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A National Statistics publication for Scotland

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Summary Statistics for Follow-Up Leaver Destinations, No. 4: 2022 Edition

14th June 2022

This annual National Statistics publication:

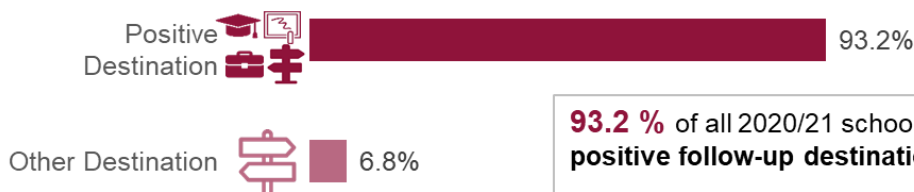
- Provides information on the **follow-up destinations** of school leavers in Scotland.
- Covers all **2020/21 school leavers** from publicly funded mainstream schools.

Follow-up destinations relate to outcomes approximately nine months after the end of the school year and the figures for the 2020/21 school leaver cohort relate to statuses recorded as at April 2022. It is likely that the **coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic** will have continued to affect the destination choices made by, and opportunities available to, some school leavers in 2020/21. Further information can be found in section 1.1.

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



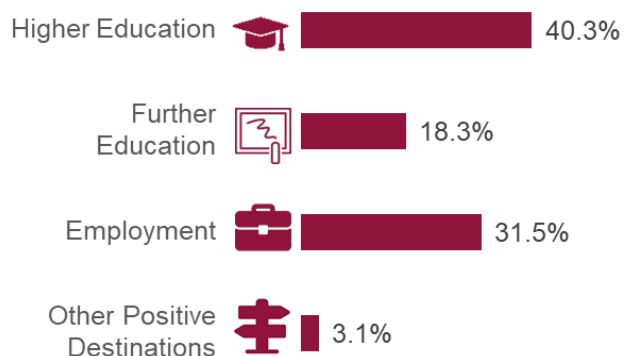
► The percentage of school leavers in positive destinations and other destinations.



93.2 % of all 2020/21 school leavers were in a **positive follow-up destination**.

▲ up from **92.2%** in 2019/20.

► The percentage of school leavers in each positive destination.



40.3% of 2020/21 leavers were in **Higher Education**.

▼ down from **42.9%** in 2019/20

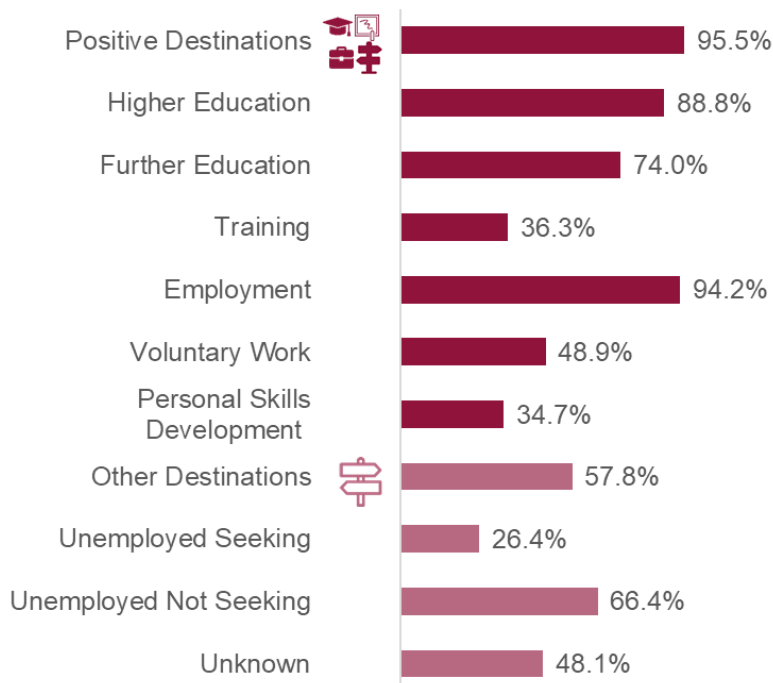
18.3% of the 2020/21 leavers were in **Further Education**.

▼ down from **23.6%** in 2019/20

31.5% of 2020/21 leavers were in **Employment**.

▲ up from **21.3%** in 2019/20

► The percentage of school leavers whose follow-up destination was the **same** as their initial destination.



In 2020/21, **95.5%** of leavers in a **positive initial destination were also in a positive follow-up destination**. This includes leavers in the same destination or in a different positive destination.

