

Accredited Official Statistics



Summary Statistics for Follow-Up Leaver Destinations, No. 7: 2025 Edition

June 2025

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Key points

- 93.1 per cent of 2023-24 school leavers were in a positive follow-up destination. This is an increase from 92.8 per cent in 2022-23.
- The gap between school leavers from the most and least deprived areas of Scotland in positive destinations widened from 7.5 percentage points in 2022-23 to 8.3 percentage points in 2023-24.
- 95.5 per cent of 2023-24 school leavers who were in a positive initial destination were also in a positive follow-up destination.
- 35.5 per cent of those in an 'other' initial destination moved into a positive follow-up destination. This varied by initial destination with 48.9 per cent of those who were Unemployed Seeking and 20.4 per cent of those who were Unemployed Not Seeking moving into a positive follow-up destination.
- Employment was the destination school leavers were most likely to remain in between initial and follow-up. Of the 2023-24 school leavers who were in Employment as their initial destination, 94.2 per cent were also in Employment as their follow-up destination.

Introduction

This publication:

- Provides information on the follow-up destinations of school leavers in Scotland, nine months after the end of the academic year in which they left school and,
- Covers all 2023-24 school leavers from publicly funded mainstream schools.

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](#).

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.

More information about Scottish Government statistics is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

Section 1. About these statistics

Section 1.1 School leaver follow-up destinations

This publication provides information on the destination of school leavers nine months after the end of the school year (the first Monday in April 2025). The activities of school leavers are grouped into '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

For most young people in Scotland S4 (≈15-16 year olds) is the last compulsory year of school, but most choose to stay on and complete S5 (≈16-17 year olds) and S6 (≈17-18 year olds).

This publication covers pupils who left publicly funded mainstream schools, in the 32 local authorities and one grant-aided school (Jordanhill).

A separate publication – [Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 7: 2025 edition](#) – published in February 2025 provided information on what school leavers were doing three months after the end of the school year (the first Monday in October 2024).

Section 1.2 Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on these statistics

The time series presented in this publication includes years where school leaver destinations are likely to have been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The greatest impact is likely to have been seen in 2019-20. However, there may have been some ongoing impact on the destinations of some school

leavers in subsequent years. More information can be found in the [School Leaver Follow-up Destinations - Methodology and Data Sources document](#).

Section 2. School leaver follow-up destinations

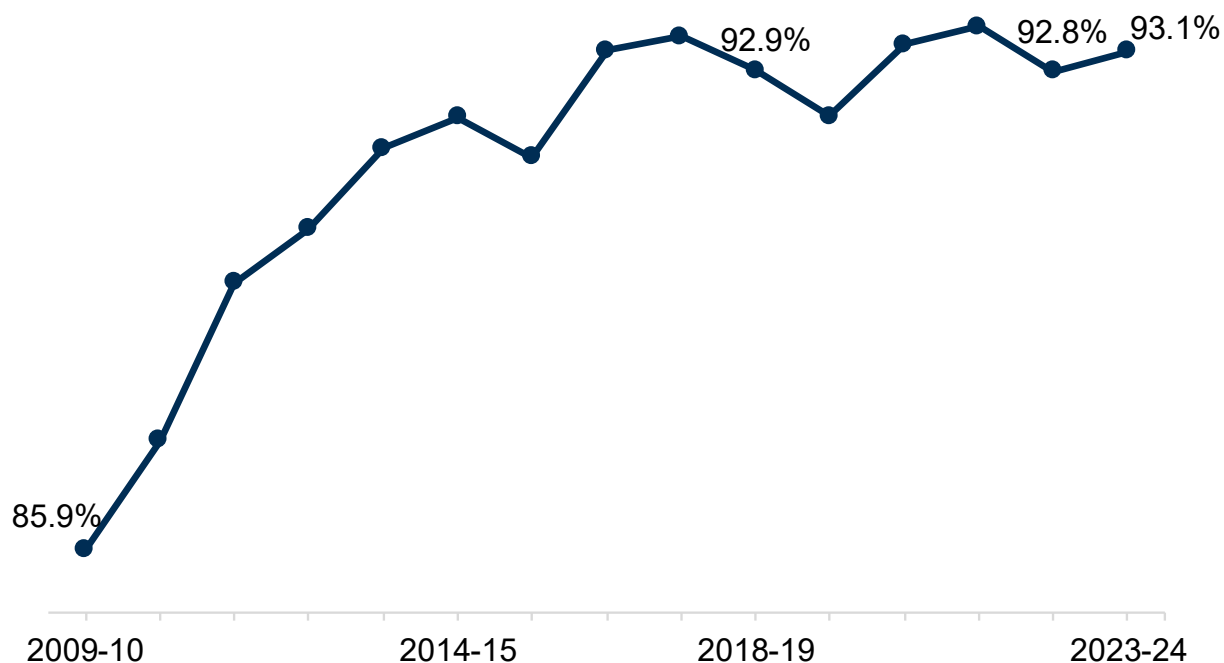
Section 2.1 Destinations of school leavers

In 2023-24 93.1 per cent of school leavers were in a positive follow-up destination. This was higher than for 2022-23 school leavers (92.8 per cent).

This was mainly due to increases in the proportion of school leavers in Higher Education and Further Education. Compared to 2022-23, the proportion of school leavers who were Unemployed Seeking has decreased and the proportion who were Unemployed Not Seeking has increased slightly.

Chart 1: The proportion of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination increased compared to last year

Percentage of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination, 2009-10 to 2023-24



The most common follow-up destination was Higher Education, accounting for 38.1 per cent of school leavers. Employment was the next most popular destination, at 28.8 per cent. The proportion of school leavers in Employment fell in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23 but remains slightly higher than levels seen before the COVID-19 pandemic.

