeals to me as I am interested in learning coding."*

*"’Perfect fit for professionals’ gives the **impression that it is only for professionals fields of work like lawyers, doctors etc**. I am not one of those."*

2.2. Key takeaways

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Key takeaways and recommendations

Consider focusing online communications campaigns / messaging on experienced professionals. Experienced professionals were much more likely to click on a link to learn more about digital skills training opportunities than early career switchers. Behaviourally informed messaging was also able to impact this behaviour, with the 'Value' message almost doubling clicks compared to the control group.

Do more to make working in digital not feel like 'starting over'. This was brought up as one of the top reasons to not consider a digital career in both age groups, but especially for experienced professionals.

Continue to focus on messages that tackle the primary negative perceptions of digital careers that persist, especially for experienced professionals - that they are a) **difficult** (believed by more than half of people) and b) **aren't socia**l (believed by more than a third of people).

Consider greater use of messengers / buddying interventions for experienced professionals. Experienced professionals were 6pp less likely to report 'knowing someone with a digital career that they enjoy' as a motivating factor to switch to a digital career, when compared to early career switchers.

Conduct further testing:

1. **In the field (e.g. a social media advertising trial)** - to see if the 'Value' message boosts clicks to learn about training (among experienced professionals) in a real-world scenario, and whether this leads to more sign-ups for digital skills training.
2. With a **larger sample** to pick up on small impacts that might make a difference at scale but could have been too small for this study to detect.

2.3. Background and methodology

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Methodology.

We recruited a sample of 5,074 early career switchers and experienced professionals in England, who are not currently in digital careers.

BIT worked with DSIT to test the effects of messages on intent to take up a digital course or career (plus comprehension and sentiment for these messages) on an online representative sample of 5,074 early career switchers and experienced professionals in England from 10 to 19 March 2023.

Gender	
Women	61%

Age group	
Early career switchers	50%
Experienced professionals	50%

Region	
South & East	40%
North	23%
Midlands	23%
London	13%

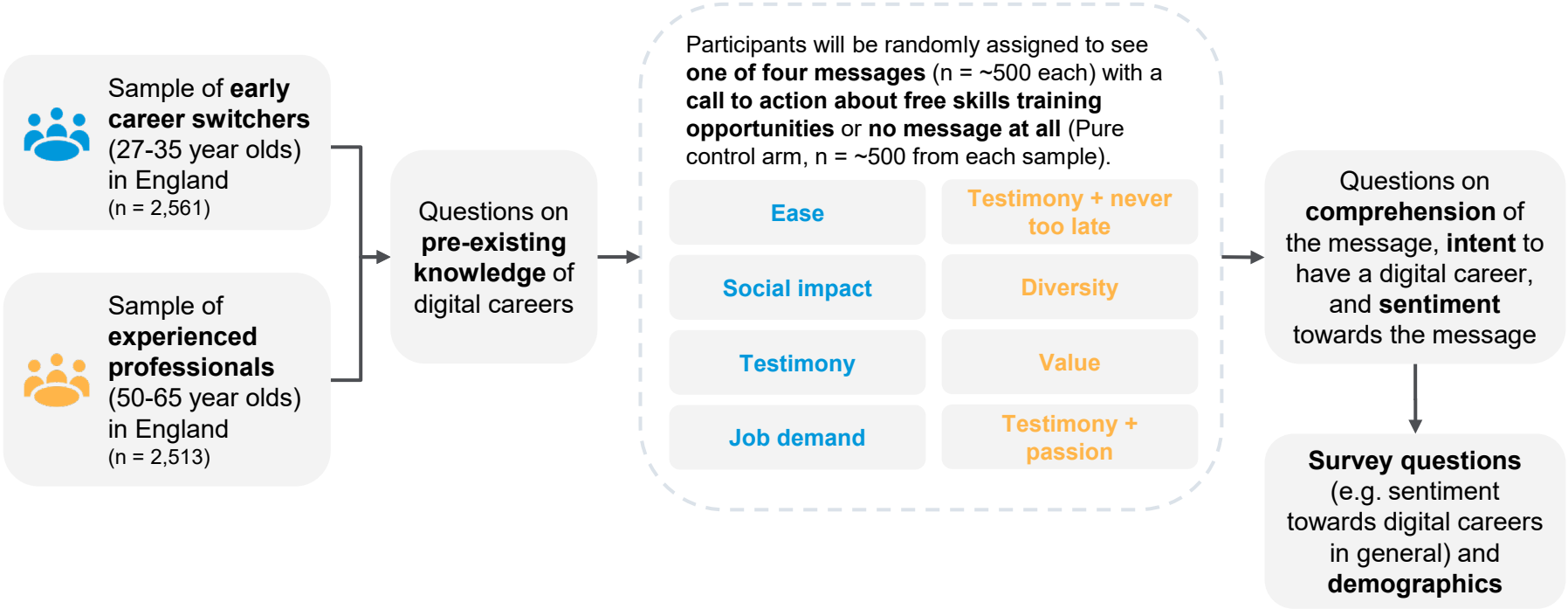
Ethnicity	
White	87%
Asian	6%
Black	3%
Mixed / other	3%

NOTE ON INTERPRETING RESULTS

1. The sample doesn't capture the digitally excluded, or people not inclined to complete online surveys.
2. Just because people say they would do something in an online experiment doesn't mean they always will in real life. We therefore interpret stated intent as a likely upper bound of real behaviour.
3. When we examine differences by subgroup (e.g. gender, ethnicity), we only do so when the sample size remains large enough to draw robust inferences.

Median time spent completing survey: 5m 22s
Also collected data for all respondents for urbanicity, income, education, socioeconomic status, employment, whether they experienced a change in their employment status as a result of coronavirus and disability.

Participants were randomly assigned to see one of four messages about digital careers, or nothing at all. They then answered questions on comprehension, intent and sentiment.



Methodology - early career switchers.

Early career switchers were randomly assigned to see one of four messages, or no message at all (n = 557).

Messages for early career switchers:

Ease	*"I was worried that I might need to complete a degree to change career, but switching to tech was a surprisingly quick and easy process."* Imogen, 33 years old.	n = 472 Median viewing time (MVT) = 11s
Social impact	Don't just work for a living - work for a cause. From virtual healthcare to online education, tech jobs are at the forefront of positive social change. Switching to a career in tech can help you help others.	n = 523 MVT = 12s
Testimony	*"One of the great things about doing digital skills training is that your skills can be useful in pretty much every sector, so you have opportunities across the board with all kinds of teams. I've worked in sustainability, research, banking and psychology"* Ilsa, 32 years old.	n = 505 MVT = 13s
Job demand	Recent data shows that tech roles are #1 in the UK for most job opportunities. Whether it's in healthcare, fashion, journalism or sports, there are digital roles that offer all kinds of exciting, creative and highly-paid opportunities.	n = 504 MVT = 9s

Click here to find out about free skills training opportunities.

Methodology - experienced professionals.

Experienced professionals were randomly assigned to see one of four messages, or no message at all (n = 562).