Employment was the most sustained destination category. **94.2%** of leavers whose initial destination was Employment were also in Employment for their follow-up destination – although leavers may have changed their employer or type of employment during this time.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

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

The statistics presented here relate to pupils who left school during or at the end of the 2020/21 school year, and their destinations approximately nine months after the end of the school year (April 2022). Destinations figures may reflect both the choices made by pupils, and the opportunities available to them upon leaving school. It is likely that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic will have continued to affect the choices made by, and opportunities available to, some 2020/21 school leavers.

In addition to possible ongoing direct impacts on the availability of some opportunities (for example employment), the approaches taken to the certification of SQA qualifications in 2020 and 2021 will have affected the attainment of some school leavers. This may in turn have affected the choices and opportunities available to them. More information is available in [section 1.1.2 of the Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No.4: 2022 Edition](#).

Similarly, the pandemic may have influenced pupils' decisions on when to leave school (for example, delaying leaving from 2019/20 to 2020/21). Analysis of the 2019/20 and 2020/21 initial leaver numbers, and leavers per stage, indicated that some S4 and S5 pupils who might typically have been expected to leave school in 2019/20 instead decided to stay on, possibly for reasons related to the pandemic. Many of these pupils will instead have left as S5 or S6 leavers in 2020/21. Pupils who chose to spend an additional year at school will have had opportunities to gain more qualifications, and/or to gain qualifications at a higher level, than had they left at the end of the 2019/20 school year. This could have affected the attainment of some leavers, which may in turn have affected the choices and opportunities available to them. (More information is available in [chapter 2 of the Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No.4: 2022 Edition](#)).

The impacts of the pandemic on school leaver destinations should be kept in mind when making comparisons between 2020/21 and 2019/20, and when comparing with earlier years.

How can I use School Leaver Destination figures?

Do not use School Leaver Destination figures:

- X Without considering the impact that COVID-19 may have had on the availability of particular opportunities, on pupils' attainment and on their decisions on when to leave school.

Do use School Leaver Destination figures:

- ✓ As an accurate reflection of school leavers' (follow-up) destinations.
- ✓ To compare the destinations of different groups of 2020/21 school leavers.
- ✓ To make comparisons over time of the destinations of school leavers – while bearing in mind the impacts of COVID-19.

1.2 School leaver follow-up destinations

This publication provides information on the **follow-up destinations** of **2020/21 school leavers**. It relates to outcomes approximately nine months after the end of the school year (the first Monday in April 2022).

A separate publication – [‘Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations’](#) – published in February 2022, provided information on the initial destinations of 2020/21 school leavers approximately three months after the end of the school year (the first Monday in October 2021).

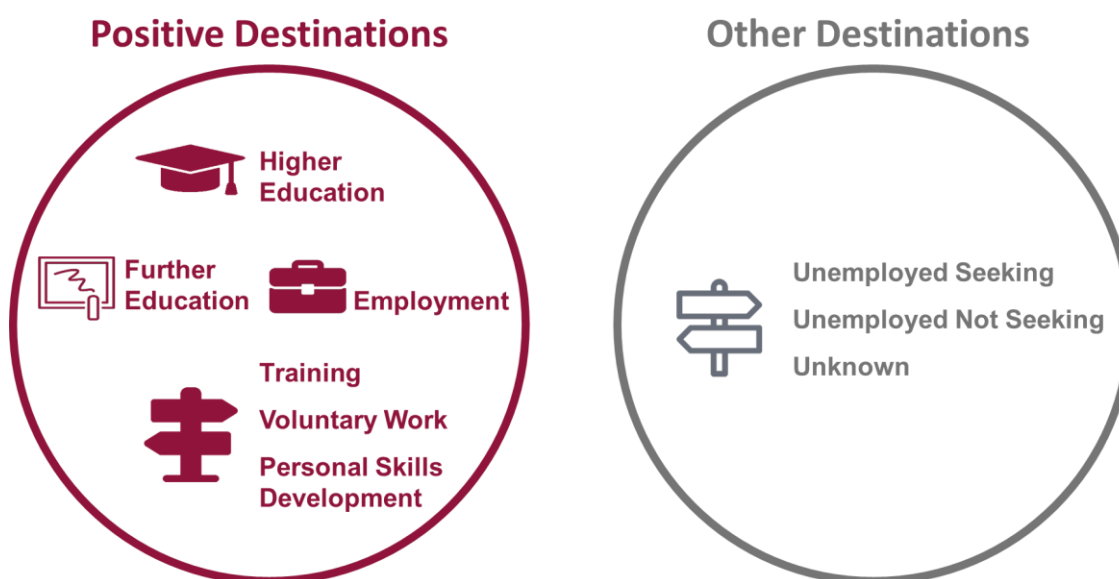
School leaver destinations data is based on the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) ‘Opportunities for All’ shared dataset, matched with [pupil census records for the school year 2020/21](#).