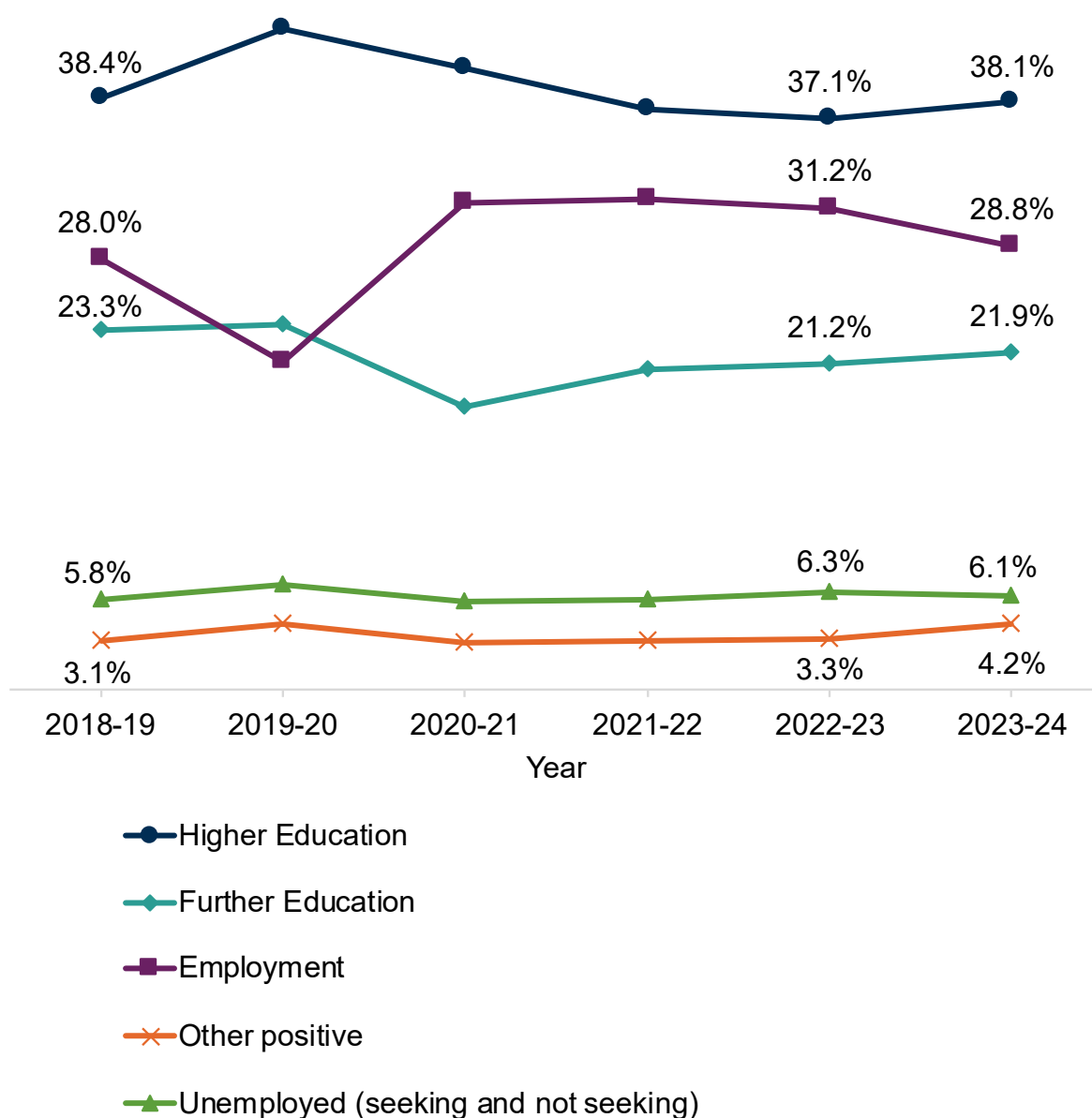
Just over one-fifth of school leavers were in Further Education. The proportion in Further Education increased in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23.

The proportion of school leavers who were unemployed nine months after leaving school decreased slightly in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23.

A time series from 2009-10 is available in [Supplementary Tables](#) 1a and 1b.