Messages for experienced professionals:

Testimony + never too late	*"It's never too late to switch to the digital sector. I did a coding bootcamp last year and had a job in tech shortly after. It's kept me up to date with the current world, and the future seems good in the industry."* Aisha, 50 years old.	n = 524 Median viewing time (MVT) = 20s
Diversity	The UK digital sector needs people of all ages and backgrounds to keep on growing and innovating. No matter your age or background, there's a place for you in digital.	n = 487 MVT = 14s
Value	The digital job market values experience and soft skills, making it the perfect fit for experienced professionals looking to explore new career paths.	n = 454 MVT = 17s
Testimony + passion	*"I was worried that digital skills training might not be for me, but I ended up loving it. It was really helpful to learn from people who work in the industry. I wouldn't be where I am now without it"* Aisha, 50 years old.	n = 486 MVT = 18s

Click here to find out about free skills training opportunities.

2.4 Experimental results

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Overall, 7 in 10 early career switchers would consider a digital career and 3 in 4 would consider training to improve their skills. The 'Testimony' and 'Job demand' performed best in terms of intent but this was not better than the no message arm.

There was **no significant difference of the messages in terms of clicking to learn more** about training opportunities.

72% of **early career switchers** say they would **consider a digital career**

88% **think others would consider** a digital career

77% say they would **consider a training course to improve their digital skills** for their current career

Of early career switchers, % who…	No message (n = 557)	Ease (n = 472)	Social impact (n = 523)	Testimony (n = 505)	Job demand (n = 504)
would consider a digital career	74%	65%	70%	76%	73%
think others would consider a digital career	91%	84%	86%	89%	91%
would consider doing a training course to improve your digital skills for their current career	81%	74%	75%	79%	76%
clicked a link to find out about free skills training opportunities	5%	7%	6%	7%	7%
would consider retraining for a digital career (if they would consider a digital career, n = 1,838)	94%	95%	94%	95%	94%

Best performers in terms of intent:

Testimony	Job demand
"One of the great things about doing digital skills training is that your skills can be useful in pretty much every sector, so you have opportunities across the board with all kinds of teams. I've worked in sustainability, research, banking and psychology" Ilsa, 32 years old.	Recent data shows that tech roles are #1 in the UK for most job opportunities. Whether it's in healthcare, fashion, journalism or sports, there are digital roles that offer all kinds of exciting, creative and highly-paid opportunities.

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, p < .05.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Overall, 1 in 2 experienced professionals would consider a digital career. The 'Diversity' and 'Testimony + passion' messages performed best in terms of intent, but 'Value' led to significantly more clicks to find out about training opportunities.

49% of experienced professionals say they would **consider a digital career**

86% **think others would consider** a digital career

56% say they would **consider a training course to improve their digital skills** for their current career

20% of experienced professionals clicked to find out more about training opportunities, **compared to 6% of early career switchers**.

Of experienced professionals, % who…	No message (n = 562)	Testimony + never too late (n = 524)	Diversity (n = 487)	Value (n = 454)	Testimony + passion (n = 486)
would consider a digital career	51%	45%	49%	45%	52%
think others would consider a digital career	91%	84%	86%	82%	86%
would consider doing a training course to improve your digital skills for their current career	62%	53%	54%	52%	57%
clicked a link to find out about free skills training opportunities	17%	16%	23%	31%	15%
would consider retraining for a digital career (if they would consider a digital career, n = 1,224)	91%	95%	91%	92%	91%

Value
The digital job market values experience and soft skills, making it the perfect fit for experienced professionals looking to explore new career paths.

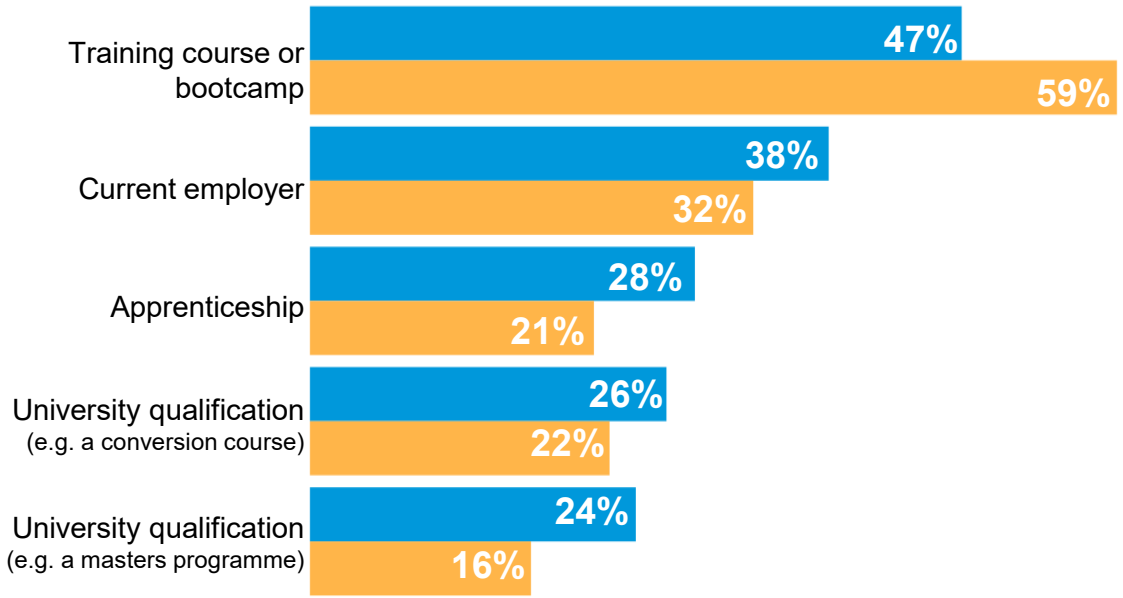
Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, p < .05.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Early career switchers
Experienced professionals

Over 9 in 10 of those who would consider a digital career would retrain for it. The most popular ways people would do this is through a training course or bootcamp or through their current employer.

95% of early career switchers and **92% of experienced professionals** who would consider a digital career would **consider retraining for it**.

% who say they would consider retraining for a digital career through…
(n = 1,838 / 1,224)

