



A National Statistics publication for Scotland

## CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

### Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 3: 2021 Edition

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

This annual National Statistics publication:

- Provides information on the **attainment** and **initial destinations** of school leavers in Scotland.
- Reports **initial destinations** for young people approximately **three months** after the end of the school year.
- Includes attainment in **National Qualifications** achieved throughout all stages of a pupil's schooling.
- Covers all **2019/20 school leavers** from publicly funded mainstream schools.

This release is the first to also contain Experimental Statistics on Foundation Apprenticeships and a wider attainment measure incorporating all Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) qualifications.

The time period covered by these statistics means that the results will be affected by the **coronavirus (COVID-19)** pandemic. In particular, the **cancellation of both exams and external assessment of coursework** in 2020 will have affected the final year of attainment for many 2019/20 school leavers. Further details can be found in Chapter 1.

Full results are available from the supplementary tables in the supporting files here:

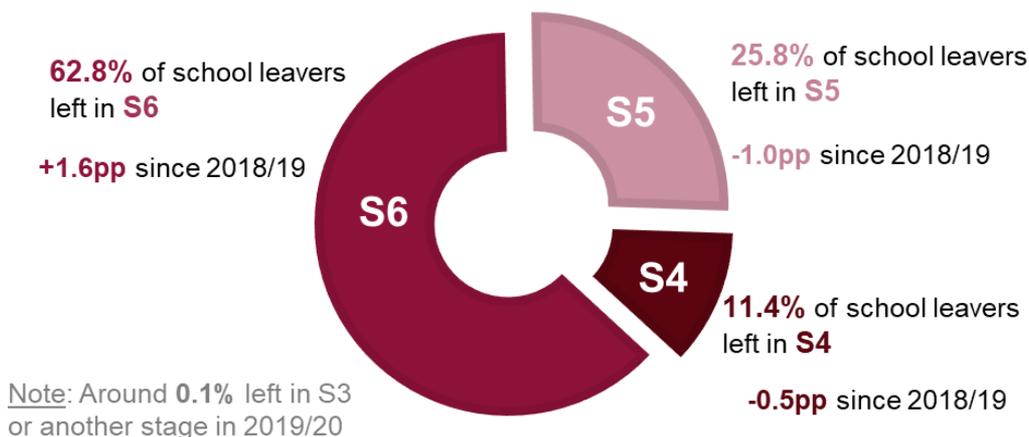
<https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-680-1>



## School Leaver Cohort

The COVID-19 pandemic affects these statistics (see chapter 2)

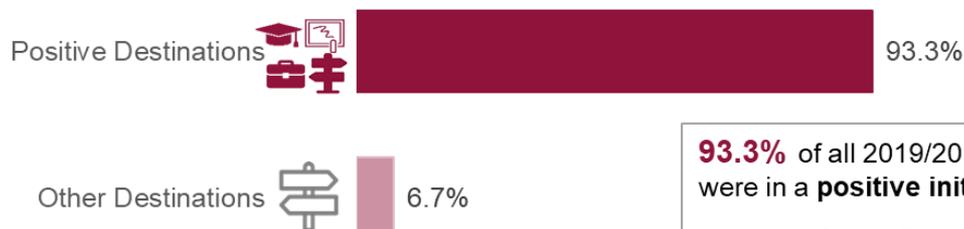
► The percentage of 2019/20 school leavers, by stage of leaving.



## School Leaver Destinations

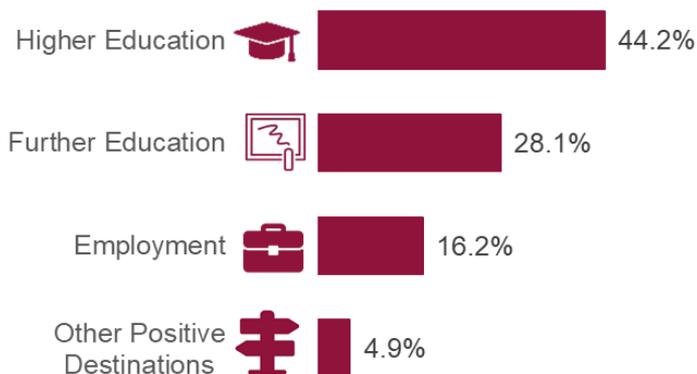
The COVID-19 pandemic affects these statistics (see section 1.1)

► The percentage of school leavers in positive destinations and other destinations.



**93.3%** of all 2019/20 school leavers were in a **positive initial destination**.  
▼ **down** from **95.0%** in **2018/19**

► The percentage of school leavers in each positive destination.



**72.2%** of the 2019/20 leavers were in **Higher or Further Education**.  
▲ the **highest** since consistent records began in **2009/10**

**16.2%** of 2019/20 leavers were in **Employment**.  
▼ **down** from **22.9%** in **2018/19**

### Notes:

- percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding
- pp= percentage point



**95.8%** of leavers left with **one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better** in 2019/20.



**85.7%** of leavers left with **one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better** in 2019/20.



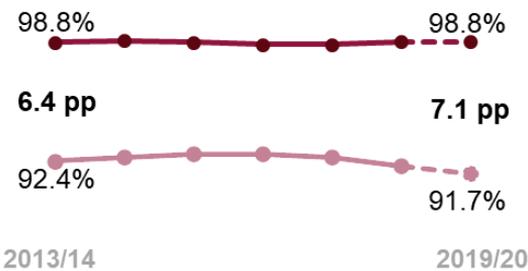
**63.9%** of leavers left with **one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better** in 2019/20.



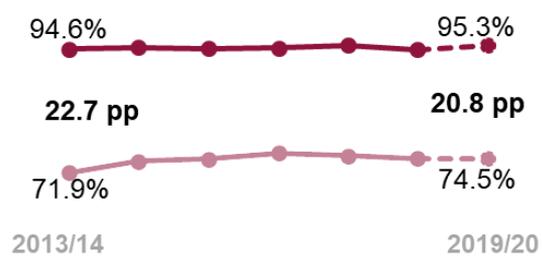
**2.0%** of school leavers attained **no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better** in 2019/20.

► The attainment gap between **most deprived** and **least deprived** areas, 2013/14 to 2019/20

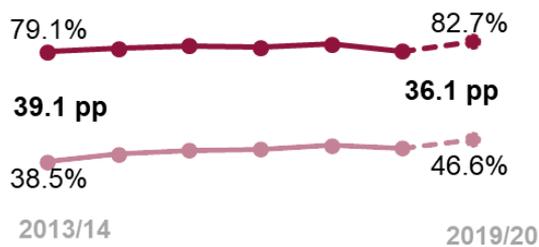
1 pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better



1 pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better



1 pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better



The gap between the **most deprived** and **least deprived** areas in 2019/20 for leavers attaining 1 pass or more at:

- **SCQF Level 4 or better** is **7.1 pp**
- **SCQF Level 5 or better** is **20.8 pp**
- **SCQF Level 6 or better** is **36.1 pp**

(percentage point changes are affected by rounding)

**Notes:**

- *Dashed line* represents break in series due to change in certification methods in 2020
- *Caution* should be exercised when making comparisons over time. See publication section 1.1
- pp= percentage point

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter outlines **data sources**, **concepts** and **methodology** associated with the data used in this report. Information on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on these statistics is also included in section 1.1.

### 1.1 Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on these statistics

#### 1.1.1 Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on School Leaver Destinations

Initial destinations relate to the activity being undertaken by young people three months after the end of the school year (October 2020). Destinations figures may reflect both choices made by pupils, as well as the opportunities available to them upon leaving school. The availability of particular opportunities (employment opportunities, for example) to 2019/20 school leavers may have been directly affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Further analysis and interpretation of these statistics should take this into account.

The coronavirus pandemic meant that the start dates for some opportunities such as apprenticeship programmes, college courses etc. were delayed in 2020. Had these started as originally planned (prior to the reference date of 5th October 2020) any school leavers participating in them would have been recorded as being in a positive destination (see section 1.2). In those instances where they instead started later than planned, and after the 5th October reference date, it is possible that some of these school leavers may be recorded as being in an 'other' destination ('Unemployed Seeking', 'Unemployed Not Seeking', 'Unknown') depending on the activity they were undertaking prior to these opportunities starting.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic may have also affected local partnerships' ability to track some school leavers through home visits meaning that their initial destination may be 'Unknown'. This is likely to have partially contributed to the larger proportion of school leavers with an 'Unknown' status compared to previous years.

### How can I use School Leaver Destination figures?

#### Use School Leaver Destination figures

- ✓ As an accurate reflection of school leavers' (initial) destinations.
- ✓ To compare the destinations of different groups of school leavers.
- ✓ To make comparisons over time of the destinations of school leavers.

#### Do not use School Leaver Destination figures

- X Without considering the impact that Covid-19 may have had on the availability of particular opportunities.

### 1.1.2 Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on School Leaver Attainment

The attainment data presented in Chapters 4 and 5 of this report covers the full range of [National Qualifications](#) that individuals left school with, at [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#) (SCQF) Level 3 and above.

Grades awarded in National 5 (SCQF Level 5), Higher (SCQF Level 6) and Advanced Higher (SCQF Level 7) National Qualifications are typically assessed externally via examinations and/or coursework. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to the cancellation of 2020 exams and the decision for the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) not to collect coursework or mark coursework that had already been collected. As a result, grades awarded in 2020 in the qualifications listed above were instead based on teacher estimates (for more information see section 7.5.2). These results form part of the 2019/20 school leaver attainment figures in this report.

For many school leavers, attainment in the most recent year before they leave school is likely to have a large impact on their highest level of attainment. The 2020 results will therefore have an impact on the overall attainment of many 2019/20 school leavers. By way of illustration, amongst 2019/20 school leavers, 26 per cent of all passes were achieved in the final year before leaving. When focusing on the highest SCQF level achieved, 72 per cent of school leavers achieved their highest level in the final year before leaving.

The attainment data in this report provides an accurate reflection of the attainment with which school leavers in Scotland left school; for this reason the 2019/20 attainment data has been presented alongside data for previous years. However, a **dashed line break** in the series has been placed between 2018/19 and 2019/20 to indicate that care must be taken when comparing 2019/20 school leaver attainment to that of earlier years due to the different certification methods. It is not possible to fully determine the extent to which the coronavirus pandemic and, more specifically, the certification methods used in 2020 have affected the attainment levels of the 2019/20 school leaver cohort. Any change between the attainment levels of the 2019/20 cohort and those of previous years should therefore not be seen as an indication that performance has improved, or worsened without further evidence.

Further information on the impact of the coronavirus on these statistics can be found in section 7.5.

## How can I use School Leaver Attainment figures?

### Use School Leaver Attainment figures

- ✓ As an accurate reflection of the attainment with which school leavers in Scotland left school in different years.
- ✓ To make factual comparisons of the proportions of school leavers attaining at different SCQF levels over time.
- ✓ To compare the attainment of different groups of school leavers.

### Do not use School Leaver Attainment figures

- X As an indication that performance in 2019/20 was better or worse than in previous years without further evidence.
- X Without taking full account of the different approach to certification in 2020 compared to previous years.

## 1.2 School Leaver Destinations

This publication provides information on the **initial destinations** of **2019/20 school leavers**, relating to outcomes approximately three months after the end of the school year (5th October 2020).

A separate publication - 'Summary Statistics for Follow-up Leaver Destinations' – will follow in June 2021 and will provide information on the follow-up destinations of 2019/20 school leavers, approximately nine months after the end of the school term (1st Monday in April).

School leaver destinations data is based on the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) 'Opportunities for All' shared dataset matched with pupil census records for the school year 2019/20.

A school leaver is defined as a young person of school leaving age, who left school during or at the end of the school year. For 2019/20 school leavers, the leaver year is 18th September 2019 to 15th September 2020. More information can be found in section 7.2.2.

