

Official Statistics



Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 7: 2025 edition

February 2025

Contents

Key Points	4
Introduction	5
An Accredited Official Statistics Publication for Scotland	5
Section 1. About these statistics	6
Section 1.1 School leavers	6
Section 1.2 School leaver initial destinations	6
Section 1.3 School leaver attainment	7
Section 1.4 Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on these statistics.	9
Section 2. The school leaver cohort	11
Section 2.1 The size and composition of the school leaver cohort	11
Section 3. School leaver initial destinations	14
Section 3.1 Initial destinations of school leavers	14
Section 3.2 Initial destinations by stage of leaving	15
Section 3.3 Initial destinations by deprivation.....	17
Section 3.4 Initial destinations by pupil characteristics.....	20
Section 4. School leaver attainment in National Qualifications	22
Section 4.1 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications	22
Section 4.2 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications, by deprivation.	24
Section 4.3 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications, by pupil characteristic.....	27
Section 4.4 School leaver destinations and attainment in National Qualifications	28
Section 4.5 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications, by local authority	29
Section 5. School leaver attainment in All SCQF qualifications	31
Section 5.1 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure.....	31
Section 5.2 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by deprivation	33
Section 5.3 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by pupil characteristic.....	36
Section 5.4 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by local authority	37
Section 6. Other groups of qualifications	40
Section 6.1 Literacy and Numeracy levels achieved by school leavers	40
Section 6.2 Developing the Young Workforce.....	41
Section 6.3 Foundation Apprenticeships (Official Statistics in Development)	42
Glossary and symbols used	43

Glossary.....	43
School leaver destination categories used in this publication	44
Symbols used in this publication	46
Access to Data and Further Information	47
Where you can access the data	47
Further sources of information on school pupils' attainment, and school leaver destinations.....	47
Data and Methodology	49
Tell us what you think	50
Enquiries.....	50
Join our mailing list	50
Future publications	50

Key Points

- 55,988 pupils left school in 2023-24 – an increase from 54,743 school leavers in 2022-23 and the largest school leaver cohort since 2009-10.
- 95.7 per cent of 2023-24 school leavers were in a positive initial destination. This is a small decrease from 2022-23 (95.9 per cent) and the second highest figure (alongside 2021-22) since consistent records began in 2009-10.
- Over the last year the percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination has decreased for leavers from the (20 per cent) most deprived areas and slightly increased for those from the (20 per cent) least deprived areas. This has led to the deprivation gap widening from 3.7 percentage points in 2022-23 to 4.3 percentage points in 2023-24.
- 83.5 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better in National Qualifications in 2023-24. This is a decrease from 2022-23 (84.8 per cent).
- 57.4 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better in National Qualifications in 2023-24. This is a slight decrease from 2022-23 (57.9 per cent)
- The gap between the proportion of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas attaining 1 pass or more in National Qualifications at SCQF Level 4 or better was 7.3 percentage points. This is wider than in 2022-23, when it was 5.9 percentage points. This is due to a decrease among school leavers from the most deprived areas between and no change among school leavers from the least deprived areas.
- The gap between the proportion of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas attaining 1 pass or more in National Qualifications at SCQF Level 5 or better was 22.7 percentage points in 2023-24. This is wider than in 2022-23 (20.2 percentage points). This is due to a decrease among school leavers from both the most and the least deprived areas over the last year, with a larger decrease in the most deprived areas.
- for the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 pass or more in National Qualifications at SCQF Level 6 or better the gap was 38.4 percentage points in 2023-24. This is wider than in 2022-23 (36.9 percentage points). This is due to a decrease among school leavers from the most deprived areas and an increase among those from the least deprived areas.
- In 2023-24, 87.4 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better in all SCQF qualifications. This proportion has decreased compared to 2022-23 (87.9 per cent) and 2018-19 (87.9 per cent).
- The proportion of school leavers who left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better in all SCQF qualifications in 2023-24 was 66.5 per cent. This is an increase compared to both 2022-23 (65.6 per cent) and 2018-19 (66.2 per cent).

Introduction

This publication:

- Covers 2023-24 school leavers from publicly funded mainstream schools in Scotland.
- Provides information on the attainment and initial destinations of school leavers in Scotland.
- Reports initial destinations for school leavers approximately three months after the end of the school year.
- Reports on school leavers' attainment in National Qualifications.
- Reports on school leavers' attainment in all qualifications and learning programmes on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Full results are available from the [supplementary tables](#).

An Accredited Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

These statistics are [Accredited Official Statistics](#). The Office for Statistics Regulation has independently reviewed and accredited these statistics as complying with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

The latest compliance check was conducted by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) in 2019 and details can be found on the [OSR website](#).



Accredited Official Statistics are called National Statistics in the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#).

Statistics on Foundation Apprenticeships in Section 6.3 of this report are [Official Statistics in Development](#).

Scottish Government statistics are regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

Section 1. About these statistics

This section provides an overview of the data sources, concepts and methodology associated with the data used in this publication. For more information, please refer to the [Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations - Data Sources and Methodology document](#).

Section 1.1 School leavers

In this publication a school leaver is defined as a young person of school leaving age, who left during or at the end of the school year. For 2023-24 school leavers, the leaver year is 13th September 2023 to 11th September 2024.

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). (Please note pupil ages are based on approximate age ranges; more information is available from [the pupil census supplementary statistics](#).)

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 for initial destinations and for the National Qualifications attainment measure in [Supplementary Tables](#) L3.1, N3.1, N3.2, Z2.1a and Z2.1b.

Section 1.2 School leaver initial destinations

This publication provides information on the initial destinations of 2023-24 school leavers from all stages of secondary school, relating to outcomes approximately three months after the end of the school year (7th October 2024).

A separate publication - 'Summary Statistics for Follow-up Leaver Destinations' – will follow in June 2025 and will provide information on the follow-up destinations of 2023-24 school leavers, approximately nine months after the end of the school year (7th April 2025).

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 2023-24. More information can be found in Section 1 of the [Methodology document](#).

Destinations are grouped into two categories within this publication, Positive Destinations and Other Destinations.

Positive Destinations includes:

- Higher Education
- Further Education
- Employment
- Training

- Voluntary Work
- Personal Skills Development

The Other Destination category includes:

- Unemployed Seeking
- Unemployed Not Seeking
- Unknown

Section 1.3 School leaver attainment

In this publication, school leaver attainment statistics are presented for two different measures.

The first measure presents leavers' attainment in **National Qualifications only**. National Qualifications are awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and, for the purposes of this publication, are the National Courses (National 3, National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) and Skills for Work. This is the measure which has been presented in all previous versions of this publication. More information is included in Section 2 of the [Methodology document](#).

The second measure, referred to as the **All SCQF** measure, was included in this publication for the first time last year. It covers school leavers' attainment from:

- qualifications included in the National Qualifications measure
- additional qualifications awarded by the SQA
- qualifications and learning programmes, from a range of other providers. Further information on this measure is provided in Section 3 of the [Methodology document](#).

For a comparison of the attainment included in the National Qualification and All SCQF measures see Table 1.

Table 1: Qualifications included in the National Qualifications and All SCQF attainment measures

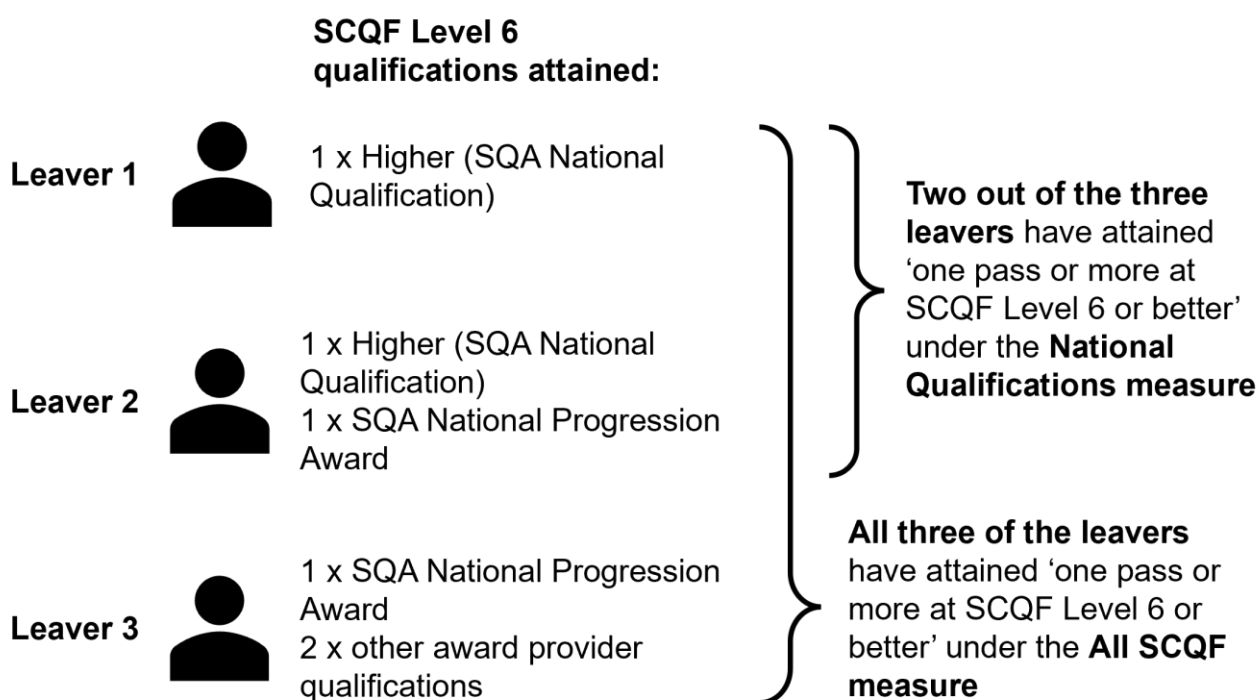
National Qualification measure (all qualifications included)	All SCQF measure (examples, not an exhaustive list)
SQA – National 3	SQA – National 3
SQA – National 4	SQA – National 4
SQA – National 5	SQA – National 5
SQA – Higher	SQA – Higher
SQA – Advanced Higher	SQA – Advanced Higher
SQA – Skills for Work	SQA – Skills for Work
	SQA – National Progression Awards

	SQA – National Certificates
	SQA – Awards
	SQA – Professional Development Award
	SQA – Scottish Vocational Qualification
	Open University – Making your learning count (SCQF Level 7)
	Sports Leaders UK – Qualification in Sports Leadership
	Young Enterprise Scotland – Young Enterprise Scotland Company Programme

For both measures, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework ([SCQF](#)) is used as the basis for reporting levels of attainment. The SCQF is Scotland’s national qualifications framework which allows broad comparisons to be made between qualifications. The SCQF level indicates the level of difficulty of a particular qualification or learning programme. It allows learners, employers and the public in general, to understand the range of skills and learning that should be achieved at each level.

For both the National Qualifications measure and the All SCQF measure this publication reports the number of passes or awards attained at a given SCQF level or better and the highest SCQF level achieved, at SCQF Levels 3 to 7.

Figure 1: Examples of qualifications attained by school leavers, and how that attainment is counted under the two measures



For a more detailed discussion of the difference between the National Qualifications measure and the All SCQF measure, please refer to Section 4 of the [Methodology document](#).

Which measure of school leaver attainment should I use?

Use the **National Qualifications measure** of attainment when:

- You want to consider school leavers' attainment in the SQA's National Qualifications. These are the National Courses – e.g. National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher – and Skills for Work.
- You want to compare to the three school leaver attainment measures included amongst the 13 National Improvement Framework key measures of the poverty-related attainment gap.
- You want to consider school leavers' attainment in qualifications where all the qualifications counted at a given SCQF level have the same number of SCQF credit points associated with them.

Use the **All SCQF measure** of attainment when:

- You want to consider school leavers' attainment in all courses on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.
- You want to consider the [Scottish Attainment Challenge local stretch aims for 2023/24 to 2025/26](#) set by local authorities.
- You want to consider school leavers' attainment, aligned to what is available on the Insight tool (used by education professionals in Scotland) and the public Secondary [School Information Dashboard](#).

If using the All SCQF measure, it should be understood that not all courses at a given SCQF Level will be associated with the same numbers of credit points (notional learning hours). See Section 4.4 of the [Methodology document](#) published alongside this report.

Section 1.4 Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on these statistics

Data for some years in this publication is affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The statistics in this publication provide an accurate reflection of school leavers' initial destinations and attainment in each of the years included. But the effects of the pandemic should be kept in mind when making comparisons over time. This applies when considering any changes in the data between 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23, and between these years and previous years. For this reason, for this edition we have included the 2018-19 data in all time series charts to allow for comparison to pre-pandemic levels.

For attainment tables and charts, we have placed a **dashed line break** in the series between 2018-19 and 2019-20 to highlight where changes in how qualifications were assessed and graded in the years 2020 to 2023. Care must be taken when

comparing attainment of school leavers in 2018-19 and before, with that of school leavers in 2019-20 to 2022-23. Any interpretation of changes must take full account of the different certification methods used in different years, and changes in the attainment levels in 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 should not be seen as an indication that performance has improved or worsened, without further evidence. For more information, see Section 6 of the the [Methodology document](#) published alongside this report.

Section 2. The school leaver cohort

The statistics in Section 2 refer to all school leavers from mainstream schools, including S3, S4, S5, S6 and 'other' stages. These are also the leavers in scope in the statistics in Section 3 (destinations), Section 4 (attainment in National Qualifications) and Section 6 (additional qualifications). Section 5 (attainment in All SCQF Qualifications) is based on leavers from S4-S6 only.

Statistics on destinations and attainment in National Qualifications that also include leavers from Scotland's publicly funded special schools are available in [Supplementary Tables](#) L3.1, N3.1, N3.2, Z2.1a and Z2.1b.