A school leaver is defined as a young person of school leaving age, who left school during or at the end of the school year. For 2020/21 school leavers, the year considered is 16th September 2020 to 14th September 2021. For more information on how this data is collected, see sections 4.3 and 4.4.

This publication covers school leavers from **all stages** of secondary school. For most young people, S4 (≈15-16 year olds) is the last compulsory year of school, but the majority choose to stay on and complete S5 (≈16-17 year olds) and S6 (≈17-18 year olds). (Pupil ages per stage are approximate; more information is available from [the Pupil Census supplementary tables](#)).

Figures in this publication are based on pupils in **publicly funded mainstream schools**, in the 32 local authorities and one grant aided school.

Destinations are grouped in the following categories:



Chapter 2: School leaver follow-up destinations

- **93.2 per cent** of 2020/21 school leavers were in a **positive follow-up destination** (an increase from 92.2 per cent in 2019/20).
- **40.3 per cent** of school leavers were in **Higher Education** (the most common follow-up destination).
- **31.5 per cent** of school leavers were in **Employment** (the highest proportion since consistent records began in 2009/10).
- The percentage of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination **increased** in 2020/21 for leavers from **both the (20%) most deprived and (20%) least deprived areas** compared to 2019/20.
- The **gap** between the two groups **decreased** from 8.3 percentage points in 2019/20 to **7.5 percentage points in 2020/21 – the lowest it has been** since consistent records began in 2009/10.

As described in section 1.1, the 2019/20 and 2020/21 figures on school leavers' follow-up destinations will be impacted by the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). The pandemic will have affected the choices made by, and opportunities available to, leavers in these years.

Particular care should therefore be taken when interpreting changes between 2019/20, 2020/21, and other years. The pandemic will have been at least partly responsible for the relatively low proportion of 2019/20 school leavers in a positive follow-up destination compared to other recent years.

2.1 Destinations

Table 1 shows that 93.2 per cent of all 2020/21 school leavers were in a positive follow-up destination. This was higher than for 2019/20 leavers (92.2 per cent), and just below the highest value seen since consistent records began in 2009/10 (93.3 per cent, in 2017/18).

Table 1 also shows that 40.3 per cent of 2020/21 leavers were in Higher Education – the most common follow-up destination. This was lower than for 2019/20 leavers (42.9 per cent) but higher than for all previous years (2009/10 to 2018/19).

The percentage of school leavers in Further Education decreased from 23.6 per cent of leavers in 2019/20 to 18.3 per cent of leavers in 2020/21. This is the lowest value since 2009/10. The same pattern was seen in the [initial destinations of 2020/21 school leavers](#).

The percentage of school leavers in Employment has increased substantially in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20. This follows a large drop between 2018/19 and 2019/20, likely reflecting the impact of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). It increased from 21.3 per cent of 2019/20 leavers (a record low since 2009/10) to 31.5 per cent in 2020/21 – a record high.

The percentage of school leavers who were Unemployed (Unemployed Seeking or Unemployed Not Seeking) has decreased from 6.8 per cent of 2019/20 leavers to 5.7 per cent of 2020/21 leavers.

Table 1: Percentage of school leavers by follow-up destination category, 2015/16 to 2020/21 [note 1][note 2][note 3]

Destination	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Higher Education	37.3	38.3	39.0	38.4	42.9	40.3
Further Education	22.4	23.0	22.6	23.3	23.6	18.3
Training	1.5	1.5	1.6	2.3	3.2	2.3
Employment	28.7	28.3	28.3	28.0	21.3	31.5
Voluntary Work	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.4
Activity Agreement	0.9	1.0	0.9	[z]	[z]	[z]
Personal Skills Development	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.8	0.4
Positive Destinations	91.6	93.1	93.3	92.9	92.2	93.2
Unemployed Seeking	5.7	4.3	3.8	3.5	4.1	3.3
Unemployed Not Seeking	1.8	1.8	1.8	2.3	2.7	2.4
Unknown	0.9	0.7	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.0
Other Destinations	8.4	6.9	6.7	7.1	7.8	6.8
Number of Leavers	52,113	51,172	49,650	49,655	47,351	50,649

Note 1: For 2018/19 onwards, support previously recorded as Activity Agreements is recorded in the Training category. For more information see section 4.6.

Note 2: Data back to 2009/10 is available in the [supplementary tables](#).