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

Follow-up destination of leavers, 2018-19 to 2023-24



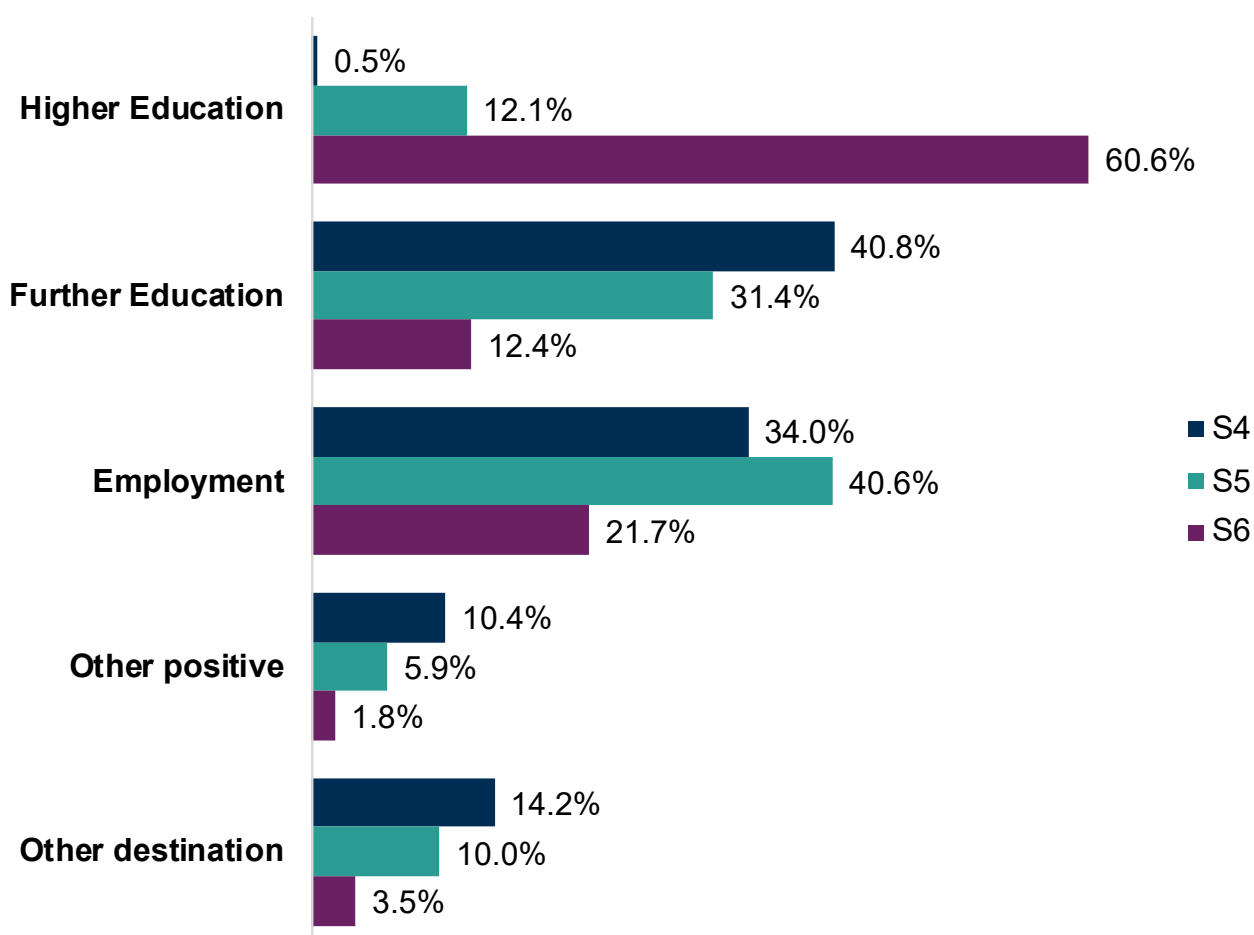
Section 2.2 Destinations by stage

The most common follow-up destination varied by stage.

- Most S6 leavers were in Higher Education (60.6 per cent);
- The most common follow-up destination for S5 leavers was Employment (40.6 per cent) followed by Further Education (31.4 per cent);
- The most common follow-up destination for S4 leavers was Further Education (40.8 per cent) followed by Employment (34.0 per cent).

Chart 3: S6 leavers are more likely to be in Higher Education while S5 leavers are more likely to be Employed and S4 leavers are more likely to be in Further Education 9 months after leaving school

Follow-up destination of school leavers by stage of leaving, 2023-24



Pupils who leave school in S6 are the most likely to be in a positive follow-up destination. Those who leave in S4 are the least likely. In 2023-24,

- 96.5 per cent of those who left school in S6 were in a positive follow-up destination. This is up from 96.1 per cent in 2022-23.

- Among S5 leavers, 90.0 per cent were in a positive follow-up destination. This is up very slightly from 89.9 per cent in 2022-23.
- And among S4 leavers 85.8 per cent were in a positive follow-up destination. This is up very slightly from 85.7 per cent in 2022-23.

A time series from 2009-10 is available in Table L1.9 in the [supplementary tables](#).

Section 2.3 Destinations by deprivation

In 2023-24 the proportion of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination decreased slightly compared to 2022-23 for the most deprived areas of Scotland (by 0.2 percentage points). This was due to a decrease in the proportion of school leavers in Employment (down by 2.6 percentage points).

However, compared to 2022-23 there were increases in the proportion of leavers from the most deprived areas of Scotland in Further Education (up by 0.8 percentage points), Higher Education (up by 0.6 percentage points) and Training (up by 0.5 percentage points),

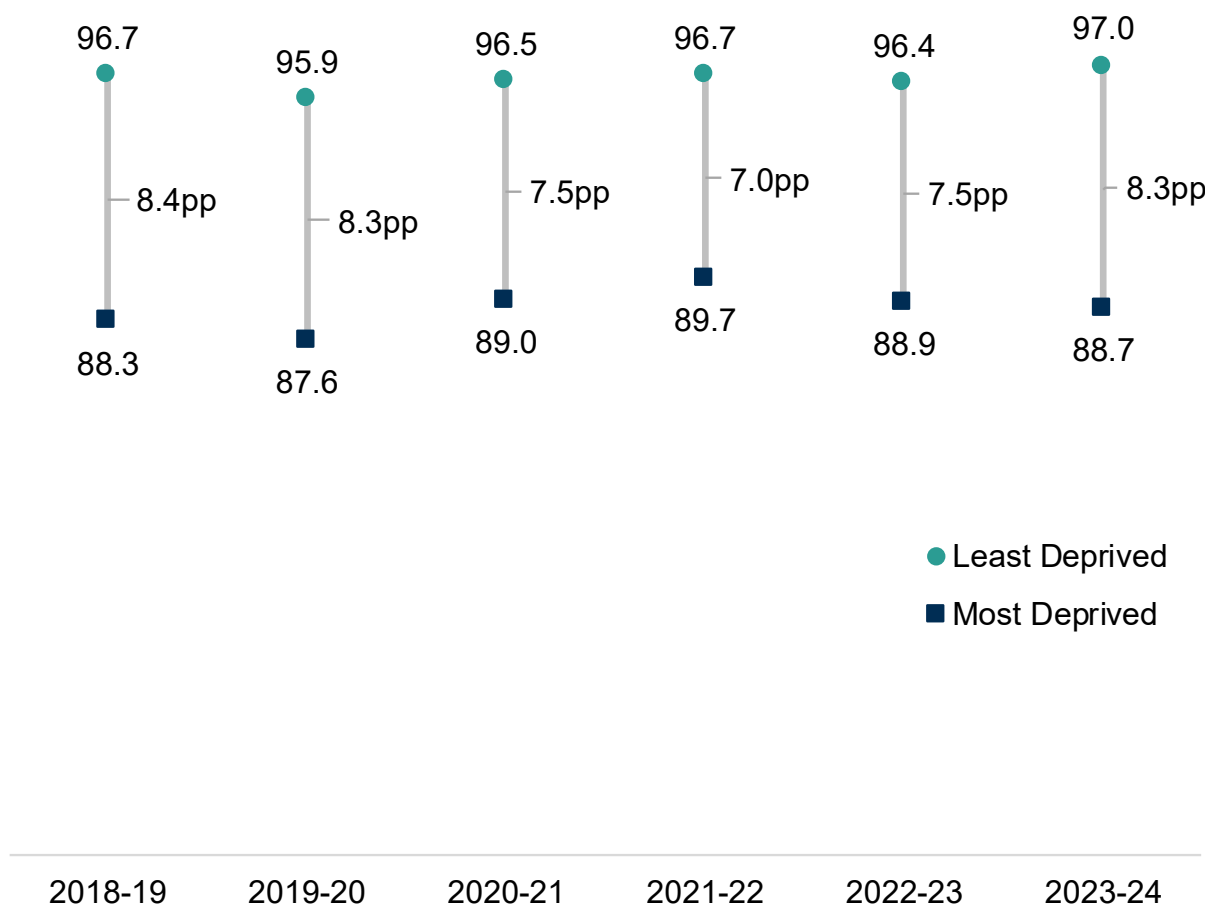
For the least deprived areas of Scotland, the proportion of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination increased compared to 2022-23 (by 0.6 percentage points). This was due to an increase in the proportion of school leavers in Higher Education (up by 2.9 percentage points). There was however a decrease in leavers from the least deprived areas going into Employment (down by 2.8 percentage points). Compared to last year, a decrease in the proportion of leavers going into Employment was seen across all SIMD quintiles.