Section 2.1 The size and composition of the school leaver cohort

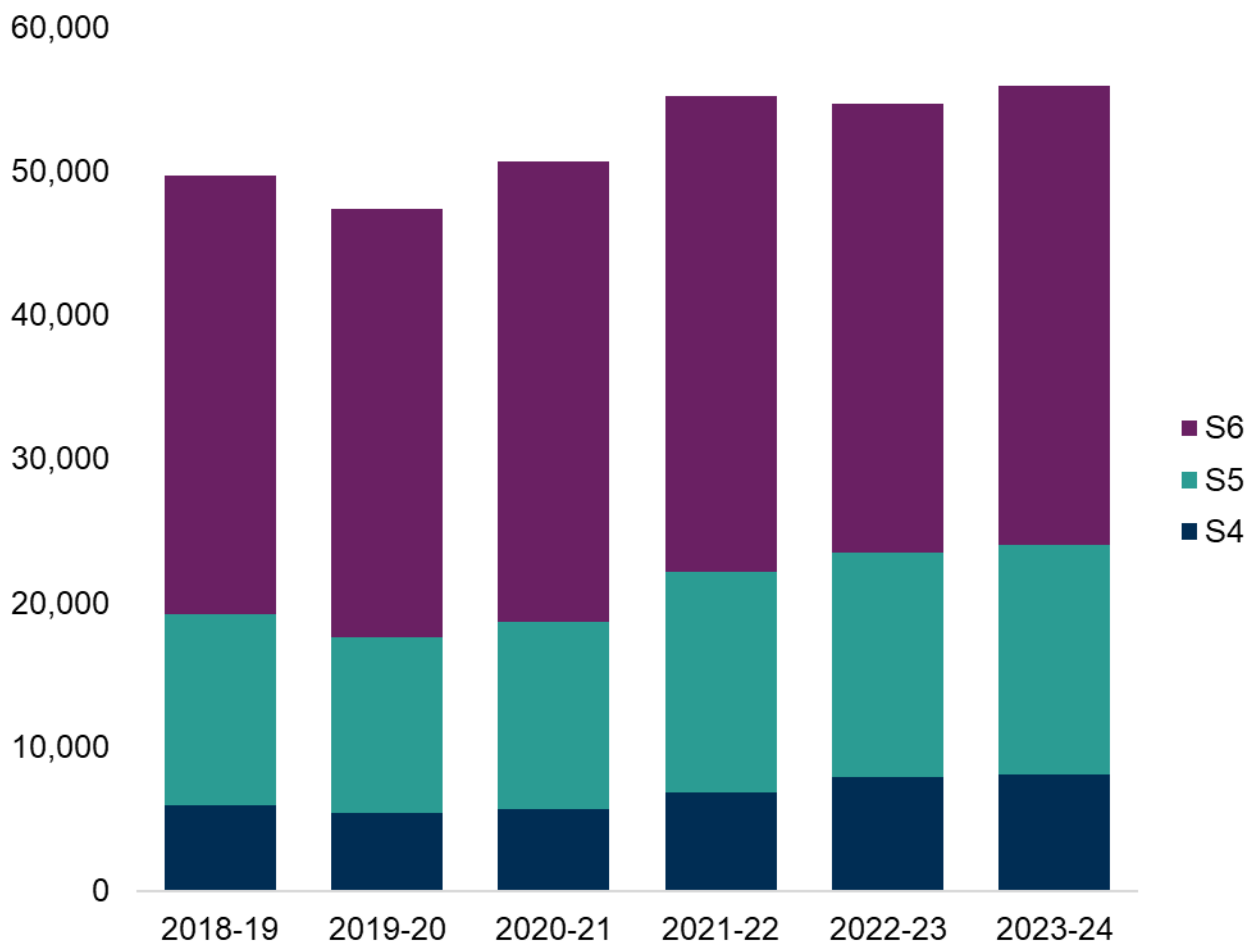
The 2023-24 school leaver cohort was 55,988 pupils. It is the largest leaver cohort since 2009-10, when the current time series started. It has increased by 1,245 pupils from 2022-23 (when it was 54,743).

Compared to 2022-23 the absolute number of leavers from all stages has increased in 2023-24. The biggest increase was in S6 leavers which rose from 31,245 in 2022-23 to 31,956 in 2023-24, an increase of 711 pupils. S5 leaver numbers increased by 337 pupils (from 15,584 in 2022-23 to 15,921 in 2023-24) and S4 leaver numbers increased by 194 (from 7,890 in 2022-23 to 8,084 in 2023-24).

The school leaver cohort fluctuates each year. It is affected by both the pupil rolls (e.g. S4, S5 and S6) each year, and also the decisions then made by pupils on whether to leave school that year, or to continue on to the next school year. Almost all S6 pupils in any academic year will leave school during or at the end of that year.

Chart 1a: The number of leavers from each stage increased over the latest year

Number of leavers by stage of leaving, 2018-19 to 2023-24

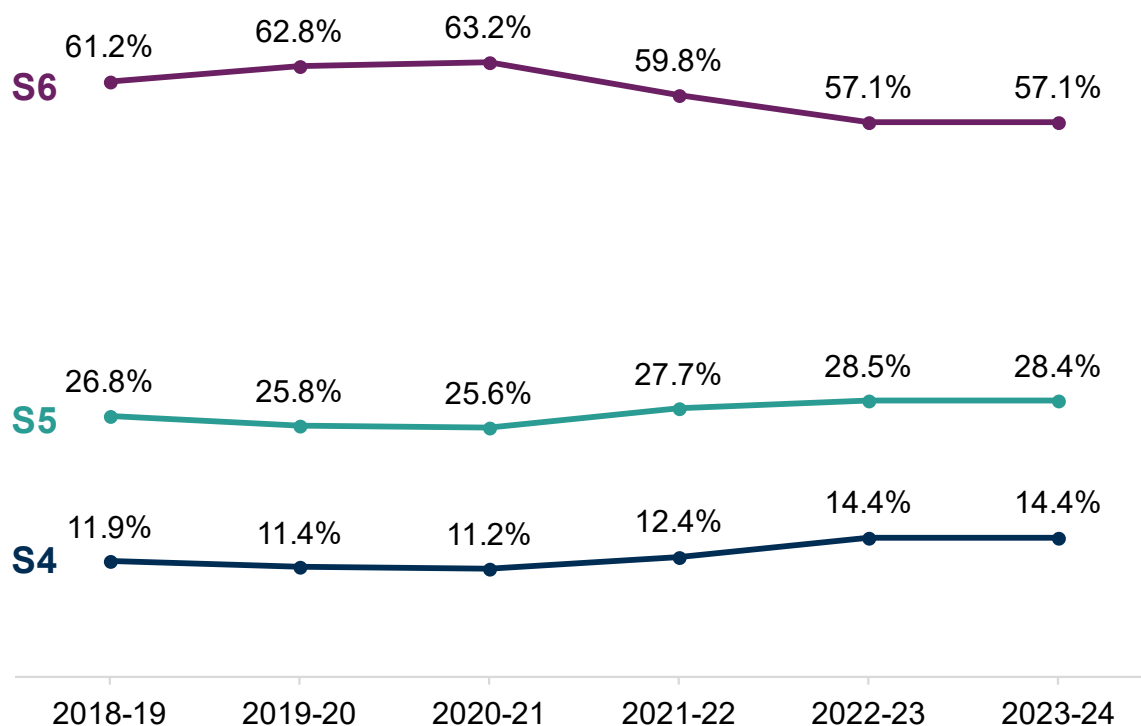


In 2023-24 the percentage of all leavers from each stage was similar to 2022-23. A little under three-fifths (57.1 per cent) of 2023-24 school leavers left in S6, the same percentage as in 2022-23. Over a quarter (28.4 per cent) of 2023-24 school leavers left in S5 (a slight decrease from 28.5 per cent in 2022-23) and 14.4 per cent left in S4 (the same percentage as in 2022-23). Less than 0.1 per cent of 2023-24 school leavers left in S3 or another stage (similar to 2022-23).

The proportion of school leavers from S6 in 2023-24 is at its lowest level since 2009-10 (equal with last year, 2022-23). The proportion leaving in S5 is at the second highest level on record since 2009-10 (only just smaller than the highest level in 2022-23) and the proportion leaving in S4 is at its highest level since 2010-11 (equal with last year, 2022-23). A full time series for 2009-10 to 2023-24 can be found in [Supplementary Tables C1.1a and C1.1b](#).

Chart 1b: The proportion of S4 and S5 leavers has increased over time while the proportion of S6 leavers has decreased

Percentage of leavers by stage of leaving, 2018-19 to 2023-24



The size of the S4 and S5 cohort has grown over time (by 14 per cent and 12 per cent respectively since 2018-19) whilst the S6 cohort has remained relatively stable (4 per cent increase since 2018-19). This partially explains the increase in S4 and S5 leaver numbers over this period.

Pupils who turn 16 between October and February are not able to leave school until the end of the Autumn term in S5. Those who do are often referred to as 'winter leavers'. In 2023-24, the proportion of S5 leavers who left before the end of the school year - most of whom were winter leavers - was 40.0 per cent. This figure is consistent with those seen in recent years and is a decrease compared to 2009-10 when the figure was 46.8 per cent.

Section 3. School leaver initial destinations

As described in Section 1.4, the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) will have had an impact on the initial destination choices made by, and opportunities available to, school leavers. The impacts of COVID-19 should be kept in mind when interpreting changes between 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23, and when comparing these to other years.

The statistics in Section 3 refer to all school leavers from mainstream schools.

Section 3.1 Initial destinations of school leavers

95.7 per cent of all 2023-24 school leavers were in a positive initial destination. This was slightly lower than in 2022-23 (95.9 per cent) but is still the second highest (alongside 2021-22) since consistent records began in 2009-10.

The proportion of school leavers in Higher Education increased from 40.3 per cent in 2022-23 to 40.8 per cent in 2023-24. This proportion is broadly consistent with figures seen in the years immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proportion of school leavers in Further Education decreased slightly from 26.6 per cent in 2022-23 to 26.4 per cent in 2023-24.

Combining the results for these two categories shows that 67.2 per cent of 2023-24 school leavers were in Higher or Further Education three months after the end of the school year. This is a slight increase from 2022-23 (66.9 per cent), driven by the increase in the proportion of leavers in Higher Education.

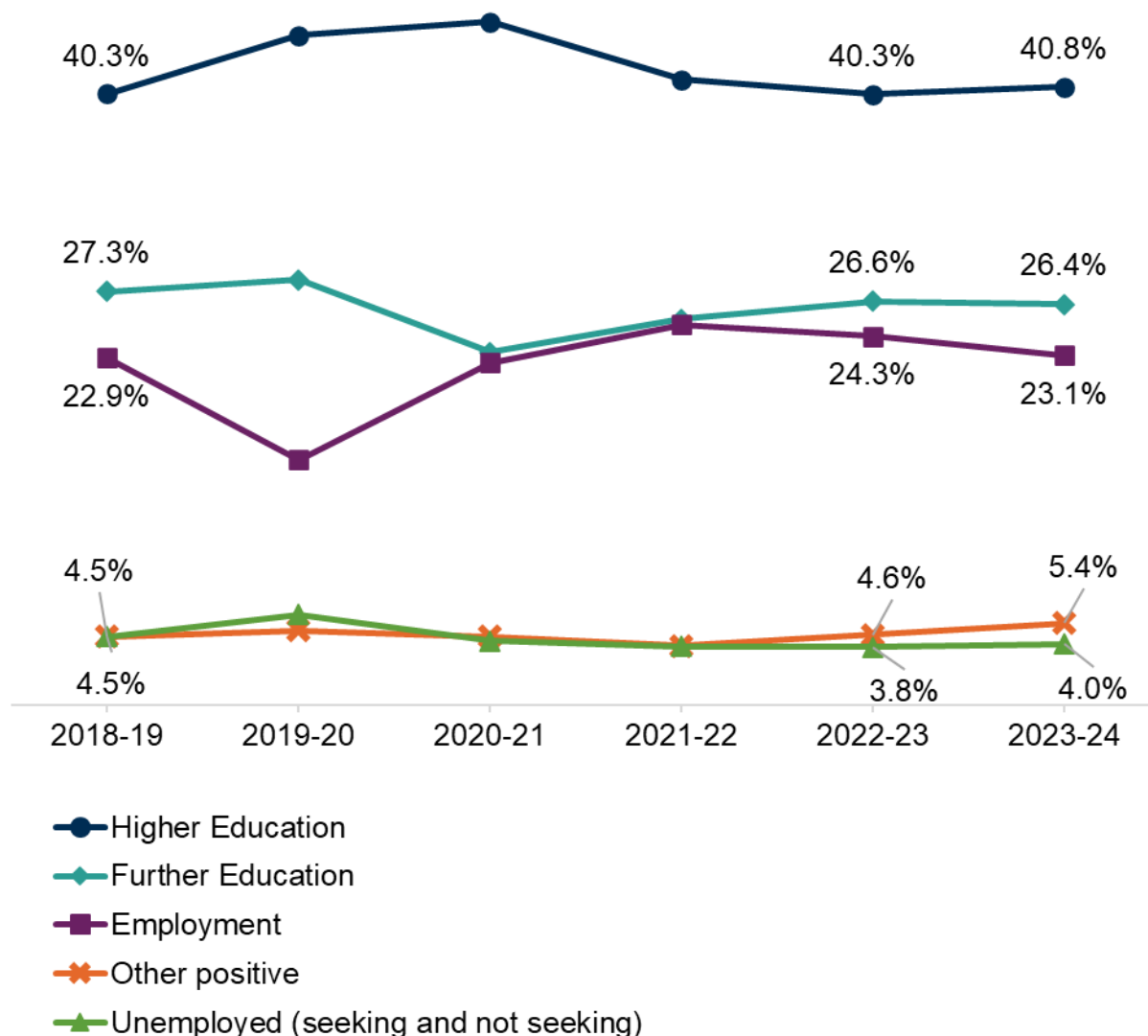
The percentage of school leavers in Employment three months after leaving school decreased from 24.3 per cent in 2022-23 to 23.1 per cent in 2023-24, a fall of 1.3 percentage points. Despite this, it is the third highest proportion since consistent records began in 2009-10.