Note 3: The 'Unknown' status in 2018/19 and 2019/20 may be affected by local partnerships' ability to track school leavers through home visits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

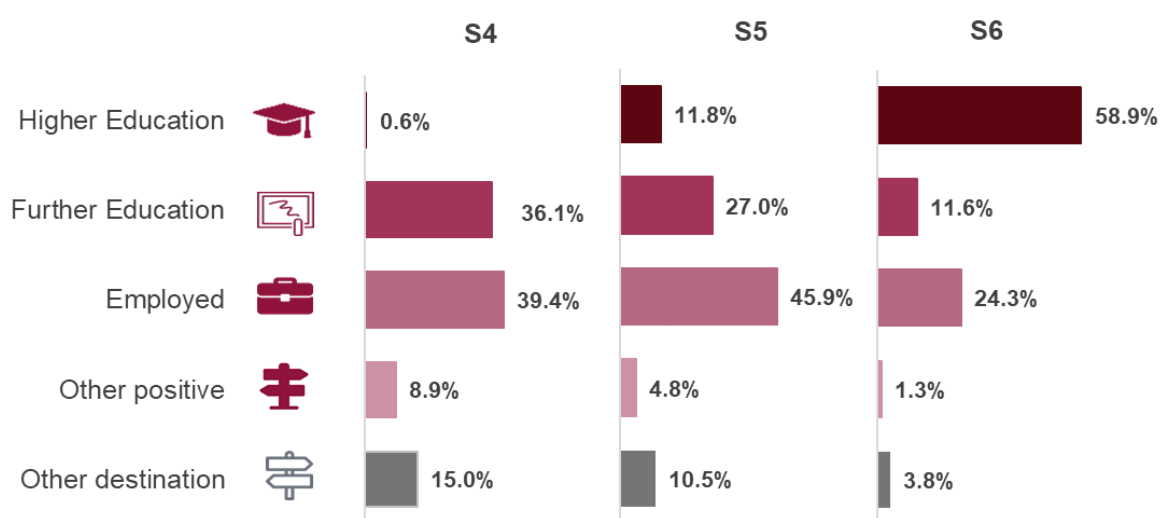
2.2 Destinations by stage

The follow-up destinations of 2020/21 school leavers by stage of leaving (Chart 1) shows:

- the majority of **S6 leavers** were in **Higher Education** (58.9 per cent);
- the most common follow-up destination for **S5 leavers** was **Employment** (45.9 per cent) followed by Further Education (27.0 per cent);
- the most common destination for **S4 leavers** was **Employment** (39.4 per cent) followed by Further Education (36.1 per cent).

In previous years, the most common follow-up destination for S4 leavers has been Further Education. In 2020/21 this has changed to Employment.

Chart 1. Follow-up destination of leavers by stage of leaving, 2020/21 [note 4][note 5][note 6]



Note 4: Other positive includes Personal Skills Development, Training and Voluntary Work.

Note 5: Other destinations include Unemployed Seeking, Unemployed Not Seeking and Unknown.

Note 6: A small percentage of school leavers left in other stages not shown in this graph. For more information, see the [supplementary tables](#). A list of these tables is available in section 4.11.

A breakdown of the number of school leavers by stage is available in Tables C1.1a & C1.1b of the [supplementary tables](#). The 2020/21 follow-up leaver cohort was larger than the 2019/20 follow-up leaver cohort (50,649 in 2020/21, up from 47,351 in 2019/20) and had a larger proportion of S6 leavers (63.2 per cent, up from 62.8 per cent). This may have been caused by some S4 and S5 pupils who might typically have left in 2019/20 choosing to stay in school for an extra year, possibly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information is available in section 1.1.

A small number of school leavers identified in the initial leaver cohort are excluded from the follow-up leaver cohort. Further information is available in section 4.4.