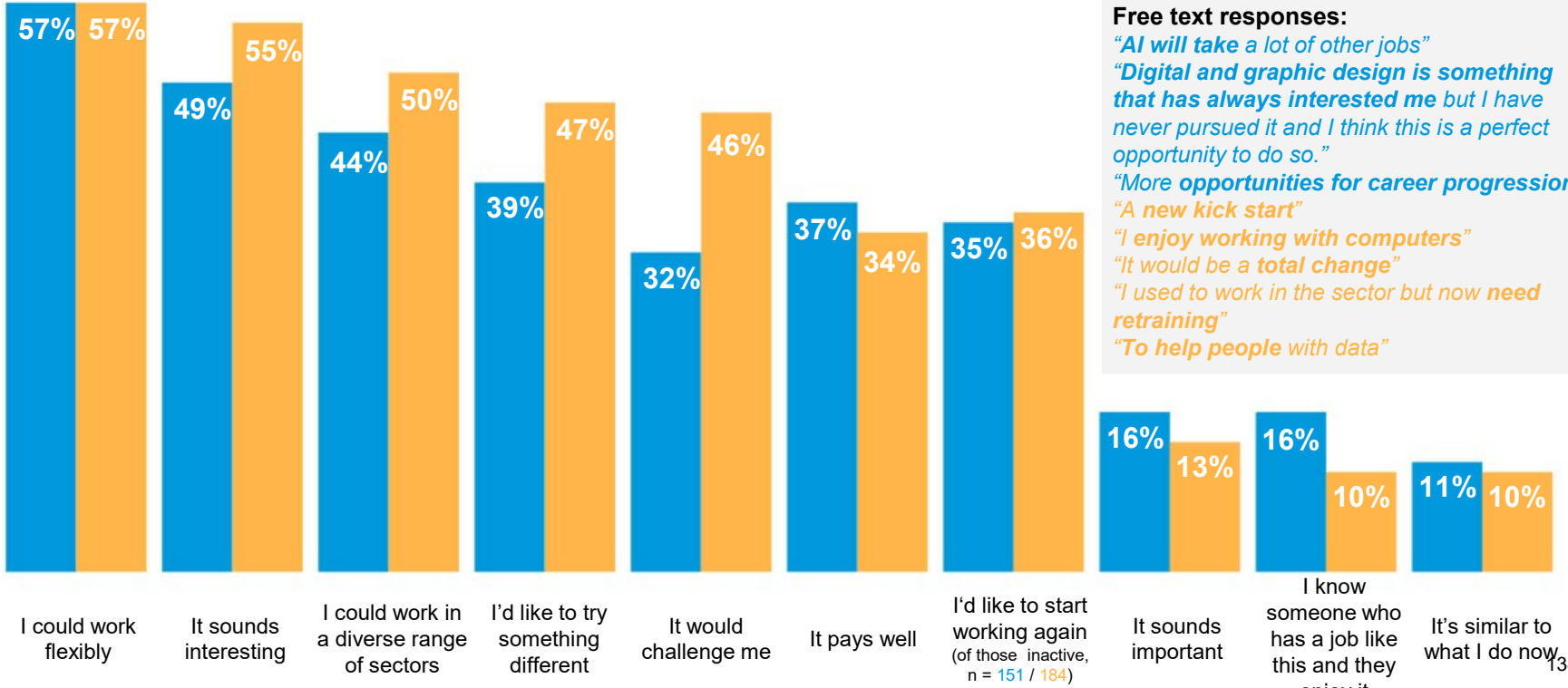


Descriptives only, not tested for significant differences.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Intent.

The top reasons for considering a digital career are: working flexibly, interest and being able to work in a diverse range of sectors.

Of those who would consider a digital career, % who would do so because… (n = 1,838 / 1,224)



Free text responses:

*"**AI will take** a lot of other jobs"*
*"**Digital and graphic design is something that has always interested me** but I have never pursued it and I think this is a perfect opportunity to do so."*
*"More **opportunities for career progression**"*
*"A **new kick start**"*
*"I **enjoy working with computers**"*
*"It would be a **total change**"*
*"I used to work in the sector but now **need retraining**"*
*"**To help people** with data"*

Descriptives only, not tested for significant differences. Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Intent.

People who would consider a career were most interested in research, data or analytical or content roles. They were least interested in geospatial technician/ cartographer or electrical or robotics roles.

Of those who would consider a digital career, % who said this job role sounds interesting (n = 3,062)

Top 5 selected job roles

- **Research roles** (e.g. user researcher) — 36%
- **Data or analytical roles** (e.g. data or business analyst) — 34%
- **Content roles** (e.g. social media manager) — 33%
- **Support roles** (e.g. IT support technician) — 28%
- **Clerical roles** (e.g. librarian) — 27%

Bottom 5 selected job roles

- **Technician roles** (e.g. 3D printing or IT support technician) — 18%
- **Engineer roles** (e.g. network engineer) — 16%
- **Robotics roles** (e.g. robotics engineer) — 15%
- **Electrical roles** (e.g. digital hardware engineer) — 12%
- **Geospatial technician; Cartographer** — 6%

The top 5 careers that sounded interesting to either age group did vary slightly (see appendix), but there was little variation in the bottom five for ECS and EPS.

Full list of job roles in Appendix.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Intent.

For many role categories, the most favoured roles tended to be those which are better-known and less niche.

Of those who would consider **data/ analytical roles** (n = 1,055),

Of those who would consider **content roles** (n = 1,023),

Of those who would consider **gaming roles** (n = 785),

Of those who would consider **design roles** (n = 728),

Of those who would consider **developer/ engineer roles** (n = 625),

% who said this role sounds most interesting…

55%	Data analyst	**39%**	Content creator	**42%**	Computer game tester	**55%**	Web designer	**33%**	Software developer
19%	Data scientist	**23%**	Social media manager	**22%**	Computer game developer	**14%**	Web architect	**24%**	Web developer
11%	Data engineer	**13%**	Content strategy specialist	**20%**	Game play tester	**11%**	UX designer	**23%**	Software engineer
10%	Data storyteller	**12%**	Influencer	**9%**	Professional gamer	**11%**	Interface designer	**15%**	Programmer
4%	Machine learning scientist	**10%**	Social media specialist	**6%**	Computer game programmer	**7%**	Front end developer	**4%**	Software artisan
1%	None of the above	**3%**	None of the above	**1%**	None of the above	**2%**	None of the above	**2%**	None of the above

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Comprehension.

All messages but ‘Ease’ performed best in terms of comprehension for early career switchers and the ‘Diversity’ message performed best for experienced professionals.

Worst performer in terms of comprehension:

Ease
"I was worried that I might need to complete a degree to change career, but switching to tech was a surprisingly quick and easy process." Imogen, 33 years old.

Of early career switchers	Ease (n = 472)	Social impact (n = 523)	Testimony (n = 505)	Job demand (n = 504)
Overall comprehension score (average of whether they correctly recalled that the message was about digital careers and whether they recalled the benefit mentioned in the message)	40%	55%	59%	55%
Of experienced professionals	**Testimony + never too late** (n = 524)	**Diversity** (n = 487)	**Value** (n = 454)	**Testimony + passion** (n = 486)
Overall comprehension score (average of whether they correctly recalled that the message was about digital careers and whether they recalled the benefit mentioned in the message)	66%	72%	48%	49%

Best performer in terms of comprehension:

Diversity
The UK digital sector needs people of all ages and backgrounds to keep on growing and innovating. No matter your age or background, there's a place for you in digital.

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
Breakdown by item and message in the Appendix.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Early career switchers
Experienced professionals

There were no significant differences between messages in terms of sentiment for early career switchers. For experienced professionals, the 'Value' message performed significantly worse than the other messages.

Of early career switchers	Ease (n = 472)	Social impact (n = 523)	Testimony (n = 505)	Job demand (n = 504)
Overall sentiment score (average of the four items below)	56%	56%	59%	58%
Of experienced professionals	**Testimony + never too late** (n = 524)	**Diversity** (n = 487)	**Value** (n = 454)	**Testimony + passion** (n = 486)
Overall sentiment score (average of the four items below)	55%	58%	52%	58%

Worst performer in terms of sentiment:

Value
The digital job market values experience and soft skills, making it the perfect fit for experienced professionals looking to explore new career paths.

For early career switchers, **74%** thought the message has the **right amount of information.**

62% thought it makes a digital career feel **accessible and achievable**.

59% thought it is **trustworthy**.

45% thought it is **relevant** to them.

45% thought it **made a career change feel appropriate at this stage** in their career.

Breakdown by message is in the Appendix.

