



Infrastructure
Matters



LSESU
CONSULTANCY
SOCIETY

Bridging the Gap

Infrastructure Careers from
a Social Science Perspective



Foreword

On a chilly autumn morning in 1987, I stood at the corner of a dilapidated demolition site, listening to the late Patrick McAuslan, LSE Professor of Public Law. He introduced his students to planning law by taking us to the Isle of Dogs, where less than a year later vast towers would begin to rise. As he discussed how law enabled and secured the project master-planning, regeneration and infrastructure necessary to underpin this new urban vision, I had a realisation – this stuff was fascinating and important. This initial excitement moved me from the conventional legal career that I had planned, to one dedicated to the infrastructure sector, which remains the focus of my consulting work today.

This report seeks to excite a new group of people, especially those who have chosen to study in the broad fields of the social sciences, finance or even law. Well-put on site by Professor McAuslan, but sometimes forgotten in parts of the social science community, people who explore and manage how infrastructure impacts the fabric of society and the economy are vital to its promotion, delivery and quality. Technical, typically STEM skills are needed. However, developers need to understand and communicate the purpose of their project, assess its effectiveness against a wide range of social and economic measures, and secure its delivery to meet policy or legal requirements. Without the deployment of social science skills in infrastructure delivery, community involvement and good design, permission and funding will pose significant challenges.

There is a risk that social science people at the start of their careers never get to understand or experience the infrastructure sector – not everyone has an accidental epiphany on a university trip. The responsibility for that first understanding and excitement falls on those within the industry now. That's why this report exists: to bring people in, and help them to advocate and advise within and for the sector themselves in future.

The vast development I saw as a student became Canary Wharf. It is now so well-established that it has fresh challenges: changing work habits, international competition, and infrastructure that has been re-thought since its construction in the '80s and needs re-thinking again. As well as being my inspiration, Canary Wharf continues to tell the story of the infrastructure coalface – the necessity of adaption, and the importance of innovation.

I hope this report can be part of this story for a new generation. Its findings are clear – infrastructure has impact. But we need to close an information gap about infrastructure careers to ensure people can get involved, especially those with social scientific backgrounds and insights. By bringing fresh eyes to the world of infrastructure, I'm confident we can foster the conversations that will catalyse the changes we believe possible.



Rynd Smith,
Managing Director,
Infrastructure Matters,
LSE Alumnus

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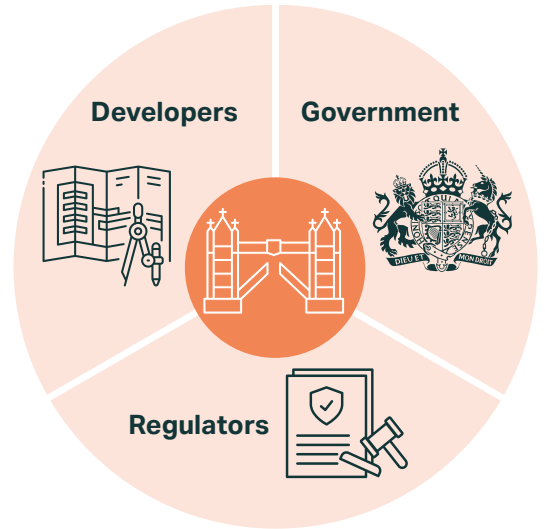
Infrastructure at a glance

What is infrastructure?

Infrastructure is the basic systems and services that a country or organisation uses in order to work effectively. It includes hard infrastructure such as transportation, utilities, telecommunications, energy and industrial infrastructure, and soft infrastructure such as social, community, cultural and financial infrastructure.

Who are the key players in infrastructure?

Within infrastructure, there is a range of developers, regulators, facilitators, interested parties, and government bodies. Of these, developers are the largest players by revenue often working across hundreds of projects at the same time with thousands of employees.



Developers

The five biggest developers in infrastructure, with a combined revenue of over £20 billion.

Developers of a project are brought in by promoters to be the designers, planners, and builders.

Regulators

Collaborating with promoters and holding developers and projects to account is essential to ensure targets in social value, cost, and timelines are delivered.

Government

Various government departments and arm's length bodies are involved and interact during the lifespan of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

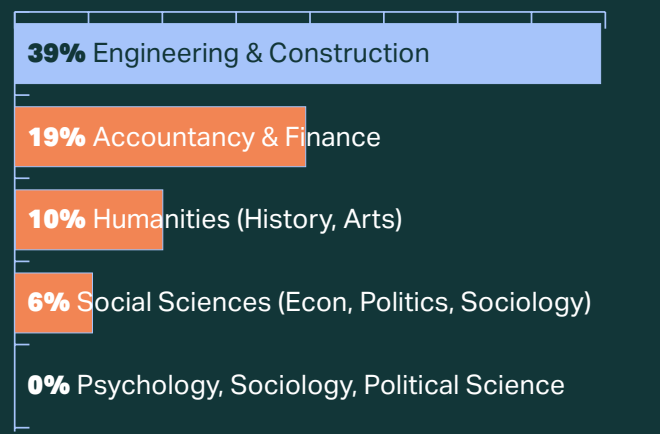
Who runs the sector?

Despite the wide number of skills needed within the infrastructure sector, those in the most senior positions come from a small group of disciplines, primarily engineering.

Engineering dominates the C-suite. 39% of leaders with known education hold a first degree in engineering or construction-related disciplines, rising to 50% among CEOs specifically.

Social sciences are virtually absent. Only 2 leaders out of 31 hold a first degree in a social science discipline, both in economics. No leaders studied sociology, political science, psychology, geography, or urban planning at undergraduate level.

Analysis of 31 industry leaders with public education backgrounds



Key sector case studies

As Infrastructure is a broad term covering a range of sectors, businesses, and regulatory environments, we have chosen three key case studies of sectors within infrastructure to highlight challenges, trends, and growth of the sectors.

Given their position at the intersection of the global energy transition and decades of underinvestment, nuclear, Renewables, and Transport have been selected. With significant current policy support and capital deployment, these sectors represent the current societal need for cheaper, greener energy and improved mobility and connectivity.

NUCLEAR

Nuclear energy provides an extensive supply of electricity making it a reliable low-carbon option for nourishing long-term energy infrastructure.

Nuclear energy generates around 15% of UK electricity and the total operational capacity is approximately 5.9–6.5 GWe.

Key Players



Following WW2, the government established the Atomic Energy Research Establishment (AERE) in 1946, with the first reactor, GLEEP, beginning operation in August 1947.

In 1956, Calder Hall, which was the first commercial-scale nuclear power station in the world, was officially opened. It generated electricity and produced plutonium for military uses.

Challenges within the industry



Long Construction Timelines

Extensive time is required for planning, consenting and delivery, with delays common at every stage



Skills Shortage

53% of the UK nuclear workforce is over 45 and the industry has an urgent need for regulatory specialists



Nuclear Waste

For new nuclear projects to receive consent, there must be a permanent nuclear waste solution. The UK is yet to create a geological disposal facility



Supply Chain

SMRs and AMRs face licensing and supply chain bottlenecks while Gen IV technologies are in the process of development

Future of the Industry

Nuclear energy is a key part of meeting Net Zero targets and delivering energy security in the UK's Civil Nuclear Roadmap to 2050, targeting up to 24 GW by 2050 (or over 30 SMRs)



Small Modular Reactors



Advanced Modular Reactors



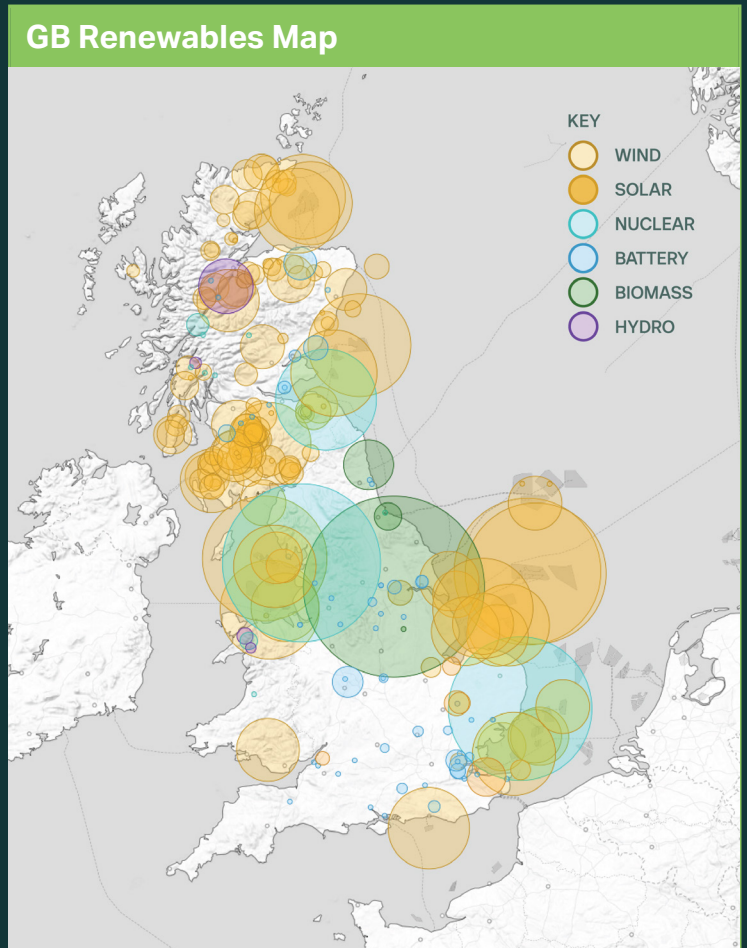
Nuclear Waste – Geological Disposal

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The renewables sector involves energy suppliers, grid developers, and generation equipment manufacturers. Firms in each sub-sector must collaborate effectively to ensure a widespread supply of affordable, eco-friendly energy.