This publication covers school leavers from **all stages** of secondary school. For most young people, S4 (≈15-16 year olds) is the last compulsory year of school, but the majority choose to stay on and complete S5 (≈16-17 year olds) and S6 (≈17-18 year olds)<sup>1</sup>.

Figures in this report are based on pupils in **publicly funded mainstream schools**, in the 32 local authorities and one grant aided school. Figures including school leavers from publicly funded special schools are available in the supplementary tables.

Destinations are grouped in the following categories within this statistical bulletin:

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<sup>1</sup> Pupils ages are based on approximate age ranges, more information is available from the pupil census, here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>

## Positive Destinations



## Other Destinations



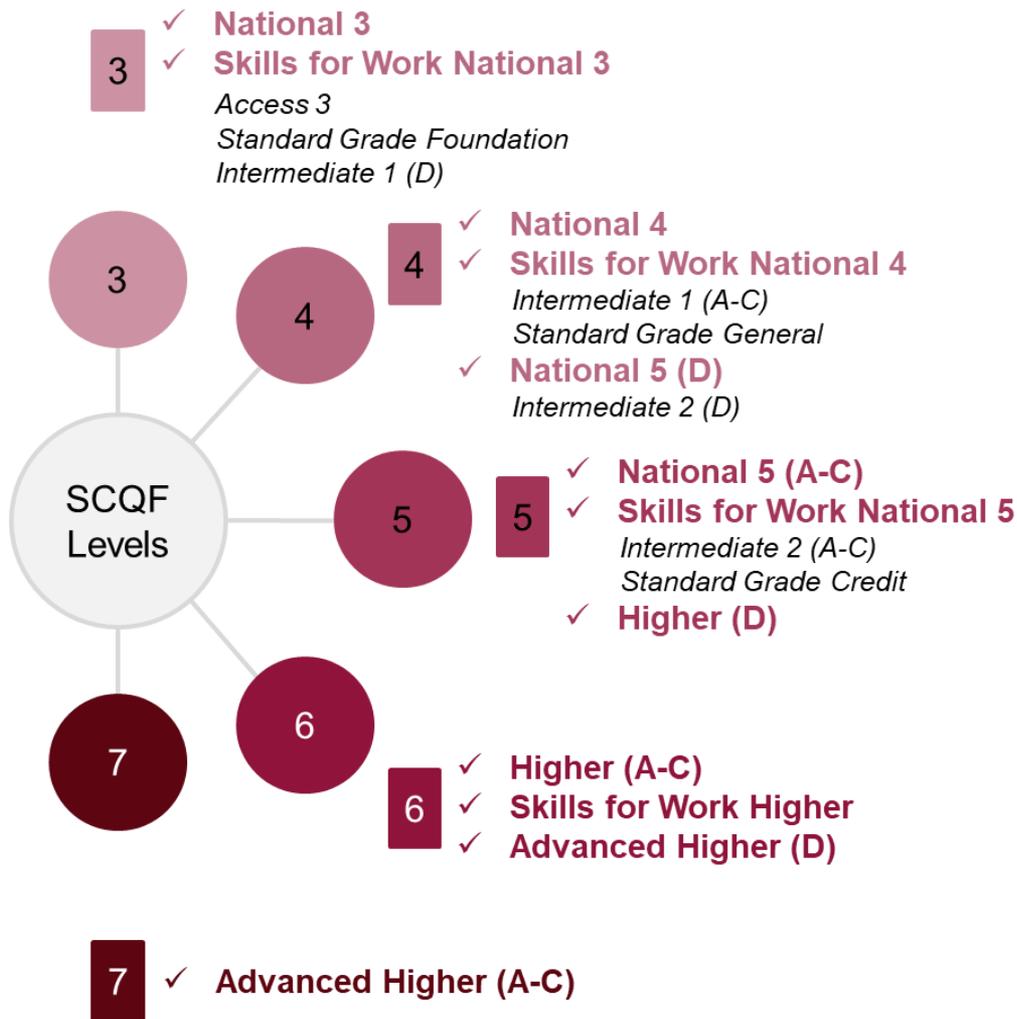
### 1.3 School Leaver Attainment

Within this report, the main school leaver **attainment** data found in Chapters 4 and 5 covers Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) **National Qualifications** achieved throughout **all stages** of a pupil's education at school. The range of qualifications included can be found in the diagram below, and cover National Courses (such as National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) as well as Skills for Work courses. These statistics on National Qualifications do not include attainment in National Units, Scottish Baccalaureate or National Qualifications below Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 3 (such as National 1 and National 2).

The **Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)** (<https://scqf.org.uk>) is used as the basis for reporting attainment. The SCQF is Scotland's national qualifications framework which allows broad comparisons to be made between qualifications at a similar level of difficulty. The SCQF level indicates the level of difficulty of a particular qualification. It allows learners, employers and the public in general, to understand the range of skills and learning that should be achieved at each level.

This publication reports the **number of passes** at a given SCQF level or better and the **highest** SCQF level achieved at **SCQF Levels 3 to 7**, incorporating the **National Qualifications** shown in the following diagram:

## Qualifications included in the main measures within this publication



(Current qualifications are marked with a tick ✓)

Highers (SCQF Level 6) are generally taken in S5 or S6 and Advanced Highers (SCQF 7), are generally taken in S6. Highers, sometimes along with Advanced Highers, are the Scottish qualifications required for entry into Higher Education.

In this publication, grade A to C (or ungraded pass) is considered a pass. If a pupil attains a D at a certain level, this is counted as equivalent to a pass at the level below.

School leavers from 2019/20 are the fifth cohort to have experienced the **Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)** (<https://scotlandscurriculum.scot>) throughout the entirety of the **senior phase** (S4-S6) of their school education. School leavers from 2013/14 and 2014/15, will have taken a range of awards and qualifications from the current set to older qualifications that have now been phased out, such as Standard Grades. Using SCQF levels to measure attainment in National Qualifications allows for broad comparisons to be made between qualifications consistently as they are adapted over time.

For more information on how this data is collected, see section 7.2.2.

## 1.4 Additional Qualifications

Whilst the main measures in this report focus on National Qualifications, a new Chapter (Chapter 6) has been added to this release which covers other qualifications that pupils may leave school with. The new chapter covers:

- attainment statistics, also presented in previous releases, relating to vocational qualifications associated with Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (section 6.1).
- Experimental Statistics on Foundation Apprenticeships (section 6.2).
- Experimental Statistics covering a wider attainment measure incorporating all SQA qualifications (section 6.3).

Experimental Statistics are new official statistics that are undergoing evaluation. Further information on the reasons for publishing these new figures under this status are presented in sections 6.2 and 6.3.

## Chapter 2: School Leaver Cohort

- **47,454** pupils left school in 2019/20 – the smallest school leaver cohort since consistent records began in 2009/10
- **62.8 per cent** of the 2019/20 school leaver cohort were in **S6**, up from 61.2 per cent in 2018/19.
- **25.8 per cent** were **S5** leavers (down from 26.8 per cent in 2018/19) and **11.4 per cent** were in **S4** (down from 11.9 per cent).

The school leaver cohort comprised 47,454 pupils in 2019/20. This is fewer than the 49,760 school leavers in 2018/19 and is the smallest school leaver cohort since consistent records began in 2009/10.

The school leaver cohort tended to be larger between 2009/10 and 2016/17, generally fluctuating between around 51,000 and 53,000. The exception to this was 2011/12 (49,745 pupils). It has generally fallen in recent years (since 2014/15) with the latest decrease in 2019/20 representing the biggest decrease since 2011/12.

The reduction in the number of school leavers in 2019/20 does not appear to correspond to a reduction in the associated number of senior phase pupils recorded in school rolls at the beginning of the school year (see Pupil Census supplementary table 3.3)<sup>2</sup>. It is possible that some S4 and S5 pupils who might have otherwise left school in 2019/20 have decided instead to stay at school for reasons related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

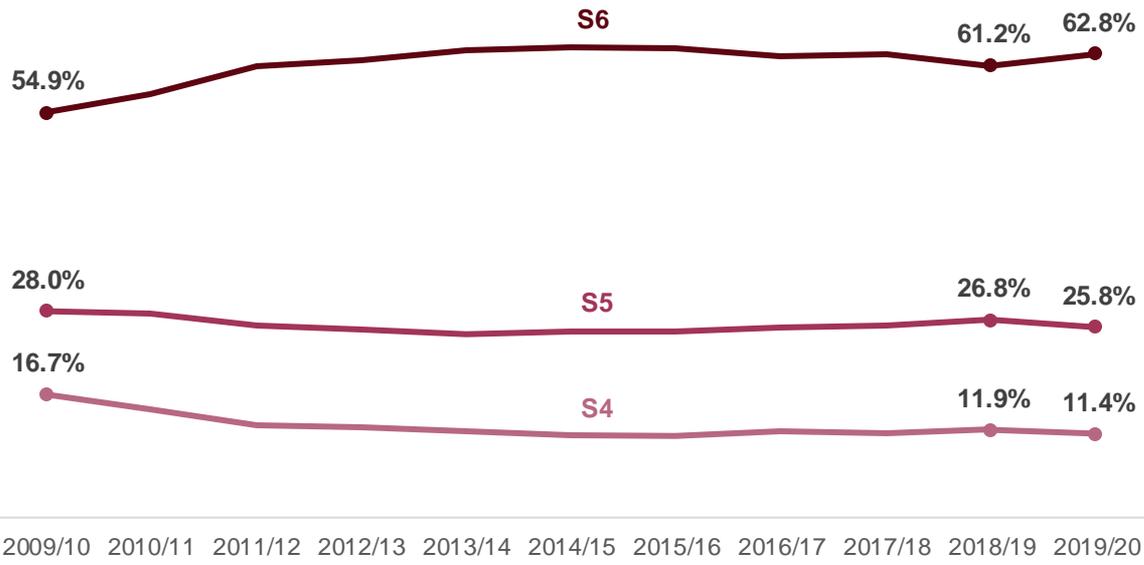
Chart 1 shows the percentage of school leavers by stage, between 2009/10 and 2019/20. It shows that over three-fifths (62.8 per cent) of 2019/20 school leavers left in S6, up from 61.2 per cent in 2018/19. Around a quarter (25.8 per cent) of 2019/20 school leavers left in S5, and 11.4% left in S4. Around 0.1 per cent left in S3 or another stage in 2019/20.

Looking over a longer time period, the proportion of pupils leaving in S6 increased between 2009/10 and 2014/15, whilst there was a corresponding decrease in the proportions leaving in S4 and S5. From 2014/15 to 2018/19, the figures were more stable, although there was a gradual decline in the proportion leaving in S6, and small increases in S4 and S5 over the same period.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>

Chart 1: Percentage of leavers by stage of leaving, 2009/10 to 2019/20



## Chapter 3: School Leaver Destinations

- **93.3 per cent** of 2019/20 school leavers were in a **positive initial destination** (95.0 per cent for 2018/19).
- **44.2 per cent** of school leavers were in **Higher Education** (the highest proportion of all categories and the highest percentage since consistent records began in 2009/10).

As described in section 1.1.1, the 2019/20 figures on school leavers' initial destinations will reflect the impact of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on choices made by, and opportunities available to, pupils upon leaving school during the pandemic.

### 3.1 Destinations of School Leavers

Table 1 shows that 93.3 per cent of all 2019/20 school leavers were in a positive initial destination. This was lower than in 2018/19 (95.0 per cent) and the lowest since 2014/15 (93.2 per cent).

72.2 per cent of 2019/20 leavers were in Higher or Further Education. This is the highest rate since consistent records began in 2009/10.

The percentage of school leavers in Employment has decreased from 22.9 per cent for 2018/19 leavers to 16.2 per cent in 2019/20, the lowest figure on record (comparable data available from 2009/10).

The percentage of school leavers who were Unemployed has increased from 4.5 per cent for 2018/19 to 6.0 per cent for 2019/20 leavers.