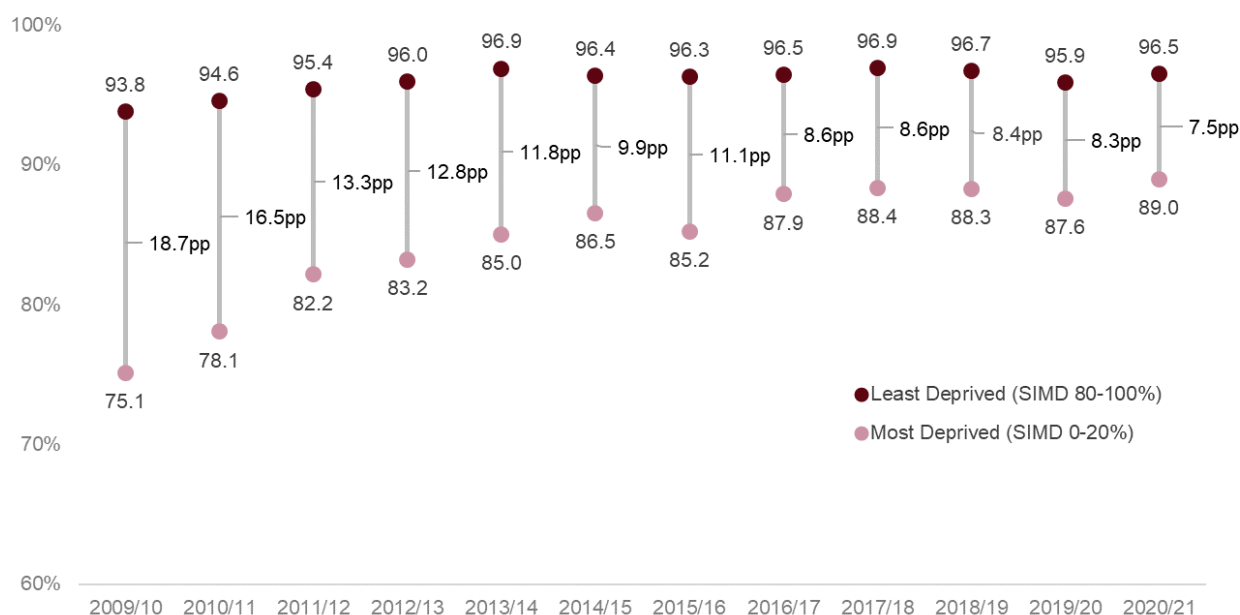
2.3 Destinations by deprivation

Chart 2 shows that the percentage of 2020/21 school leavers in a positive follow-up destination has increased compared to 2019/20, for leavers from both the **most deprived** and **least deprived areas** (assessed using the **Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)** – more information in section 4.5).

The deprivation gap between the two groups has reduced from 8.3 percentage points in 2019/20 to 7.5 percentage points in 2020/21. The percentage of leavers in a positive follow-up destination increased more among leavers from the most deprived areas (a 1.4 percentage point increase between 2019/20 and 2020/21) than among those from the least deprived areas (a 0.6 percentage point increase).

The deprivation gap between leavers from the most and least deprived areas is now the smallest it has been since consistent records began in 2009/10.

Chart 2. Percentage of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination, by SIMD, 2009/10 to 2020/21 [note 7][note 8]



Note 7: pp = percentage point difference between most and least deprived SIMD quintiles.

Note 8: Based on SIMD 2009 for 2009/10 and 2010/11, SIMD 2012 for 2011/12 to 2015/16, SIMD 2016 for 2016/17 to 2019/20, and SIMD 2020 for 2020/21. More information can be found on the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 webpage](#).

Table 2 provides a breakdown of follow-up school leaver destinations by SIMD.

In 2020/21, the most common follow-up destination for leavers from the least deprived areas was Higher Education, at 59.7 per cent. Leavers from the least deprived areas were more likely to be in Higher Education than leavers from other areas.

The most common destination for leavers from the most deprived areas was Employment, at 31.9 per cent. Leavers from the most deprived areas were more likely to be in Further Education, Training or Personal Skills Development than leavers from other areas.

Among leavers from the most deprived areas, 9.7 per cent were Unemployed (Unemployed Seeking and Unemployed Not Seeking). This compares to 2.8 per cent of leavers from the least deprived areas.

Table 2: Percentage of school leavers by follow-up destination category by SIMD, 2020/21 [note 9][note 10]

Follow-up Destination	0-20% (Most Deprived)	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100% (Least Deprived)	Percentage point gap	Total
Higher Education	25.3	32.0	38.9	47.0	59.7	34.4	40.3
Further Education	26.4	21.7	17.6	14.8	10.3	-16.0	18.3
Training	4.4	3.0	1.9	1.4	0.8	-3.6	2.3
Employment	31.9	33.8	35.3	31.6	25.2	-6.7	31.5
Voluntary Work	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.4
Personal Skills Development	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.2	-0.5	0.4
Positive Destinations	89.0	91.4	94.3	95.4	96.5	7.5	93.2
Unemployed Seeking	5.8	4.4	2.8	1.9	1.5	-4.3	3.3
Unemployed Not Seeking	3.9	3.0	1.9	1.8	1.3	-2.6	2.4
Unknown	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.7	-0.7	1.0
Other Destinations	11.0	8.6	5.7	4.6	3.5	-7.5	6.8
Number of Leavers	10,894	9,862	9,729	10,295	9,869		50,649

Note 9: Based on SIMD 2020. More information can be found on the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 webpage](#).

