Anyone for T?

Awareness of T Levels in England | November 2022

EngineeringUK

T Levels have the potential to deliver the skilled engineering workforce we need

Launched in 2020

3 engineering-related T Levels available

Roughly equivalent to 3 A levels

2-year course, includes **45 days of industry placement**

Awareness of T Levels is low

37% of young people surveyed aged 11 to 18 have heard of T Levels

27% of parents surveyed have heard of T Levels

18% of parents surveyed know a lot/a fair amount about T Levels

43,500 industry placements needed to 2024/25

9% of employers surveyed currently host one or more students on a T Level placement

32% of employers surveyed say lack of knowledge is a barrier to offering placements

Of employers surveyed

Only **28%** say they have both heard of T Levels and understand what they involve

72% are aware of T Levels

19% of SMEs understand T Levels

39% of larger employers understand T Levels

63% don't know about shared placements

57% haven't heard about tailored advice and support

52% haven't heard about webinars, guides and case studies

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Awareness of T Levels in England

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This short report combines findings from EngineeringUK research including the Engineering Brand Monitor and our recent joint report with Make UK "Unlocking Talent: Ensuring T Levels deliver the workforce of the future". It also draws on reports from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and National Foundation for Educational Research.

Findings suggest that more needs to be done both for students, parents and employers to raise awareness of T Levels. This is against the backdrop of an estimated shortfall of 43,500 industry placements, a key component for students looking to take up T Levels.

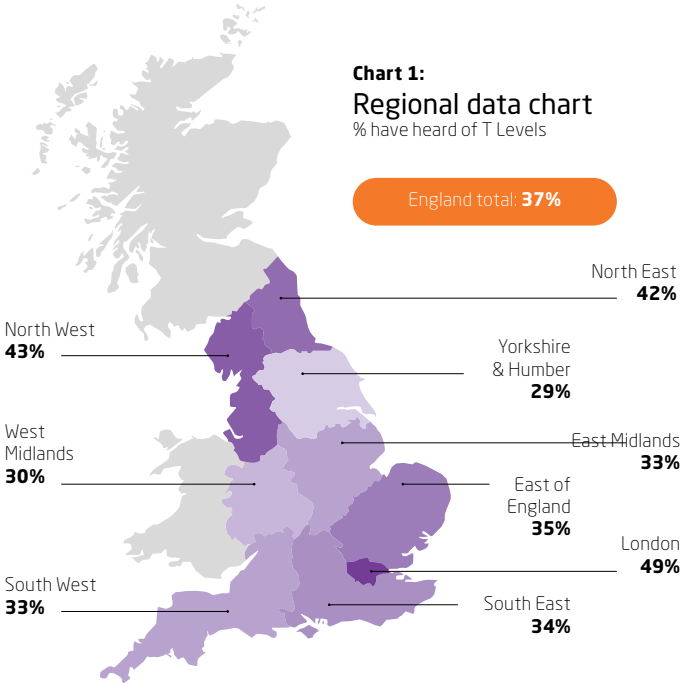
The first T Levels were launched in 2020. They are 2-year courses which are taken after GCSEs and broadly equate to 3 A Levels. A combination of classroom-based learning and an industry placement, T Levels provide students with the opportunity to put their knowledge and skills into practice, gain first-hand experience of the world of work and understand future career opportunities. The first cohort to take T Levels in engineering and manufacturing started in September this year, with T Levels in construction and digital now in their third year.

From the perspective of young people

Given their relatively recent introduction, young people may not be expected to have comprehensive knowledge about T Levels. However, we were surprised to see that the majority (63%) of young people did not know what T Levels were at all. When broken down by age group, only 30% of those aged 11 to 14 (Key Stage 3), and 35% of 14 to 16 year olds (Key Stage 4) and 16 to 18 year olds (Key Stage 5) respectively said they knew what T Levels are.[1]

Breaking awareness down by region (Chart 1), we can see that almost half of young people in London (49%) have heard of T Levels – the highest in England, while fewer than a third of young people in Yorkshire & Humber (29%) have done so – the lowest in England. The average for England sits at 37%.

Chart 1:
Regional data chart
% have heard of T Levels



[1] https://www.engineeringuk.com/media/318108/euk2708-parents-report-fv.pdf

The role and perspective of parents and teachers

Young people say that their main source of advice on both their education and careers is their parents. There are marked differences on the types of educational pathways parents recommend to their children based on their own educational background. Parents with a higher level of education are more likely to recommend an academic route, regardless of their income level, while parents with a lower level of education are more likely to recommend a vocational route, also regardless of income level.

Recent research by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers showed 1 in 4 (27%) parents had heard of T Levels, with the highest awareness among parents of 16 to 19 year olds (39%)[2]. However, within that proportion, fewer than 2 in 10 (18%) said they knew a lot or a fair amount about T Levels.

Of school leaders and classroom teachers surveyed by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)[3], only half (52%) had heard of T Levels. However, school leaders were substantially more aware (85%) than classroom teachers (41%).

From the perspective of employers

Recent data collected by Make UK[4] and EngineeringUK indicates that, while nearly three-quarters (72%) of employers surveyed said that they have heard of T Levels, fewer than a third (28%) told us that they had both heard of them and understand what they involve. The same proportion (28%) have not heard of them at all.

Awareness was lower among SMEs surveyed, which is a concern, given the large proportion of engineering and technology jobs held in the SME sector. Over 6 in 10 (63%) of representatives from SMEs had heard of T Levels, compared with over 8 in 10 (83%) from larger employers. The gap in understanding of T Levels follows the same pattern at 20 percentage points lower in SMEs (19%) compared with larger employers (39%).

Only 1 in 10 (9%) of employers surveyed currently host one or more students on a T Level placement, meaning that 9 in 10 employers who, theoretically, could host a T Level student, currently do not. Looking ahead, just over 1 in 10 (12%) additional employers are planning on a T Level placement in the coming year, bringing the total number up to 2 in 10 (21%). Almost one-third of employers (32%) said that a lack of knowledge about what was expected was a barrier to them offering any placements or more placements.

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When asked which additional steps could be taken to enable their company to offer T Level industry placements (or more placements) going forward, 26% selected the following option from a list: more practical guides, videos and case studies specific to manufacturing and engineering. These findings suggest that there is real potential to build upon existing resources, tools and networks, both to expand awareness of T Levels overall and to extend the range of tailored support and information for engineering and manufacturing employers.

[2] https://www.imeche.org/docs/default-source/1-oscar/reports-policy-statements-and-documents/t_levels_2022_01_07_web.pdf?sfvrsn=2

[3] https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED604438.pdf

[4] https://www.engineeringuk.com/media/318632/unlocking-talent-ensuring-t-level-deliver-the-workforce-of-the-future-final.pdf

www.engineeringuk.com/tlevelawareness

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