For experienced professionals, **79%** thought the message has the **right amount of information**.

68% thought it is **trustworthy**.

62% thought it makes a digital career feel **accessible and achievable**.

35% thought it is **relevant** to them.

37% thought it **made a career change feel appropriate at this stage** in their career.

Breakdown by message is in the Appendix.

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

2.5 Free text feedback on messages

THE
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Sentiment.

Free text feedback suggests that the ‘Ease’ message wasn’t clear and some people want more information.

Ease

"I was worried that I might need to complete a degree to change career, but switching to tech was a surprisingly quick and easy process." Imogen, 33 years old.

*“It **isn't very clear** to people not in tech what is involved/included in the paragraph”*

*“The only thing it says is that it's easy to change careers. The **choice of age is a bit confusing**. Is it meant to say that even in your early 30s you can change careers? Cause the **early 30s isn't that old but the ad makes it seem like it**. ”*

*“Gonna **look into online courses now**.”*

*“**Wish there was more** information.”*

*“There's **nothing about what they did before or what they went on to do**.”*

*"It **makes me feel that I can** do it."*

*""It’s **not clear what they are referring to when they say ‘tech’** or what happened, it’s very unclear."*

*"It could **expand on what the alternative is to doing a degree**, but it is quite **short and to the point which makes you want to click on the link** for more information."*

*"Does not explain **what training is needed or potential salary**."*

*"It’s quick and to the point but **not very personal**."*

*"It seems **gossipy or a quick opinion**, it doesn’t give enough but then it’s only three lines."*

*"More **emphasis that you can have a career change after 30 years old**. A **timeframe of how long it took** this person to train and get hired would be beneficial and motivational. A **salary guideline** for specific roles would help too."*

*"Maybe **more of a story to go with the message** rather than just ‘tech’ - could be more specific on Imogen’s **initial job role and what she changed her career to**."*

*"The message made me confused! **It’s only a statement how can it make you feel you should change career?**"*

*“The **subject feels broad**. Is she after graphic design or analytical work for a police force? Her personality is non existent so it's **lacking a human feel**.”*

*“**Very vague and ambitious**. Doesn't feel like Imogen is a real person.”*

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Sentiment.

While people liked the ‘Social impact’ message, it was seen by some as being vague, particularly on how digital careers actually help others.

Social Impact

Don't just work for a living - work for a cause. From virtual healthcare to online education, tech jobs are at the forefront of positive social change. Switching to a career in tech can help you help others.

*“More **fluent language can make the message more understandable** for readers. Additionally, giving a short **example of social change made by tech jobs** can persuade people well. ”*

*“It's quite **generic, still not sure it's relevant to me** but it could be.”*

*“It's a **bit vague** and doesn't really include pay out and if it's a reliable source of income.”*

*“It’s **something I would be interested in.**”*

*"It **doesn't detail anything specific**. Health care could mean a number of things."*

*"It looks good, **I’m out of work at the moment so will consider this**."*

*"It's should be **more explanatory for people with zero knowledge** of the digital market."*

*"It has a **strong message** showing you can train in a digital job that **can help other people as well** as yourself."*

*"It could use a little **more on how it could help**. In what way?”*

*"It's a **great message** that more people should have access to."*

*"Would **like to know more about starting**."*

*"Digital career sounds great, the **only issue would be the timing to learn it whilst currently working** a full time role."*

*"It's **made me think** that there are careers that I hadn't even considered.“*

*“I think this information needs to be slightly **more accessible**. It's a bit **vague and I don't personally understand** what is trying to be conveyed here.”*

*“**Work for a cause is off putting**, when you have mortgage to pay, bills etc you work because you have to. The **choice of working for a business that suits you morally is not always possible** and put me off this message immediately.”*

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Sentiment.

People said they thought the ‘Testimony’ message sounded personal and genuine. Some people wanted more information on what digital skills are.

Testimony

“One of the great things about doing digital skills training is that your skills can be useful in pretty much every sector, so you have opportunities across the board with all kinds of teams. I've worked in sustainability, research, banking and psychology" Ilsa, 32 years old.

*“It **doesn't tie in the digital training with a digital career** I don't think that's obvious.”*

*“Would be **nice to know what kinds of digital skill training are available within the message** instead of having to click a link.”*

*“They **don't say specifically what digital skills** they have got to be able to work in these different sectors.”*

*“Maybe **place of work or lives** to add context.”*

*“It's very **clear and gives a positive message** about digital careers so **would definitely interest the right person**.”*

*“Sounds **genuine**.”*

*“It **makes me wonder what other opportunities would be available** in this sector.”*

*"It seems **honest and genuine.**”*

*"I'd say generally the information provided is fine, but personally I **would certainly want to know a lot more** and be put at ease very quickly that it's trustworthy."*

*"It should include the all **important info about costs**. These kind of things usually aren't cheap and someone may get excited only to realise they can't afford this and then feel depressed."*

*"It's **not clear to me that it's promoting digital careers**. It needs to be explicit."*

*"A lot of jobs have some kind of computer involvement, but **what careers are mainly digital based**?"*

*"I think some brief **information on any qualifications** that may be needed to start, but research would provide that."*

*"**People looking for money**. Tell them how much can get."*

*"Anything that's mentions **‘sustainability’ is instantly made unbelievable**."*

*"It’s the **right length** for a general selection of people to be able to grasp and process, and finish reading to the end. The **key impressive thing is located in the last sentence (about the variety of sectors and career areas)** - I think this is very good because the last thing we read can generally be what we remember most clearly or take away with us."*

*“**Short, straight to the point and very informative**.”*

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Sentiment.

While people liked the ‘Job demand’ message, some wanted to see more information on exactly what types of careers are available.

Job Demand

Recent data shows that tech roles are #1 in the UK for most job opportunities. Whether it's in healthcare, fashion, journalism or sports, there are digital roles that offer all kinds of exciting, creative and highly-paid opportunities.

*“Although it mentions the different sectors, it **doesn't mention any types of roles** so someone **might not think that a specific role could be digital**.”*

*“This survey has opened my eyes to realise I **can still do whatever I want to do and there aren't many things to stop me** from doing so.”*

*“Perhaps it might be worth **including some wording to reflect that the career is accessible for all** e.g disabilities, stay at home mums, people looking for a career change etc.”*

*“Need **more information**. Need to know on **how to go about getting the necessary training or qualification** for the job role.”*

*“I think **anything is achievable**, the only person that's stopping you is you!”*

*"It's a **good opportunity and there are many roles available**. It should interest many people."*

*"It's **short but covers a few different industries** that can be **relevant to a lot of people**."*

*"Be interesting to **have a look and see what opportunities are out there.**"*

*"**Tech roles' to me sounds like any job involving technology**. Technology is not just computers but the application of scientific knowledge so **I think the wording is slightly misleading**."*

*"Besides of being UK #1, **providing information regarding the job opportunities around the world** as well would be nice."*

*"It is a little vague; **maybe mentioning pay or benefits** of the role would be more enticing."*

*"More information regarding **suitability for age**. At present it **seems like it's targeted towards the younger demographic**."*

*"I'm **actively going to challenge myself to register for more digital careers courses** for up skills hence I have a degree in IT."*

*"It would be good if it provided **more info about how easy it is to get into a career** as a beginner."*

*“The message **includes all the right points to me**. Demonstrating the **high amount of opportunities** and it did highlight to me that there are **multiple sectors you could work for that still fall under the digital umbrella**.”*

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

It was clear the ‘Testimony + never too late’ message was aimed at an older age group. Many found this encouraging; helping them understand that they could retrain too.