**Table 1: Percentage of school leavers by initial destination category, 2014/15 to 2019/20**

*Column Percent (percentages may not total 100 due to rounding)*

Destination Category	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Higher Education	38.8	40.3	40.7	41.1	40.3	44.2
Further Education	27.6	26.6	26.8	26.5	27.3	28.1
Training	3.6	2.3	2.2	1.9	3.5	3.7
Employment	21.4	22.3	22.0	22.7	22.9	16.2
Voluntary Work	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.5
Activity Agreement <sup>1</sup>	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.2	n/a	n/a
Personal Skills Development	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.8
<b>Positive Destinations</b>	<b>93.2</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>93.9</b>	<b>94.6</b>	<b>95.0</b>	<b>93.3</b>
Unemployed seeking	5.3	5.0	4.4	3.7	3.1	4.1
Unemployed Not Seeking	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.8
Unknown <sup>2</sup>	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.7
<b>Other Destinations</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>6.7</b>
Number of Leavers	52,491	52,305	51,300	49,748	49,760	47,454

1. From 2018/19, support previously recorded as Activity Agreements is recorded in the Training category. As a result, the proportion of school leavers recorded in the Training category is not directly comparable prior to and post 2018/19. For more information see section 7.3.2.

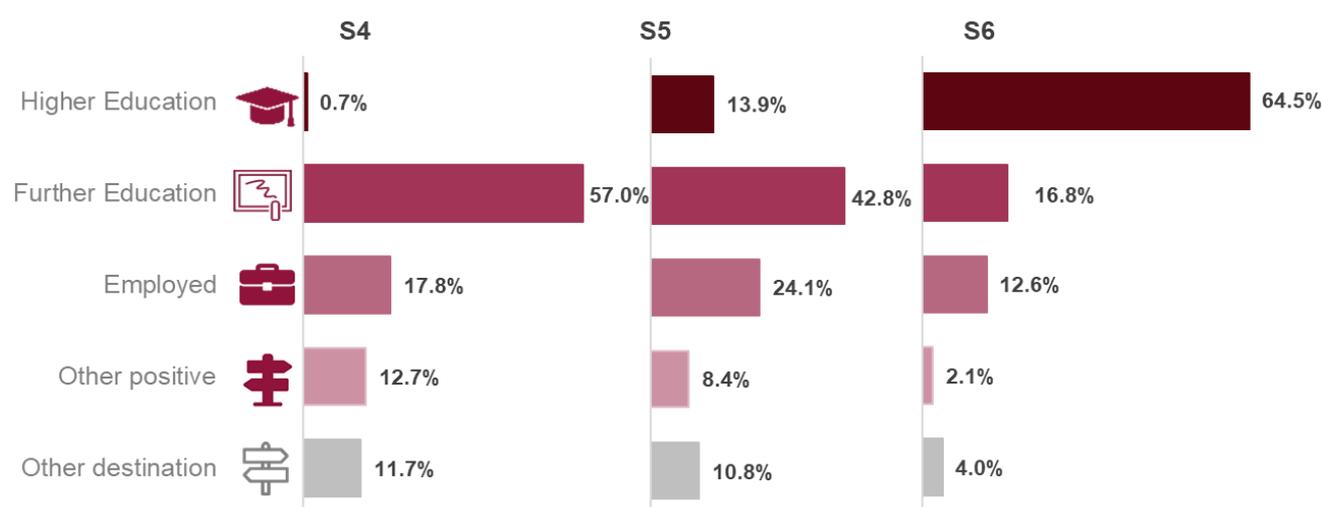
2. The 'Unknown' status in 2019/20 may be affected by local partnerships' ability to track school leavers through home visits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 3.2 Destinations by Stage

The initial destinations of 2019/20 school leavers by stage of leaving (Chart 2) show:

- the majority of **S6 leavers** entered Higher Education (64.5 per cent);
- the most common initial destination for **S5 leavers** was Further Education (42.8 per cent) followed by Employment (24.1 per cent);
- the majority of **S4 leavers** entered Further Education (57.0 per cent).

**Chart 2: Initial destinations of school leavers by stage of leaving, 2019/20**



1. 'Other positive' includes Personal Skills Development, Training and Voluntary Work.

2. 'Other destination' includes Unemployed seeking, Unemployed not seeking and Unknown.

## 3.3 Destinations by Deprivation

Chart 3 shows that the percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination has decreased in 2019/20, for leavers from both the (20%) **most deprived** and (20%) **least deprived areas**, based on the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation \(SIMD\)](#). The proportion of school leavers in a positive initial destination has fallen by more amongst leavers from the most deprived areas than it has amongst those from the least deprived areas which has led to an increase in the deprivation gap, from 5.4 percentage points in 2018/19 to 6.3 percentage points in 2019/20.

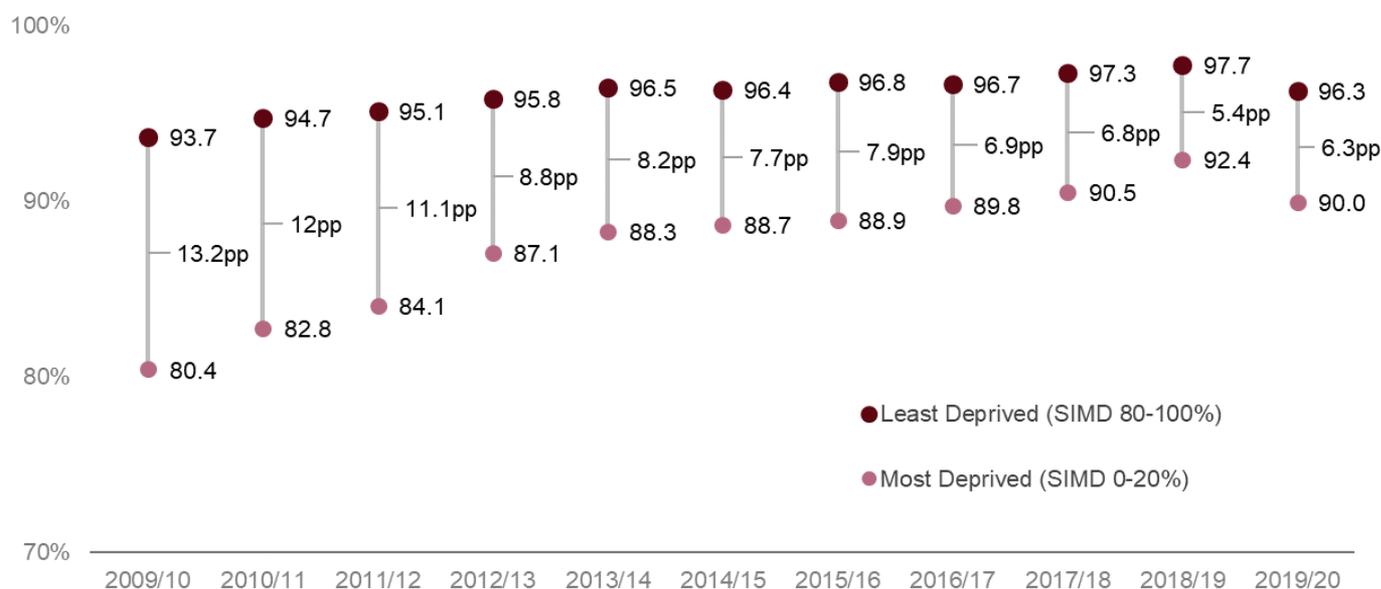
Section 3.1 showed that the proportion of all school leavers entering Higher Education increased between 2018/19 and 2019/20, while the proportion entering Employment decreased to a record low. Time series data of destinations by deprivation (available in Table 2 in the supplementary tables) shows that the proportion entering Higher Education increased amongst all SIMD groups but by least among those from the most deprived areas. Leavers from each SIMD group saw a decrease in the proportion entering Employment with there being no clear pattern by deprivation.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of initial school leaver destinations by SIMD for 2019/20. It shows, for example, that pupils from the most deprived areas continue to be less likely to enter Higher Education than those from the least deprived areas.

In 2019/20, the most common destination for leavers from the most deprived areas was Further Education at 37.5 per cent.

In 2019/20, 9.1 per cent of leavers from the most deprived areas were unemployed, compared to 3.4 per cent of leavers from the least deprived areas.

**Chart 3. Percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination, by SIMD<sup>1</sup>, 2009/10 to 2019/20**



pp = percentage point difference between most and least deprived SIMD quintile

1. Based on SIMD 2009 for 2009/10 and 2010/11, SIMD 2012 for 2011/12 to 2015/16 and SIMD 2016 for 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20. More information on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016 (SIMD 2016) can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-index-multiple-deprivation-2016/>.

**Table 2: Percentage of school leavers by initial destination category by SIMD<sup>1</sup>, 2019/20**

Column Percent (percentages may not total 100 due to rounding)

2019/20 Initial Destination	0-20% (Most Deprived)	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100% (Least Deprived)	Percentage point gap <sup>2</sup>	Total
Higher Education	28.2	34.8	44.0	51.5	64.1	35.8	44.2
Further Education	37.5	33.4	27.7	23.8	16.9	-20.6	28.1
Training	7.2	4.6	2.9	2.0	1.2	-6.0	3.7
Employment	14.9	17.6	18.5	16.9	13.4	-1.5	16.2
Voluntary Work	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.5
Personal Skills Development	1.8	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.3	-1.5	0.8
<b>Positive Destinations</b>	<b>90.0</b>	<b>91.6</b>	<b>94.1</b>	<b>95.1</b>	<b>96.3</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>93.3</b>
Unemployed seeking	6.3	5.3	3.6	2.9	2.3	-4.0	4.1
Unemployed Not Seeking	2.7	2.1	1.6	1.5	1.1	-1.6	1.8
Unknown	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.3	-0.7	0.7
<b>Other Destinations</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>-6.3</b>	<b>6.7</b>
Number of Leavers	10,463	9,176	9,047	9,480	9,288		47,454

1. Based on SIMD 2016. More information on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016 can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-index-multiple-deprivation-2016/>.

2. The percentage point gap measures the difference between the most and least deprived pupils.

### 3.4 Destinations by Pupil Characteristics

Table 3 shows the percentage of school leavers who entered a positive initial destination by various characteristics.

The percentage of 2019/20 school leavers in positive initial destinations has decreased for most groups, compared to 2018/19.

School leavers in 2019/20 with an Additional Support Need (ASN) were less likely to go on to a positive initial destination, compared to leavers without a recorded ASN (89.6 per cent compared to 95.4 per cent). These statistics relate to leavers from mainstream schools only. Similar statistics relating to destinations of secondary and special school leavers combined are available in Supplementary Table L3.1.

Pupils of an Asian ethnic background tend to be more likely to go on to a positive initial destination. Rates for most ethnic groups in a positive destination for 2019/20 have decreased compared to 2018/19.

Females continue to be more likely to enter positive destinations than males; 94.6 per cent of females and 92.1 per cent of males entered a positive destination.

Other Urban areas had the lowest proportion of leavers in positive destinations (92.7 per cent), compared to Accessible Rural areas which had the highest (94.7 per cent).