As a result, the gap between the two groups has widened from 7.5 percentage points in 2022-23 to 8.3 percentage points in 2023-24.

A full time series from 2009-10 is available in [Supplementary Table 2](#).

Chart 4. The deprivation gap for positive follow-up destinations has widened compared to last year

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



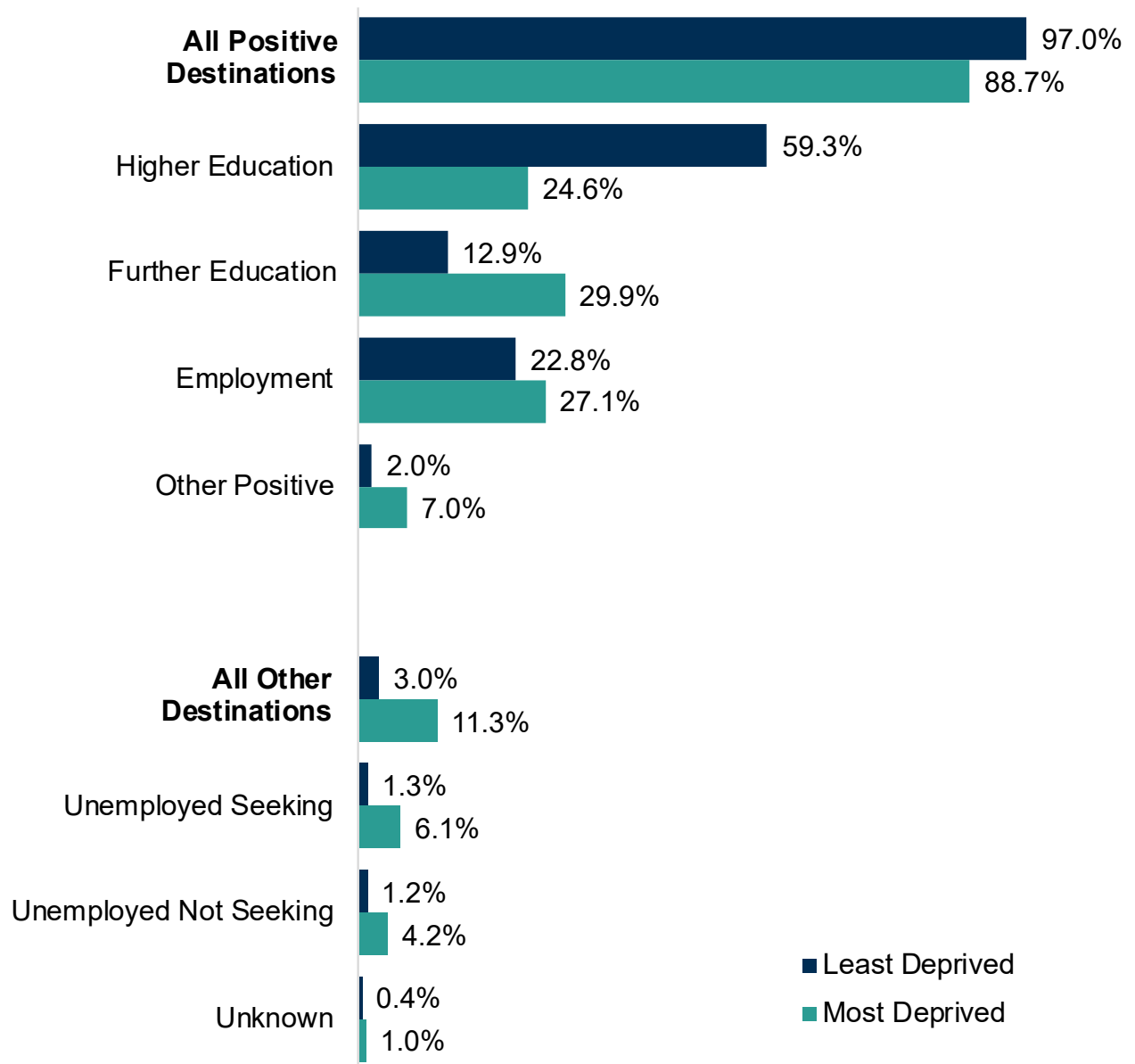
In 2023-24, the most common follow-up destination for leavers from the least deprived areas of Scotland was Higher Education. This was followed by Employment. These leavers were more likely to be in Higher Education than leavers from other areas. They were less likely to be in Further Education, Training, Employment, Voluntary Work, Personal Skills Development or to be unemployed.

The most common destination for leavers from the most deprived areas of Scotland was Further Education. This was followed by Employment and Higher Education. These leavers were more likely to be in Further Education, Training, Personal Skills Development or to be unemployed than those from other areas. They were also less likely to be in Higher Education than leavers from other areas.

More data on destinations by deprivation is available in [Supplementary Table 2](#).

Chart 5: Leavers from the most deprived areas are most likely to be in Further Education whereas leavers from the least deprived areas are most likely to be in Higher Education 9 months after leaving

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



Section 2.4 Destinations by other pupil characteristics

The proportion of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination varies by pupil characteristics.