The sector has expanded rapidly over the last 50 years, as the world accelerated towards lowering carbon emissions. Since the Clean Air Act 1952, the UK government has heavily subsidised renewable energy through 'obligations' to reduce pollution.

Currently, 41% of the UK's electricity demand is satisfied by renewable energy, 60% of which is wind power. Recent technological development is concentrated around energy storage and green manufacturing, which aim to improve consistency of renewable output and reduce the environmental harms of producing generation assets.



Challenges within the industry



Reliability

Dependence on inconsistent weather conditions in the UK



Construction Emissions

Construction and manufacturing equipment often use rare minerals and are not sustainable



Grid Infrastructure

Network Grid is struggling to keep up with the quick development of new renewables infrastructure



Timescales

Renewable generation facilities have lengthy timescales to install and expand

Future of the Industry

With major investment into offshore wind, green hydrogen, and solar farms there is rapid expansion across the sector. Government backing and private innovation is positioning the UK as a global leader in the clean energy transition.



Government Targets



Innovation



Expansion

TRANSPORT

The UK transport sector consists of roads, railways, ports, airports and urban transit systems that are pivotal in enabling the movement of people and goods across domestic and international markets. The UK has one of the most developed transport systems in Europe, with extensive motorway networks, one of the largest rail networks in Europe, and major global aviation hubs such as Heathrow.

It has evolved from 19th-century canals and railways to a modern network formed by road dominance, globalised supply chains, and growing logistics and warehousing capacity. Today, the sector plays a significant role in economic output and is increasingly shaped by decarbonisation policy, technological innovation, and structural rail reform.

Meanwhile, transport continues to expand its contribution to GDP, with sector output reaching record levels in 2025. Today, growth is shaped by technology adoption, electrification, and policy on decarbonisation, rail reform, and urban mobility.

Also, the nationalisation of trains signals a reorganisation of the UK rail operating model. Through the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024, operators will transition into public ownership from 2025 to 2027.

Key Players



Challenges within the industry



Cost Overrun

Weak cost forecasting, complex system integration, and fragmented governance leads to cost overrun



Policy Context

Safety concerns further shape policy, with public backlash leading to the cancellation of new smart motorways



Emissions

Transport is the largest emitting sector of UK greenhouse gases

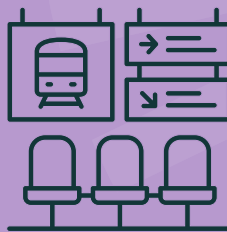


Regional Inequality

Unequal transport investment favours London over the North and Midlands, widening economic and connectivity gaps

Future of the Industry

With better public transport, connectivity, and access, productivity and economic opportunities can thrive. Projects like the Lower Thames Crossing are seeking to facilitate local, regional, and national growth whilst prioritising low emissions and decarbonisation.



Finalising Rail Nationalisation



Decarbonisation



Expansion

Road to Delivery: Silvertown Tunnel

The Silvertown Tunnel is a TfL-delivered Thames river crossing connecting Silvertown and Greenwich Peninsula, designed to relieve Blackwall Tunnel congestion, improve resilience, and support cross-river public transport. Below is the path TfL took to gain consent for the Tunnel, the standard process for all Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.



1 Pre-application

Following the Mayor's 2012 announcement intending to build the Silvertown Tunnel, TfL conducted informal consultation (3,900 responses with 80% support).

3 Pre-examination

After acceptance, the Planning Inspectorate invited and reviewed representations from statutory and public consultations, appointed the Examining Authority, and defined the key issues and procedures for examination.



Department for Transport

5 Recommendation & Decision

At the conclusion of the examination, the Examining Authority submitted its report and recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who granted development consent for the Silvertown Tunnel.

2 Acceptance

The Planning Inspectorate reviewed TfL's Development Consent Order (DCO) application for completeness and compliance, formally accepting the Silvertown Tunnel for examination.



Planning Inspectorate

4 Examination

The Examining Authority conducted a formal examination of the application, considering written and oral evidence before submitting its recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling MP.

River
Thames



7 Construction

Construction commenced in May 2020. Works included tunnel boring beneath the Thames, with the tunnel structurally completed in August 2022, followed by fit-out, systems installation, and testing through 2023-2024.



160% increase in bus journeys on routes 108, 129 and SL4 since the Silvertown Tunnel scheme launched



9% of trips through the two tunnels is by public transport



125-130 cyclists use the cycle shuttle on a typical day

6 Post-Decision

Following consent, TfL progressed procurement, identifying the Riverlinx consortium as the preferred bidder in May 2019, awarding them the design, build, finance and maintain contract.

8 Tunnel Opened

The Silvertown Tunnel opened in April 2025, with road user charging implemented as part of its operation, enabling a new river crossing between Silvertown and the Greenwich Peninsula.

Student Perceptions on Infrastructure Careers

When we began writing this report we strongly believed that there was a disconnect between social science students and the infrastructure sector - what we didn't know was what caused that gap.

As students attending a world-leading social science specialist university we understood the value that social scientists could bring to the sector, and through our research we came to understand the impactful careers that students could embark upon within infrastructure.

As such we undertook a student survey to assess views of infrastructure and careers within the sector to understand this gap and help inform possible solutions to this issue, the findings of which are detailed in the following section.

Survey Approach



Methodology

In December 2025, we published a 12 question survey to research university students' perceptions of careers in the infrastructure industry. We had 2 objectives:

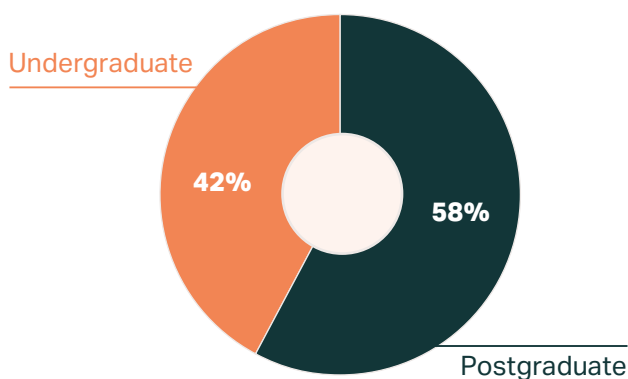
1. To measure students' social awareness of the industry
2. To measure students' career awareness (e.g. pathways, prestige, and career prospects).



Respondent Make-Up

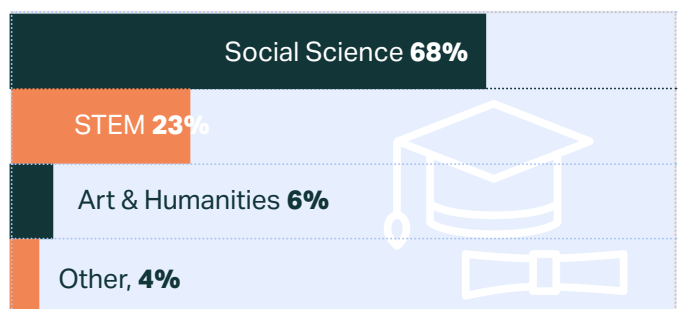
We targeted students at London universities, particularly those from the London School of Economics (LSE), receiving 84 responses - 93% of which attended LSE. We also aimed to receive responses from across the academic lifespan to reflect the makeup of universities, the survey successfully yielded a mix of undergraduates and postgraduates.

Stage of Education



There was strong presence of senior undergraduates and postgraduates (56%) improving the likelihood that responses reflect mature career perceptions, as students who are more advanced in their educational journey will naturally have had more time to reflect on career pathways.