Note 10: The percentage point gap measures the difference between leavers from the 20% most deprived and 20% least deprived areas.

The time series of destinations by SIMD (available in the [supplementary tables](#)) can be used to help understand what has caused the gap in total positive destinations between school leavers from the most and least deprived areas to narrow between 2019/20 and 2020/21.

The proportion of school leavers who were in Employment increased across all SIMD groups between 2019/20 and 2020/21. However, the increase was greater amongst leavers from the 20% most deprived areas than amongst leavers from the 20% least deprived areas. Among leavers from the most deprived areas, it rose from 20.5 per cent in Employment in 2019/20 to 31.9 per cent in 2020/21, an increase of 11.4 percentage points. Among leavers from the least deprived areas, it rose from 17.4 per cent to 25.2 per cent, an increase of 7.8 percentage points.

The proportion of school leavers in Higher Education decreased amongst leavers from all SIMD groups between 2019/20 and 2020/21. However the size of this decrease was greater amongst those in the least deprived areas than it was amongst those in the most deprived areas. Among leavers from the least deprived areas, it fell from 62.6 per cent in Higher Education in 2019/20 to 59.7 per cent in 2020/21, a decrease of 2.9 percentage points. Among leavers from the most deprived areas, it fell from 27.0 per cent to 25.3 per cent, a decrease of 1.7 percentage points.

Together these changes help to explain why the percentage of leavers in all positive destinations increased more amongst leavers from the most deprived areas than the least deprived areas, which has led to the gap between the two groups narrowing.

The pattern observed in Further Education was different. The proportion of school leavers in Further Education decreased amongst all SIMD quintiles between 2019/20 and 2020/21. But the decrease was greater amongst those from the most deprived areas than it was amongst those from the least deprived areas.

A full list of the [supplementary tables](#) is available in section 4.11.

2.4 Destinations by pupil characteristics

Table 3 shows the percentage of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination by various characteristics. The percentage of 2020/21 school leavers in positive follow-up destinations has increased for most groups, compared to 2019/20.

Females are more likely to be in a positive follow-up destination than males. For 2020/21 leavers, 93.8 per cent of female leavers were in a positive follow-up destination, compared to 92.6 per cent of males. This is the same pattern seen in previous years. However the percentage of leavers in a positive destination increased more between 2019/20 and 2020/21 for males than for females.

Pupils of an Asian ethnic background, or an African/Black/Caribbean ethnic background, tend to be more likely to go on to a positive follow-up destination than those from other ethnic backgrounds. In 2020/21, 96.6 per cent of leavers from an African/Black/Caribbean ethnic background, and 95.5 per cent of leavers from an Asian – Pakistani and Asian – Other ethnic background were in a positive destination. Compared to 2019/20, the percentage in a positive follow-up destination increased across leavers from most ethnic groups, but not all. It decreased slightly among leavers from some minority ethnic groups, including Asian – Pakistani and 'All Other Categories'. However, the total numbers of leavers in these categories (in particular 'All Other Categories') are relatively small, which can lead to the percentage in a positive destination fluctuating year-on-year.

In 2020/21, Other Urban Areas had the lowest proportion of leavers in positive destinations (92.3 per cent). Remote Rural areas continued to have the highest (95.4 per cent). Leavers from Remote Small Towns saw the biggest increase in leavers in a positive follow-up destination compared to 2019/20.

School leavers in 2020/21 with an Additional Support Need (ASN) were less likely to go on to a positive follow-up destination than leavers without a recorded ASN (89.2 per cent compared to 95.5 per cent). This is the same pattern as seen in previous years. However the percentage of leavers in a positive destination increased more between 2019/20 and 2020/21 for leavers with an ASN than for those without.

More information on destinations by pupil characteristics is available in the [supplementary tables](#). A list of these tables is available in section 4.11.

Table 3: Percentage of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination, by pupil characteristic, 2015/16 to 2020/21 [note 11][note 12][note 13]

