

UK Graduate Job Vacancies Fall to Lowest Level in a Decade



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UK graduate job vacancies drop to a decade low. The “cost of living” Prime Minister’s Chancellor has proposed militarisation as one way to offset youth unemployment.

Details. Only 8,383 graduate vacancies were advertised in July 2026, down 45.6% from 15,397 a year earlier. This is the lowest figure since records began in 2016, and a fall of around 85% from the 2017 peak of more than 55,000. The decline also comes as a [record](#) 262,820 UK 18-year-olds were accepted into university or college courses in 2026, up 3% from last year.

► AI is one factor behind the decline in entry-level recruitment. Employers are increasingly using AI for administrative and junior-level tasks, reducing the need to hire inexperienced workers. Additionally, 2.3% of all UK job [advertisements](#) now mention AI, almost double the rate 15 months earlier, with around 18,000 advertisements each month referring to AI skills.

► Some commentators [argue](#) that the figures overstate the crisis because many of the jobs are likely just not advertised as “graduate positions”. However, 30 of 38 [tracked](#) entry-level occupations had fewer vacancies by April 2026, including declines of 27% in software engineering, 28% in graphic design and 29% in accounting. The argument also does not consider the aforementioned effects of AI.

► UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham has [proposed](#) reforms giving teenagers earlier access to technical education, apprenticeships and connection with employers, including routes into construction and other skilled manual occupations. Regarding this, he [said](#), “Britain will value the hard hat every bit as much as the graduation cap”.

Context. The wider British labour market is also under pressure. More than 1 million people [aged](#) 16-24 were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in January-March 2026, representing 13.5% of the age group, up 89,000 from a year earlier.

► The government's emphasis on apprenticeships and manual work [coincides](#) with Britain's drive to rebuild strategic industries and expand military production. The government has repeatedly [attempted](#) to portray militarisation as a solution to economic hardship.

► Prime Minister Andy Burnham [said](#) he appointed former Defence Secretary John Healey as Chancellor “precisely because of his commitment to defence”. The Chancellor has previously [argued](#) that increased defence spending could stimulate British industry and employment.

► The deterioration of [graduate](#) employment follows a wider transformation of the labour market by AI. Previous research has [shown](#) that AI allows capitalists to redistribute tasks among [fewer workers](#), intensify workloads and reduce the need for specialised labour.