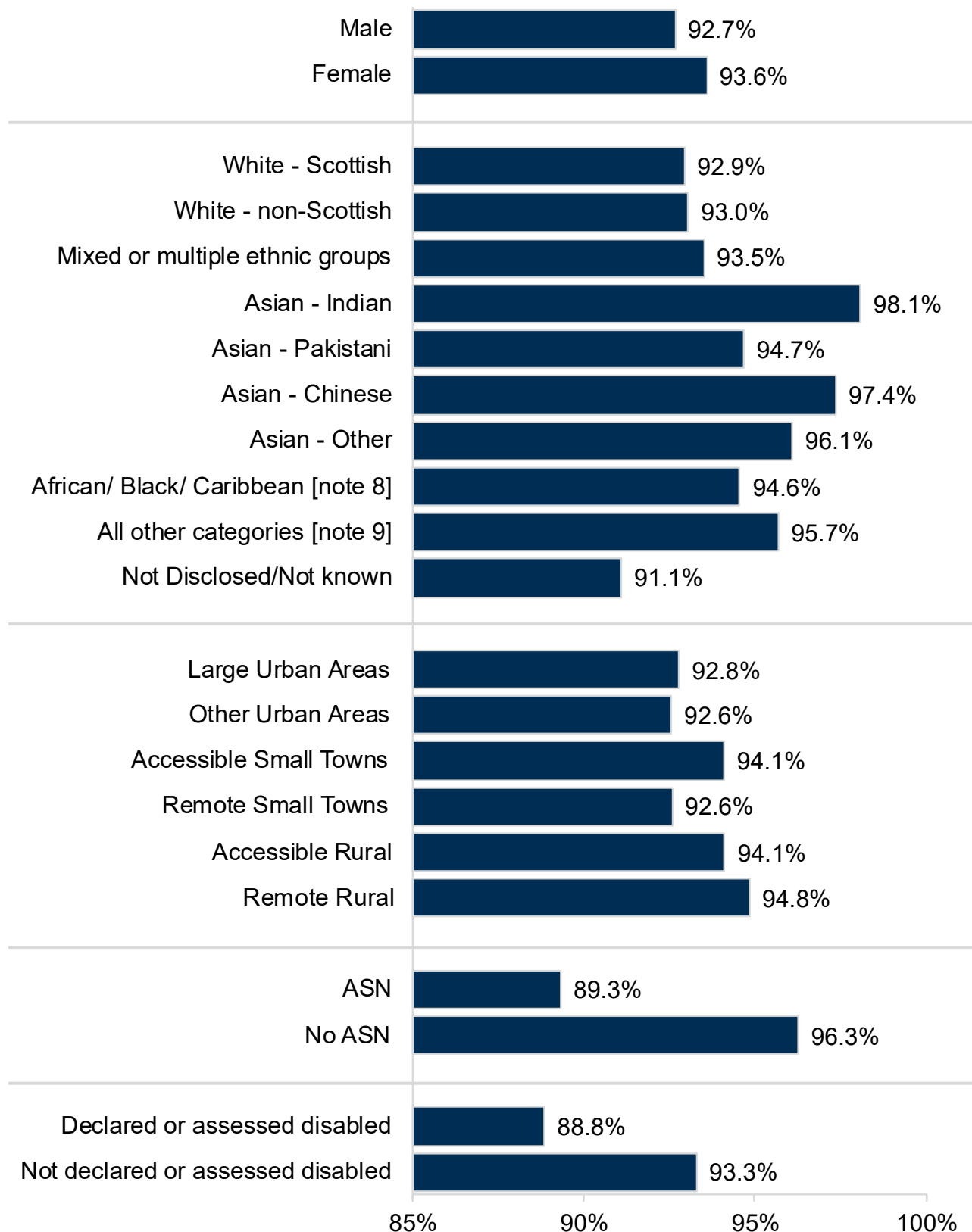
In 2023-24:

- Female school leavers were more likely to be in a positive destination than male school leavers.
- School leavers of Asian – Indian or Asian – Chinese ethnicity were more likely to be in a positive destination than those in other ethnic groups.
- School leavers from Remote Rural areas, Accessible Rural areas and Accessible Small Towns were more likely to be in a positive destination than those from other areas.
- School leavers who did not have an Additional Support Need (ASN) were more likely to be in a positive destination than those who had an ASN.
- School leavers who were not declared or assessed as disabled were more likely to be in a positive destination than those who were declared or assessed as disabled.

These patterns are similar to those for other years. More information on destinations by pupil characteristics is available in [Supplementary Table 3](#).

Chart 6: The proportion of leavers in a positive destination differs by pupil characteristic

Proportion of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination by pupil characteristic, 2023-24



Section 3. Comparing initial and follow-up destinations

Section 3.1 Initial and follow-up destinations

A school leaver's follow-up destination, nine months after they leave school, can be different to their initial destination, three months after they leave school.

In 2023-24 the proportion of school leavers in a positive initial destination was 95.7 per cent (see the [Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 7: 2025 edition](#)). A smaller proportion of school leavers were in a positive follow-up destination (93.1 per cent). It is not unusual to see a decrease between initial and follow-up destinations - the same pattern can be seen across all previous school leaver cohorts since consistent records began in 2009-10. However, the decrease between initial and follow-up positive destinations in 2023-24 is the second largest on record at around 2.6 percentage points.