The percentage of school leavers who were Unemployed (either Unemployed Seeking or Unemployed Not Seeking) increased slightly from 3.8 per cent for 2022-23 to 4.0 per cent for 2023-24. This is the third lowest proportion since consistent records began.

A full time series showing the initial destination of school leavers from 2009-10 to 2023-24 can be found in [Supplementary Tables](#) 1a and 1b.

Chart 2: The most common initial destination for school leavers is Higher Education followed by Further Education and Employment

Percentage of school leavers by initial destination category, 2018-19 to 2023-24



Section 3.2 Initial destinations by stage of leaving

The composition of the school leaver cohort each year is likely to influence the percentages of total school leavers in each destination. The most common initial destination for leavers varies by stage of leaving. As noted in Section 2 and similar to last year, the 2023-24 leaver cohort had a lower than usual proportion of S6 leavers, and higher than usual proportions of S4 and S5 leavers. This change in the composition of the leaver cohort in 2022-23 and 2023-24 is likely to be influencing some of the changes seen in the overall proportions entering each initial destination compared to previous years.

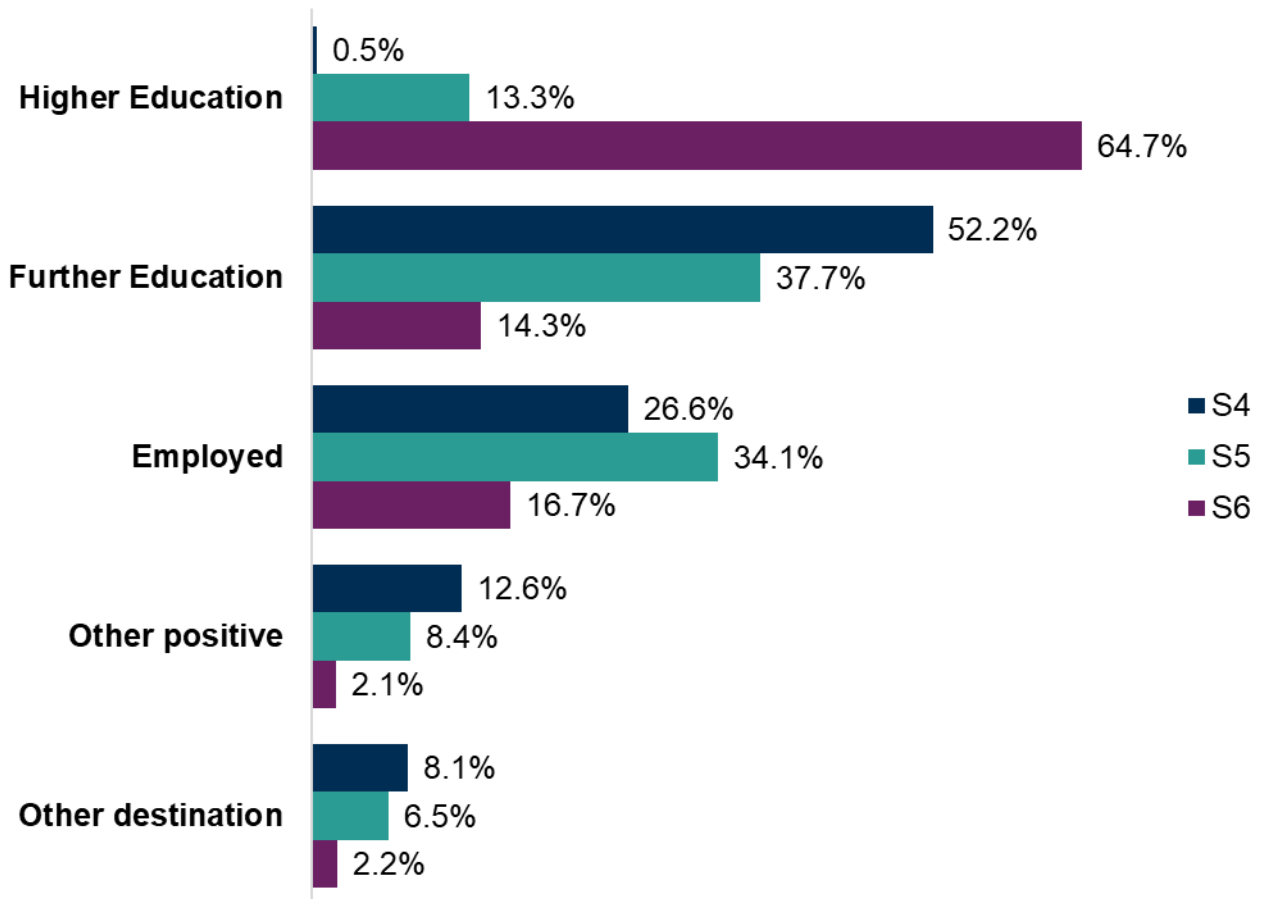
The initial destinations of school leavers vary by stage of leaving. In 2023-24:

- the majority of S6 leavers entered Higher Education (64.7 per cent)

- the most common initial destination for S5 leavers was Further Education (37.7 per cent) followed closely by Employment (34.1 per cent)
- over half of S4 leavers entered Further Education (52.2 per cent)

Chart 3: S6 leavers are more likely to enter Higher Education after leaving school while S5 and S4 leavers are more likely to enter Further Education

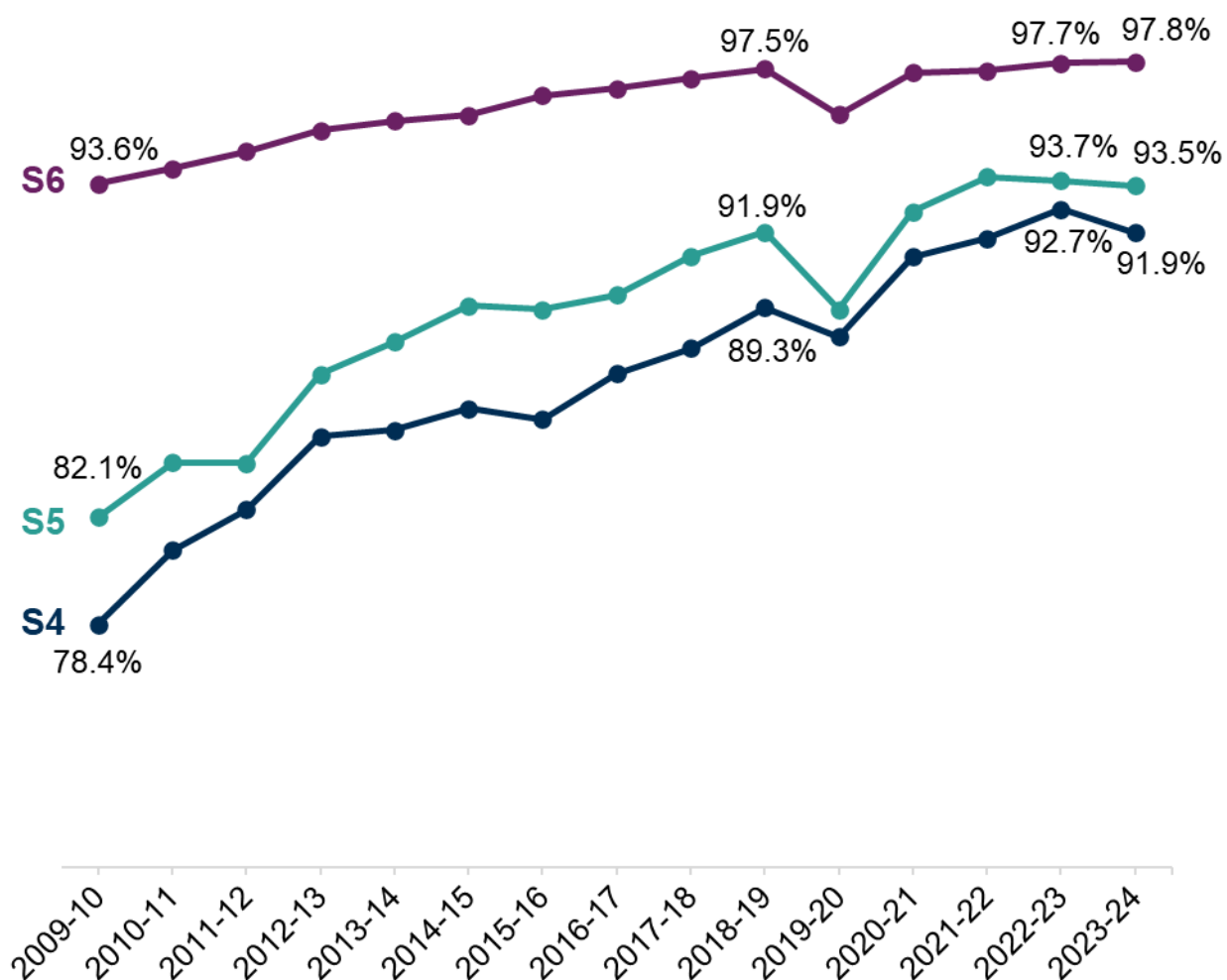
Initial destinations of school leavers by stage of leaving, 2023-24



Pupils who stay on longer at school have a greater likelihood of being in a positive initial destination. 97.8 per cent of S6 leavers were in a positive destination in 2023-24 compared to 93.5 per cent of S5 leavers and 91.9 per cent of S4 leavers. Over time the gap has narrowed due to a greater improvement among S4 and S5 leavers than S6 leavers.

Chart 4: S6 leavers are more likely to be in a positive initial destination than those who leave school earlier

Percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination by stage of leaving, 2009-10 to 2023-24



Section 3.3 Initial destinations by deprivation

When considering data by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation ([SIMD](#)), it is important to note that the data show the difference between young people living in the most and least deprived areas. Not every person living in a deprived area will themselves be experiencing high levels of deprivation and not everyone experiencing deprivation will live in a deprived area.

The [National Improvement Framework](#) uses a range of measures to monitor the poverty-related attainment gap. Following a user consultation in 2022, school leaver initial destinations was added as a new key measure. This Section presents the data for this measure. Three other key measures, relating to school leaver attainment, are also presented in this report, in Section 4.2.

Widening of the gap can occur for multiple reasons. An increase in the least deprived areas and/or a decrease in the most deprived areas will cause the gap to

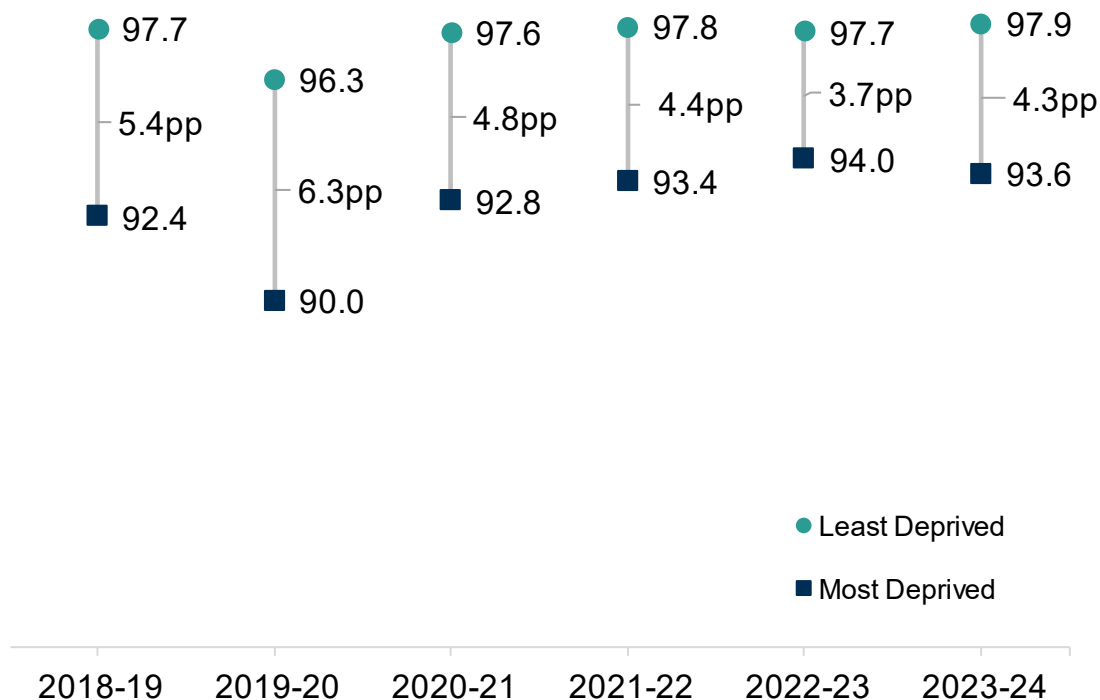
widen but it is also possible for the gap to widen when there have been increases in both areas, if the increase is greater in the least deprived areas.

The proportion of school leavers from the most deprived areas who were in a positive destination decreased from 94.0 per cent in 2022-23 to 93.6 per cent in 2023-24. The proportion of leavers from the least deprived areas who were in a positive destination increased slightly from 97.7 per cent to 97.9 per cent over the same time period. Together, this has led to a widening of the deprivation gap, from 3.7 percentage points in 2022-23 to 4.3 percentage points in 2023-24. Despite this, this is the second narrowest gap since consistent records began in 2009-10.

Time series data of destinations by deprivation (available in Table 2 in the [supplementary tables](#)) shows that the widening of the gap between 2022-23 and 2023-24 is mainly due to an increase by 2.3 percentage points in the proportion of school leavers from the least deprived areas entering Higher Education and no change in the proportion of leavers from the most deprived areas entering Higher Education. There has also been a decrease in the proportion of school leavers from the most deprived areas entering Employment (down by 0.9 percentage points compared to 2022-23) and Further Education (down by 0.4 percentage points compared to 2022-23).