More information on destinations by pupil characteristics is available in the supplementary tables found in the supporting files here:

<https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-680-1>

**Table 3: Percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination, by pupil characteristic, 2014/15 to 2019/20**

<b>Pupil Characteristic</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	92.0	92.6	92.9	93.5	94.2	92.1
Female	94.3	94.4	94.9	95.6	95.9	94.6
<b>Ethnicity<sup>1</sup></b>						
White - Scottish	93.2	93.4	93.7	94.4	94.9	93.2
White - non-Scottish	92.2	94.0	94.7	95.1	95.8	93.3
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	93.4	92.8	94.9	95.5	93.8	92.3
Asian - Indian	*	*	*	97.2	97.2	*
Asian - Pakistani	94.8	93.6	96.5	95.8	97.1	97.2
Asian - Chinese	*	*	*	98.0	*	*
Asian - Other	94.7	95.9	96.4	97.0	*	95.0
African/ Black/ Caribbean <sup>2</sup>	92.6	93.8	95.3	96.9	96.4	94.7
All other categories <sup>3</sup>	89.4	93.1	93.7	91.7	93.7	93.4
Not Disclosed/Not known	93.3	92.3	92.7	91.5	92.8	91.2
<b>Urban/Rural</b>						
Large Urban Areas	92.1	92.4	93.0	93.6	95.0	93.1
Other Urban Areas	93.2	93.8	93.4	94.4	94.5	92.7
Accessible Small Towns	93.9	94.1	94.5	94.8	95.7	94.2
Remote Small Towns	94.3	94.6	94.7	95.0	94.9	92.9
Accessible Rural	94.0	94.2	95.5	95.9	96.1	94.7
Remote Rural	95.1	94.7	96.0	96.7	95.8	94.5
<b>Additional Support Needs<sup>4</sup></b>						
ASN	88.7	89.1	89.8	90.9	91.9	89.6
No ASN	94.3	94.8	95.3	96.0	96.5	95.4
<b>All Leavers</b>	<b>93.2</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>93.9</b>	<b>94.6</b>	<b>95.0</b>	<b>93.3</b>

1. Some categories have been grouped together due to small numbers. Some categories (typically 'Asian – Indian', 'Asian – Chinese' contain between 100-200 leavers and due to relatively small numbers may be subject to fluctuation. Comparisons between groups should take this into account.

2. The 'African/ Black/ Caribbean' category includes 'African', 'African - Other', and the 'Caribbean or Black' categories.

3. 'All other categories' includes 'Other - other' and 'Other - Arab'.

4. Pupils who have a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP), Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) or Child's Plan are assessed or declared disabled or have another need.

## Chapter 4: School Leaver Attainment

- **63.9 per cent** of school leavers left with **one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better** in 2019/20.
- **2.0 per cent** of school leavers attained **no passes** at SCQF Level 3 or better in 2019/20.
- **96.2 per cent** of leavers attained **literacy** at SCQF Level 3 or better in 2019/20.
- Similarly, **96.1 per cent** of leavers attained **numeracy** at this level in 2019/20.

### 4.1 Attainment Data

Attainment data in this section accounts for **National Qualifications** achieved throughout **all stages** of a pupil's education at school. The range of qualifications included in the main measures in this publication can be found in the diagram in section 1.3.

The **Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)** is used as the basis for reporting attainment. This publication reports the **number of passes** at a given SCQF level or better and **highest** SCQF level achieved at **SCQF Levels 3 to 7**. SCQF levels, in ascending order, indicate the **level of difficulty** of a particular qualification, and allow for broad comparisons to be made between qualifications. For more information, see section 7.2.2.

As outlined in section 1.1.2, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to the cancellation of 2020 National 5 (SCQF Level 5), Higher (SCQF Level 6) and Advanced Higher (SCQF Level 7) exams and the decision for SQA to not collect coursework or mark coursework that had already been collected. Grades in these qualifications in 2019/20 were instead based on teacher estimates. This will have affected the attainment of many 2019/20 school leavers presented in this report. For this reason a **dashed line break** in the series has been placed between 2018/19 and 2019/20 to indicate that care must be taken when comparing 2019/20 attainment to that of earlier years. Interpretation must take full account of the different certification methods and an increase in the attainment levels in 2019/20 should not be seen as an indication that performance has improved without further evidence.

### 4.2 Attainment of School Leavers

Table 4 indicates that 34.1 per cent of 2019/20 school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Levels 3 to 5 as their highest qualification (2.2 per cent at SCQF Level 3, 10.1 per cent at SCQF Level 4 and 21.8 per cent at SCQF Level 5). Meanwhile 63.9 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or 7 (40.6 per cent at SCQF Level 6 and 23.2 per cent at SCQF Level 7); the highest level since 2009/10. This should be interpreted with care given the change in assessment method in 2020 outlined above and in section 1.1.2.

A small proportion (2.0 per cent) of school leavers attained no passes in National Qualifications at SCQF Level 3 or better in 2019/20. Some of these school leavers have attainment in other courses/units either in courses at SCQF Levels 1 or 2 or in courses/units not covered in these statistics (such as National Progression Awards, National Certificates and Awards). More information can be found in supplementary table A1.4.

**Table 4: Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved, 2014/15 to 2019/20**

SCQF Level						Percentage
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 <sup>a</sup>
No passes at SCQF 3 or better	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.0
SCQF Level 3	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.9	2.2
SCQF Level 4	11.0	10.7	10.2	10.3	10.9	10.1
SCQF Level 5	24.9	23.9	24.9	23.8	24.5	21.8
SCQF Level 6	41.4	42.6	41.9	42.0	41.4	40.6
SCQF Level 7	18.8	19.1	19.3	20.2	19.1	23.2
<b>Number of leavers</b>	<b>52,491</b>	<b>52,305</b>	<b>51,300</b>	<b>49,748</b>	<b>49,760</b>	<b>47,454</b>

a. A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018/19 and 2019/20 school leavers reflecting the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 on 2019/20 school leaver attainment. Further information can be found in section 1.1.2.

Table 5 provides information on the total attainment of school leavers at each SCQF Level or better. The table shows that 95.8 per cent of school leavers attained one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better in 2019/20; 85.7 per cent of leavers achieved one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better and 63.9 achieved one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better.

A time series from 2009/10 to 2019/20 is presented in the supplementary tables found in the supporting files here:

<https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-680-1>

**Table 5: Leaver attainment by SCQF Level or better and number of passes achieved, percentage of leavers, 2018/19 and 2019/20**

2019/20 <sup>a</sup>		Percentage					
SCQF Level	1 pass or more	2 passes or more	3 passes or more	4 passes or more	5 passes or more	6 passes or more	7 passes or more
3 or better	98.0	96.3	94.1	91.8	88.1	81.2	67.9
4 or better	95.8	93.3	90.9	88.1	84.1	77.6	64.9
5 or better	85.7	79.2	73.0	66.4	59.2	51.0	40.5
6 or better	63.9	55.2	47.9	40.9	32.9	21.5	10.7
7	23.2	10.4	3.5	0.3	*	*	-
<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>							
2018/19		Percentage					
SCQF Level	1 pass or more	2 passes or more	3 passes or more	4 passes or more	5 passes or more	6 passes or more	7 passes or more
3 or better	97.8	96.1	94.0	91.6	87.7	80.5	66.3
4 or better	95.9	93.6	91.2	88.2	84.0	77.1	63.5
5 or better	85.1	77.6	70.5	63.4	55.8	47.8	37.6
6 or better	60.5	50.6	43.0	36.1	28.7	18.5	8.9
7	19.1	8.0	2.7	0.3	*	*	-

a. A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018/19 and 2019/20 school leavers reflecting the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 on 2019/20 school leaver attainment. Further information can be found in section 1.1.2.

### 4.3 Attainment by Deprivation

In 2017, the Scottish Government consulted on proposals for measuring the poverty related attainment gap and milestones towards closing it; focusing on the impact of the education system as a whole and using a range of measures that reflect key stages of the learner journey and the breadth of issues that can impact on attainment.

The outcome was a basket of 11 key measures (supported by 15 sub-measures) of the attainment gap, three of which are based on school leaver attainment by deprivation, namely:

- The proportion of leavers attaining one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better
- The proportion of leavers attaining one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better
- The proportion of leavers attaining one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better

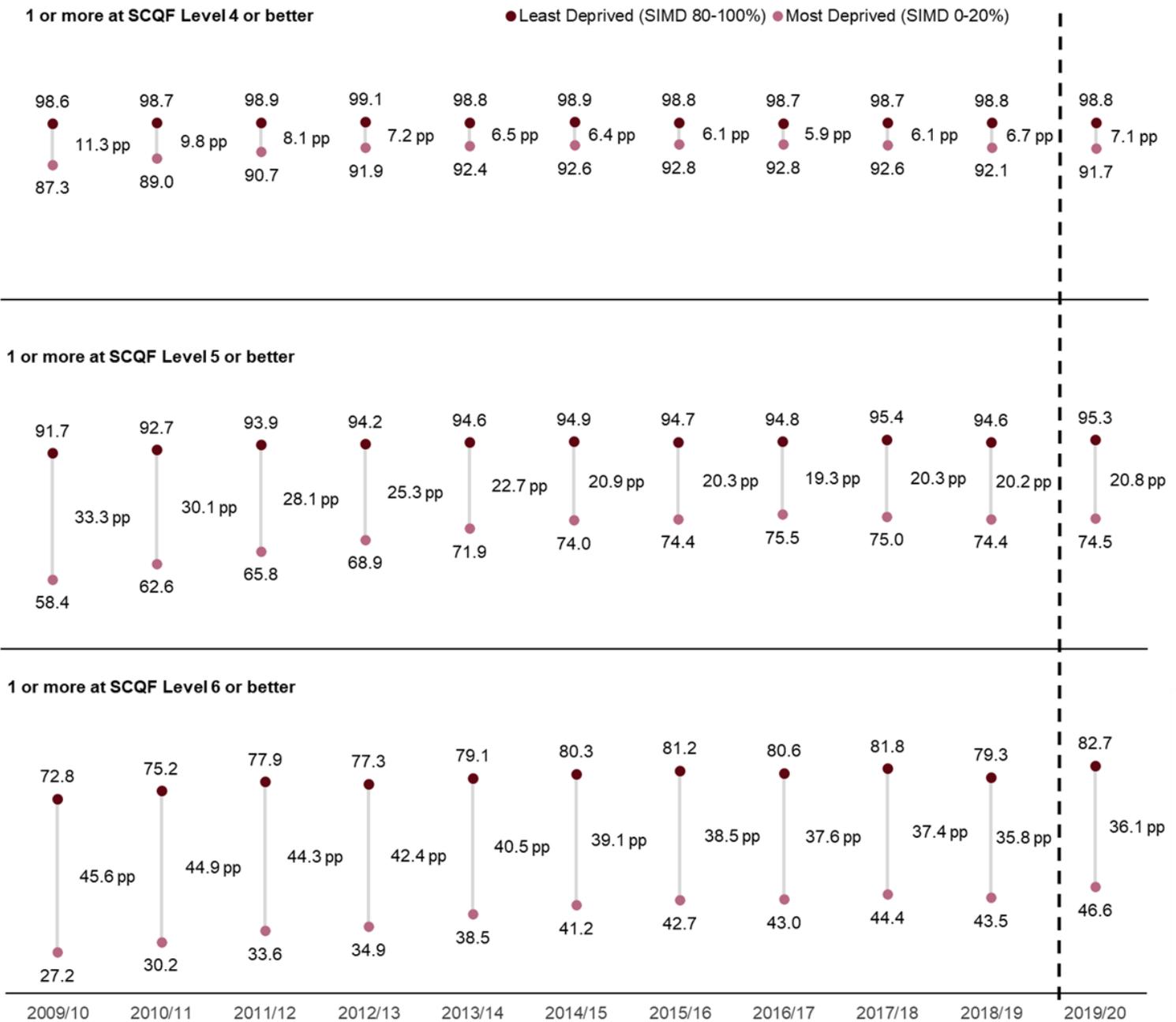
Chart 4 shows the proportions of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas who attained 1 pass or more at SCQF Levels 4 or better, 5 or better and 6 or better. As described in Section 1.1.2, care should be taken when making comparisons between 2019/20 and earlier years and any increase or decrease should not be interpreted as indicating improving or worsening performance without further evidence.

The gap between the proportion of school leavers from the most deprived and least deprived areas attaining 1 pass or more at **SCQF Level 4 or better**, was 7.1 percentage points. This is up from 6.7 percentage points in 2018/19 due to a small reduction in the proportion of leavers from the most deprived areas who attained a pass at this level. Following a steady reduction in the gap between 2009/10 (11.3 percentage points) and 2016/17, the gap has widened each year and in 2019/20 is the widest it has been since 2012/13.