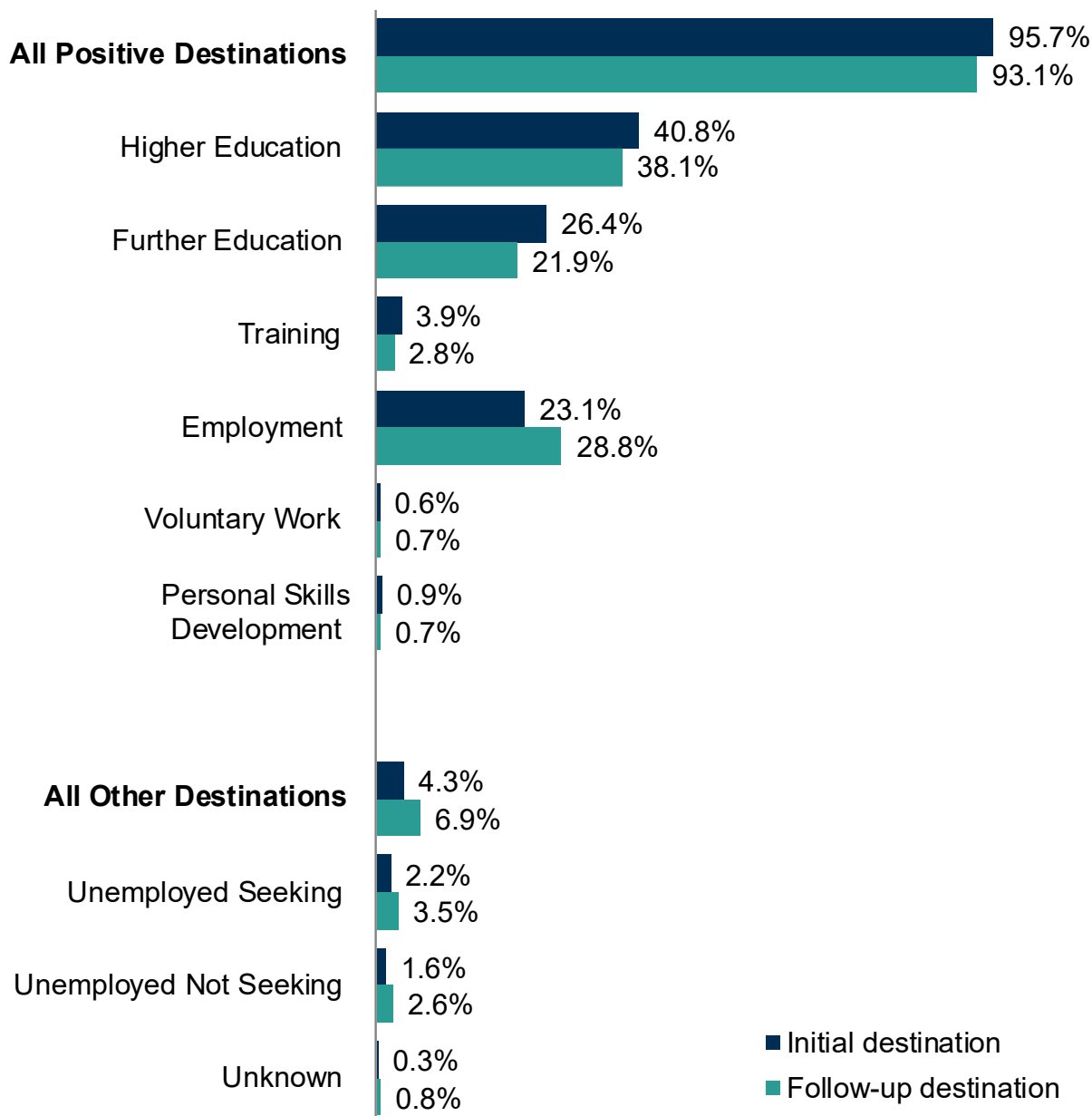
In 2023-24, the largest reductions between initial and follow-up destinations were in Further Education and Higher Education. The largest increase was in Employment. Again, these patterns are broadly consistent with those seen in most years since 2009-10.

The proportion of leavers who were Unemployed Seeking or Unemployed and Not Seeking employment both increased between initial and follow-up destinations.

A time series of initial and follow-up destinations is available in [Supplementary Tables](#) L1.1a and L1.1b.

Chart 7: The proportion of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination is lower than the proportion who were in a positive initial destination

Percentage of school leavers by initial and follow-up destination category, 2023-24



Section 3.2 Leavers staying in the same destination or changing destination

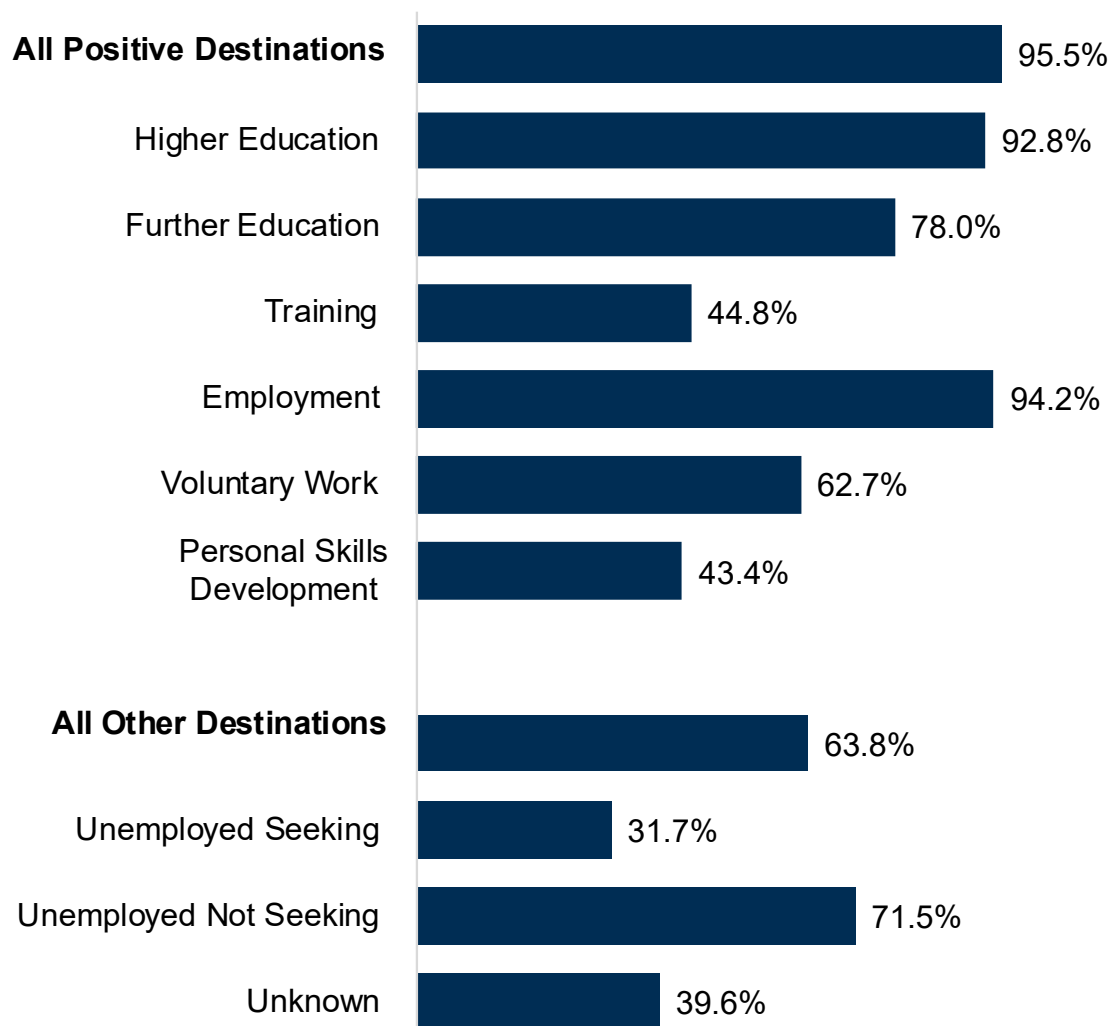
In 2023-24, 95.5 per cent of those in a positive initial destination were also in a positive follow-up destination. This includes leavers in the same positive destination, and those who moved from one positive destination to another. This is up from 95.1 per cent in 2022-23.