Testimony + Never too late

“It's never too late to switch to the digital sector. I did a coding bootcamp last year and had a job in tech shortly after. It's kept me up to date with the current world, and the future seems good in the industry.” Aisha, 50 years old.

*“It **does not say that it is free and funded by the government**, Some people might be **put off because they think it could be expensive**.”*

*“I'm at a stage where I need to look at new career pathways and **this has come at the right time**.”*

*“The **problem comes when you start applying** for jobs in your 50s. That's when you **find out all about age discrimination**.”*

*“I’m **not sure about the it keeps me up to date in the modern world sentence**, could be more about **how her career or skills have increased**.”*

*“It needed to **define a little more what digital was, a little too broad**. **Good to include the age** as that helps.”*

*"It's worded simply, **you either want to do or you don't. Age or experience isn't a barrier**."*

*"This is a good message **aimed at the older population**.”*

*"I think this message is really **intriguing and think it could get a lot of people to apply** for this type of field of work."*

*"Would be useful to know **how long the courses are**. Don't like **the word bootcamp makes me think it will be very hard**."*

*"What about **qualifications and pay scales for newcomers** to the industry?"*

*"I **did not realise how many different variety of jobs** you can do through having a digital career."*

*"It is a very interesting message, **I would love to learn more about a different career**, and keeping up to date with the world."*

*"It is very clear and **makes it obvious that no matter your age you can retrain** for anything."*

***"If this is designed to encourage 50+ back into work, I think an emphasis on part time options is necessary**, particularly since the pandemic."*

*“You **must indicate job spectrum**, otherwise it is hard to see yourself moving to a nebulous career path.”*

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Sentiment.

While people liked the ‘Diversity’ message, many thought it wasn’t relevant to them, and that it was targeted at a younger age group.

Diversity

The UK digital sector needs people of all ages and backgrounds to keep on growing and innovating. No matter your age or background, there's a place for you in digital.

*“I think offering training skills are not enough. **What else is needed to explore a career change** - any real life examples?”*

*“Could **appeal to people younger than me, but possibly up to and including middle age.**”*

*“It says **enough to get you interested and then you click on the link** to look further into it.”*

*"It would be helpful to give **examples of careers or roles** that may open up following training.”*

*"Sounds very **interesting although maybe have more description** to what it actually means."*

*"It might be good to have a brief **description of what digital careers are**."*

*"As being the 50s I am **not sure the message is applied to me**..."*

*"Let’s be honest **anyone older than 30 would not get a job.**"*

*"I truly believe **there is a level at which an individual can enter a digital career**. Like many careers. **it's not for everyone**..."*

*"The message was **fine but not relevant** to me. I'm far **too close to retirement to consider** such a move."*

*"It is **not engaging at all**.”*

*"I think that it's a **good lead in** sort of message. It **makes you want to find out more** about a digital career and the options available."*

*“For anyone interested in a digital career the message is good. It's **to the point and doesn't contain too much information** to digest at one time.”*

*“A **list of potential careers** should be in the advert so people can relate to some of the examples given.”*

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Sentiment.

The ‘Value’ message was seen by some as a bit vague, and some people thought it was targeted at a younger age group.

Value

The digital job market values experience and soft skills, making it the perfect fit for experienced professionals looking to explore new career paths.

*“I **think it's aimed at younger people**, someone in their 40s or 50s looking at it wouldn't think it was for them.”*

*“I'm at that age where I find digital work and analysis is totally beyond me and **starting to retrain would be very difficult**.”*

*“Upper age limit...**starts at 19 but in this age of trying to get people back to work the presentation isn't attractive to the 50+**.”*

*“The message was **easy to understand and straightforward** making it easy reading and not boring.”*

*“It **suggests that you already have to have a professional career path and experience**, I think it would **not attract people with less confidence or experience.**”*

*"It’s a **great idea and will talk to my grandson about it**."*

*"The message is **good for professionals, but might be off putting to people who are not professionals**, and people who are just starting out."*

*"It was a **good incentive for people who have lost their way career wise** to look into something else"*

*"I want a new career but **it's a bit vague**. It **doesn't really tell me anything about what is required so I would be put off** as I **associate digital, even though I do some digital, with young and dynamic people**."*

*"It could **explain a little more about what jobs are classed as a digital career**.”*

*"’**The digital job market’ is pretty vague**, I for one have absolutely no idea what kind of jobs/which industries/walks of life this phrase refers to.."*

*"Somewhat intriguing. I **immediately clicked on the link** to see if it was working, it was. It did **make me interested in what was available**, also it made it very clear the courses are free."*

*"It seems a little vague and perhaps would **benefit from more context**. **Not clear what it means by ‘soft skills’**."*

*"’Perfect fit for professionals’ gives the **impression that it is only for professionals fields of work like lawyers, doctors etc**. I am not one of those."*

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Sentiment.

People liked the mention of Aisha's age in the 'Testimony and passion' message and thought it showed that anyone can retrain.

Testimony + Passion

"I was worried that digital skills training might not be for me, but I ended up loving it. It was really helpful to learn from people who work in the industry. I wouldn't be where I am now without it" Aisha, 50 years old.

*"The **fact that Aisha is a woman is relevant to me**. **Mentioning her age is important** when it comes to career change. I would have included **information about Aisha's current role**."*

*"I am **past it (physically and age) but this is a fantastic opportunity for the younger generation** with some enthusiasm and aspiration; wish I were 35 years younger!"*

*"It was **short and very clear**."*

*"Perhaps it would be **helpful if it stated where and with whom, Aisha trained**."*

*"It's very **personal and relevant**."*

*"It **would be nice to understand how someone like me could pursue a digital career** who has no connections / knowledge."*

*"I am 51 and it has **inspired me to go and have a look to see what I can find out**. It is never too late to find an exciting fulfilling career."*

*"No but **it's interesting to hear someone of my age** say they have benefitted from learning."*

*"Would like to have known **what digital role/career the person concerned eventually took up**. I am 53 and **feel like I am getting left behind, and maybe too old to retrain, so to read that she is 50 is quite positive**. It also appeals to me as I am interested in learning coding."*

*"**Shows no matter what age** you are you can retrain."*

*"I **like that she is an older person**."*

*"I think it's a **good idea that the lady's age was mentioned**, as this will possibly encourage mature workers that they can still get different jobs . I**t does seem more difficult sometimes when you're a bit older and might not have the confidence to start over again.**"*

*"Including the **age of the person made me think more positively**."*

*"Good to think the older generation may be being **reconsidered as useful again, instead of being overlooked**."*