Degree Types

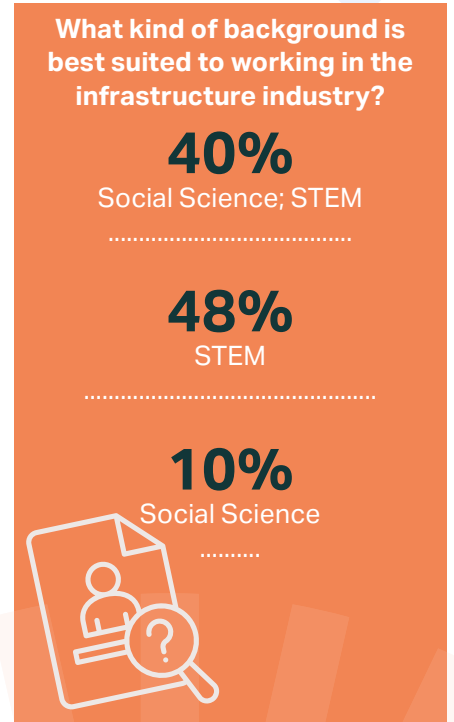
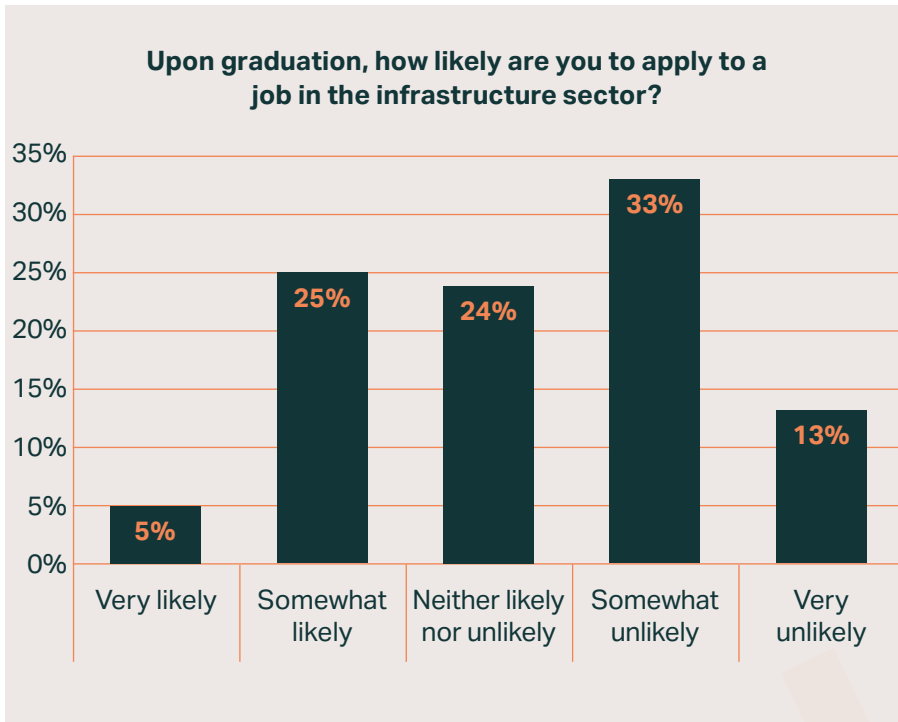


Overall, out of the 84 responses, 19 students were studying STEM degrees. This is likely because most respondents attended LSE, which does not teach natural science courses. A potential caveat for STEM inferences is a small sample size of 19. But, we believe that this is sufficient to evidence the strongest trends within STEM responses. The low response rate from STEM students strengthens inferences on the perceptions of social science students, that our analysis focuses on.

Key Insights

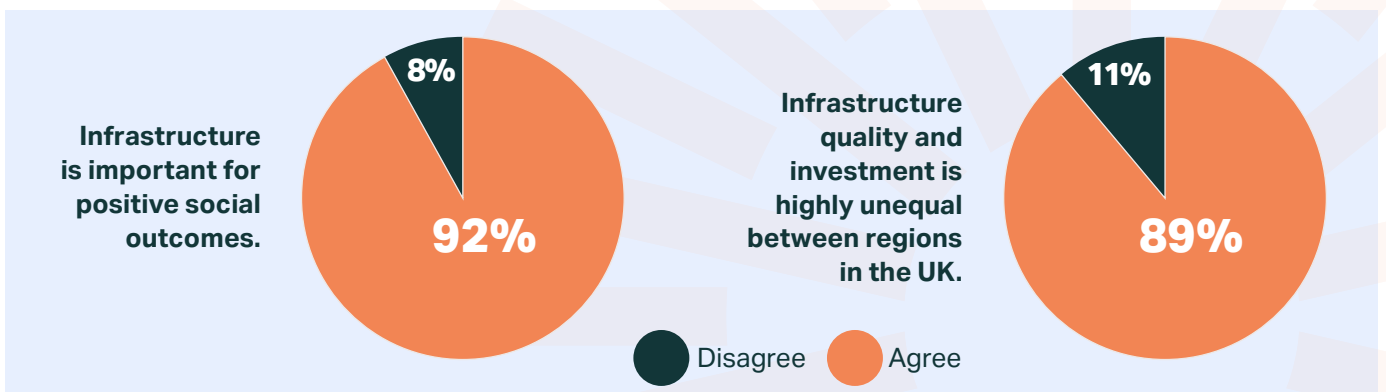
Social science students face barriers to entry

Although 88% of students see strong future prospects in infrastructure, 88% associate infrastructure careers with STEM backgrounds and 75% are unaware of entry pathways. Not only does this suggest a clear barrier for social science students in entering infrastructure, it also implies a failure on the behalf of universities, private companies, and governments in appealing to these students. Given the salience of political-economic challenges facing the infrastructure industry, the skill set of the social sciences is more important than ever.



Social science students recognise infrastructure's social and political role

At the same time, 92% of students agree that infrastructure is important for positive social outcomes, and 89% agree that there is regional inequality in UK infrastructure. This suggests that, despite being disincentivised to enter the sector, students recognise economic-political problems that provide a clear role for social science graduates within infrastructure.



Yet, when asked to rank the most important infrastructure segments, students consistently downplayed the role of professional services in addressing poor management and corruption. These two issues are the very issues they identified as the leading causes of failed infrastructure projects.

Students' knowledge of economic-political problems offers a promising platform for universities, private companies, and governments to tap into. Ultimately, given the salience of economic-political challenges in infrastructure, efforts to plug this gap of social science graduates should be a high priority. In the following two sections, we more deeply explore the trends of our survey with the aim of further supporting this argument.

Social science students face barriers to entry

The survey found that, despite the diversity of jobs that exist within infrastructure, the majority of respondents (48%) believed that STEM backgrounds are best suited to work in the infrastructure industry, only 10% of respondents selected the social sciences as the best suited background for infrastructure. Although we do not claim that social sciences are the most important, the fact that 48% selected only STEM supports the claim that the role of a social science toolkit is under appreciated by students. Furthermore, we observed that 46% of students reported they were somewhat or very unlikely to enter the infrastructure sector, with only 30% reporting any positive likelihood – illustrating a strong negative skew to student perceptions of infrastructure careers.

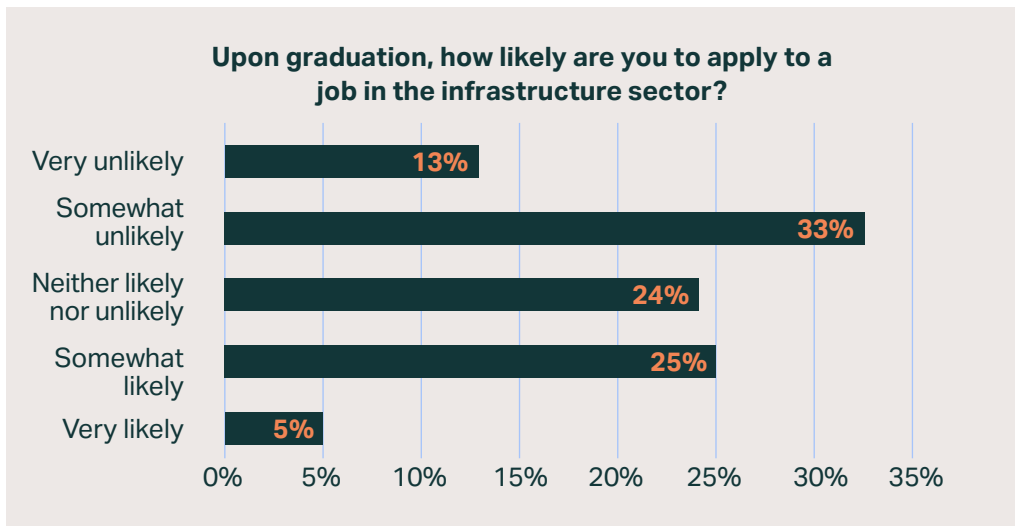
What kind of background is best suited to working in the infrastructure industry?