Chart 5: The deprivation gap for positive initial destinations has widened compared to last year but it is the second smallest gap on record

Percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination, by SIMD, 2018-19 to 2023-24



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

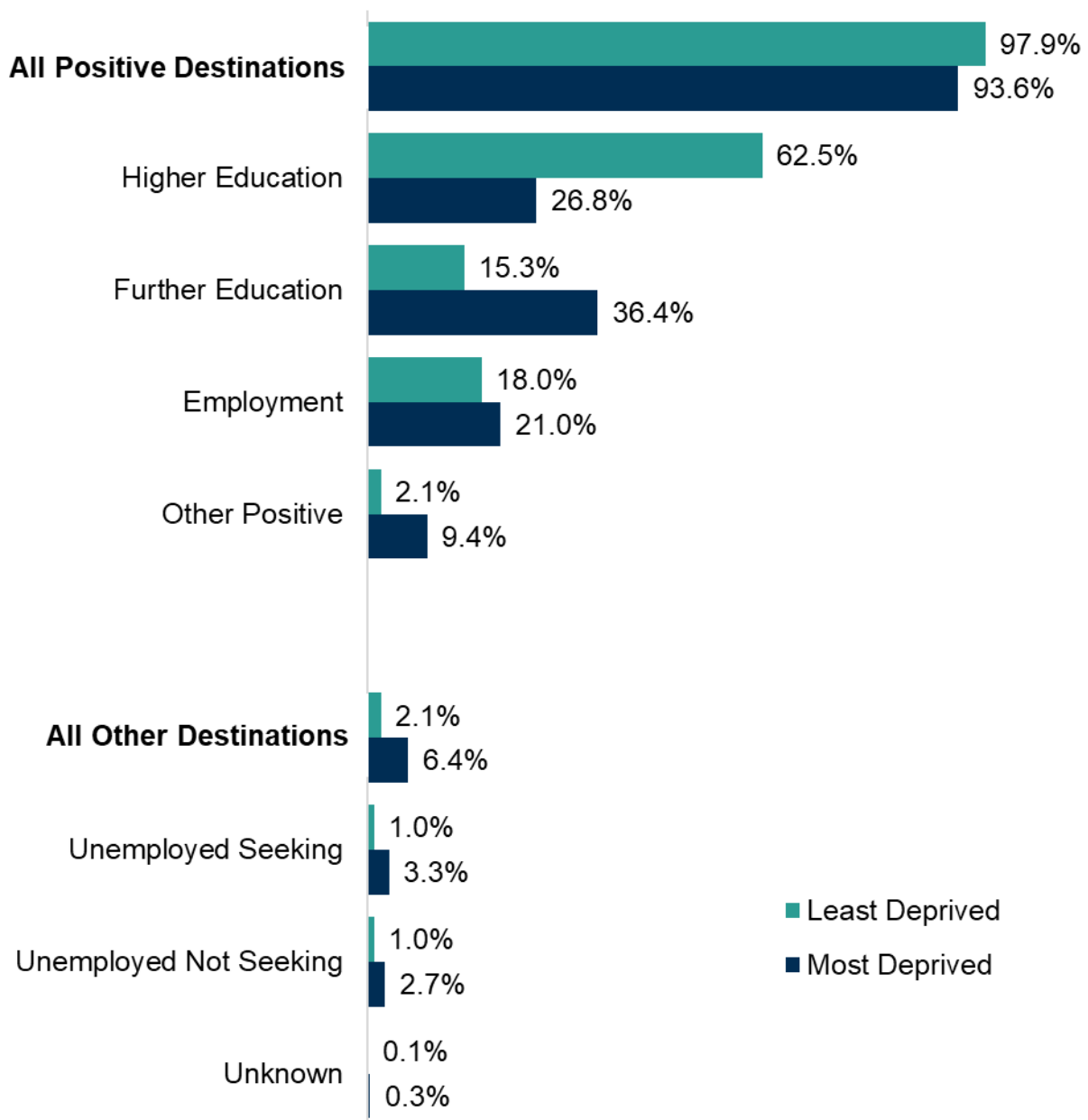
In 2023-24, the most common destination for leavers from the most deprived areas was Further Education at 36.4 per cent. Pupils from the most deprived areas continue to be less likely to enter Higher Education than those from the least deprived areas (26.8 per cent compared to 62.5 per cent).

In 2023-24, 6.1 per cent of leavers from the most deprived areas were unemployed, compared to 2.0 per cent of leavers from the least deprived areas.

A breakdown of initial school leaver destinations across all five SIMD quintiles is available in Table 2 of the [supplementary tables](#).

Chart 6: Leavers from the most deprived areas are most likely to enter Further Education whereas leavers from the least deprived areas are most likely to enter Higher Education

Percentage of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas, by initial destination category, 2023-24



Section 3.4 Initial destinations by pupil characteristics

Female pupils continue to be more likely to enter positive destinations than male pupils: 96.3 per cent of female school leavers were in a positive initial destination in 2023-24, compared to 95.2 per cent of male leavers. This result is consistent with previous years.

Some figures related to Ethnicity have been suppressed due to the small numbers of school leavers involved. Amongst those groups for which data can be reported, the highest proportion of school leavers in a positive initial destination in 2023-24 was amongst African/ Black/ Caribbean leavers (97.7 per cent).

Remote Rural areas had the highest proportions of leavers in positive initial destinations in 2023-24 (96.3 per cent), whilst Remote Small Towns had the lowest (94.9 per cent).

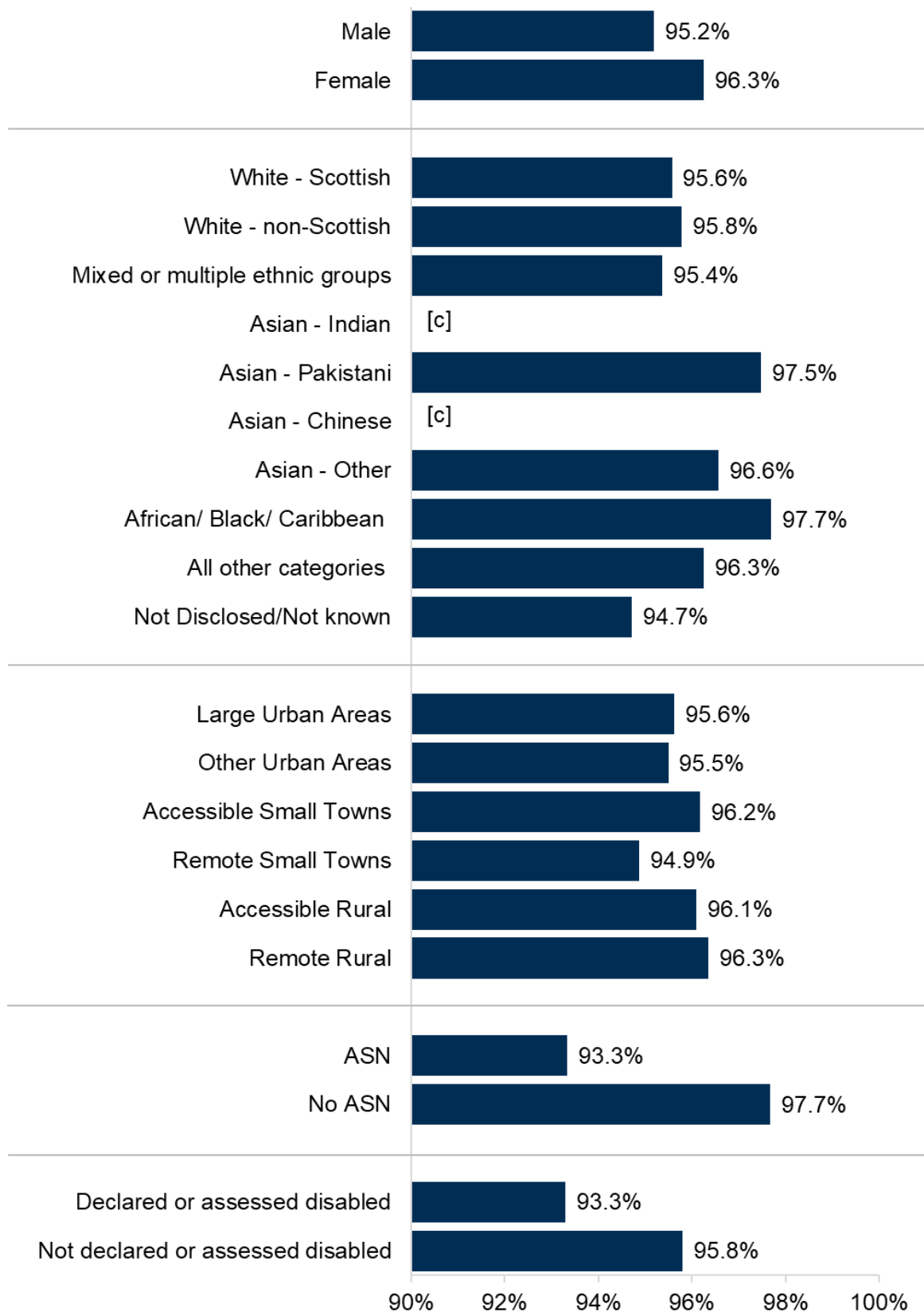
School leavers in 2023-24 with an Additional Support Need (ASN) were less likely to be in a positive initial destination (93.3 per cent) than leavers without a recorded ASN (97.7 per cent). This result is consistent with previous years. These statistics relate to leavers from mainstream schools only; similar statistics relating to destinations of mainstream and special school leavers combined are available in [Supplementary Table L3.1](#).

Leavers in 2023-24 who were declared or assessed disabled were also less likely to be in a positive initial destination (93.3 per cent) than leavers who were not (95.8 per cent).

More information on destinations by pupil characteristics is available in Table 3 of the [supplementary tables](#).

Chart 7: The proportion of leavers in a positive destination differs by pupil characteristic

Percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination, by pupil characteristic, 2023-24



Note: Axis for this chart starts at 90 per cent.

Section 4. School leaver attainment in National Qualifications

The statistics in Section 4 relate to attainment in the National Qualifications provided by SQA. These are National Courses (e.g. National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher) and Skills for Work. There is more information in Section 1.3. They refer to all school leavers from mainstream schools, including S3, S4, S5, S6 and 'other' stages.

As described in Section 1.4, the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) led to changes in how National Qualifications were assessed and graded in the years 2020 to 2023. This should be kept in mind when comparing between years. A **dashed line break** in the series between 2018-19 and 2019-20 is shown to highlight where the changes in assessment happened.

Section 4.1 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications

In 2023-24, 2.4 per cent of school leavers had a highest qualification level of SCQF Level 3, 11.7 per cent had their highest qualification at Level 4 and 26.2 per cent at SCQF Level 5.

38.0 per cent of 2023-24 school leavers had a highest qualification level of SCQF Level 6, a slight increase from 2022-23 when the figure was 37.7 per cent. However, compared to 2018-19, (41.4 per cent), the proportion has decreased.

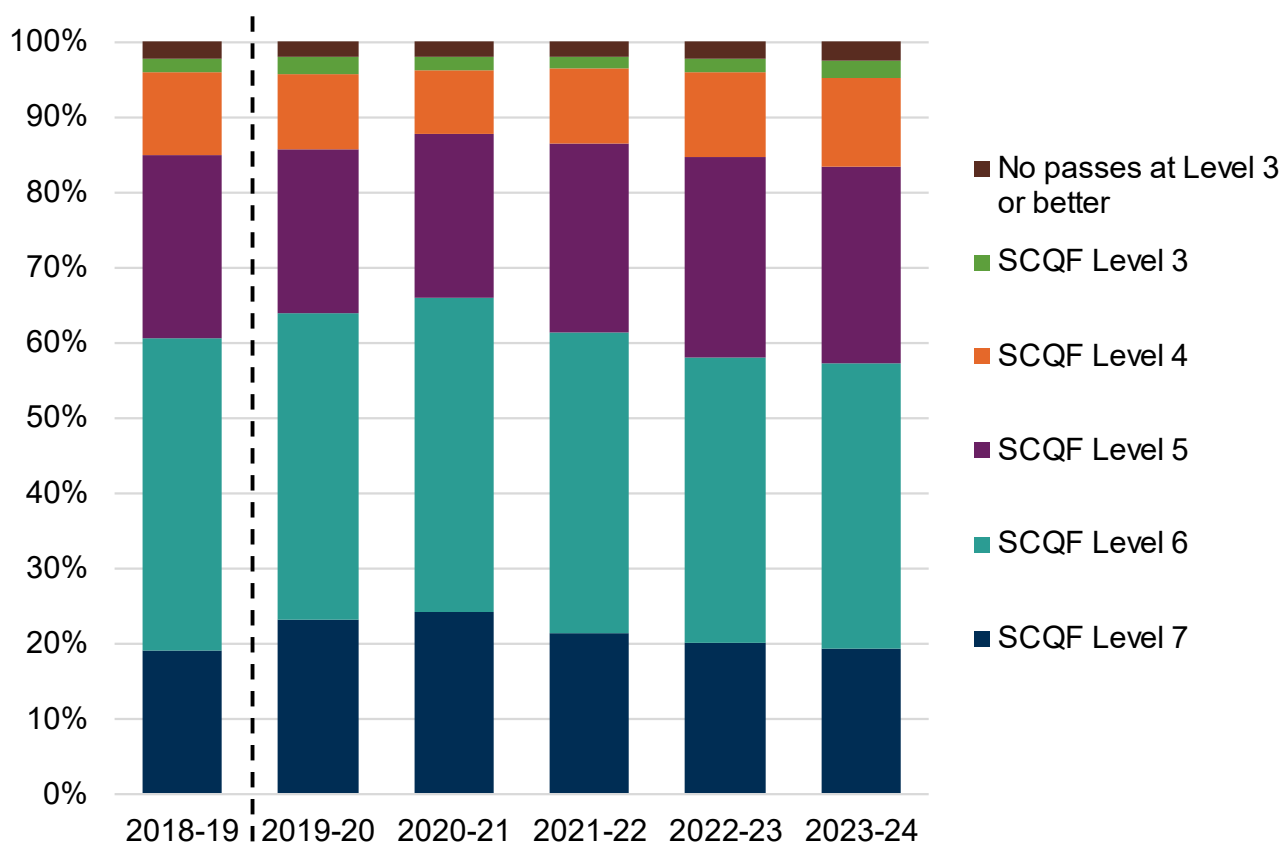
In 2023-24, 19.3 per cent of school leavers had their highest qualification at SCQF Level 7. This is a decrease from 2022-23 (20.3 per cent) but an increase when compared to 2018-19 (19.1 per cent).