At **SCQF Level 5 or better**, the gap was 20.8 percentage points in 2019/20. This is up from 20.2 percentage points in 2018/19. The proportion attaining 1 pass or more has increased slightly for school leavers from the most deprived areas but increased by more for those from the least deprived areas which has led to the gap widening. Between 2009/10 and 2016/17 the attainment gap at SCQF Level 5 or better reduced steadily from 33.3 percentage points to 19.3 percentage points. Since then it has increased to 20.8 percentage points in 2019/20.

At **SCQF Level 6 or better**, the gap was 36.1 percentage points in 2019/20. This is up from 35.8 percentage points in 2018/19. The proportion attaining 1 pass or more has increased for both school leavers from the most and least deprived areas but has increased by more for those from the least deprived areas which has led to the gap widening slightly. Over the longer term, the gap has reduced from 45.6 percentage points in 2009/10.

**Chart 4: Percentage of school leavers by attainment at SCQF Level 4 to 6 or better, by SIMD<sup>1</sup> quintile, 2009/10 to 2019/20<sup>a</sup>**



pp = percentage point difference between most and least deprived quintile

1. Based on SIMD 2016. More information on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation can be found at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD>.

a. A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018/19 and 2019/20 school leavers reflecting the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 on 2019/20 school leaver attainment. Further information can be found in section 1.1.2.

#### 4.4 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics

Table 6 shows school leaver attainment by pupil characteristic, such as sex and ethnicity. It shows that females are continuing to outperform males at SCQF Levels 4 to 6 or better with the gap being wider at higher SCQF levels.

Pupils recorded as Asian-Chinese continue to have the highest level of attainment, with 92.5 per cent achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better. Pupils with a recorded Additional Support Need (ASN) are less likely to achieve SCQF Levels 4 to 6 or better, than pupils without an ASN. Pupils living in Remote Rural areas are the most likely to achieve at SCQF Levels 4, 5 and 6 or better.

**Table 6: Percentage of school leavers by attainment at SCQF Level 4 to 6 or better, by pupil characteristic, 2018/19 and 2019/20**

Pupil Characteristic	2018/19			2019/20 <sup>a</sup>		
	1 or more at SCQF Level 4 or better	1 or more at SCQF Level 5 or better	1 or more at SCQF Level 6 or better	1 or more at SCQF Level 4 or better	1 or more at SCQF Level 5 or better	1 or more at SCQF Level 6 or better
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	95.2	82.6	54.5	95.0	83.2	57.8
Female	96.6	87.5	66.8	96.6	88.3	70.1
<b>Ethnicity<sup>1</sup></b>						
White - Scottish	95.9	84.9	59.7	95.7	85.2	62.7
White - non-Scottish	95.5	84.1	61.1	95.5	86.1	65.3
White - UK	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
White - Other	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	96.7	89.5	71.8	95.5	89.7	70.2
Asian - Indian	*	93.7	76.7	*	*	82.3
Asian - Pakistani	97.9	92.7	72.7	99.0	94.0	80.4
Asian - Chinese	100.0	97.4	91.7	*	*	92.5
Asian - Other	*	90.6	77.1	97.0	92.6	79.9
African/ Black/ Caribbean <sup>2</sup>	97.8	91.0	70.6	97.1	93.8	78.2
All other categories <sup>3</sup>	89.3	73.9	55.3	93.7	85.4	65.4
Not Disclosed/Not known	90.8	79.5	55.3	92.8	79.7	61.7
<b>Urban/Rural</b>						
Large Urban Areas	95.7	85.0	62.0	95.7	85.9	65.9
Other Urban Areas	95.3	83.8	58.4	95.4	83.8	61.0
Accessible Small Towns	96.9	85.9	62.5	96.3	86.8	65.8
Remote Small Towns	95.4	84.2	57.1	95.1	85.0	59.1
Accessible Rural	96.9	87.2	62.8	96.6	88.6	66.9
Remote Rural	97.2	87.9	62.2	97.0	89.8	67.0
<b>Additional Support Needs<sup>4</sup></b>						
ASN	90.7	69.8	39.3	90.8	71.4	43.3
No ASN	98.3	92.2	70.5	98.5	93.5	75.1
<b>All Leavers</b>	<b>95.9</b>	<b>85.1</b>	<b>60.5</b>	<b>95.8</b>	<b>85.7</b>	<b>63.9</b>

\* percentages based on fewer than 5 pupils have been suppressed for disclosure and quality reasons

a. A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018/19 and 2019/20 school leavers reflecting the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 on 2019/20 school leaver attainment. Further information can be found in section 1.1.2.

1. Some categories have been grouped together due to small numbers. Some categories (typically 'Asian – Indian', 'Asian – Chinese' contain between 100-200 leavers and due to relatively small numbers may be subject to fluctuation. Comparisons between groups should take this into account.

2. The 'African/Black/Caribbean' category includes 'African', 'African - Other', 'Caribbean or Black' categories

3. 'All other categories' includes 'Other - other' and 'Other - Arab'.

4. Pupils who have a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP), Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) or Child's Plan are assessed or declared disabled or have another need.

Broad patterns in attainment by pupil characteristic are typically stable year on year, although small numbers in some characteristic groups mean fluctuations do occur. Table 6 shows that, compared to 2018/19, a higher percentage of 2019/20 school leavers achieved one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better and SCQF Level 6 or better across almost all characteristic breakdowns. Comparisons between years should take into account the effect of the change in assessment method in 2020 which will affect the attainment of many 2019/20 school leavers.

## 4.5 Literacy and Numeracy

Literacy and numeracy are key skills for any school leaver. **Literacy** is taken to be the ability to communicate by reading, writing, and listening and talking. **Numeracy** is defined as the ability to use numbers in order to solve problems by counting, doing calculations, measuring, and understanding graphs and charts.

A range of courses are included in the literacy and numeracy measures, as set out in background note 7.2.2. These courses are selected based upon the outcomes and assessment standards for **SQA's literacy and numeracy units at National 3, 4 and 5**, with the key criterion being: the main purpose of the qualification or award is to improve literacy and/or numeracy skills.

When looking at achievement in literacy and numeracy, a pass in relevant units (rather than full qualifications, for example) counts as achieving literacy or numeracy at that level. With unit based courses, a pupil who did not pass the course, but achieved the relevant units, would be counted as achieving literacy or numeracy at that level. Mandatory unit assessments were removed from National 5s in 2017/18 and from Highers in 2018/19. This means that it is no longer mandatory for a pupil to complete unit assessments in order to achieve National 5 and Higher qualifications. This change is likely to have an effect on the literacy and numeracy attainment figures.

Table 7 shows the percentage of 2019/20 school leavers attaining literacy and numeracy at SCQF Levels 3 to 5 or better. At each level, more leavers attained literacy skills than numeracy skills, and this was more marked at higher SCQF levels.

At SCQF Level 3 or better, 96.2 per cent of leavers attained literacy and 96.1 per cent of leavers attained numeracy. 93.9 per cent of leavers attained literacy at SCQF Level 4 or better, whilst 91.6 per cent attained numeracy skills at this level. Similarly, 81.7 per cent of leavers attained literacy at SCQF Level 5 or better, whilst 71.0 per cent attained this level in numeracy.

**Table 7: Leaver attainment in literacy and numeracy by SCQF Level, percentage of leavers, 2016/17 to 2019/20<sup>a</sup>**

SCQF Level	Literacy				Numeracy			
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>3 or better</b>	96.5	96.3	96.1	96.2	96.3	95.8	95.8	96.1
<b>4 or better</b>	94.4	94.3	93.9	93.9	90.7	90.8	91.4	91.6
<b>5 or better</b>	80.8	81.6	81.7	81.7	68.8	69.1	68.7	71.0

a. As described above caution should be exercised if making comparisons over time.

## Chapter 5: School Leaver Attainment and Destinations

- School leavers with **higher attainment levels** are **more likely** to go on to a **positive destination** – **64.7 per cent** of school leavers who **did not achieve a pass at SCQF Level 3 or better** entered a positive destination; this increases to **98.5 per cent** of leavers who achieved **at SCQF Level 7**.

Table 8 shows that for 2019/20 school leavers whose highest qualification was at SCQF Level 5 the main destination is Further Education (55.3 per cent), while the majority of school leavers with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or 7 entered Higher Education.

The most common destination for school leavers with no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better is Further Education (27.4 per cent). The same is also true for those with SCQF Level 3 and 4 as their highest qualification (36.8 per cent and 48.1 per cent respectively).

**Table 8: Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved and initial destinations category, 2019/20<sup>1</sup>**

Initial Destination	No passes at SCQF 3 or better	SCQF Level 3	SCQF Level 4	SCQF Level 5	SCQF Level 6	SCQF Level 7	Total
Higher Education	1.6	*	*	3.2	56.6	87.9	44.2
Further Education	27.4	36.8	48.1	55.3	21.7	4.0	28.1
Training	16.4	20.9	14.2	4.5	1.0	0.3	3.7
Employment	13.8	11.4	17.8	27.2	16.3	5.6	16.2
Voluntary Work	0.7	*	*	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.5
Personal Skills Development	4.9	2.7	2.4	1.1	0.3	0.0	0.8
<b>Positive Destinations</b>	<b>64.7</b>	<b>72.9</b>	<b>83.6</b>	<b>91.7</b>	<b>96.3</b>	<b>98.5</b>	<b>93.3</b>
Unemployed seeking	12.3	14.2	9.6	5.6	2.8	1.1	4.1
Unemployed Not Seeking	17.2	10.0	5.3	1.8	0.6	0.4	1.8
Unknown	5.7	2.9	1.5	0.9	0.3	0.1	0.7
<b>Other Destinations</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>6.7</b>
Number of Leavers	964	1,036	4,780	10,360	19,286	11,028	47,454

1. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

\* percentages based on less than 5 leavers have been suppressed for disclosure and quality reasons.

## Chapter 6: Additional qualifications

Attainment data in previous sections relate to National Qualifications (including Skills for Work), as detailed in section 1.3. This section covers a range of additional qualifications that may be undertaken by school pupils.

### 6.1 Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

The Scottish Government established the independent Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, led by Sir Ian Wood, in January 2013. Its remit was to explore how we might develop a modern, responsive and valued system for vocational training and emulate the labour markets of the best performing European countries. More information on the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce strategy is available here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/developing-young-workforce-scotlands-youth-employment-strategy/>.

Table A1.3 in the supplementary tables shows attainment in vocational qualifications at SCQF Level 2 to 7, by local authority. These vocational qualifications include National Certificates, Higher National Qualifications, Scottish Vocational Qualifications, National Progression Awards, and Skills for Work. Note that attainment in most of these qualifications is not included in the attainment statistics presented in previous sections, which cover National Qualifications only. The exception are Skills for Work courses which contribute to both measures.

Unlike the National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications, the qualifications which make up this measure are typically assessed internally. With this in mind, and given the approach to certification in 2020 we have not introduced a break in the series between 2018/19 and 2019/20 for this measure. Further information on the changes to SQA assessment methods in 2020 is available in Section 7.5.2.

The table shows that 22.5 per cent of 2019/20 school leavers achieved one or more vocational qualifications at SCQF Level 5 or better. This compares to 17.1 per cent in 2018/19 and to 7.3 per cent in 2013/14.

The supplementary tables can be found here: <https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-680-1>

The latest Developing the Young Workforce progress report is available here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/developing-young-workforce-fifth-annual-progress-report-2018-19/>.

### 6.2 Foundation Apprenticeships (Experimental Statistics)

Foundation Apprenticeships have been designed and developed with Skills Development Scotland, industry and SQA, and are aligned to key sectors of the economy with current skills shortages and projected future jobs growth. They provide work-based learning opportunities with industry recognised qualifications in the senior phase <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/become-an-apprentice/foundation-apprenticeships/>.