40%

Social Science; STEM

48%
STEM

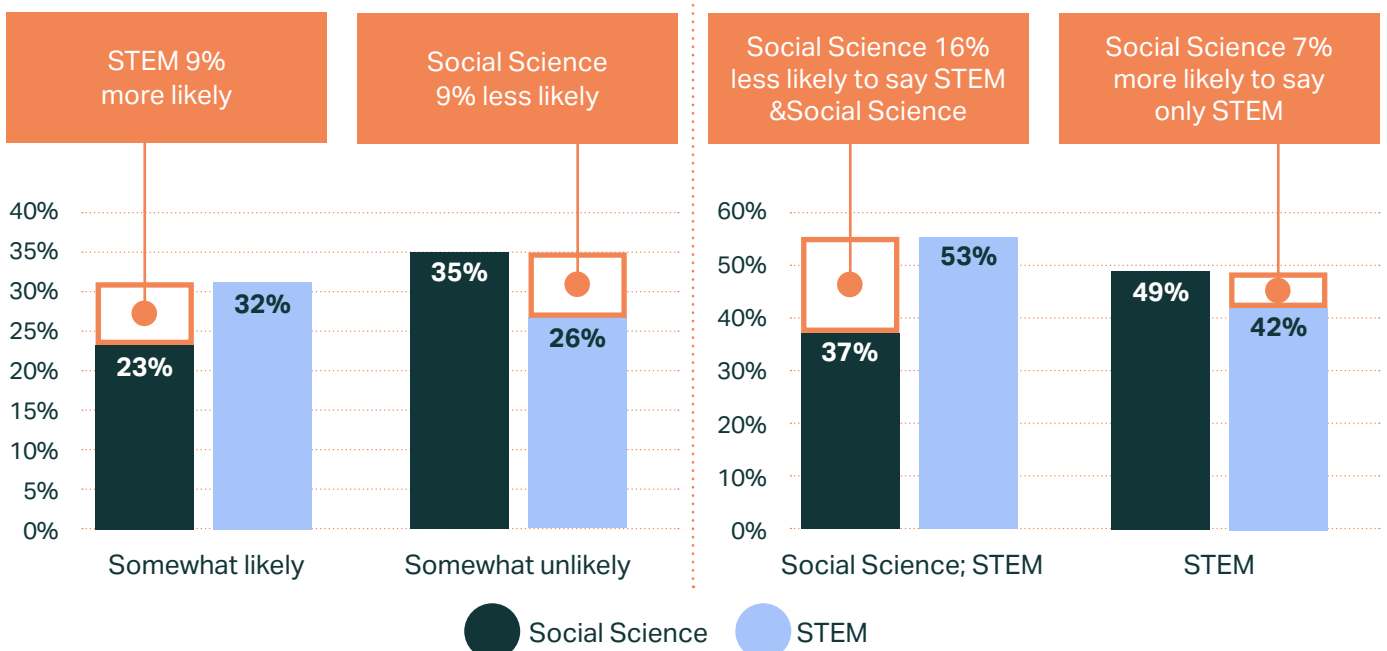
10%
Social Science



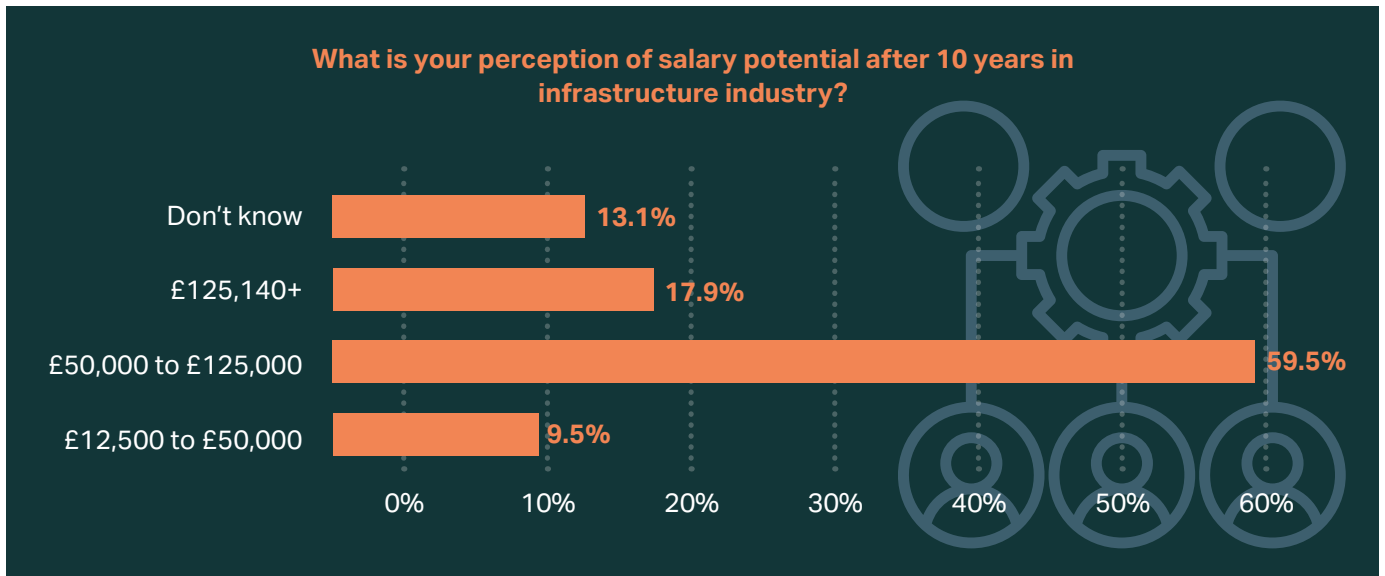
The trend of social science students being more disenchanted with infrastructure careers grows when we look at the differences between STEM and Social Science responses. Our survey suggested a possible trend that STEM students are more likely to recognise the relevance of professional services as well as being more unlikely to pursue a career in infrastructure. Whilst non-STEM students are more inclined to see STEM as the most suitable background for the industry. They are also more likely to report that entering infrastructure is somewhat unlikely for them. However, we cannot claim this is a highly reliable trend due to a limited STEM-only sample size.

Upon graduation, how likely are you to apply to a job in the infrastructure sector?

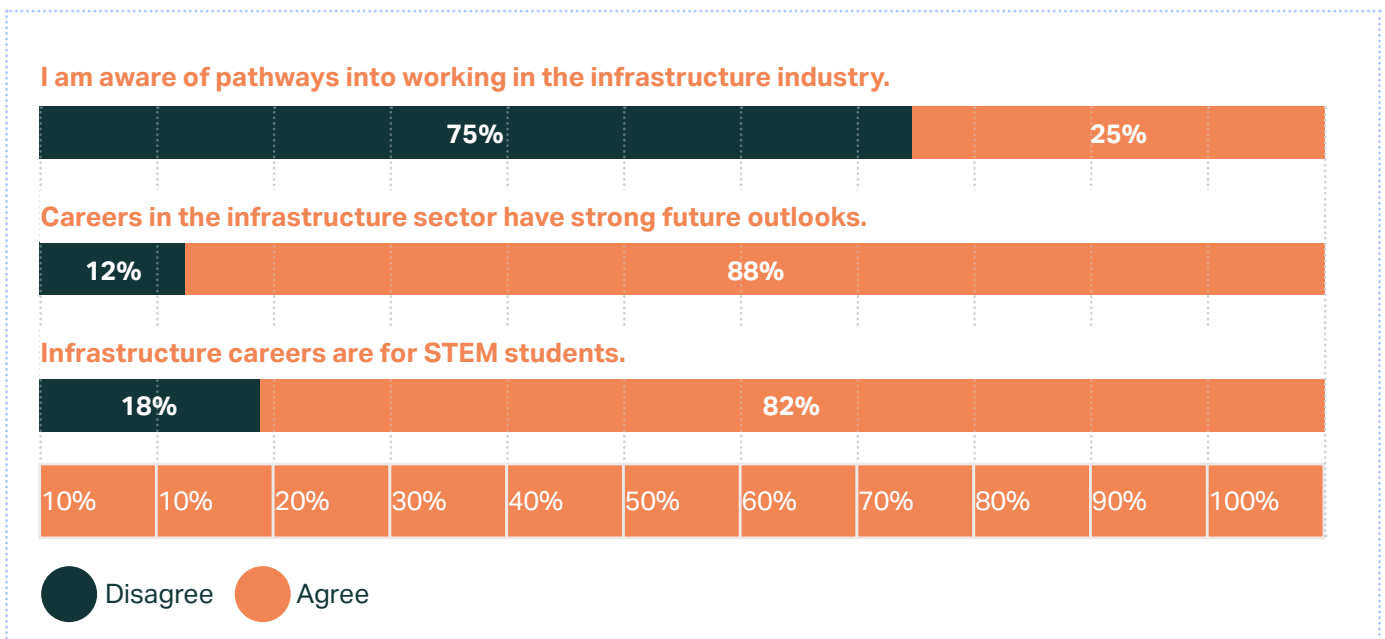
What kind of background is best suited to working in the infrastructure industry?