The positive destination in which 2023-24 school leavers were most likely to remain between initial and follow-up was Employment. It is possible that some of these school leavers changed jobs in between times.

School leavers whose initial destination was Personal Skills Development or Training were less likely to remain in the same destination. This may reflect the short-term nature of some of these activities.

Chart 8: School leavers who were in initial destinations such as Higher Education or Employment were more likely to stay in those destinations than school leavers who were in Training or Personal Skills Development

Percentage of school leavers whose follow-up destination was the same as their initial destination, 2023-24



Of those school leavers who were in a positive initial destination, 4.3 per cent moved into an 'other' follow-up destination. This varied for different initial destinations.

For example, 43.4 per cent of those whose initial destination was Personal Skills Development (PSD) were also in PSD at follow-up, 37.7 per cent had moved into a different positive destination and 18.0 per cent had moved into an 'other' destination.

For those whose initial destination was Training, 44.8 per cent also had a follow-up destination of Training, 33.1 per cent had moved into a different positive destination and 21.5 per cent had moved into an 'other' destination.

Meanwhile 94.2 per cent of those whose initial destination was Employment also had a follow-up destination of Employment, 3.0 per cent were in a different positive destination and 2.6 per cent had moved into an 'other' destination.

Of those school leavers who were in an 'other' initial destination, 35.5 per cent moved into a positive follow-up destination. Again, this varied by initial destination.

Amongst those whose initial destination was Unemployed Seeking, 31.7 per cent were also Unemployed Seeking at follow-up, 19.1 per cent were in a different 'other' destination and 48.9 per cent had moved into a positive follow-up destination.

Of those whose initial destination was Unemployed Not Seeking, 71.5 per cent were still Unemployed Not Seeking at follow-up, 7.2 per cent were in a different 'other' destination and 20.4 per cent had moved into a positive follow-up destination. Of those who moved to a positive follow-up destination, the most common destination was Employment.

Note that a small number of school leavers who were in the initial school leaver cohort are excluded from the follow-up cohort. This means that figures in this section may not sum to 100 per cent.

[Supplementary Tables](#) L1.8a and L1.8b provide information on school leavers staying in their initial destination or moving to a different destination.

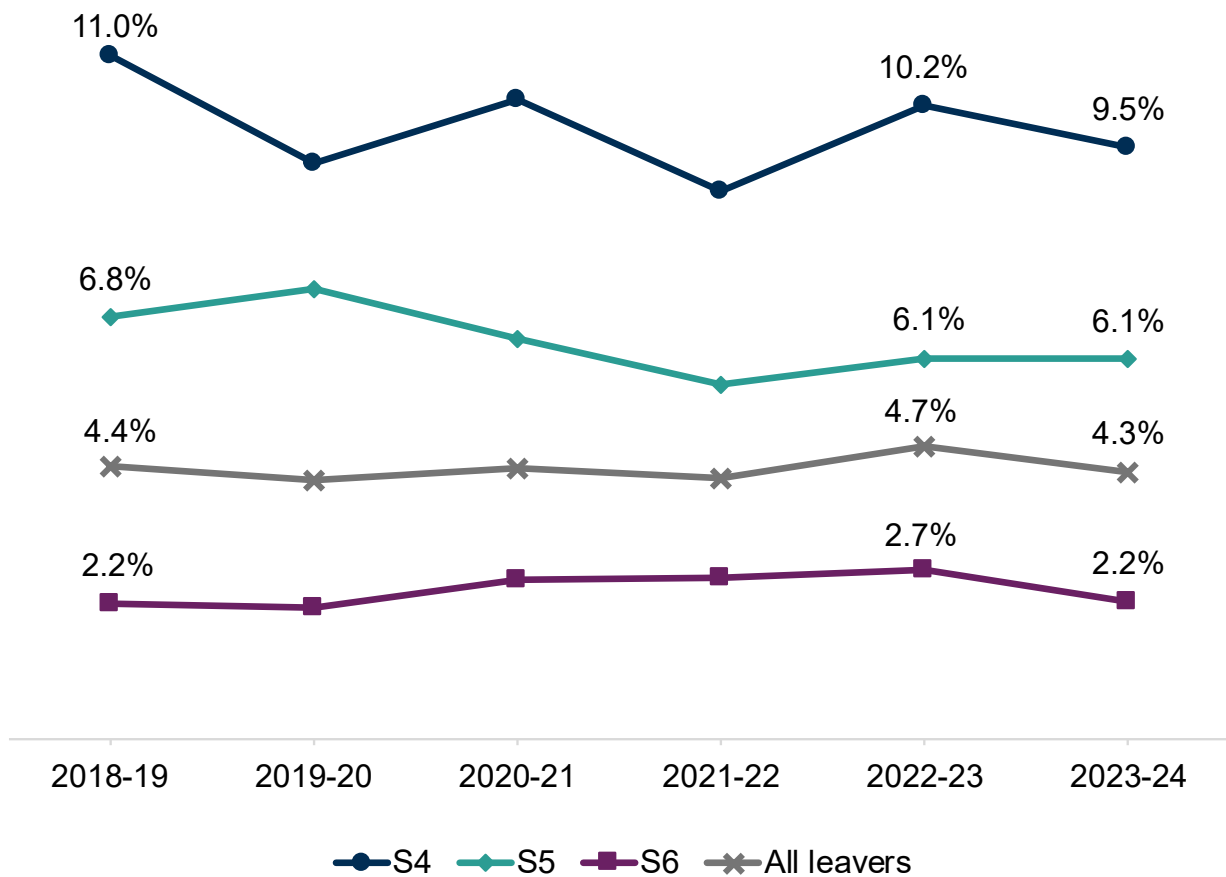
Section 3.3 Leavers staying in the same destination or changing destination, by the stage in which they left school