A small proportion (2.4 per cent) of school leavers attained no passes in National Qualifications at SCQF Level 3 or better in 2023-24. This has increased slightly as a proportion from 2022-23 (2.2 per cent). Some of these school leavers have attainment 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). Details can be found in [Supplementary Tables](#) N1.4a and N1.4b.

A full time series of the highest SCQF Level achieved by school leavers in National Qualifications since 2009-10 can be found in [Supplementary Table](#) 4.

Chart 8: The proportion of school leavers who left school with one pass or more at SCQF level 6 or better has decreased slightly in recent years

Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the National Qualifications measure, 2018-19 to 2023-24



In 2023-24, 83.5 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better, and 57.4 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better. These proportions have both decreased from 2022-23, when 84.8 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better, and 57.9 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better. The 2023-24 proportions also show a decrease when compared to 2018-19, when 85.1 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better, and 60.5 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better.

The change in the make-up of the school leaver cohort in 2023-24 compared to recent years may have had an effect on overall school leaver attainment. As described in Section 2.1, 2023-24 saw a lower proportion of S6 school leavers and increased proportions of S4 and S5 leavers compared to recent years. Those leaving in earlier stages may be less likely to leave with qualifications at higher SCQF levels than those leaving in S6.

A time series from 2009-10 to 2023-24 is presented in Table 5 and 5a in the supplementary tables.

Table 2: Total leaver attainment under the National Qualifications measure, percentage of leavers, 2024

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	97.6	95.7	93.0	89.9	85.6	77.7	66.8
4 or better	95.2	92.1	89.2	85.8	81.4	74.5	64.0
5 or better	83.5	76.0	68.9	62.0	55.0	47.6	39.6
6 or better	57.4	48.0	41.5	35.3	28.2	18.0	8.7
7	19.3	8.1	2.8	0.3	[low]	[low]	0.0

[low] = value less than 0.05 per cent but greater than zero. See the 'Glossary and symbols used' Section for a list of all symbols used in the tables.

Section 4.2 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications, by deprivation

As outlined in Section 3.3, the [National Improvement Framework](#) monitors the poverty-related attainment gap based on a basket of key measures. Three of these measures are based on school leaver attainment by deprivation, namely:

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

As described in Section 1.4, there were changes in the way in which many qualifications were assessed and graded in the years 2020 to 2023, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore care should be taken when making comparisons. Any increase or decrease should not be interpreted as indicating improving or worsening performance without further evidence.

At SCQF Level 4 or better, the gap between the proportion of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas attaining 1 pass or more in National Qualifications was 7.3 percentage points. This is wider than in 2022-23, when it was 5.9 percentage points. The proportion attaining 1 pass or more in National Qualifications at this level decreased for school leavers from the most deprived areas between 2022-23 and 2023-24 but stayed the same for school leavers from the least deprived areas. This has led to the gap between the two groups widening.

Longer term, the gap at SCQF Level 4 or better has narrowed most years, starting from 11.3 percentage points in 2009-10 and reaching its narrowest in 2021-22 (5.8 percentage points). In 2023-24 the gap at SCQF Level 4 is at its widest since 2011-12.

At SCQF Level 5 or better, the gap was 22.7 percentage points in 2023-24. This is wider than in 2022-23 (20.2 percentage points). The proportion attaining 1 pass or more in National Qualifications at this level decreased for school leavers from both the most and the least deprived areas between 2022-23 and 2023-24. But it decreased by more for those from the most deprived areas, which has led to the gap between the two groups widening.

Longer term, the gap has narrowed most years, starting from 33.3 percentage points in 2009-10 and reaching its narrowest in 2020-21 (18.2 percentage points). In 2023-24, the gap at SCQF Level 5 is at its widest since 2013-14.

At SCQF Level 6 or better, the gap was 38.4 percentage points in 2023-24. This is wider than in 2022-23 (36.9 percentage points). The proportion attaining 1 pass or more in National Qualifications decreased for school leavers from the most deprived areas between 2022-23 and 2023-24 but increased for those from the least deprived areas, which has led to the gap between the two groups widening.

Longer term, the gap has narrowed most years, starting from 45.6 percentage points in 2009-10 and reaching its narrowest in 2020-21 (34.4 percentage points). In 2023-24, the gap at SCQF Level 6 is at its widest since 2015-16.

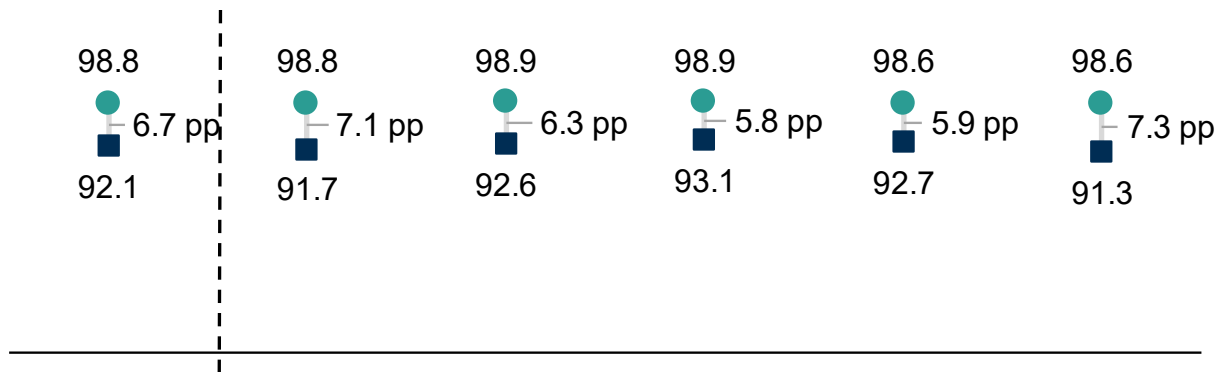
A full time series for attainment at SCQF Level 4 or better, SCQF Level 5 or better and SCQF Level 6 or better since 2009-10 under the National Qualifications measure is available in Table N1.2 in the [supplementary tables](#).

Chart 9: The attainment gap has widened at SCQF Levels 4 to 6 compared to last year

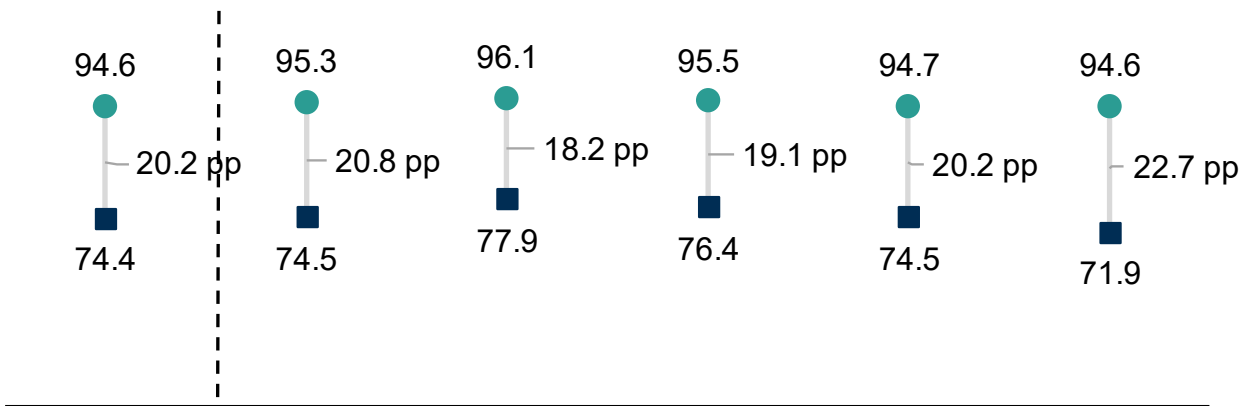
Percentage of school leavers by attainment at SCQF Level 4 to 6 or better under the National Qualifications measure, by SIMD quintile, 2018-19 to 2023-24

1 or more at SCQF Level 4 or

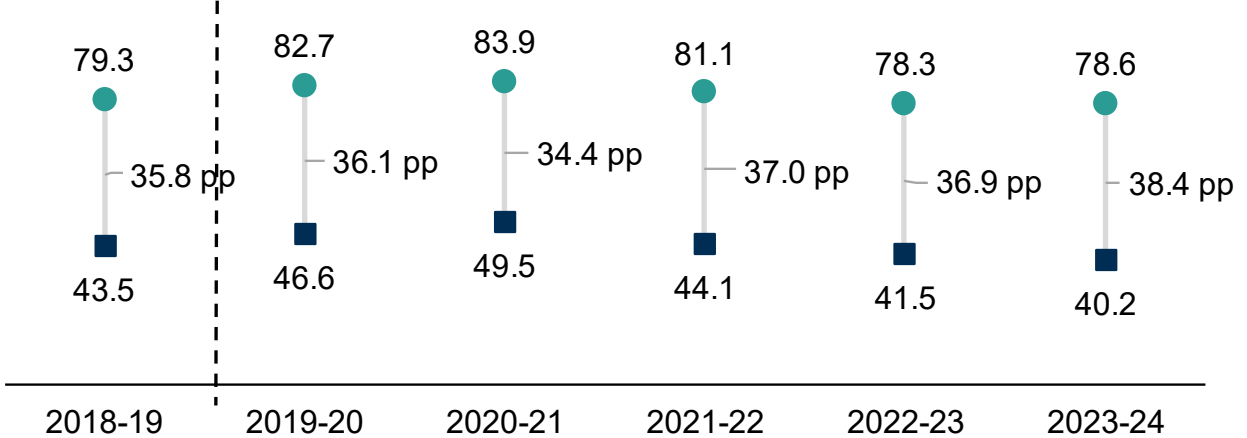
● Least Deprived ■ Most Deprived



1 or more at SCQF Level 5 or better



1 or more at SCQF Level 6 or better



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

Section 4.3 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications, by pupil characteristic

Female pupils are continuing to outperform male pupils in National Qualifications at SCQF Levels 4 to 6 or better, with the gap being wider at higher SCQF levels.

Asian-Chinese pupils continue to have high levels of attainment compared to other groups, with 87.1 per cent achieving one pass or more in a National Qualification at SCQF Level 6 or better.

Pupils with a recorded Additional Support Need (ASN) are less likely to achieve National Qualifications at SCQF Levels 4 to 6 or better than pupils without an ASN. Similarly, pupils who are declared or assessed disabled are less likely to achieve SCQF Levels 4 to 6 or better than pupils who are not. The number of pupils with a recorded ASN has increased markedly over recent years (see table 1.5 of the pupil census [supplementary tables](#)) These increases were likely due in part to continued improvements in recording and the introduction of the additional need types 'Child Plans' and 'Other' in 2011. This should be kept in mind when interpreting attainment data by Additional Support Needs.

In 2023-24 pupils living in Accessible Rural areas and Remote Rural areas are the most likely to achieve National Qualifications at SCQF Level 4 or better and at SCQF level 5 or better. At SCQF level 6 or better pupils living in Accessible Rural and Large Urban areas have the highest levels of attainment. Pupils living in Remote Small Towns are the least likely to achieve at SCQF levels 4 to 6 or better.

A full time series for school leaver attainment in National Qualifications, by pupil characteristic from 2009-10 to 2023-24 can be found in [Supplementary Table 6](#).

Table 3: The attainment gap between leavers with different pupil characteristics widens as the SCQF Level increases

Percentage of school leavers by attainment at SCQF Level 4 to 6 or better under the National Qualifications measure, by pupil characteristic, 2023-24

Pupil Characteristic	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
Sex			
Male	94.8	82.4	53.0
Female	95.7	84.7	61.9
Ethnicity			
White – Scottish	95.1	82.7	55.4
White – non-Scottish	95.1	84.7	59.9
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	95.8	86.5	67.0
Asian – Indian	98.6	95.5	83.7
Asian – Pakistani	98.9	92.8	73.4
Asian – Chinese	97.7	95.4	87.1
Asian – Other	95.7	89.0	73.9

African/ Black/ Caribbean	97.6	93.2	75.1
All other categories	93.4	82.5	61.3
Not Disclosed/Not known	91.9	80.1	53.8
Urban/Rural			
Large Urban Areas	94.9	83.5	59.9
Other Urban Areas	95.1	81.8	54.2
Accessible Small Towns	95.4	83.9	57.1
Remote Small Towns	93.5	80.1	51.7
Accessible Rural	96.4	87.2	60.4
Remote Rural	95.9	86.6	58.9
Additional Support Needs			
ASN	91.3	72.0	40.6
No ASN	98.5	93.1	71.2
Disabled status			
Declared or assessed disabled	84.9	66.1	35.6
Not declared or assessed disabled	95.6	84.2	58.2
All Leavers	95.2	83.5	57.4

Section 4.4 School leaver destinations and attainment in National Qualifications

In 2023-24, the majority of school leavers whose highest SCQF level achieved was Level 6 or Level 7 entered Higher Education (59.5 per cent and 88.4 per cent respectively). For all other attainment levels, the most common destination was Further Education. For example, 50.6 per cent of leavers whose highest National Qualification was at SCQF Level 5 entered Further Education. This compares to 44.0 per cent of those whose highest qualification was at SCQF Level 4 and 36.5 per cent of those whose highest qualification was at SCQF Level 3. Amongst those with no passes at SCQF Level 3, 25.8 per cent entered Further Education.