A new supplementary table, A1.5, has been introduced covering the number of school leavers in 2019/20 who have achieved a Foundation Apprenticeship by subject. The statistics in this table have been labelled as Experimental Statistics reflecting the fact that

work to ensure and improve their accuracy is ongoing. Note that attainment in Foundation Apprenticeships is not included in attainment statistics presented in Chapters 4 and 5, which cover National Qualifications only. The National Certificate and National Progression Award components of Foundation Apprenticeships do however contribute to the Delivering Scotland's Young Workforce measure outlined in section 6.1 above and to the All SQA qualifications measure outlined in section 6.3, below.

In 2019/20, school leavers who were on track to complete their Foundation Apprenticeship but could not due to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), received a Letter of Recognition (<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/news-events/2020/june/foundation-apprenticeship-outcomes-and-progressions-routes-confirmed-with-colleges-and-universities/>).

The figures in table A1.5 are based on Foundation Apprenticeships which had either (i) been certified by the date on which SQA attainment data cut was taken for this publication (3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020) and had a result date between 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019 and 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020 or (ii) for which a Letter of Recognition was issued.

Foundation Apprenticeships have been available since 2016. They generally last for two years and so the first set of school leavers to attain Foundation Apprenticeships would have left school in 2018. However, table A1.5 presents data for 2019/20 school leavers only.

For the academic year 2019/20, Skills Development Scotland have been working with SQA and others to improve the data recording of Foundation Apprenticeships in school attainment data. The data in this table, designated as **Experimental Statistics**, provides a good indication of the number of school leavers who attained a Foundation Apprenticeship. Despite this there will be a small number of school leavers who achieved a Foundation Apprenticeship but for whom this information was not entered onto systems in time to be included in these figures. These statistics are therefore being published as Experimental Statistics to provide useful information for users, while reflecting that they are undergoing testing to ensure they meet quality standards of National Statistics in future. The statistics are undergoing ongoing development work with stakeholders including Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). They will remain in 'Experimental' status for the duration of this work as more knowledge and quality improvements are built into the data to improve coverage in future outputs. Outputs will be compared on an ongoing basis with other sources to ensure that statistics presented are of sufficient quality.

The supplementary tables can be found here: <https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-680-1>

## 6.3 All SQA qualifications attainment measure (Experimental Statistics)

### 6.3.1 Background

As set out in detail in section 1.3, the attainment statistics in Chapters 4 and 5 of this publication focus on Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications (including Skills for Work). These qualifications are a subset of the full range of SQA awards and qualifications<sup>3</sup> that pupils can achieve. A wide variety of other SQA qualifications are also increasingly being taken by school pupils but are not included in the headline statistics in this report.

In response to feedback from users, and to improve the evidence base on the attainment of broader achievements and skills as part of the Curriculum for Excellence, we have been exploring how a wider range of qualifications could be reflected in this publication to account for other attainment achieved by school pupils. Some, but not all, of these are already reflected in the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce supplementary table, which shows that the percentage of pupils leaving school with vocational qualifications continues to rise (see section 6.1).

This year we have also included some supplementary tables (W1-W4) covering an 'all SQA qualifications' measure, including National Qualifications **and** other SQA qualifications such as National Certificates, National Progression Awards and Awards (full list given below). This measure therefore includes the National Certificate and National Progression Award components of Foundation Apprenticeships. As a result, for school leavers who have completed a Foundation Apprenticeship since their establishment in 2016, the attainment achieved in these components will be included in this measure – rather than the Foundation Apprenticeship qualification itself.

These statistics have been designated as **Experimental Statistics**, reflecting that they are undergoing development and subject to revision based on informed feedback from users. Further information on the range of SQA qualifications can be found on the [SQA](#) website.

### 6.3.2 Methodology

Similarly to the National Qualifications-based attainment measure used in previous sections (for which details on methodology can be found in section 7.2.2), only the best result within a subject is counted and Grades A to C (or ungraded pass) is considered a pass. If a pupil attains a D at a certain level, this is counted as equivalent to a pass at the level below.

Where a pupil has attainment in a given subject at multiple Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) levels, potentially across different qualification types (e.g. National Qualifications, National Progression Awards) only the attainment at the highest level is counted. This ensures that the number of passes achieved at a given SCQF level or better (see Table W2) counts the total number of subjects where a pass was achieved, allowing us to measure the 'breadth' of attainment (for how many subjects a pupil attains a given level) as well as the 'depth' (to what level a pupil attains).

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<sup>3</sup> A number of SCQF accredited courses and qualifications are provided by other bodies. These are not included in this measure. The Scottish Government does not receive data on a consistent basis for the full range of these qualifications/courses delivered by other providers.

An important point to note is that for National Qualifications, all qualifications at a given SCQF level carry the same number of SCQF credit points meaning that they are all associated with the same notional hours of learning. This means that it makes sense to treat all National Qualifications at a given SCQF level equally – each is treated as a single pass at a given SCQF level.

However, in the ‘All SQA qualifications’ measure, some qualifications at a given SCQF level are worth, for example, 6 SCQF credit points whilst others are worth, for example, 24. **Both of these qualifications are treated as being equal in this proposed measure – each is treated as a single pass.** This means that qualifications with varying magnitudes of notional learning hours are treated equally, although time and knowledge requirements of different qualifications at the same level may vary substantially. This should be borne in mind when interpreting the results.

### Differences between existing National Qualification attainment measures and the proposed ‘All SQA qualifications’ measure

	Existing National Qualifications attainment measure	Proposed All SQA qualifications attainment measure
<b>Qualifications included</b>	National Qualifications (National Courses, Skills for Work)	National Qualifications (National Courses, Skills for Work), Awards, Customised Awards Higher National, National – Workplace, National Certificates, National Progression Awards, Professional Development Awards, Scottish Vocational Qualifications, Ungraded National Courses
<b>SCQF credit points</b>	<b>Same</b> for each qualification within a given SCQF level	<b>Differs</b> between qualifications within a given SCQF level
<b>Highest SCQF level achieved</b>	Highest SCQF level achieved across <b>any subject in National Qualifications</b>	Highest SCQF level achieved across <b>any subject in any SQA qualification</b>
<b>Number of passes achieved by SCQF level or better</b>	Total number of subjects where a pass was achieved in <b>National Qualifications</b>	Total number of subjects where a pass was achieved <sup>a</sup> in <b>any SQA Qualification</b>

a. Note that only the best result within a subject is counted. In cases where a National Qualification has been attained within a given subject this will not be counted towards total passes in the ‘All SQA qualifications’ attainment measure if another qualification has been achieved at a higher SCQF level within the same subject.

Supplementary tables W1-W4 cover the 'All SQA Qualifications' measure. Across all SQA qualifications, data for 2019/20 shows that 65.8 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better, while 1.9 per cent of school leavers achieved no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better. These patterns are similar to those presented for the National Qualifications-based attainment measure in Chapter 4. They show higher overall levels of attainment as a pass in the 'All SQA Qualifications' measure can be in a National Qualification or in one of the other SQA qualifications (listed in section 6.3.1).

Note that, as in the measures in sections 4 and 5, we have included a dashed line break between 2018/19 and 2019/20 for this measure as it includes National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications (for more information see section 1.1.2).

### **6.3.3 Feedback**

The supplementary tables provided on this measure are included to give an indication of the type of evidence on school leaver attainment in the full range of SQA qualifications which could be made available in future releases. These statistics are being published as Experimental Statistics in order to gather feedback from users and aid development. The statistics will remain in 'Experimental' status for the duration of this work as we gain insight from feedback on whether the statistics meet user needs and how they could be presented to add value to existing attainment measures. The methods used to produce this measure are under development and users should be aware that results may therefore be revised in future releases. Timescales for development will depend on the results of user feedback.

We invite any comments from users on the usefulness of the measure, and on whether this is the best approach to include a wider range of qualifications to measure attainment. Please send any feedback on this measure to the following mailbox:  
[school.stats@gov.scot](mailto:school.stats@gov.scot)

## Chapter 7: Background notes

### 7.1 National Statistics publication

This is a National Statistics Publication. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

These statistics undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. This publication has been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority.

### 7.2 Sources and methodology

#### 7.2.1 Destinations

##### Source and Quality Assurance

School leaver destination data is sourced from the Opportunities for All shared dataset which is managed and hosted by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) on behalf of partners. The data is held on the SDS operational Customer Support System (CSS). This data set contains information shared by local authorities, colleges, Scottish Funding Council, Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) via a secure online portal known as the 16+ Data Hub. The data to be shared is documented within the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013 and there are a series of business rules governing the processing of this data.

Data that has been shared by partners is combined with information gathered directly from young people, their parents/carers or their representatives by SDS staff delivering services to individuals, including transitional support to school leavers. SDS has at least one named adviser for each school in Scotland who work directly with pupils and school staff to support the transition of young people from school. As this combined data is primarily used for operational purposes the quality is continually monitored to ensure SDS, local authorities and colleges can monitor and plan for a young person's involvement in education, training or employment and identify those young people who require advice or support.

SDS has developed guidance documents for their staff which set out the specific activities and processes involved in identifying, engaging with and confirming the status of SDS customers. This information includes definitions of the available statuses on CSS and step by step recording guidance. SDS staff have access to specific reports for data quality and more specifically to support the school leaver destination process. These reports will identify school leavers and provide details of their destinations including the source of the information and the date the information was validated.

Prior to destination data being shared with the Scottish Government, final quality checks are carried out centrally by the Corporate Planning and Performance Reporting team within SDS. These include a review of statuses to ensure the reported destination reflects the available detail e.g. course details and course levels are correctly reported as higher or further education. In addition, final checks of shared data are made to ensure destinations are consistent with data sources e.g. matching information about modern or graduate apprentices.

## Methodology

A pupil is counted as a school leaver if they have a leaver record on the Opportunities for All shared data set, a pupil census record for the same academic year, and no pupil census record in the following academic year.

The initial destinations data in this publication provide information on the outcomes for young people approximately three months after the end of the academic year (1st Monday in October) while the follow-up publication provides information on the outcomes of young people approximately nine months after the end of the academic year (1st Monday in April). These collections should be seen as complementary to one another but it should be noted that various factors may affect the results at different time periods.

Throughout this publication the initial destination statistics exclude special school leavers from the calculations. For information on initial destination statistics which include special school leavers see tables L3.1, A1.3, A3.1 and A3.2 in the supplementary tables which can be found in the supporting files here:

<https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-680-1>

### 7.2.2 Attainment

#### Source and Quality Assurance

Data on National Qualifications are provided by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) using data from the live SQA Awards Processing System (APS).

SQA provide two extracts of data to the Scottish Government; one in August (pre-review data) and one in December (post-review data, used in this publication).

In a normal year, the August data extract includes records with a result date between the 1<sup>st</sup> August of the previous year and the 31<sup>st</sup> July of the current year (where a candidate has been entered, has a final result or has been certificated), Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) credit information, SCQF points, SCQF levels and qualification types (where available) and excludes records on qualification types that are out of scope. This year, due to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), the data extract (taken on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020) includes records with a result date between 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019 and 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020.

The data extract is merged with school roll data provided by the Scottish Government (Scottish Candidate Number (SCN), centre number and stage information); data is retained where there is a match by SCN on the SQA data extract and the school roll data. This ensures SQA only provide records for which Scottish Government have legitimate interest to process.

The December data extract is formed of the August data extract, updated with information from the Post-results Service (clerical check or marking review). The December extract contains records provided in the August attainment data transfer which match with the SQA APS on SCN and product code. Any records that were present in the August extract, but are no longer present in SQA APS will not feature in the December extract, this will typically be due to course withdrawals/changes.

## Methodology

This publication concentrates on National Qualifications (e.g. National 5, Highers, etc.).