School leavers from S4 were more likely to move from a positive destination to an 'other' destination between initial and follow-up than school leavers from S5 or S6. This holds for each year since 2009-10. [Supplementary Table](#) 4 provides more information on the movement of school leavers between destination types by stage of leaving.

S6 leavers were the least likely to leave a positive destination and move into an 'other' destination between initial and follow-up.

Chart 9: S4 leavers are more likely to move from a positive initial destination to an 'other' follow-up destination than leavers from S5 or S6

Percentage of leavers in a positive initial destination who moved to an 'other' follow-up destination 2018-19 to 2023-24

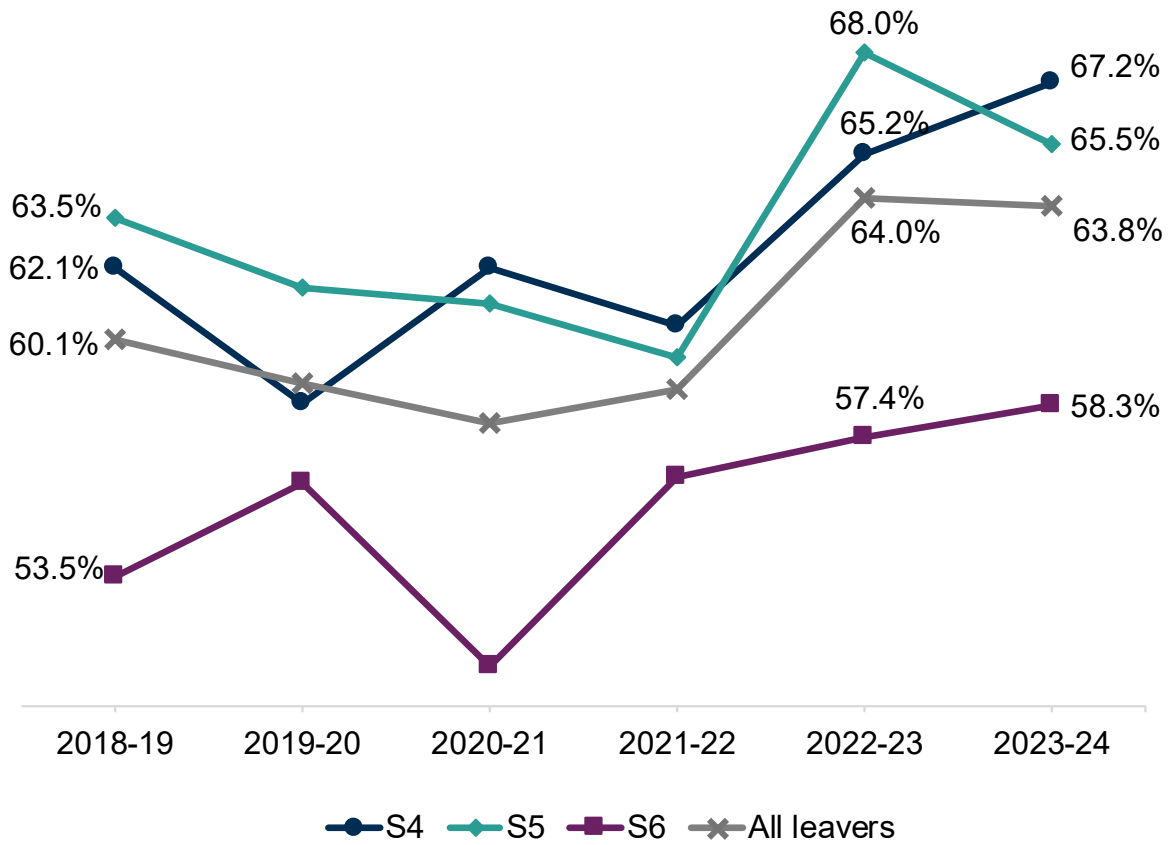


S4 and S5 leavers who were in an 'other' initial destination were more likely to still be in an 'other' destination at follow-up than S6 leavers. This has been the case in every year since 2018-19.

Between 2022-23 and 2023-24, the percentage of leavers who remained in an 'other' destination between initial and follow-up increased for leavers from S4 and S6 but decreased for S5 leavers.

Chart 10: S4 and S5 leavers are more likely to remain in an 'other' destination than S6 leavers

Percentage of leavers in an 'other' initial destination who remained in an 'other' follow-up destination 2018-19 to 2023-24



Glossary

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.

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 2023-24 data. For more information see [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2020](#).

School leaver destination categories used in this publication

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. 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 section 4.1 of the [June 2020 release of this publication](#).

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; and stage of leaving. 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.

Other publications related to the activities of school leavers and young people include:

1. Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations.

- Available from the [Scottish Government](#), February.
- Provides information on the attainment of school leavers and on the activities of **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 (this publication).

- Available from the [Scottish Government](#), June.
- Provides information on the activities of **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.

Data and methodology

Full details of the methodology, data sources and other notes on the data can be found in the [School Leaver Follow-up Destinations - Methodology and Data Sources 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

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