These perceptions are compounded by a lack of information on career pathways into the infrastructure sector, despite 75% of respondents believing that this sector has strong future and compensation outlooks:



Overall, this survey highlighted that the main barriers to entry into the infrastructure industry for social science students is a lack of information and broadly held misconceptions. There is a real and urgent need to ensure that social students are aware of the opportunities and future impact that is possible in this sector. This can be achieved via increased outreach and engagement with universities, by the private and public sector, infrastructure-focused career fairs, and targeted recruiting and advertising by private firms.



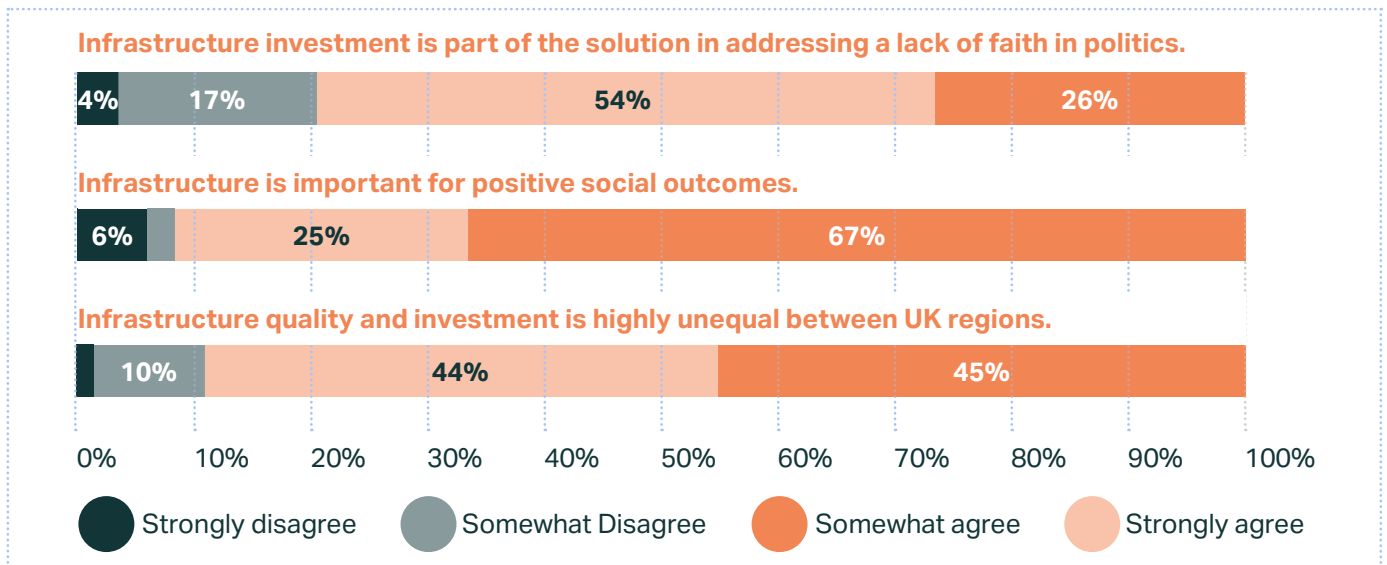
46%
of students are unlikely to enter the infrastructure sector

10%
of students believe social scientists are best suited to the sector

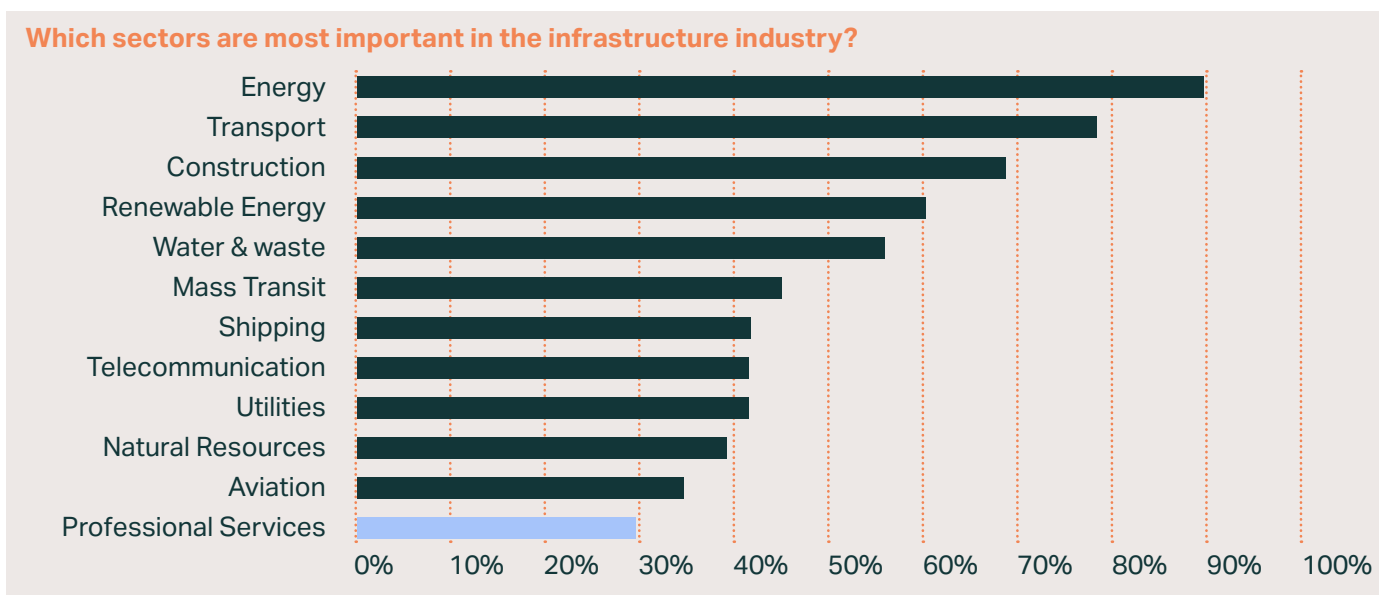
75%
are unaware of pathways into infrastructure careers

Social science students recognise infrastructure's social & political role

Our survey revealed that social science students are quick to acknowledge the already discussed political-economic issues linked to the infrastructure industry.

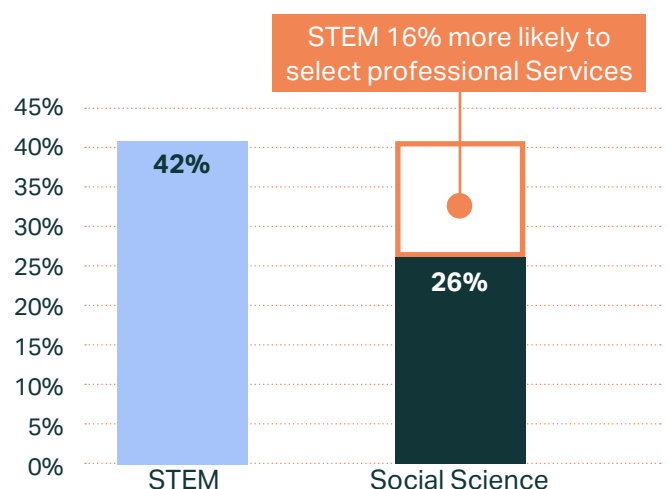


Despite this acknowledgement, students undervalued the importance of professional services in the infrastructure industry with only 30% selecting it from the range of options, ranking this segment lowest overall.