Leavers with no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better were the most likely to be in Other Destinations (27.4 per cent), and leavers whose highest qualification was at SCQF Level 7 were the least likely to be in Other Destinations (0.6 per cent).

A full time series showing school leaver initial destinations by highest SCQF Level achieved under the National Qualifications measure since 2009-10 can be found in [Supplementary Table 7](#).

Table 4: School leavers whose highest qualification was at SCQF Level 6 or 7 were most likely to enter Higher Education and for all other attainment levels Further Education was the most common destination

Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the National Qualifications measure and initial destinations category, 2023-24

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	1.4	0.5	0.5	3.6	59.5	88.4	40.8
Further Education	25.8	36.5	44.0	50.6	15.8	3.0	26.4
Training	16.9	22.3	13.2	4.1	0.8	0.2	3.9
Employment	20.5	16.5	26.4	36.0	21.8	7.2	23.1
Voluntary Work	1.2	1.0	1.2	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.6
Personal Skills Development	6.9	5.8	3.1	0.8	0.1	0.0	0.9
Positive Destinations	72.6	82.5	88.4	95.7	98.4	99.4	95.7
Unemployed Seeking	9.7	6.9	5.6	2.7	0.9	0.3	2.2
Unemployed Not Seeking	15.7	10.0	5.3	1.4	0.6	0.2	1.9
Unknown	2.0	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.3
Other Destinations	27.4	17.5	11.6	4.3	1.6	0.6	4.3
Number of Leavers	1,351	1,318	6,545	14,650	21,294	10,830	55,988

Section 4.5 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications, by local authority

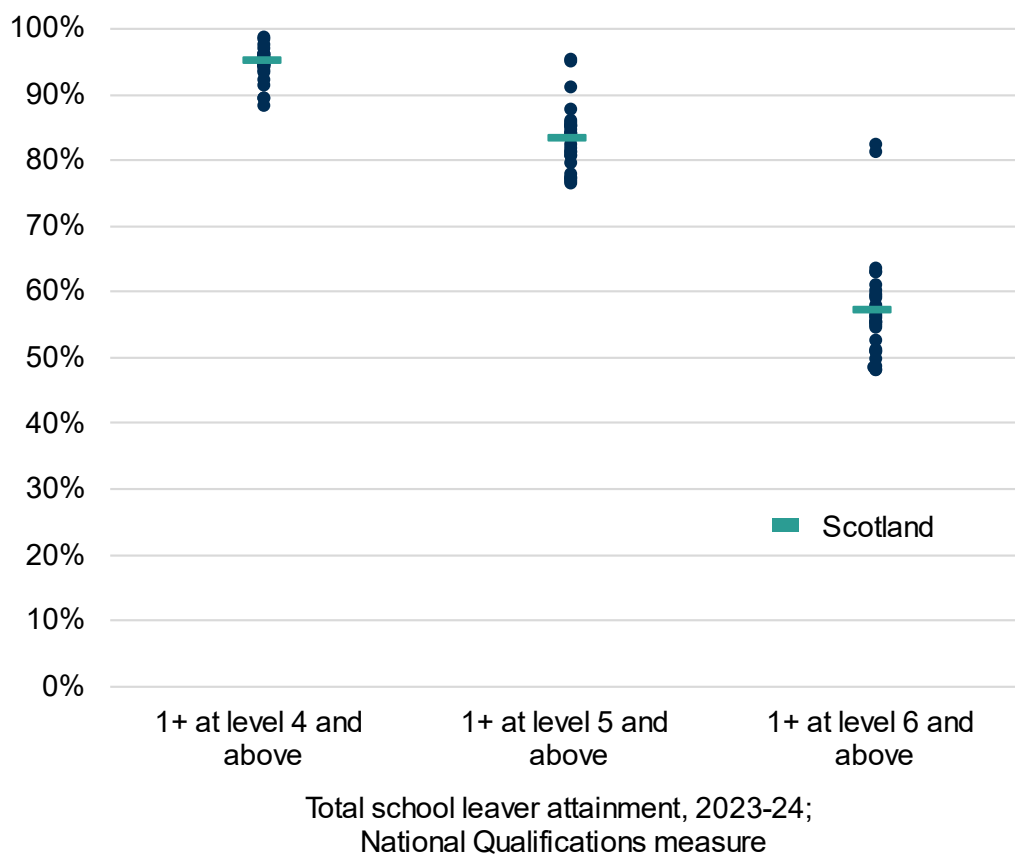
A range of factors will affect attainment at local authority level including presentation policies and the context of each authority. Factors such as levels of poverty or deprivation, the stage at which pupils leave school and the structure of the local economy (for example, the relative levels of post school opportunities in the employment sector or the continuing education sectors) may have an impact on the levels of attainment which pupils leave school with. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons between local authorities.

In 2023-24, for one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 and above, attainment across local authorities under the National Qualifications measure ranged from 88.6 per cent to 99.0 per cent, a range of 10.4 percentage points. For one pass or more SCQF Level 5 or better, National Qualifications attainment ranged from 76.8 per cent to 95.8 per cent, a range of 19.0 percentage points. For one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better, National Qualifications attainment ranged from 48.4 per cent to 82.7 per cent, a range of 34.2 percentage points.

A full time series for attainment by local authority since 2009-10 under the National Qualifications measure is available in Table 8 of the [supplementary tables](#).

Chart 10: The range in attainment across local authorities widens as the SCQF level increases

Total school leaver attainment under the National Qualifications measure, by local authority, 2023-24 (percentage of leavers)



Further data on attainment by local authority for years 2009-10 to 2023-24 are provided in [Supplementary Table N2.1](#). Supplementary Tables N2.2a and N2.2b also include a breakdown of attainment in National Qualifications in each local authority by deprivation.

Section 5. School leaver attainment in All SCQF qualifications

The statistics in this section relate to the All SCQF attainment measure. Please refer to Section 1.3 above and Section 4 of the [Methodology document](#) for an explanation of how these differ to the figures in Section 4 above which are based on the National Qualifications attainment measure.

As described in Section 1.4, the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) led to changes in how many qualifications were assessed and graded in the years 2020 to 2023. This should be kept in mind when comparing between years. A **dashed line break** in the series between 2018-19 and 2019-20 is shown to highlight where the changes in assessment happened.

Section 5.1 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure

In 2023-24, 2.0 per cent of school leavers left with their highest qualification at SCQF Level 3, 8.4 per cent with their highest qualification at SCQF Level 4 and 20.9 per cent with their highest qualification at SCQF Level 5.

Based on the All SCQF measure, 41.1 per cent of 2023-24 school leavers left with SCQF Level 6 as their highest qualification level. This is an increase compared to 2022-23 (40.2 per cent). It is however a decrease compared to 2018-19 (44.1 per cent).

In 2023-24, the proportion of leavers whose highest qualification was at SCQF Level 7 was 25.4 per cent, the same as in 2022-23. This is an increase compared to 2018-19 (22.1 per cent).

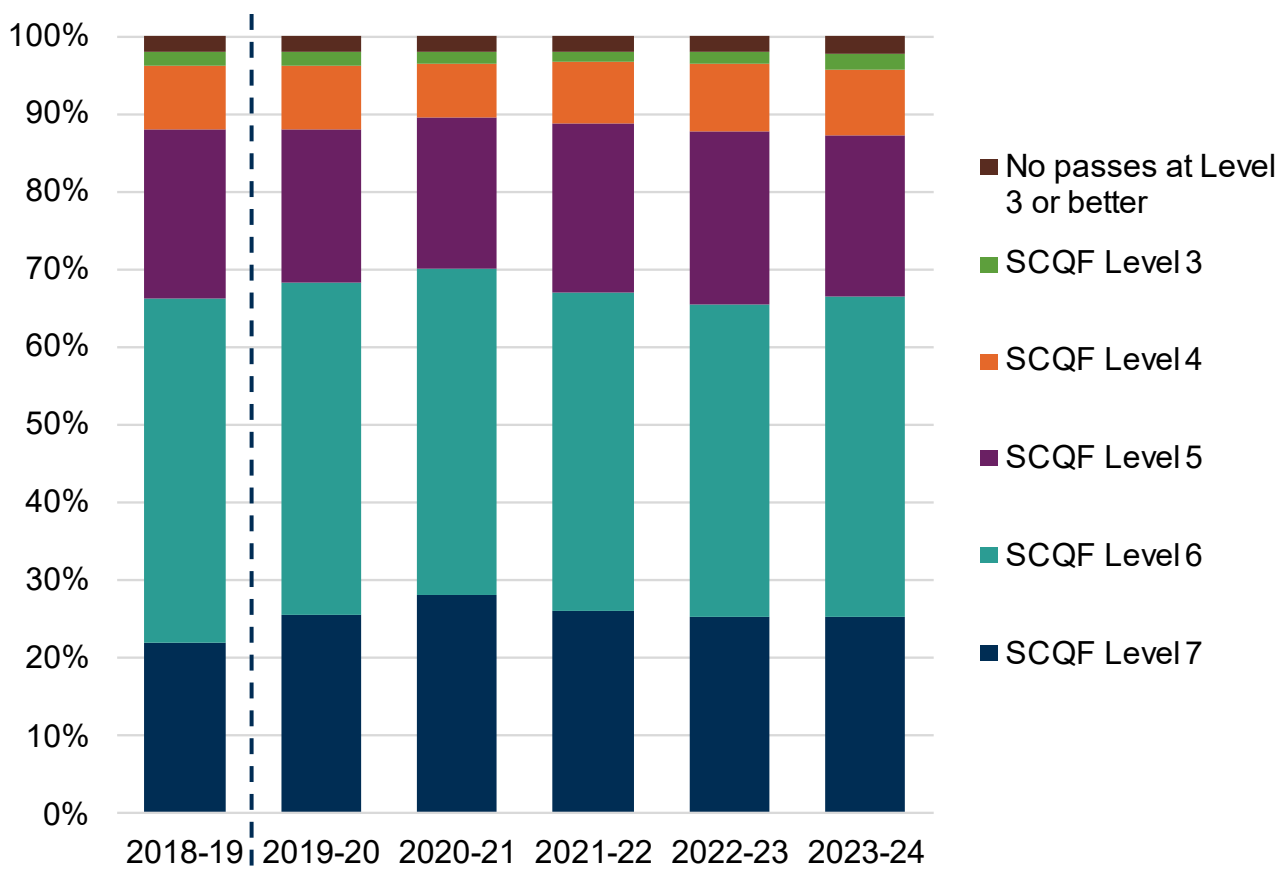
A small proportion (2.2 per cent) of school leavers attained no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better in 2023-24, under the All SCQF measure. This is a slight increase when compared to the proportions observed over the last few years.

As described in Section 2.1, 2023-24 saw a lower proportion of S6 school leavers and increased proportions of S4 and S5 leavers compared to recent years. Those leaving in earlier stages may be less likely to leave with qualifications at higher SCQF levels than those leaving in S6.

A full time series showing the highest SCQF level achieved by school leavers under the All SCQF measure since 2009-10 can be found in [Supplementary Table 9](#).

Chart 11: The proportion of school leavers who attained their highest qualification at SCQF level 6 or 7 has increased since last year

Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the All SCQF measure, 2018-19 to 2023-24.



In 2023-24, 87.4 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better. This proportion has decreased compared to 2022-23 (87.9 per cent) and 2018-19 (87.9 per cent).

The proportion of school leavers who left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better in 2023-24 was 66.5 per cent. This is an increase compared to both 2022-23 (65.6 per cent) and 2018-19 (66.2 per cent).

A time series from 2009-10 to 2023-24 is presented in Table 10 and 10a in the [supplementary tables](#).

Table 5: Leaver attainment by SCQF Level and number of passes achieved under the All SCQF measure, percentage of leavers, 2023-24

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	96.0	93.8	91.3	88.0	82.5	74.8
4 or better	95.8	92.8	90.3	87.5	84.1	79.1	71.9
5 or better	87.4	81.7	76.9	71.8	66.6	60.5	53.4
6 or better	66.5	57.9	51.7	45.6	39.0	29.6	19.6
7	25.4	11.7	4.3	0.6	0.1	[low]	[low]

[low] = value less than 0.05 per cent but greater than zero. See the 'Glossary and symbols used' Section for a list of all symbols used in the tables.

Section 5.2 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by deprivation

This Section presents school leaver attainment based on the All SCQF measure broken down by deprivation levels as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

The All SCQF measures are not currently amongst the 13 key National Improvement Framework measures (presented in Section 4.2) which are used to assess progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

As described in Section 1.4, there were changes in how many qualifications were assessed and graded in the years 2020 to 2023, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, care should be taken when making comparisons between 2023-24 and earlier years. Any increase or decrease should not be interpreted as indicating improving or worsening performance without further evidence.

At SCQF Level 4 or better, the gap between the proportion of school leavers from the most deprived and least deprived areas attaining one pass or more based on the All SCQF measure was 6.4 percentage points in 2023-24. This has widened from 5.1 percentage points in 2022-23. The proportion attaining one pass or more at this level decreased for school leavers from the most deprived areas between 2022-23 and 2023-24 but remained the same for leavers from the least deprived areas. This has led to the gap between the two groups widening.

Longer term, the gap at SCQF Level 4 or better has narrowed over time, starting from 11.0 percentage points in 2009-10 and reaching its narrowest in 2022-23 (5.1 percentage points). In 2023-24 the gap is at its widest since 2018-19. A full time series for attainment at SCQF Level 4 or better, SCQF Level 5 or better and SCQF Level 6 or better since 2009-10 under the All SCQF measure is available in Table S1.2 of the [supplementary tables](#).