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

2.6. Existing knowledge and attitudes

THE BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM

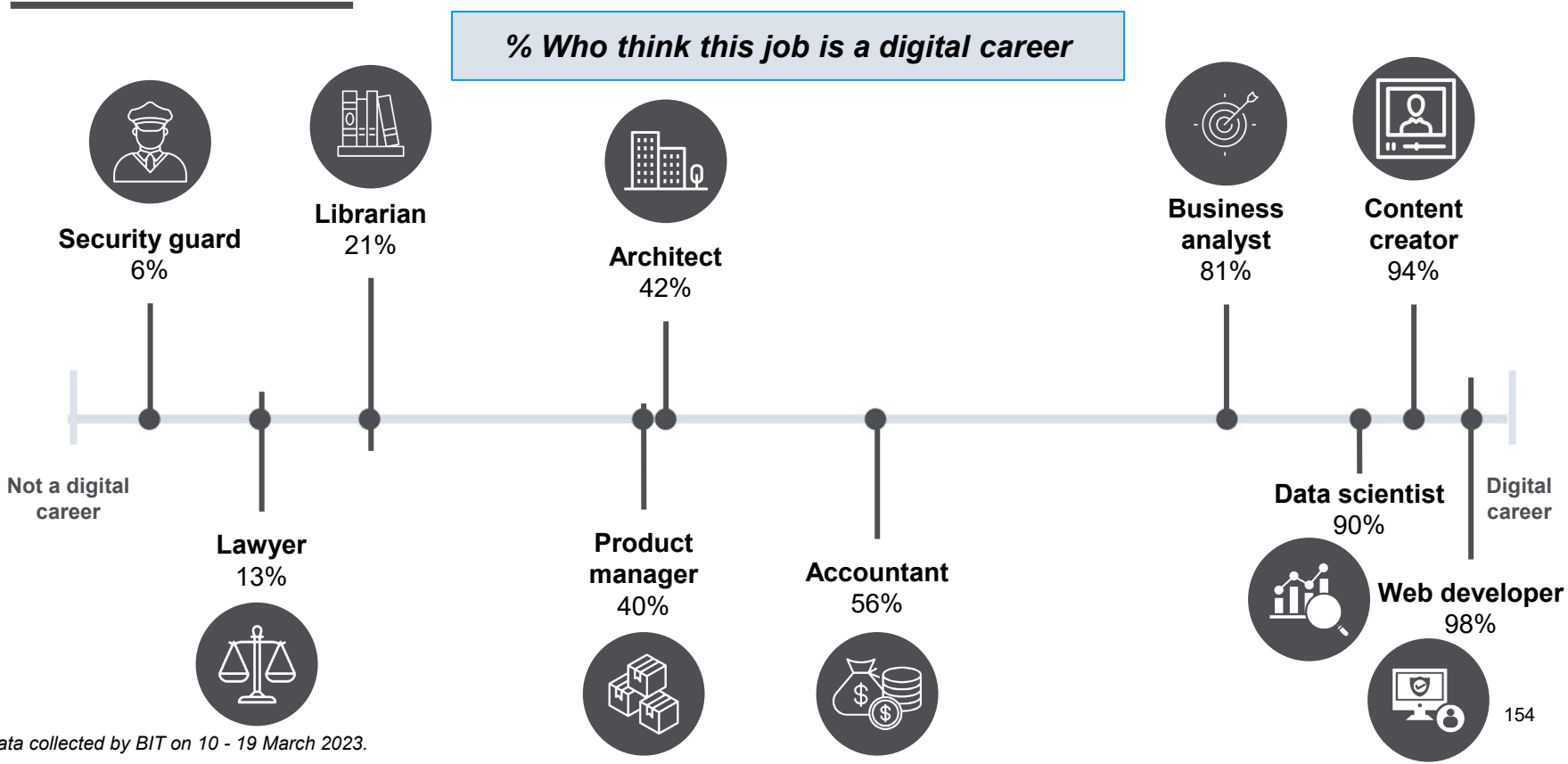
People generally report that digital courses and careers are about working with IT, computers, coding and marketing. This was similar across early career switchers and experienced professionals.

When you think of digital careers what kind of roles do you think of?

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Existing knowledge about digital careers.

Web developers, content creators, data scientists and business analysts were thought to be the best examples of digital careers.



Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Attitudes towards digital courses/apprenticeships and careers.

Overall, attitudes towards digital courses and careers were positive.

8 in 10 Thought they are not boring, offer equal opportunities, and are creative.
However, **1 in 2** thought they are difficult and only **4 in 10** thought they are social.

% who think that digital careers...

** People of all genders, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds.*
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

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3. Appendix

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Appendix

Exploratory research - Interview structure

Interview section	Exploratory questions		
1. Background	• What motivates you in a job?		
2. Training	**If they recently completed training or are currently completing training:** • What made you want to start digital skills training? • Can you please walk me through what the training/apprenticeship was/is like? • Has this training had any other impact on your life in general?	**If they are considering starting training:** • What kind of digital skills training would you like to complete (data analysis, website design, coding, etc.)? Why?	**If they are not interested in training:** • Why are you not interested in digital skills training? • What do you imagine participating in a digital skills course or training would be like?
3. Digital Role	**If they have recently changed to a digital role:** • What was your previous role? • Please walk me through the process of applying to your current role: • Now that you are in this digital/tech role, what would you say are the main advantages in comparison to your previous role?	**If they are considering applying to a digital role:** • What factors are making you consider a digital role? • Is there a particular job or role you have in mind?	**If they are not interested in digital roles:** • What are the main advantages that you look for in a job? • What do you imagine working in a digital or tech industry job would be like?
4. Message testing	• What do you think of the terms 'digital, AI, cyber, tech'? • Various message testing prompts		

Appendix

Breakdown of people's perceptions of 'digital careers' by age group

% who think this job is a digital career

6%	5%	Security guard
13%	14%	Lawyer
15%	27%	Librarian
43%	36%	Product manager
38%	45%	Architect
58%	54%	Accountant
80%	81%	Business analyst
86%	93%	Data scientist
95%	92%	Content creator
97%	98%	Web developer

Appendix - early career switchers.

Comprehension breakdown

% of early career switchers who correctly recalled…	Ease (n = 472)	Social impact (n = 523)	Testimony (n = 505)	Job demand (n = 504)
Overall comprehension score (average of the two items below)	40%	55%	59%	55%
that the message was about digital careers	25%	57%	49%	44%
the benefits* of considering a digital career mentioned in the message	55%	54%	69%	65%

Of those who didn't see any message, the top benefits for digital careers were job opportunities (63%), transferable skills (53%), and helping people (51%).

* Benefits mentioned:
- There are many available job opportunities that use digital skills (Job demand)
- Digital skills can be used to help people (Social impact)
- Completing digital skills training gives you skills that are needed in pretty much every sector (Testimony)
- It's easy to start a digital career (Ease)

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - early career switchers.

Overall comprehension score by subgroups.

Overall comprehension score		Ease (n = 472)	Social impact (n = 523)	Testimony (n = 505)	Job demand (n = 504)
Gender	Male (n = 674)	34%	54%	51%	45%
	Female (n = 1,328)	43%	56%	63%	61%
Region	North (n = 440)	40%	56%	56%	58%
	South & East (n = 756)	40%	56%	63%	59%
	Midlands (n = 460)	39%	57%	58%	52%
	London (n = 348)	38%	51%	56%	47%
Socioeconomic status	High (n = 566)	43%	55%	59%	52%
	Medium (n = 1,282)	39%	57%	60%	58%
	Low (n = 134)	38%	43%	42%	32%

Overall, comprehension was lower for people of lower socioeconomic status.