Pupil Characteristic	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Sex						
Male	90.9	92.4	92.4	92.1	90.9	92.6
Female	92.3	94.0	94.3	93.7	93.6	93.8
Ethnicity						
White - Scottish	91.5	93.0	93.2	92.7	92.0	93.1
White - non-Scottish	92.8	93.9	94.2	93.5	92.3	93.2
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	93.0	92.7	93.6	92.8	91.7	94.7
Asian - Indian	96.9	[c]	97.2	94.4	95.4	[c]
Asian - Pakistani	92.5	95.7	93.5	94.8	95.6	95.5
Asian - Chinese	95.9	[c]	96.8	[c]	[c]	[c]
Asian - Other	95.1	95.3	93.9	[c]	[c]	95.5
African/ Black/ Caribbean	92.3	93.9	96.0	94.1	95.1	96.6
All other categories	88.4	94.5	92.0	93.6	93.3	92.6
Not Disclosed/Not known	88.8	90.7	89.8	88.9	90.2	91.6
Urban/Rural						
Large Urban Areas	90.2	92.4	92.4	92.4	92.2	93.2
Other Urban Areas	91.6	92.4	92.9	92.1	91.4	92.3
Accessible Small Towns	93.6	93.3	93.7	93.7	93.0	93.8
Remote Small Towns	93.3	94.6	94.8	93.6	91.1	93.1
Accessible Rural	92.4	95.2	95.1	94.5	93.7	94.7
Remote Rural	93.2	96.4	95.9	94.6	93.8	95.4
Additional Support Needs						
ASN	85.2	87.7	88.4	87.9	87.2	89.2
No ASN	93.5	95.0	95.3	95.1	94.9	95.5
All Leavers	91.6	93.1	93.3	92.9	92.2	93.2

Note 11: Some categories have been grouped together due to small numbers. Some categories contain between 100-200 leavers and may be subject to fluctuation.

Comparisons between groups should take this into account.

Note 12: The 'African/ Black/ Caribbean' category includes 'African', 'African - Other', and the 'Caribbean or Black' categories. 'All other categories' includes 'Other - other' and 'Other - Arab'.

Note 13: Additional Support Needs (ASN): pupils who have a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP), Individualised Education Programme (IEP), Child's Plan, are assessed or declared disabled, or have another need. See section 4.9 for more information.

Chapter 3: Initial to follow-up destination comparison

- **95.5 per cent** of 2020/21 school leavers who were in a positive initial destination were also in a **positive follow-up destination**.

A school leaver's follow-up destination, nine months after they leave school, may differ from their initial destination, three months after they leave school. Information on the [initial destinations of 2020/21 school leavers](#) was published in February 2022.

Chart 3 compares 2020/21 school leaver initial destination rates (3 months after leaving school) with follow-up destination rates (9 months after leaving school).

The possible effects of the COVID-19 pandemic should be considered when comparing initial and follow-up destinations for 2020/21 leavers – see sections 1.1 and 4.2. Caution should also be used when comparing patterns seen in 2020/21 leaver statistics to those of 2019/20 leavers, and when comparing either of those cohorts to previous years.

The percentage of 2020/21 school leavers in a positive follow-up destination (93.2 per cent) was lower than the percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination (95.5 per cent). The same pattern can be seen across all previous school leaver cohorts since consistent records began in 2009/10.

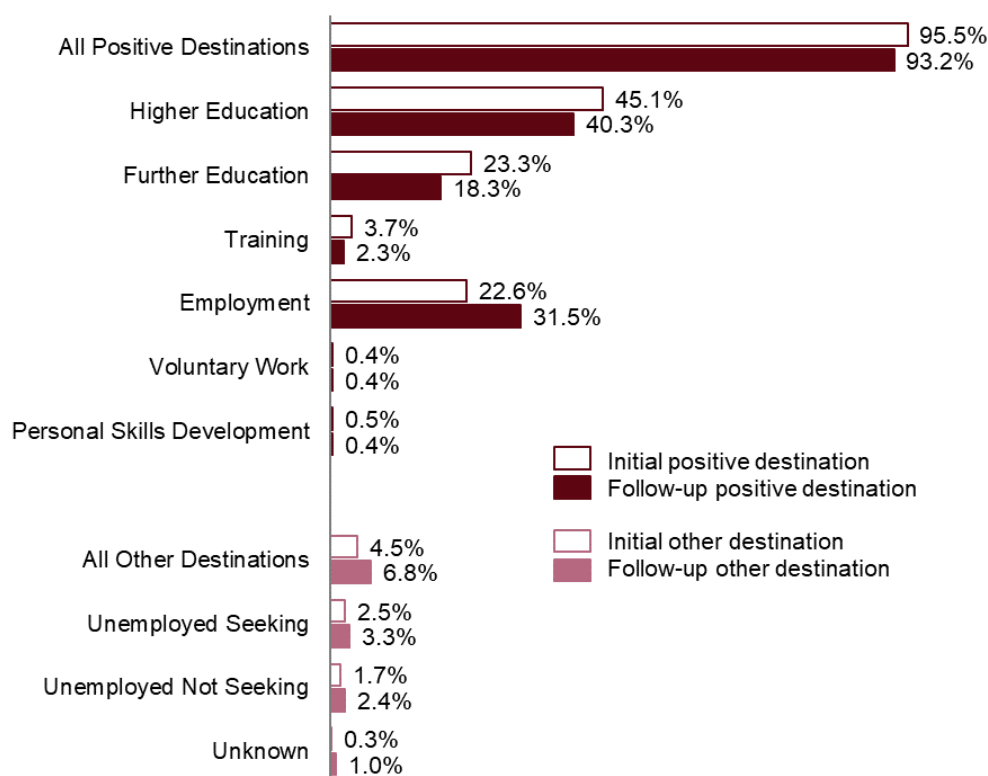
The largest reductions between initial and follow-up destinations were in Further Education and Higher Education. The percentage of leavers in these destinations decreased by 5.0 and 4.8 percentage points, respectively. Analysis of leavers changing destinations (available in Table L1.8 of the [supplementary tables](#)) shows that the most common follow-up destination for those leaving Higher and Further Education was Employment.