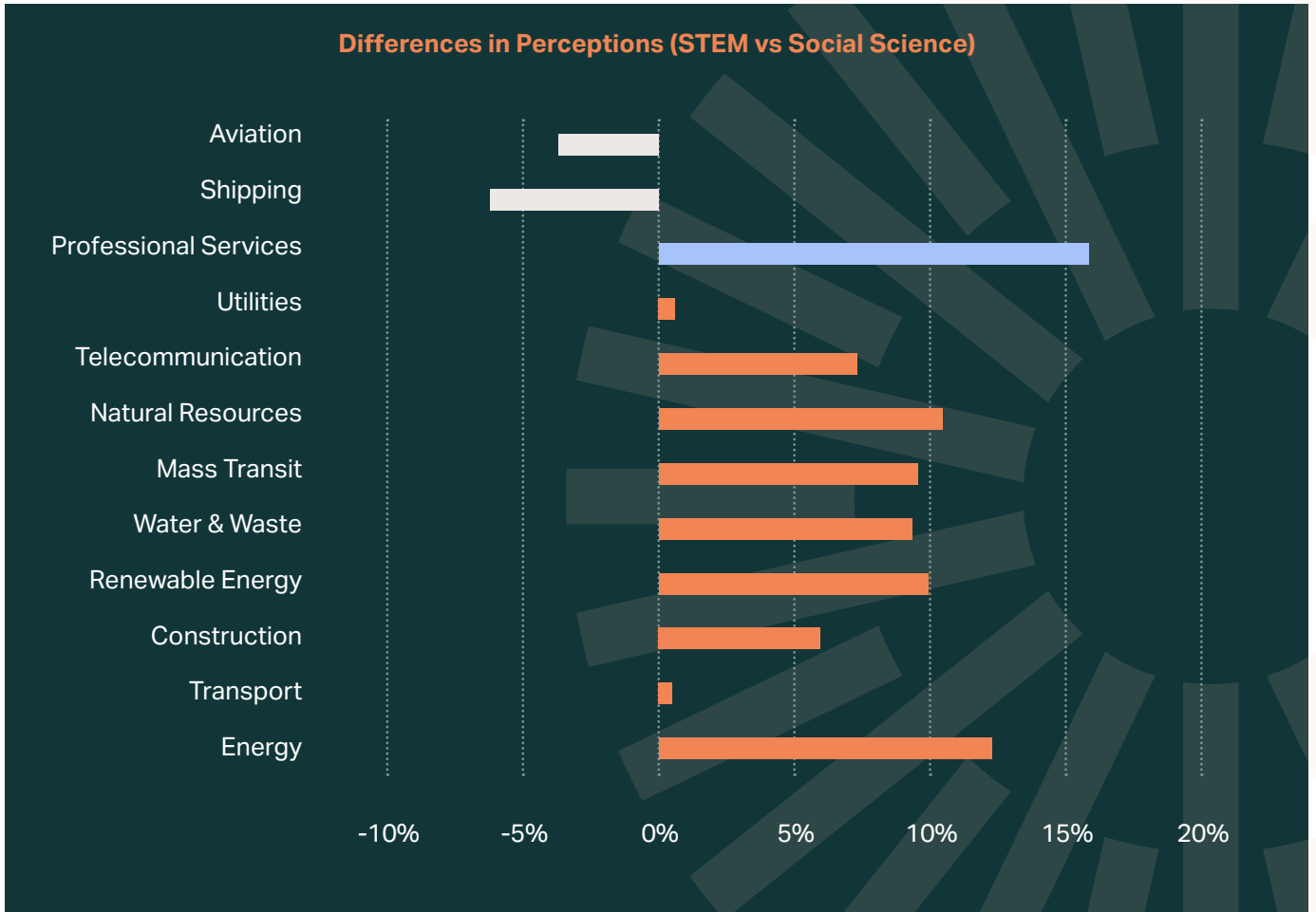


Furthermore, when looking into how responses differed between STEM and Social Science students, we found that STEM students are 16% more likely to select Professional Services as an important sector than Social Science students. Lastly, it is worth noting that this was the largest difference between STEM and Social Science responses across sector options, reinforcing the significance of this divide despite a limited non-STEM sample size. This suggests that, on the precondition STEM students may have a stronger knowledge of the infrastructure industry, they are therefore better equipped to identify the importance of professional services, and social science skills more broadly in the industry. This reinforces the need for solutions that overcome the information gaps that social science students face in infrastructure careers.

% of Respondents who selected Professional Services as Most Important

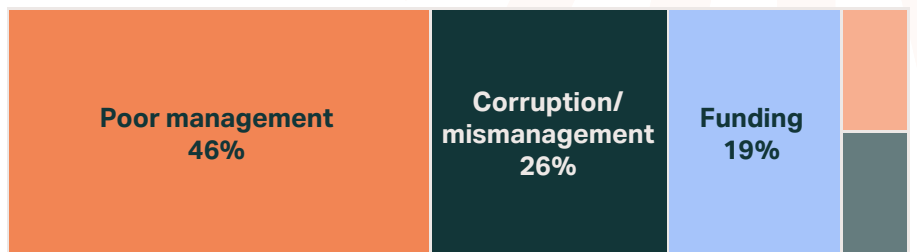


Differences in Perceptions (STEM vs Social Science)



An underappreciation for professional services was consistent with other survey questions. When asked to select the leading reason why infrastructure projects fail, 46% of respondents cited poor management and 26% selected corruption or mismanagement.

What is the leading reason why infrastructure projects go wrong



This is despite the value that social science graduates can bring to professional services through improving management effectiveness, and in building monitoring and accountability mechanisms to overcome corruption and mismanagement – the very problems that they identified as most prominent and, arguably, the problems a social science tool kit is best equipped to solve.



The Impact of Infrastructure

It's clear that infrastructure is a complex, opaque sector, where students believe that new ideas and approaches have the potential to make a difference. But is it worth it? Can improving the infrastructure sector improve outcomes for the UK?

The evidence says it can: infrastructure sector has significant potential to reshape regional and national economic performance, and improve social outcomes.

Building Britain's Future

At the current rate of investment, BY 2050, the sector will have added...



3,053 new jobs for every 1000 infrastructure sector jobs. Economies and livelihoods are actively forming around infrastructure projects



£1,949 billion in Gross Value Added, propelling growth and prosperity across communities nationwide



£771 billion in tax revenue from extra economic activity, with businesses and workers benefiting from infrastructure-driven growth

Why is good infrastructure important to households?

Beyond the economic headlines, every household and individual can feel the boost from infrastructure investment. From an easier commute to work, lower energy bills, to better job opportunities, and flourishing local spaces, infrastructure can be a key cornerstone for a community's improving standard of living

This has a material impact on the economy - a study from University College London found that investment into **wind power delivered reduced consumer bills by £14.2 billion through lower electricity prices between 2010 and 2023**. The impact of infrastructure was recognised in our survey, with 82% believing it was important for social outcomes.



From 2010 to 2023, wind power delivered reduced consumer bills by £14.2 billion through lower electricity prices

The Tideway Success Story: Broadly on Time and on Budget

The UK has a reputation for inefficient infrastructure delivery, but there are exceptions to the rule. When new approaches are adopted, with social value as a priority, infrastructure can be done better



Not all infrastructure projects deliver equally. The Thames Tideway Tunnel proves that strategic pricing and planning can cut costs and timelines while delivering two pronged benefits: massive economic investment and significant reduction of urban pollution.

This 25 km-long project addressed the critical failure of London's Victorian sewers, which previously discharged raw waste into the Thames approximately once a week.

The Impact



4,250

New Jobs Created

Economic Stimulus

The project created over 4,250 direct jobs, focusing on local recruitment and specialised skill development.



28%

Reduction in Carbon Emission

Environmental Stewardship

Beyond its 95% overflow reduction goal, it achieved a 28% carbon reduction against original estimate during the construction phase alone.

Innovative Financing: The RAB and SIPR Model

A key part of the project's success was applying an innovative financing model - the SIPR framework.

This model uses private financing in a unique way: the regulator gives a private operator the responsibility for performance, meaning the impact of risks are internalised, getting the best deal for customers.

This model significantly reduced financing costs, allowing the tunnel to be delivered broadly on time and within budget.

Consequently, the government now intends to expand this successful model to all types of water infrastructure to support competitive delivery and nationwide growth.

The SIPR Framework



Stage 1: Specification

The Secretary of State or Ofwat formally identifies and specifies a project.



Stage 2: Competitive Tendering

Third-party Infrastructure Providers (IPs) bid to finance, design, build, maintain, and operate the new infrastructure.



Stage 3: Licensing & Delivery

The winning IP is Granted its own licence by Ofwat and regulated directly. The IP owns the asset for the licence period



Stage 4: Regulation & Operation

A regulatory model controls the IP's remuneration throughout the licence period.

Infrastructure and the UK Economy

To assess the economic impacts of infrastructure on the UK, the best place to start is the map.

The UK is full of regional inequality dynamics - inequality between the nations, the North and South divide, as well as variations on outcomes within regions.

Decisions made on where to invest in their environment can demonstrate the impact infrastructure can have, leaving their mark on the economy.

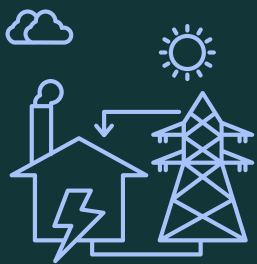


Nuclear: Regional Economic Powerhouses

Nuclear infrastructure is concentrated in very specific regions across the UK and helps in generating high-skill employment and promote strong regional growth.