Attainment data includes qualifications achieved throughout all stages of a pupil's schooling. Qualifications data from SQA are available on a consistent basis from 2005/06, meaning any attainment for earlier leaver cohorts (e.g. those who left in 2009/10) which pre-dates 2005/06 (i.e. in early stages of secondary school) may be missing.

The attainment data are based on the result date of learners' qualifications. In some cases, this may lead to attainment being reported in a different academic year to that reported by SQA. There is also the possibility of a small number of awards being excluded if a review is successful after a pupil has left. Only attainment data for candidates with a Scottish Candidate Number in the pupil census that year are included.

This publication uses the 'latest and best' approach for attainment data. This means that only the best result within a subject is counted, where a grade A to C (or ungraded pass) is considered a pass. For example, if a pupil passes Higher Mathematics and Advanced Higher Mathematics the following year, only the Advanced Higher qualification will be counted when looking at how many qualifications at any level that leaver has achieved by the time they left school.

If a pupil attains a D at a certain level this is not counted as achieving that level. Instead it is counted as being equivalent to attainment at the level below (note, even though there may not be a qualification offered at the level below). For example, if a pupil attains a D at SCQF Level 5 in a certain subject this would be counted as attaining at SCQF Level 4 or better for that subject and not at SCQF Level 5 or better.

Attainment statistics exclude special school pupils unless otherwise stated.

The methodology used for these statistics is distinct from other sources of attainment data (for a comprehensive list of sources see section 7.9). The table below outlines the main differences between this publication and the SQA statistics published annually in August.

	<b>This publication</b>	<b>SQA attainment statistics</b>
Main measure	Numbers of passes achieved by <b>individual school leavers</b> at a given SCQF level ( <b>pupil level</b> )	Grades and number of passes achieved <b>in total</b> in a given qualification or course ( <b>qualification level</b> )
Focuses on	<b>Highest level attained</b> by individual school leavers	<b>Grades and pass rates</b> in different qualifications broken down by subject
Cohort covered	<b>School leavers</b> only	<b>All candidates</b> , including school pupils who entered SQA qualifications, as well as those in non-school settings
Qualifications covered	Main measures based on <b>National Qualifications</b> only, based on latest <b>6 years</b> of attainment data	<b>All SQA qualifications</b> entered in a <b>single year</b>

## Curriculum

School leavers from 2019/20 are the fifth cohort to have experienced the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) throughout the senior phase of their school education. School leavers from 2013/14 and 2014/15 will have taken a range of qualifications from the current set to older qualifications that have now been phased out.

For most young people S4 is the last compulsory year of school, but the majority choose to stay on and complete S5 and S6 (see Chart 1). Highers (SCQF Level 6) are generally taken in S5/S6; Highers, sometimes along with Advanced Highers (SCQF Level 7, usually taken in S6), are the qualifications required for entry into Higher Education.

Under CfE, schools and their partners are able to offer greater personalisation and choice in the Senior Phase (S4 to S6) in a range of ways, for example by: designing the Senior Phase as a three year experience rather than planning each year separately and delivering qualifications over a variable timeframe in response to young people's needs and prior achievements. Developing the Young Workforce (see section 6.1) has built upon this and has strengthened partnerships between schools, colleges, employers and other providers to increase the range of options and pathways on offer to young people.

With more choices available in the senior phase, young people are also taking a range of vocational qualifications, including National Certificates, Higher National Qualifications, Scottish Vocational Qualifications, National Progression Awards and Skills for Work qualifications, alongside their National Qualifications. These provide a valuable route into Further Education, Higher Education, training or employment. This publication concentrates on National Qualifications (e.g. National 5, Highers, etc.) and Skills for Work qualifications. Statistics on school leavers achieving vocational qualifications can be found in Table A1.3 whilst tables W1-W4 provide information on a new All SQA qualifications measure (see section 6.3 above). A list of the tables is available at background note 7.7.

## Literacy and numeracy attainment

When the publication refers to Literacy or Numeracy attainment, a pupil is counted towards having literacy or numeracy attainment if they have passed units from the list below.

SCQF level	Literacy	Numeracy
<b>SCQF Level 4</b>		
Intermediate 1	Gaidhlig Unit Group 1, English Unit Group 1, English Unit Group 2, Gaidhlig Unit Group 2, English Unit Group 3	Maths Unit Group, Maths Unit Group 2
National 4	ESOL Unit Group	Application of Mathematics, Gniomhachas Matamataigs (Applications of Mathematics)
<b>SCQF Level 5</b>		
Intermediate 2	Gaidhlig Unit Group 1, English Unit Group 1, English Unit Group 2, ESOL Unit Group 1, ESOL Unit Group 2, Gaidhlig Unit Group 2, English Unit Group 3	Maths Unit Group, Maths Unit Group 2
National 5	English Unit Group, ESOL Unit Group, Gaidhlig Unit Group, English Unit Group 2, English, English Speakers of Other Languages, Gaidhlig	Mathematics Unit Group, Matamataig Unit Group, Application of Mathematics, Mathematics, Gniomhachas Matamataigs (Applications of Mathematics), Matamataigs (Mathematics)
<b>SCQF Level 6</b>		
Higher	Gaidhlig Unit Group 1, English Unit Group 1, English Unit Group 2, ESOL Unit Group 1, ESOL Unit Group 2, Gaidhlig Unit Group 2, English Unit Group 3, English Unit Group 4, ESOL Unit Group 1, ESOL Unit Group 2, Gaidhlig Unit Group 3, English Unit Group 5	Maths Unit Group, Maths Unit Group 2, Matamataigs Unit Group, Maths Unit Group 3, Matamataigs Unit Group 2

Note: ESOL = English for Speakers of Other Languages

### 7.2.3 Attainment and destinations data matching

The school leaver destinations data is matched to the pupil census and to SQA data so that pupil characteristics and attainment data can be linked to the destinations. Only leavers with a match to the pupil census are included in the analysis within this publication. This means that some leavers are excluded from the analysis.

For the 2013/14 school leaver cohort, the leaver matching methodology was updated. This updated methodology has been adopted since then, and data back to 2009/10 leavers have been produced on a consistent basis. These data are not directly comparable with data prior to 2009/10, and caution should be exercised when making comparisons with data prepared using the previous method.

All matching is done within certain constraints:

- Pupil census record must be in S3 or above, or categorised as SP (Special School), or AD (Adult Learner) in order to be included.
- School attended must be the main school attended by the pupil.

After being matched to the pupil census the data are then matched to the SQA attainment data using the Scottish Candidate Number (SCN).

If a pupil does not have a Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) category in the pupil census data, the SIMD category of the pupil's school is used.

## 7.3 Definitions & Symbols

### 7.3.1 Destinations

Leaver destinations are categorised by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) based on shared administrative data wherever possible. Alternatively, they have been captured by staff in data sharing organisations or through direct data input by SDS staff, as a result of contact with individuals, their parents/carers or organisations an individual is engaging with. The following categories for leaver destinations are included in this statistical bulletin:

Positive destination: includes higher education, further education, training, employment, voluntary work, Personal Skills Development and (between 2010/11 and 2017/18) Activity Agreements.

Higher Education: includes leavers following Higher National Diploma (HND) or Higher National Certificate (HNC) courses, degree courses, courses for the education and training of teachers and higher level courses for professional qualifications. It includes programmes at a level higher than the standard of the National Qualifications, i.e. above SCQF Level 7. Leavers with a deferred, unconditional place in higher education have also been included in this category.

Further Education: includes leavers undertaking full-time education which is not higher education and who are no longer on a school roll. This may include National Qualifications.

Training: includes leavers who are on a training course and in receipt of an allowance or grant, such as the Employability Fund national training programme. It also includes leavers who are on local authority or third sector funded training programmes that are in receipt of a training allowance or those participating in Community Jobs Scotland.

From 2018/19 this category includes school leavers receiving support that would previously have been recorded as 'Activity Agreements'. This means that the proportions of 2018/19 and 2019/20 school leavers with a destination category of Training cannot be directly compared to the proportion recorded for previous years. Further information can be found in the Activity Agreements definition below.

Employment: includes those who consider themselves to be employed and in receipt of payment from their employers. It includes young people undertaking training in employment through national training programmes such as Modern Apprenticeships and Graduate Apprenticeships.

Voluntary Work: includes those undertaking voluntary work/volunteering which will involve a young person giving of their time and energy through a third party with or without financial allowance.

Personal Skills Development: Young people who have a destination as Personal Skills Development (PSD) on the Opportunities for All shared dataset fall into one of two different categories:

PSD (Employability): including individuals who participate in activities with the aim of employment. For example programmes run by community learning and development or third sector organisations.

PSD (Social & Health): includes individuals who may not be ready to enter the labour market and require access to support from support services to make transitions into learning/work or adulthood. An example of this is where an individual undertakes structured opportunities appropriate to their long term needs or to address their barriers to engaging in education, employment or training.

The way in which school leavers undertaking Personal Skills Development are counted in these statistics changed in 2018/19 and data for previous years was revised to allow consistent comparisons over time. Further information can be found in the [previous release of this publication](#) (section 6.1)

Activity Agreements: prior to 2018/19 this included those for whom there was an agreement between a young person and an advisor that the young person would take part in a programme of learning and activity which helped them become ready for formal learning or employment.

The integration of funding streams as part of the ongoing implementation of No One Left Behind<sup>4</sup> means that although local authorities will provide the same type of support and opportunities for young people, this activity will no longer be funded under the banner of 'Activity Agreements'. This means it is no longer appropriate to record school leavers receiving this support using this category. Instead they are recorded in the Training category for 2018/19 onwards. Note that data for earlier years continues to include the Activity Agreements category reflecting the support that was available at the time.

Unemployed seeking: includes those known by Skills Development Scotland or their partners to be seeking employment or training. This includes those receiving support from SDS, Department of Working and Pensions and other partners. It is based on regular contact between the supporting organisation and the individual. This does not refer to the definition of 'unemployed' used by the Department of Work and Pensions to calculate published unemployment rates.

Unemployed not seeking: includes all those individuals who are not yet ready or are unavailable to enter the labour market for a range of reasons. The reasons may involve ill

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<sup>4</sup> No One Left Behind: review of employability services sets out the next steps that will be taken to deliver more effective and joined-up employability support across Scotland. As part of this the funding streams associated with Activity Agreements and other programmes are being integrated into a new local employability delivery model managed collaboratively between Scottish Government and Local Government from April 2019.

health/sickness, prison, pregnancy, caring for children or other dependents or taking time out.

Unknown: includes all leavers whose destination is not known either to Skills Development Scotland, the school attended, other partners or were not able to be contacted at the survey point.

### **7.3.2 Symbols**

The following symbols are used:

- = nil

\* = suppressed

## **7.4 Additional Support Needs**

An Additional Support Need (ASN) is recorded where a pupil is receiving any form of additional support for learning, this could be for a wide variety of reasons, of different durations and of any type. The different types of support provided include Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSP) and Individualised Educational Programmes (IEP) as well as disabilities, Child's Plans and other plans. Under previous legislation a pupil may have been categorised as having a Record of Need (RoN).

## **7.5 Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

### **7.5.1 School Leaver Destinations**

The initial destination statistics in this report are based on data held on the 'Opportunities for All' shared dataset, hosted and managed by SDS on their Customer Support System. SDS provided information on school leavers' latest destination statuses recorded as at Monday, 5th October 2020 and extracted from the dataset in early December 2020 (see section 7.2.1).

Destinations figures may reflect both choices made by pupils, as well as the opportunities available to them upon leaving school. The availability of particular opportunities (employment opportunities, for example) to 2019/20 school leavers may have been directly affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The coronavirus pandemic meant that the start dates for some opportunities such as apprenticeship programmes, college courses etc. were delayed in 2020. Had these started as originally planned (prior to the reference date of 5th October 2020) any school leavers participating in them would have been recorded as being in a positive destination (see section 1.2). In those instances where they instead started later than planned, and after the 5th October reference date, it is possible that some of these school leavers may be recorded as being in an 'other' destination ('Unemployed Seeking', 'Unemployed Not Seeking', 'Unknown') depending on the activity they were undertaking prior to these opportunities starting.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic may have also affected local partnerships' ability to track some school leavers through home visits meaning that their initial destination may be 'Unknown'. This is likely to have partially contributed to the larger proportion of school leavers with an 'Unknown' status compared to previous years.