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Comprehension breakdown.

% of experienced professionals who correctly recalled…	Testimony + never too late (n = 524)	Diversity (n = 487)	Value (n = 454)	Testimony + passion (n = 486)
Overall comprehension score (average of the two items below)	66%	72%	48%	49%
that the message was about digital careers	79%	73%	59%	67%
the benefits* of considering a digital career mentioned in the message	53%	70%	37%	31%

Of those who didn't see any message, the top benefits for doing a digital career were that there are many job opportunities (70%), skills are needed in all sectors (64%), and that skills can be used to help people (51%).

* Benefits mentioned:
- Digital careers are for everyone (Diversity, Value)
- It's easy to start a digital career (Testimony + never too late)
- Digital careers are fun (Testimony + passion)

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - experienced professionals.

Overall comprehension score by subgroups.

Overall comprehension score		Testimony + never too late (n = 524)	Diversity (n = 487)	Value (n = 454)	Testimony + passion (n = 486)
Gender	Male (n = 844)	68%	74%	47%	47%
	Female (n = 1,106)	65%	70%	49%	51%
Region	North (n = 465)	69%	71%	48%	45%
	South & East (n = 829)	63%	73%	51%	51%
	Midlands (n = 461)	66%	67%	44%	52%
	London (n = 196)	68%	77%	47%	47%
Socioeconomic status	High (n = 725)	74%	73%	48%	47%
	Medium (n = 1,637)	63%	72%	48%	50%
	Low (n = 173)	62%	70%	50%	54%

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - early career switchers.

Intent to consider a digital career by subgroups.

% of early career switchers who would consider a digital career		No message (n = 562)	Ease (n = 472)	Social impact (n = 523)	Testimony (n = 505)	Job demand (n = 504)
Gender	Male (n = 862)	79%	69%	75%	77%	79%
	Female (n = 1,696)	71%	63%	67%	76%	69%
Region	North (n = 565)	73%	64%	67%	78%	73%
	South & East (n = 954)	17%	40%	56%	63%	59%
	Midlands (n = 612)	79%	64%	78%	77%	74%
	London (n = 430)	78%	69%	76%	83%	71%
Socioeconomic status	High (n =725)	80%	68%	76%	86%	84%
	Medium (n = 1,637)	71%	64%	69%	73%	70%
	Low (n = 173)	77%	55%	57%	73%	50%

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - experienced professionals.

Intent to consider a digital career by subgroups.

% of experienced professionals who would consider a digital career		No message (n = 562)	Testimony + never too late (n = 524)	Diversity (n = 487)	Value (n = 454)	Testimony + passion (n = 486)
Gender	Male (n = 1,103)	56%	48%	55%	47%	58%
	Female (n = 1,409)	48%	43%	46%	44%	47%
Region	North (n = 589)	53%	45%	56%	48%	50%
	South & East (n = 1,093)	51%	45%	48%	48%	54%
	Midlands (n = 578)	48%	40%	45%	35%	48%
	London (n = 253)	56%	59%	55%	46%	60%
Socioeconomic status	High (n =725)	59%	58%	54%	54%	61%
	Medium (n = 1,637)	49%	40%	49%	44%	50%
	Low (n = 173)	45%	45%	43%	31%	38%

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - early career switchers.

Reasons why people would consider a digital career.

Of early career switchers who would consider a digital career, % who would because…	No message (n = 412)	Ease (n = 308)	Social impact (n = 366)	Testimony (n = 386)	Job demand (n = 366)
They could work flexibly	59%	58%	59%	57%	53%
It sounds interesting	44%	46%	52%	50%	52%
They could work in a diverse range of sectors	39%	40%	39%	55%	48%
They'd like to try something different	34%	42%	43%	43%	36%
It would challenge them	35%	30%	34%	30%	30%
It pays well	38%	39%	31%	33%	47%
It sounds important	14%	15%	17%	15%	20%
They know someone who enjoys their digital career	19%	13%	15%	14%	16%
It's similar to what they do now	10%	10%	11%	11%	10%

Descriptives only, not tested for significant differences.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - experienced professionals.

Reasons why people would consider a digital career.

Of experienced professionals who would consider a digital career, % who would because…	No message (n = 289)	Testimony + never too late (n = 237)	Diversity (n = 241)	Value (n = 204)	Testimony + passion (n = 253)
They could work flexibly	58%	59%	52%	55%	58%
It sounds interesting	48%	62%	59%	52%	55%
They could work in a diverse range of sectors	54%	52%	48%	46%	48%
They'd like to try something different	42%	48%	48%	49%	50%
It would challenge them	43%	47%	49%	42%	48%
It pays well	35%	36%	33%	28%	35%
It sounds important	12%	13%	14%	8%	16%
They know someone who enjoys their digital career	11%	11%	9%	8%	9%
It's similar to what they do now	12%	10%	9%	10%	8%

Descriptives only, not tested for significant differences.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - early career switchers.

Reasons why people would not consider a digital career.

Of early career switchers who would not consider a digital career, % who would not because…	No message (n = 145)	Ease (n = 164)	Social impact (n = 157)	Testimony (n = 119)	Job demand (n = 138)
They enjoy their current career	43%	43%	39%	38%	42%
They don't want to start their career over	29%	32%	21%	14%	33%
They don't think it would interest them	25%	31%	31%	29%	24%
They are not good enough at maths	21%	19%	15%	17%	19%
They don't have the right education for it	21%	13%	20%	18%	15%
They don't know what it would be like	14%	16%	27%	13%	14%
It would be too difficult for them	13%	10%	11%	8%	11%
It's not for people like them	8%	11%	11%	13%	11%
It doesn't involve working with people	12%	7%	10%	10%	12%
It would be boring	10%	9%	9%	14%	8%
It doesn't involve helping others	4%	7%	8%	7%	6%
There aren't many jobs where they want to live	9%	8%	5%	3%	5%

Descriptives only, not tested for significant differences.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - experienced professionals.

Reasons why people would not consider a digital career.

Of experienced professionals who would not consider a digital career, % who would not because…	No message (n = 273)	Testimony + never too late (n = 287)	Diversity (n = 246)	Value (n = 250)	Testimony + passion (n = 233)
They enjoy their current career	32%	34%	35%	29%	30%
They don't want to start their career over	32%	43%	37%	36%	34%
They don't think it would interest them	25%	30%	27%	27%	25%
They are not good enough at maths	14%	14%	11%	12%	14%
They don't have the right education for it	14%	10%	11%	9%	11%
They don't know what it would be like	13%	11%	9%	11%	13%
It would be too difficult for them	17%	17%	17%	14%	17%
It's not for people like them	11%	14%	11%	13%	12%
It doesn't involve working with people	8%	9%	8%	8%	10%
It would be boring	8%	10%	9%	8%	11%
It doesn't involve helping others	3%	8%	7%	4%	5%
There aren't many jobs where they want to live	4%	3%	5%	4%	3%

Descriptives only, not tested for significant differences.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix.