The distribution of nuclear sector generates "pockets" of economic activity, where we can see the productivity of nuclear jobs supporting local economies.

The North West, home to Sellafield, the National Nuclear Laboratory and Heysham power stations, as well as Urenco at Capenhurst and Springfields fuel plant, continues to have the largest impact. Some £4.1 billion in GVA was contributed by the sector across the region in 2024.



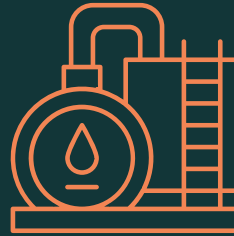
Energy: UK-Wide Underinvestment in Resilience

Across the UK, electricity prices were 19% above the EU average in the second half of 2024. This challenge is primarily driven by infrastructure shortfalls, leaving us exposed to volatile natural gas prices. The UK has strong renewable electricity capacity, but prices are still set by the price of gas, due to its position as the UK's "backup generator" when demand is high, or renewables aren't producing energy.

Where other countries have invested in resilience measures, our energy prices remain tied to the international markets.

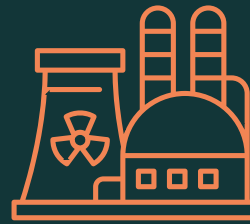
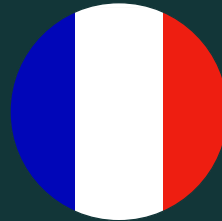
Hinkley Point C: £5.3 billion has now been spent directly with businesses across the South West helping to increase the nearby town of Bridgwater's productivity so it is now 10% higher than the surrounding area.





Gas Storage

On average, the UK stores enough gas for **12 days of use** - **Germany has 89**. This leaves the UK reliant on short-term supply, which exposes it to price variation



Nuclear Generation

France has taken a different approach, reducing its reliance on gas entirely. France has **58 active nuclear power stations** (the **UK has 9**), which provides a reliable, all-hour energy output.



Transport: A North-South Doom Cycle

Investment in transit, especially rail infrastructure, tell the story of the UK's regional inequalities. For every pound the government spends on transport for a person in London and the South East, 41p goes to someone in the North. This creates a vicious cycle, where the low productivity of the North discourages transport investment, which entrenches low productivity further still - all while the opposite happens in the South East.

Low Productivity

Low Investment

How Infrastructure failed the High Street

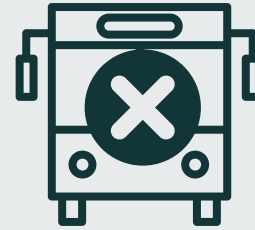
A story of infrastructure underinvestment

The UK town centre shows a clear pattern: declining physical infrastructure kills social infrastructure. While a number of factors have led to a decline in UK town centres, infrastructure has undeniably left an impact.



Energy Cost

Rising energy costs in the past 20 years have strained the hospitality sector: The Caterer's "closure tracker" identifies energy bills as a key driver of shutting pubs and restaurants. The Government has argued that energy bills have been driven up by our over-reliance on global markets, due to a lack of investment in renewables.

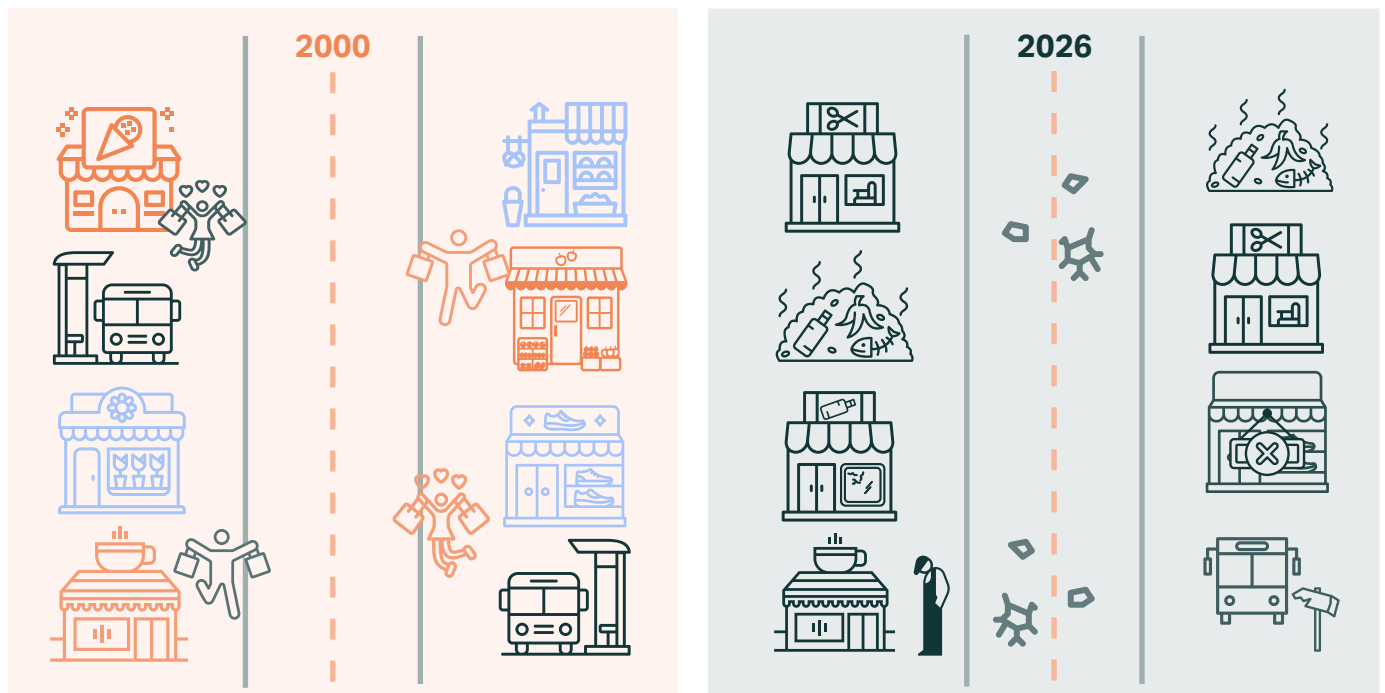


Local Transport

Public transport options are vital to creating a dynamic and successful town centre, with hospitality particularly reliant on effective services. A 15% drop in non-London bus services since 2019 (Guardian) has corresponded with the struggling high street, and has been a key barrier to post-covid recovery.

The Impact

Six pubs close every week in Britain, and when the Red lion shuts, so does the place where the parish council met, where the football team planned their season, where neighbours became a community.



Transport	Energy	Supply Chain	Pub Closures
-22% services since 2011	+£18,400/yr bills (92% cite as threat)	+23% food costs for hospitality	10,000+ since 2010 (72% outside London)

The Consequences

Our survey found that 92% of university students surveyed agreed that infrastructure is important for positive social outcomes, yet the places that need it most are the ones losing it fastest.

Without the support of the built environment, Wellbeing deteriorates, Community Frays



Most deprived areas are **64%** more likely to suffer from **mental health disorders**



North East saw largest **funding cuts** AND greatest **mental health deterioration**



Loneliness is the greatest in areas with the **least social infrastructure**
10% vs 4%

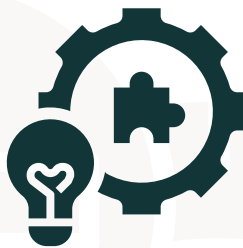


Volunteering at **lowest ever** recorded rate **23%**



Social participation has **collapsed** to **13%**

It doesn't end there. When the built environment fails, The Democratic Fabric Tears



Among university students, 4 in 5 **believe infrastructure investment** is part of the **solution** to declining faith in politics.



Areas with weakest "social fabric" voted 62% Leave vs 44% in strongest areas



All four seats that swung to Reform at the last election had a **"missing road"** and **lack of transport** was a **key local issue**



Studies find a significant **positive association** between **high-street vacancy rates** and **populist support**

Conclusions

If infrastructure has the impact and the challenges we've identified, what next?

Sectors can continue in their ways for the long term, and can even grow and thrive when external conditions, such as government policy and investment confidence, allow them to do so. However, leaving it to factors out of the industry's control is a risk. We believe there is value in trying to do better, attempting new approaches, and working together towards a high-impact, innovative and resilient sector.

Recommendations

Infrastructure Matters

Throughout the report, the significance of infrastructure is clear. Looking at the survey results, social science students acknowledge the social, economic, and political importance of the industry. This is seen to a greater extent when recognising the consequences of poor, unequal, or under invested in infrastructure.