## 7.5.2 Attainment

### 2020 Attainment in National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher

The attainment data presented in this report covers Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications achieved throughout all stages of pupils' education at school.

The attainment data is calculated by considering school leavers' attainment over the previous 6 years. Results focus on the highest level achieved and so it is likely that attainment in earlier years will have a limited impact on the final figures. For 2019/20 school leavers' total attainment is based on attainment from 2015 to 2020.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to the cancellation of 2020 National 5 (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 5), Higher (SCQF Level 6) and Advanced Higher (SCQF Level 7) exams and also meant that coursework could not be collected or assessed by the SQA. Grades in these qualifications in 2020 were initially awarded based on an Alternative Certification Model (ACM) but, following a Ministerial direction, the final awarded grades were based on teacher estimates. The results for those learners who were awarded a higher grade under the ACM approach were retained. The resulting 2020 National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher pass rates were higher than in previous years.

For many school leavers, attainment in the most recent year before they leave school is likely to have a large impact on their highest level of attainment. The 2020 results will therefore have an impact on the overall attainment of many 2019/20 school leavers. By way of illustration, amongst 2019/20 school leavers, the passes achieved in their final year represented 26 per cent of all passes they achieved throughout school. When focusing on the highest SCQF level achieved by school leavers, 72 per cent of school leavers achieved their highest level in the final year before leaving.

In this report, the proportions of 2019/20 school leavers attaining passes at SCQF levels 5, 6 and 7 (or better) have increased by more than has typically been seen in previous years. When interpreting these changes, the different approach to certification in 2020 should be kept in mind. Attainment at SCQF level 4 may also be affected as a result of the treatment of grade Ds at SCQF level 5 (see Section 1.3). In addition, the 'total qualifications achieved' figures in this report and the associated tables provide information on the number of passes at a given SCQF Level **or better**. Any impact of the different approach to certification in 2020 on SCQF Levels 5, 6 or 7 could filter down to measures at SCQF Level 3 or better and at SCQF level 4 or better.

The attainment data in this report provides an accurate reflection of the attainment with which 2019/20 school leavers in Scotland left school. For this reason the 2019/20 attainment data has been presented alongside data for previous years. However, care must be taken when comparing between years. Interpretation must take full account of the different certification models used and an increase in attainment levels in 2019/20 should not be seen as an indication that performance has improved without further evidence.

### 2020 Attainment in National 3 and National 4

National 3 and National 4 qualifications are made up of units which are internally assessed as pass or fail by the school or college and externally assured by SQA. This process took place in 2020 with results based on either existing evidence from assessments that had

already been completed and/or teaching experience of candidates' work from throughout the year.

## **2020 Attainment in National Certificates, National Progression Awards, Skills for Work courses and other Awards**

For National Certificates, National Progression Awards, Skills for Work courses and other Awards, schools, colleges, employers and training providers provided SQA with the results of their internal assessment decisions (where some evidence from the course already existed but further progress was not possible) using their teaching experience of candidates' work through the year. Schools, colleges, employers and training providers were also asked to use existing quality assurance systems and processes to verify the appropriateness of internal assessment outcomes and certification. The usual level of external verification was not possible and so SQA undertook a reasonable level of quality assurance remotely, to support the safe and secure delivery of qualifications.

### **2021 attainment**

In light of the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on learning and teaching and the risk of further disruption, the decision has been taken that there will be no external assessment of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses for 2020/21. At the time of writing, courses will be assessed based on teacher or lecturer judgement supported by nationally consistent assessment resources and quality assurance.

These changes have no impact on the statistics in this report but will affect attainment data associated with future school leaver cohorts and the statistics in future versions of this report.

## **7.6 UK comparisons**

### **7.6.1 Attainment**

Scotland has a different set of qualifications to the rest of the United Kingdom (UK) and comparisons cannot be made directly. Scotland, and the other UK countries, participate in the [Programme for International Assessment \(PISA\)](#) survey on education performance.

### **7.6.2 Destinations**

The information presented here is for young people who have left school, while in England and Wales information is collected on 16-19 year olds who are not in education, employment or training. As a result direct comparisons cannot be made.

## **7.7 List of supplementary tables**

Supplementary tables on attainment and leaver destinations are available at in the supporting files here:

<https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-680-1>

These tables on attainment and school leaver initial destinations include breakdowns by: characteristics of leavers; local authority; additional support needs; stage of leaving; and subject. There will be information on attainment and leaver destinations of those from special schools.

## School Leaver Destinations

- C1.1: Number and percentage of initial school leavers by stage of leaving, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table L1.1. Percentage of school leavers from publicly funded schools in Scotland by initial destination category: 1992/93 to 2019/20
- Table L1.2. Percentage of school leavers from publicly funded secondary schools in Scotland by initial destination category and gender, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table L1.3. Percentage of school leavers from publicly funded secondary schools in Scotland by initial destination category and 6-fold Urban Rural classification of school, 2019/20
- Table L1.4. Percentage of school leavers from publicly funded secondary schools in Scotland by initial destination category and ethnic background, 2019/20
- Table L1.5. Percentage of school leavers from publicly funded secondary schools in Scotland by initial destination category and national identity, 2019/20
- Table L1.6. Percentage of school leavers from publicly funded secondary schools in Scotland by initial destination category and whether declared or assessed disabled, 2019/20
- Table L2.1. Percentage of school leavers by initial destination and local authority, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table L2.2. Number of school leavers by initial destination and local authority, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table L3.1. Percentage of secondary and special school leavers from publicly funded schools in Scotland by initial destination and Additional Support Need, 2019/20

## Attainment Statistics

- Table A1.1. Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved, by SIMD quintile, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table A1.1b. Percentage of school leavers by total qualifications achieved, by SIMD quintile, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table A1.2. Attainment of secondary school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved in each subject, 2011/12 to 2019/20
- Table A1.3. Percentage of secondary and special school leavers from publicly funded schools attaining vocational qualifications at SCQF Level 2 to 7, by local authority, 2013/14 to 2019/20
- Table A1.4. School leavers with no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table A2.1. Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved, by local authority, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table A2.2. Percentage of school leavers by total qualifications achieved, by local authority, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table A2.3. Percentage of school leavers by total qualifications achieved, by local authority and SIMD, 2012/13 to 2019/20

- Table A3.1. Percentage of secondary and special school leavers from publicly funded schools by highest SCQF Level achieved and Additional Support Need, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table A3.2. Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved, by local authority, 2009/10 to 2019/20

## Experimental Statistics

- Table A1.5. Secondary school leavers from publicly funded secondary schools attaining Foundation Apprenticeships, by subject, 2019/20
- Table W1. Percentage of school leavers achieved one or more passes at SCQF Level 3-7 or better, All SQA Qualifications measure, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table W2. School leavers attainment by SCQF Level or better and number of passes achieved, percentage of leavers, All SQA Qualifications measure, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table W3. Percentage of school leavers by attainment at SCQF Level 4 to 6, by pupil characteristic, All SQA Qualifications measure, 2009/10 to 2019/20
- Table W4. Percentage of school leavers by total qualifications achieved, by SIMD quintile, 2009/10 to 2019/20

## 7.8 Cost

### 7.8.1 Attainment

There is no additional cost to SQA to supply the attainment data.

### 7.8.2 Leavers

As part of the overall approach to delivering the Scottish Government's Opportunities for All commitment the follow-up of school leavers is a business as usual activity for Skills Development Scotland and costs are embedded within their daily operations. This is unlike earlier years where two dedicated exercises were undertaken and costs could be attributed to the school leaver follow up exercise.

## 7.9 Further information

Copies of this publication are available on the Scottish Government's website at: <https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-680-1>

School level information, including attainment on a consistent basis is available through Insight (a professional benchmarking tool used by local authorities and schools) and published on the School Information Dashboard:

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/school-education-statistics/#school-levelsummarystatisticsanddashboards>.

The scope of these destination statistics is limited to school leavers, but other sources are available to assess patterns across the wider society. For example, information on employment trends more broadly is available from the [Scottish Government labour market statistics website](#), and the [Scottish Funding Council](#) publishes data on participation in Higher Education.

The Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) have developed the Annual Participation Measure (APM) which complements school leaver destination statistics. Published every August, the APM captures the activity of all 16-19 year olds across a complete year, including those who choose to stay on at school as well as those who have left school. The APM has been adopted as the metric for measuring success in relation to the Young people's participation national indicator within the [National Performance Framework](#). The indicator measures the percentage of young adults (16-19 year olds) participating in education, training or employment.' Latest results were published in August 2020 and are available here:

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/participation-measure>.

The Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels return is a census based data collection and gathers data on whether or not pupils have achieved the expected CfE Level for their stage based on the class teachers' professional judgement. The collection covers numeracy and the three elements of literacy (reading, writing, listening and talking) at four stages within Broad General Education: P1, P4, P7 and S3. The collection of data for 2019/20 did not go ahead due to the closure of schools as a result of COVID-19 and the associated difficulties in collecting meaningful data that would be comparable with that for other years. Results for end 2018/19 were published in December 2019 and are available here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/achievement-curriculum-excellence-cfe-levels-2018-19/pages/1/>

Scotland participates in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) triennial Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey. This assessment is undertaken by 15 year-olds in almost eighty countries, including all OECD countries, and as such is a key international benchmark of performance. The results of previous PISA surveys are available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/programme-international-student-assessment-pisa-2018-highlights-scotlands-results/>.

Skills Development Scotland publish Foundation Apprenticeship Progress Reports on an annual basis. These include data on the number of young people undertaking Foundation Apprenticeships in Scotland. The latest report can be found at <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/45251/fa-progress-report.pdf> and the next report will be published in Spring 2021.

The table below provides summary information for some of the key sources of data on attainment and the activity of young people in Scotland.

Source	Organisation, usual date of publication, web link	Key points
THIS PUBLICATION Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations	Scottish Government, February 2021, <a href="http://www.gov.scot">www.gov.scot</a>	Provides information on the <b>attainment of school leavers</b> and on the activities being undertaken by <b>school leavers 3 months after leaving school</b> .  Coverage: School leavers

Summary Statistics for Follow-up Leaver Destinations	Scottish Government, June, <a href="http://www.gov.scot">www.gov.scot</a>	Provides information on the activities being undertaken by <b>school leavers 9 months after leaving school</b> .  Coverage: School leavers
Annual Participation Measure	Skills Development Scotland, August, <a href="https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk">https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk</a>	Reports on the economic and employment activity of the <b>wider 16-19 year old cohort</b> , including those at school.  Coverage: All 16-19 year olds
Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels	Scottish Government, December, <a href="http://www.gov.scot">www.gov.scot</a> Not collected for 2019/20 due to COVID-19	Provides information on national performance of <b>P1, P4, P7 and S3 school pupils</b> . Reports on the percentage of pupils who have achieved the expected Curriculum for Excellence level in these organisers.  Coverage: All P1, P4, P7 and S3 school pupils.
SQA Attainment Statistics	Scottish Qualifications Authority, August, <a href="https://www.sqa.org.uk">https://www.sqa.org.uk</a>	Attainment Statistics for every course and qualification in a given year.  Coverage: all SQA attainment, not just that of school leavers (and covering those attaining SQA qualifications in non-school settings such as Further Education)

## A National Statistics Publication for Scotland

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

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The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through [statistics.gov.scot](http://statistics.gov.scot)

are available via an alternative route

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [school.stats@gov.scot](mailto:school.stats@gov.scot) for further information.

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ISBN 978-1-80004-680-1

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Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA  
PPDAS826426 (02/21)