At SCQF Level 5 or better, the attainment gap under the All SCQF measure was 18.1 percentage points in 2023-24. This is wider than in 2022-23 (16.6 percentage points). Between 2022-23 and 2023-24 the proportion attaining 1 pass or more at this level decreased for school leavers from the most deprived areas but increased for leavers from the least deprived areas. This has led to the gap between the two groups widening.

Longer term, the gap has narrowed most years, starting from 32.1 percentage points in 2009-10 and reaching its narrowest in 2020-21 (16.1 percentage points). In 2023-24 the gap at SCQF Level 5 is at its widest since 2019-20.

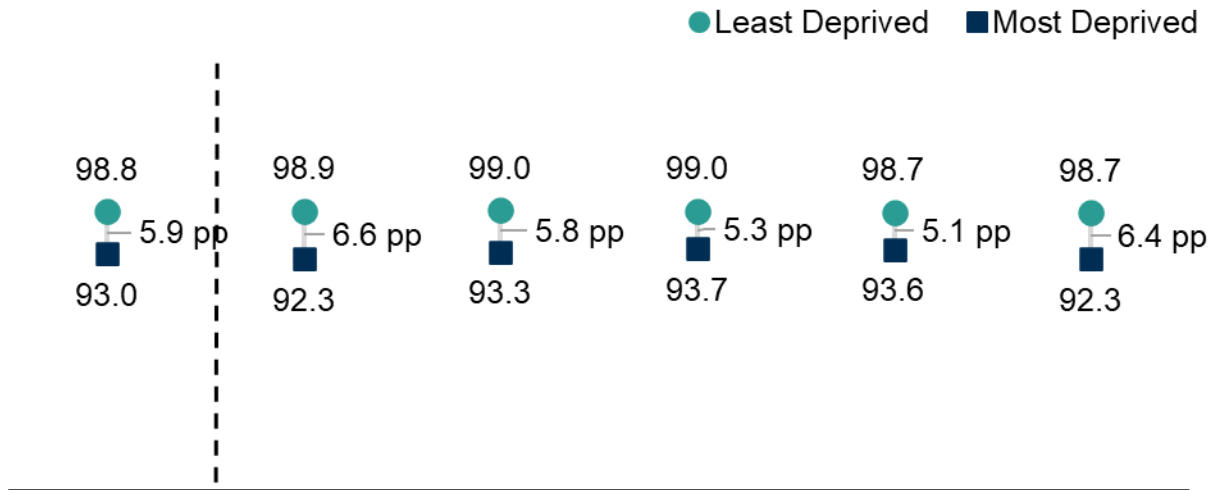
At SCQF Level 6 or better, the attainment gap under the All SCQF measure was 31.8 percentage points in 2023-24. This is slightly wider than in 2022-23 (31.5 percentage points). The proportion attaining one pass or more increased for school leavers from both the most and the least deprived areas between 2022-23 and 2023-24. But it increased by more for those from the least deprived areas, which has led to the gap between the two groups widening.

Longer term, the gap has narrowed most years, starting from 45.4 percentage points in 2009-10 and reaching its narrowest in 2020-21 (31.4 percentage points). The gap in 2023-24 is narrower than in all years other than 2020-21 and 2022-23.

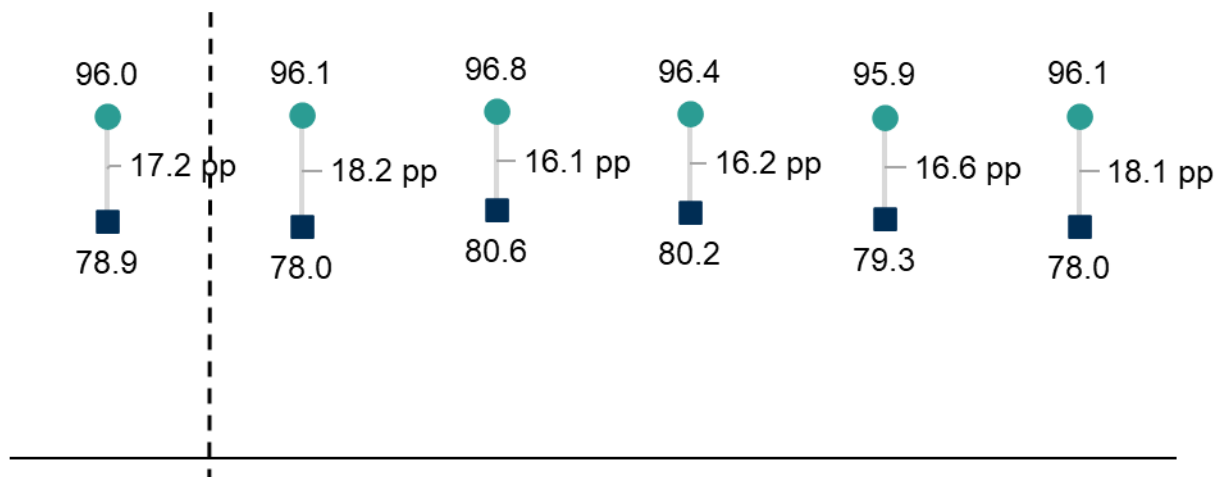
Chart 12: The attainment gap has widened at SCQF Levels 4 to 6 compared to last year

Percentage of school leavers by attainment at SCQF Level 4 to 6 or better under the All SCQF measure, by SIMD quintile, 2018-19 to 2023-24

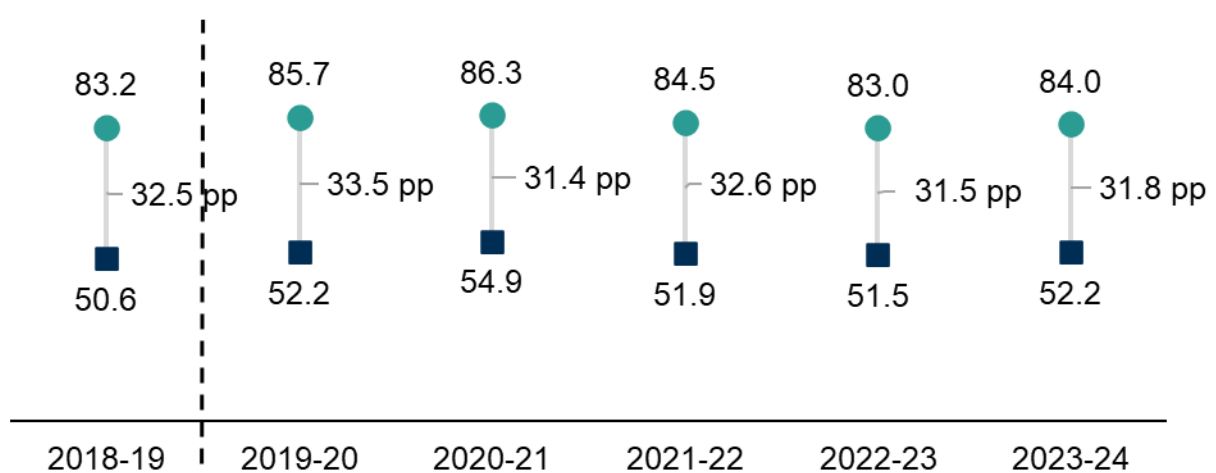
1 or more at SCQF Level 4 or better



1 or more at SCQF Level 5 or better



1 or more at SCQF Level 6 or better



Section 5.3 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by pupil characteristic

Female pupils outperform male pupils at SCQF Levels 4 to 6 or better, with the gap being wider at higher SCQF levels.

Asian-Chinese pupils have high levels of attainment compared to other groups, with 90.4 per cent achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better in 2023-24.

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. Similarly, pupils who are declared or assessed disabled are less likely to achieve SCQF Levels 4 to 6 or better than pupils who are not. The number of pupils with a recorded ASN has increased markedly over recent years (see table 1.5 of the pupil census [supplementary tables](#)) These increases were likely due in part to continued improvements in recording and the introduction of the additional need types 'Child Plans' and 'Other' in 2011. This should be kept in mind when interpreting attainment data by Additional Support Needs.

In 2023-24 pupils living in Accessible Rural areas and Remote Rural areas are the most likely to achieve at SCQF Level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better. At SCQF level 6 or better pupils living in Accessible Rural and Large Urban areas have the highest levels of attainment. Pupils living in Remote Small Towns are the least likely to achieve at SCQF levels 4 to 6 or better.

Broad patterns in attainment by pupil characteristic are typically stable year on year, although small numbers in some characteristic groups mean fluctuations do occur. When comparing to 2022-23, a lower percentage of 2023-24 school leavers achieved one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better across almost all characteristic breakdowns. Conversely, a higher percentage of 2023-24 school leavers achieved one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better across almost all characteristic breakdowns when comparing to 2022-23.

A full time series for school leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by pupil characteristic since 2009-10 can be found in [Supplementary Table 11](#).

Table 6: The attainment gap between leavers with different pupil characteristics increases as the SCQF Level increases

Percentage of school leavers attaining at SCQF Level 4 to 6 or better under the All SCQF measure, by pupil characteristic, 2023-24

Pupil Characteristic	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
Sex			
Male	95.4	86.7	62.9
Female	96.2	88.1	70.2

Ethnicity			
White – Scottish	96.2	90.2	73.4
White – non-Scottish	98.6	95.9	89.5
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	99.2	95.2	83.8
Asian – Indian	98.0	96.4	90.4
Asian – Pakistani	97.2	93.3	81.3
Asian – Chinese	98.2	95.7	83.9
Asian – Other	93.9	87.6	69.6
African/ Black/ Caribbean	93.0	84.5	64.6
All other categories	96.2	90.2	73.4
Not Disclosed/Not known	98.6	95.9	89.5
Urban/Rural			
Large Urban Areas	95.5	87.1	67.9
Other Urban Areas	95.8	86.3	65.6
Accessible Small Towns	95.7	87.4	65.0
Remote Small Towns	93.8	83.4	58.1
Accessible Rural	96.8	90.3	68.3
Remote Rural	96.3	90.3	65.6
Additional Support Needs			
ASN	92.3	78.1	51.7
No ASN	98.6	95.1	78.7
Disabled status			
Declared or assessed disabled	87.1	72.2	44.6
Not declared or assessed disabled	96.1	88.0	67.3
All Leavers	95.8	87.4	66.5

Section 5.4 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by local authority

As outlined in the [Methodology document](#) Section 3.4, local authority results can be affected by the different presentation policies in operation in different local authorities. This means that in any year the attainment of school leavers from one local authority may be more heavily influenced by qualifications associated with a smaller number of SCQF credit points than in another. For example, where presentation policies in one local authority have led to a larger number of pupils taking qualifications associated with one or two SCQF credit points than in another, this could lead to higher attainment levels in that authority due to the shorter time requirements of such qualifications. There can also be variation within a single local authority over time, for example if presentation policies change.

Table 14 of the [supplementary tables](#) and Section 4.2 of the [Methodology document](#) shows the proportion of qualifications attained by school leavers at SCQF Level 6 and above that were associated with one or two SCQF credit points (10 or 20 notional learning hours) in 2018-19 to 2023-24. There is considerable

variation between local authorities and also over time within individual local authorities. This should be kept in mind when interpreting results in this section.

More generally, if making comparisons between local authorities we recommend keeping in mind the context of the individual authorities. Factors such as levels of poverty or deprivation, the stage at which pupils leave school and the structure of the local economy (for example, the relative levels of post school opportunities in the employment sector or the continuing education sectors) may have an impact on the levels of attainment which pupils leave school with. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons.

If considering changes in attainment under the All SCQF measure over time, keep in mind that the numbers of award providers - and qualifications - included in the All SCQF measure has risen over time, and that the SCQF credit points of qualifications included have also changed over time (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3 of the Methodology document). There can also be variation in presentation policy within a single local authority over time, which may affect the attainment figures.

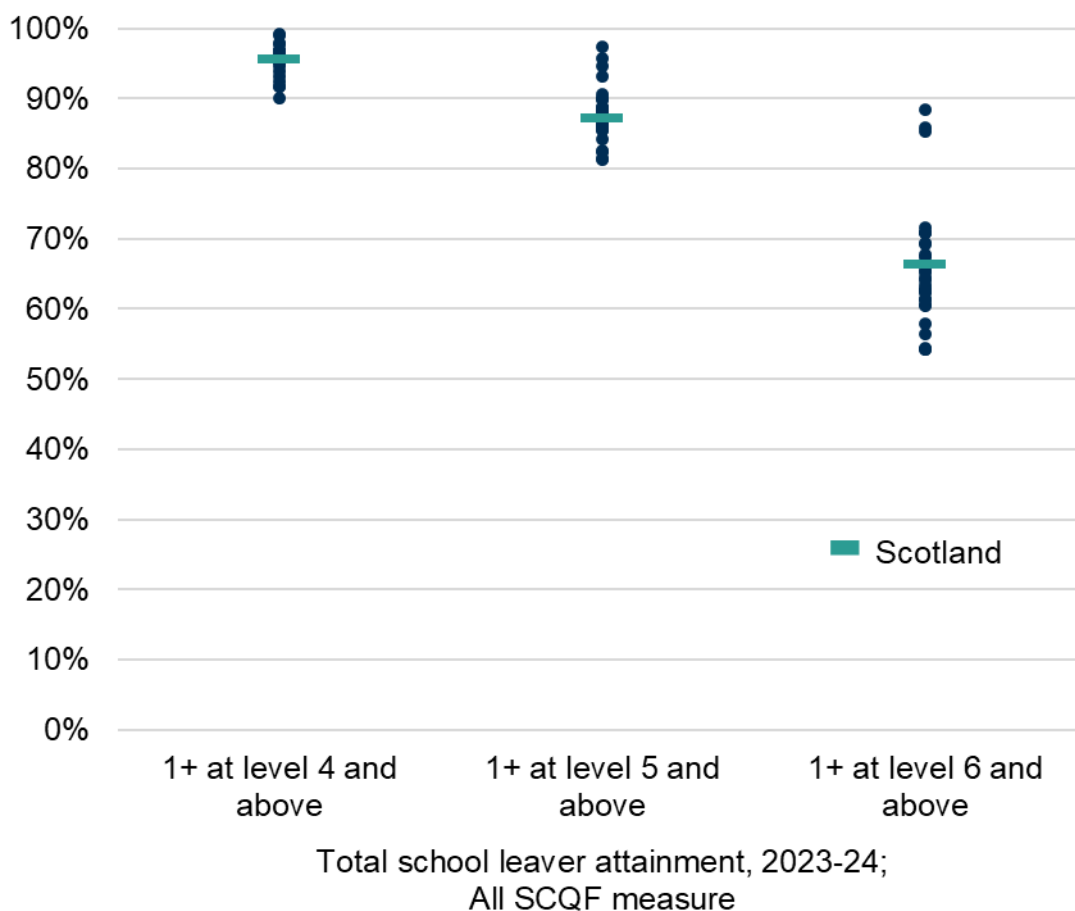
In 2023-24, for one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better, attainment across local authorities under the All SCQF measure ranged from 90.0 per cent to 99.3 per cent, a range of 9.3 percentage points. For one pass or more SCQF Level 5 or better, All SCQF attainment ranged from 81.3 per cent to 97.3 per cent, a range of 16.0 percentage points. For one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better, All SCQF attainment ranged from 54.3 per cent to 88.4 per cent, a range of 34.2 percentage points.