With this impact realised, a first key recommendation is that infrastructure needs investment especially in left behind neighbourhoods and regions. Investment in infrastructure not only builds new roads, tunnels, rail lines, and nuclear power stations but real societal impact. Not just through social value frameworks enforced by companies but increased productivity, connectivity, and reduced inequality throughout the country. Furthermore, secondary impacts through jobs, skills, and education within a region present a further example that infrastructure does matter in communities, regions, and across the UK.

Mind the (Information) Gap

This report, particularly the survey, reveals a critical information gap with 88% of students seeing strong career prospects within infrastructure yet only 30% of social science students would consider entering the sector, with 25% completely unaware of career pathways into the sector.

To address this, universities, private firms, and government must collaborate to integrate specific content into curriculums, demonstrating how skills taught in the social sciences can help solve the key issues facing infrastructure development and delivery. Social science students are uniquely equipped to deal with the challenges to infrastructure projects including spatial inequalities, the need for innovative financing and better management.

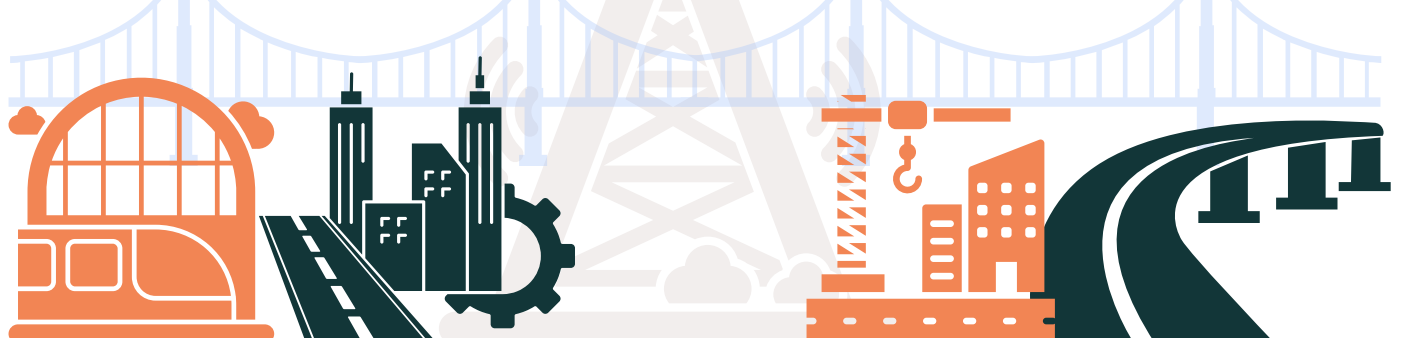
It is essential that professional service roles within infrastructure are repositioned within student perceptions to reflect their impact and role in combating systemic issues through targeted recruitment campaigns. These campaigns must clearly communicate career pathways, earning expectations and provide concrete examples of how professional services, like consulting, create measurable social outcomes within infrastructure.

The sector cannot afford to overlook social science talent when students have already diagnosed the issues and possess the skills to address them. Closing this gap demands coordinated action between invested parties to capitalise on their abilities.

Move Fast and Make Things

This report shows the infrastructure sectors massive potential for societal impact, hampered by a rigid consensus on how things should be done. With the scale and budget of the sector, innovative ideas and new approaches can have outsized impacts. We've seen this happen with Thames Tideway, applying a new financing model and achieving positive results.

Bringing social sciences to the forefront could drive this forward. Zooming out to a societal level will allow new approaches to be explored, from fresh takes on cost-benefit analyses to novel methods of community impact. This requires a leap of faith. Some of these approaches will be untested, and some may not work, but the opportunity to do infrastructure better has the potential to pay dividends for the lives of people, nationwide.



Reflections

Upon leaving LSE, we all shared a sense that we'd learnt something important, and a desire to use it for good.

The Infrastructure sector fit our skills and passions, yet the importance of the industry was something we stumbled upon, rather than sought out. This sector, combining the complexity of billion-pound investments with the challenges of government policy and the weight of social impact, was surprisingly opaque when it came to careers. Where employment pathways into management consulting, law, finance, insurance were all well understood, infrastructure seemed like a path only for engineers. That didn't feel right, and as such this report is a reaction to our experiences designed to give the next generation a better understanding of the opportunities available to them.

The driving force behind this report has always been raising awareness of the sector. We started this initiative with the belief that bringing new people into the conversation could have a tangible impact on the industry, and that process began as soon as we started recruiting. Even before this report was produced, nine talented and passionate students had started the process of understanding infrastructure careers.

We hope that the students take what they've learned during the process and apply it to their academics and their careers. As a group, we've explored the infrastructure sector, identifying where it's faced challenges, and what can be done to improve it. I hope they will all go away from this project as an advocate for the industry; as a career option, and as a key to improving society.

Thank you to everyone who engages with this report. We hope you take it away, and find something in it that you want to talk about.



Solomon Westmancott

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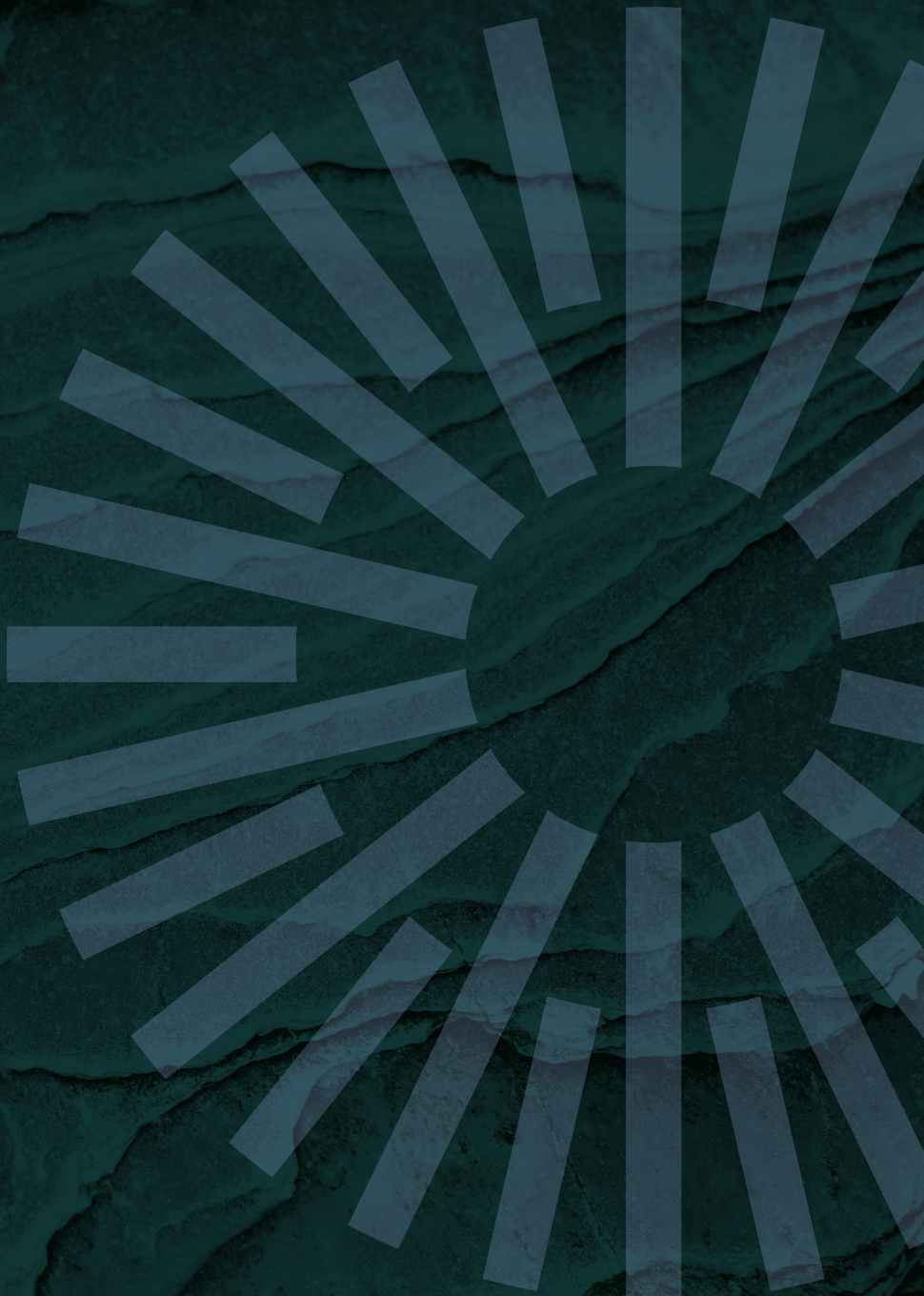
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