Careers people find interesting

36%	Research roles (e.g. user researcher and operational researcher)	**21%**	Writing roles (e.g. technical author)
34%	Data and analytical roles (e.g. data scientists, business analyst, data analyst, forensic computer analyst, information scientist)	**20%**	Developer or engineer roles (e.g. software engineer/developer, app developer, AI developer, web developer, robotics engineer)
33%	Content roles (e.g. social media manager; vlogger; web content manager or editor)	**20%**	Scientist roles (e.g. AI research scientist, research software engineer, AI healthcare researcher)
28%	Support roles (e.g. networking, IT support technician, database administrator)	**18%**	Technician roles (e.g. 3D printing or IT support technician)
27%	Clerical roles (e.g. librarian, library assistant)	**16%**	Engineer roles (e.g. network/ IT support or robotics engineer, database administrator)
26%	Computer games developer or tester	**15%**	Robotics roles (e.g. robotics engineer, mechatronics & robotics engineer)
24%	Product roles (e.g. digital product manager, digital delivery manager or digital product owner)	**12%**	Electrical roles (e.g. Digital hardware engineer, electronics engineer, semiconductor engineer)
24%	Design roles (e.g. web or user experience (UX) designer)	**6%**	Geospatial technician; Cartographer
22%	Security roles (e.g. cyber intelligence officer, IT security coordinator, security service personnel)	**< 1%**	Other (e.g. “Data input”, “Music production”, “Graphic designer”, “Sales”)
21%	Business roles (e.g. systems analyst, solutions architect, technical architect)	**3%**	Don’t know (exclusive)

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix.

Careers people find interesting by age group.

32%	42%	Research roles (e.g. user researcher and operational researcher)
33%	36%	Data and analytical roles (e.g. data scientists, business analyst, data analyst, forensic computer analyst, information scientist)
40%	25%	Content roles (e.g. social media manager; vlogger; web content manager or editor)
26%	32%	Support roles (e.g. networking, IT support technician, database administrator)
21%	35%	Clerical roles (e.g. librarian, library assistant)
29%	21%	Computer games developer or tester
28%	19%	Product roles (e.g. digital product manager, digital delivery manager or digital product owner)
26%	20%	Design roles (e.g. web or user experience (UX) designer)
19%	25%	Security roles (e.g. cyber intelligence officer, IT security coordinator, security service personnel)
22%	19%	Business roles (e.g. systems analyst, solutions architect, technical architect)
20%	21%	Writing roles (e.g. technical author)
22%	18%	Developer or engineer roles (e.g. software engineer/developer, app developer, AI developer, web developer, robotics engineer)
19%	19%	Scientist roles (e.g. AI research scientist, research software engineer, AI healthcare researcher)
18%	18%	Technician roles (e.g. 3D printing or IT support technician)
15%	17%	Engineer roles (e.g. network/ IT support or robotics engineer, database administrator)
14%	15%	Robotics roles (e.g. robotics engineer, mechatronics & robotics engineer)
11%	13%	Electrical roles (e.g. Digital hardware engineer, electronics engineer, semiconductor engineer)
5%	8%	Geospatial technician; Cartographer
< 1%	< 1%	Other (e.g. “Data input”, “Music production”, “Graphic designer”, “Sales”)
3%	3%	Don’t know (exclusive)

Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

For many role categories, the most favoured roles tended to be those which are better-known and less niche

Of those who would consider **data/ analytical roles** (n = 612 / 443),

Of those who would consider **content roles** (n = 727 / 296),

Of those who would consider **gaming roles** (n = 525 / 260),

Of those who would consider **design roles** (n = 486 / 242),

Of those who would consider **developer/ engineer roles** (n = 409 / 216),

% who said this role sounds most interesting…

59% 50%	Data analyst	39% 40%	Content creator	41% 45%	Computer game tester	55% 55%	Web designer	35% 30%	Software developer
19% 20%	Data scientist	24% 20%	Social media manager	22% 21%	Computer game developer	13% 17%	Web architect	24% 22%	Web developer
11% 11%	Data engineer	12% 16%	Content strategy specialist	20% 18%	Game play tester	12% 9%	UX designer	23% 22%	Software engineer
8% 12%	Data storyteller	13% 9%	Influencer	11% 6%	Professional gamer	12% 8%	Interface designer	15% 15%	Programmer
3% 5%	Machine learning scientist	10% 11%	Social media specialist	5% 8%	Computer game programmer	7% 9%	Front end developer	2% 8%	Software artisan
1% 2%	None of the above	2% 4%	None of the above	< 1% 2%	None of the above	1% 3%	None of the above	1% 3%	None of the above

Data collected by BIT on 10 to 19 March 2023.

Appendix - early career switchers.

Sentiment breakdown

Of early career switchers, % who think the message…	Ease (n = 472)	Social impact (n = 523)	Testimony (n = 505)	Job demand (n = 504)
Overall sentiment score (average of the four items below)	56%	56%	59%	58%
… is trustworthy	57%	58%	61%	62%
… is relevant to them	43%	47%	47%	44%
… made them feel that doing a digital career is accessible and achievable	64%	58%	65%	63%
…made a career change feel appropriate at this stage	48%	44%	45%	44%
… has the right amount of information	67%	74%	78%	78%

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, p < .05.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - early career switchers.

Overall comprehension score by subgroups

Overall sentiment score		Ease (n = 472)	Social impact (n = 523)	Testimony (n = 505)	Job demand (n = 504)
Gender	Male (n = 674)	59%	64%	67%	64%
	Female (n = 1,328)	57%	57%	61%	60%
Region	North (n = 440)	57%	55%	62%	58%
	South & East (n = 756)	40%	56%	63%	59%
	Midlands (n = 460)	57%	63%	62%	59%
	London (n = 348)	60%	61%	65%	64%
Socioeconomic status	High (n = 566)	63%	63%	68%	62%
	Medium (n = 1,282)	56%	57%	61%	63%
	Low (n = 134)	54%	62%	58%	54%

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - experienced professionals.

Sentiment breakdown

The ‘Value’ message performed significantly worse than other messages on all sentiment outcomes.

Of experienced professionals, % who think the message…	Testimony + never too late (n = 524)	Diversity (n = 487)	Value (n = 454)	Testimony + passion (n = 486)
Overall sentiment score (average of the four items below)	55%	58%	52%	58%
… is trustworthy	63%	73%	67%	71%
… is relevant to them	34%	38%	30%	37%
… made them feel that doing a digital career is accessible and achievable	61%	67%	54%	66%
…made a career change feel appropriate at this stage	38%	37%	33%	41%
… has the right amount of information	81%	79%	77%	77%

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.

Appendix - experienced professionals.

Overall comprehension score by subgroups - Experienced professionals

Overall sentiment score		Testimony + never too late (n = 524)	Diversity (n = 487)	Value (n = 454)	Testimony + passion (n = 486)
Gender	Male (n = 844)	62%	66%	57%	63%
	Female (n = 1,106)	58%	62%	57%	63%
Region	North (n = 465)	64%	69%	58%	62%
	South & East (n = 829)	57%	62%	60%	62%
	Midlands (n = 461)	59%	63%	51%	63%
	London (n = 196)	62%	62%	55%	69%
Socioeconomic status	High (n = 725)	63%	63%	68%	62%
	Medium (n = 1,637)	56%	57%	61%	63%
	Low (n = 173)	54%	62%	58%	54%

Green shading identifies statistically significantly highest (or joint highest) value within row, $p < .05$.
All regressions are controlled for gender, region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status.
Data collected by BIT on 10 - 19 March 2023.