When compared to the equivalent data for the National Qualifications measure in Section 4.5 the difference in attainment between the National Qualifications measure and the All SCQF measure varies between local authorities. This is likely to largely reflect variation in presentation policies across local authorities with different courses and qualifications on offer.

A full time series for school leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by local authority since 2009-10 can be found in [Supplementary Table 12](#).

Chart 13: The range in attainment between local authorities widens as the SCQF Level increases

Total school leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by local authority, 2023-24 (percentage of leavers)



Further data on attainment by local authority for years 2009-10 to 2023-24 are provided in Table S2.1 in the [supplementary tables](#). The Supplementary Tables S2.2a and S2.2b also include a breakdown of attainment under the All SCQF measure in each local authority by deprivation.

Section 6. Other groups of qualifications

This section presents data on other attainment of interest. The statistics in Section 6 refer to school leavers from all stages, including S3, S4, S5, S6 and 'other' stages. The statistics on Literacy and Numeracy and those on Foundation Apprenticeships refer to mainstream school leavers. The statistics on Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) refer to leavers from mainstream and special schools consistent with the DYW key performance indicator.

Section 6.1 Literacy and Numeracy levels achieved by school leavers

Literacy and numeracy are key skills for any school leaver. Literacy is 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 Section 7 of the [Methodology document](#). 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 that 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) can count as achieving literacy or numeracy at that level. With unit-based courses, a pupil who did not pass the full course, but did achieve the relevant units, would be counted as achieving literacy or numeracy at that level.

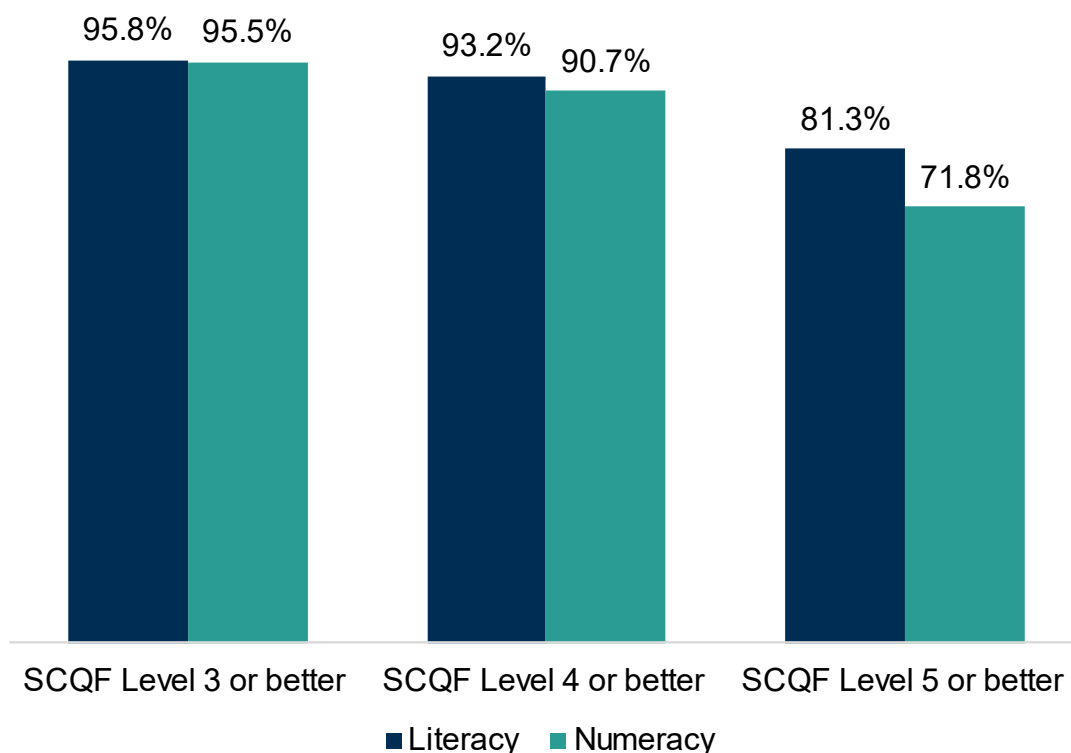
Mandatory unit assessments were removed from National 5s in 2017-18 and from Highers in 2018-19. This means that it is no longer mandatory for a pupil to complete unit assessments in order to achieve National 5 and Higher qualifications. This change is likely to have an effect on the literacy and numeracy attainment figures over time.

In addition, as described in Section 1.4, there were changes in how many qualifications were assessed and graded in the years 2020 to 2023, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore care should be taken when making comparisons between 2023-24 and earlier years. Any increase or decrease should not be interpreted as indicating improving or worsening performance without further evidence.

At SCQF Level 3 or better, 95.8 per cent of 2023-24 school leavers attained literacy and 95.5 per cent attained numeracy. At SCQF Level 4 or better, 93.2 per cent of school leavers attained literacy and 90.7 per cent attained numeracy. At SCQF Level 5 or better, 81.3 per cent of school leavers attained literacy and 71.8 per cent attained this level in numeracy.

A full time series for school leaver attainment in literacy and numeracy since 2012-13 can be found in [Supplementary Table 13](#).

Chart 14: School leaver attainment in literacy is higher than in numeracy
Secondary school leaver attainment in literacy and numeracy by SCQF Level, percentage of leavers, 2023-24



Section 6.2 Developing the 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 the development of a modern, responsive and valued system for vocational training and to emulate the labour markets of the best performing European countries. More information on the [Developing Scotland's Young Workforce strategy](#).

Tables Z2.1a and Z2.1b in the [supplementary tables](#) show attainment in vocational qualifications at SCQF Levels 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.

35.0 per cent of 2023-24 mainstream and special school leavers achieved one or more vocational qualifications at SCQF Level 5 or better. This compares to 30.4 per cent in 2022-23, and to 7.3 per cent in 2013-14.

Section 6.3 Foundation Apprenticeships (Official Statistics in Development)

[Foundation Apprenticeships](#) (FA) have been designed and developed with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), industry and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (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.

For more detail on how this data has been collected please refer to the [Methodology document](#) (Section 5.3).

[Supplementary Table Z1.1](#) covers the number of school leavers between 2019-20, and 2023-24 who have achieved a Foundation Apprenticeship by subject. The statistics in this table have been labelled as Official Statistics in Development reflecting the fact that work to ensure and improve their accuracy is ongoing.

In 2023-24, 1,335 Foundation Apprenticeships were achieved by school leavers. This represents an increase on 2022-23. The largest group of these were in social services: children and young people (470) followed by business skills (244) and social services and healthcare (204).

Note that attainment in Foundation Apprenticeships is not included in attainment statistics presented in Section 4 which covers National Qualifications only. The National Certificate and National Progression Award components of Foundation Apprenticeships do however contribute to the All SCQF measure (Section 5) and to the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce measure (Section 6.2).

Glossary and symbols used

Glossary

Additional Support Needs (ASN):

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2004 (as amended) states that a child or young person has an additional support need where they need additional support in order to benefit from school education.

Code of Practice for Statistics:

The [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) provides producers of official statistics with the detailed practices they must commit to when producing and releasing official statistics.

Curriculum for Excellence:

[Curriculum for Excellence](#) is Scotland's curriculum. It helps our children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for life in the 21st century.

National Improvement Framework (NIF):

The [National Improvement Framework \(NIF\)](#) is Scottish Government policy to ensure children and young people develop a broad range of skills and capacities, whilst supporting them to thrive, regardless of their social circumstances or additional needs.

Publicly funded mainstream school:

Schools which are run and financed by the local authority and grant aided schools.

Pupil Census:

A Scottish Government data collection, collecting a range of information and statistics on school pupils in Scotland. For more information see [School education statistics](#).

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD):

The [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Scotland.

Least deprived:

Pupils whose home address is in the 20 per cent of least deprived data zones (small areas) as defined by the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#).

Most deprived:

Pupils whose home address is in the 20 per cent of most deprived data zones (small areas) as defined by the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#).

Special schools:

Most children with additional support needs are educated in mainstream schools but some with complex or specific needs are educated in special schools.

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA):

The national accreditation and awarding body for Scotland. [SQA](#) develops, maintains, and improves a framework of qualifications including National Qualifications and a range of other qualifications.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF):

The [SCQF](#) is Scotland's national qualifications framework which allows broad comparisons to be made between qualifications.

SCQF credit points:

SCQF credit points provide an indication of the length of time it takes to complete a course's learning outcomes, with 1 credit point equating to 10 notional hours of learning.

SCQF Level:

The SCQF level indicates the level of difficulty of a particular qualification or learning programme.

Senior Phase:

[Senior Phase](#) takes place from S4 to S6 in schools. It is the phase when a young person will build up a portfolio of qualifications and continue to develop the knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.

Urban Rural Classification:

The Urban Rural Classification is an Official Statistic used to distinguish between rural and urban areas. Within this publication the Urban Rural Classification 2020 has been used for analysis of 2022-23 data. For more information see [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2020](#)

School leaver destination categories used in this publication**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. 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 school leavers with a destination category of Training in years 2018-19 to 2021-22 cannot be directly compared to the proportion recorded for previous years.

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 2020 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 means that although local authorities will provide the same type of support and opportunities for young people, this activity is no longer 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 for Work 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 for 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 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.

Symbols used in this publication

[z] = not applicable

[c] = value suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosure of personal information

[low] = value less than 0.05 per cent but greater than zero.

Access to Data and Further Information

Where you can access the data

More information on school leavers' initial destinations and attainment are available in the supplementary tables. These include breakdowns of the data by: characteristics of leavers; local authority; reasons for Additional Support Need; stage of leaving; and subject. Some tables also include information on the initial destinations and attainment of leavers from special schools.

Data on school leaver attainment and destinations is also available via [the Scottish Government's open data platform](#).

Further sources of information on school pupils' attainment, and school leaver destinations

This publication is available on the [Scottish Government's website](#). School level information is available through Insight (a professional benchmarking tool used by local authorities and schools) and will be published on the [School Information Dashboard](#).

The scope of these destination statistics is limited to school leavers, but other sources are available to assess patterns across 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.

[Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence \(CfE\) Levels](#) 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.

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. [Results](#) are available on the Scottish Government website.

Skills Development Scotland publish Foundation Apprenticeship Progress Reports. These include data on the [number of young people undertaking Foundation Apprenticeships in Scotland](#).

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

1. **Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations** (this publication).
 - Available from the [Scottish Government](#), February.
 - Provides information on the **attainment of school leavers** and on the activities being undertaken by **school leavers 3 months after the end of the school year**.
 - Coverage: school leavers from publicly funded schools.
2. **Summary Statistics for Follow-up Leaver Destinations.**
 - Available from the [Scottish Government](#), June.
 - Provides information on the activities being undertaken by **school leavers 9 months after the end of the school year**.
 - Coverage: school leavers from publicly funded schools.
3. **Annual Participation Measure.**
 - Available from [Skills Development Scotland](#), August.
 - Reports on the economic and employment activity of the **wider 16-19 year-old cohort**, including those at school.
 - Coverage: all 16-19 year-olds.
4. **Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels.**
 - Available from the [Scottish Government](#), December.
 - Provides information on the performance of **P1, P4, P7 and S3 school pupils**. Reports on the percentage of pupils who have achieved the expected Curriculum for Excellence level in reading, writing, listening and talking, and numeracy.
 - Coverage: all P1, P4, P7 and S3 pupils in publicly funded schools. (Not collected in 2019-20. Collected for primary school pupils only in 2020-21).
5. **SQA Attainment Statistics.**
 - Available from [Scottish Qualifications Authority](#), August and December.
 - Attainment statistics for every course and qualification in a given year.
 - Coverage: all SQA attainment, not just that of school leavers; and includes those attaining SQA qualifications in non-school settings such as Further Education.

Data and Methodology

Please refer to the [Methodology document](#).

Tell us what you think

We are always interested to hear from our users about how our statistics are used, and how they can be improved.

Enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Julie Ramsay
Education Analytical Services
E-mail: school.stats@gov.scot

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

Office of the Chief Statistician
e-mail: statistics.enquiries@gov.scot

Join our mailing list

If you would like to receive notification about statistical publications, or find out about consultations on our statistics please join the [ScotStat mailing list](#).

Future publications

Details of future publications can be found on our [forthcoming publications](#) page.