The largest increase between initial destination and follow-up destination was in Employment. The proportion of leavers in this destination increased by 9.0 percentage points between initial destination and follow-up destination.

The proportion of leavers in Other destinations (see section 1.2) increased by 2.2 percentage points between initial and follow-up destinations. The percentage of Unemployed Seeking increased by 0.8 percentage points.

A time series of initial and follow-up destinations is available in the [supplementary tables](#). A list of these tables is available in section 4.11.

Chart 3: Percentage of school leavers by initial and follow-up destination category, 2020/21 [note 14]



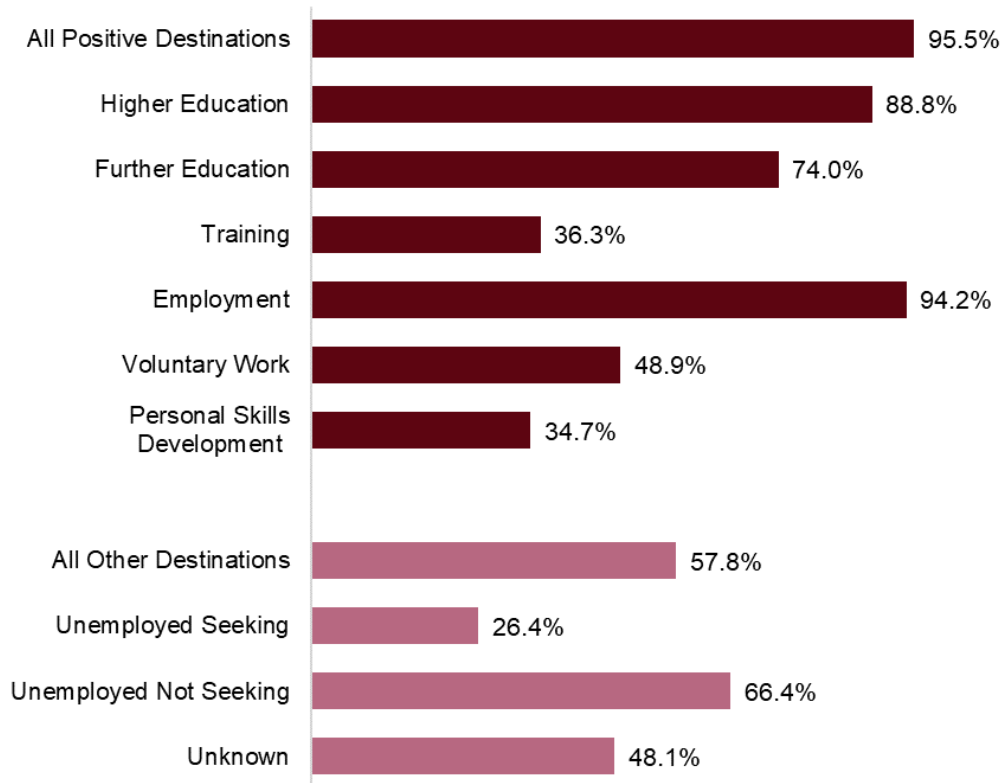
Note 14: Bars in chart 3 which are white on the inside with a coloured outline show data on initial destinations of leavers. Bars which are a solid colour show data on follow-up destinations. The darker colour (used in the top portion of the chart) shows positive destinations, while the lighter colour (used in the lower portion) shows other destinations.

Chart 4 shows the percentage of school leavers whose follow-up destination was the same as their initial destination. In 2020/21, 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 to another positive destination. The positive destination in which school leavers were most likely to remain between initial and follow-up was Employment, at 94.2 per cent; followed by Higher Education at 88.8 per cent. This differs from 2019/20 when Higher Education was the positive destination leavers were most likely to remain in (96.0 per cent).

School leavers whose initial destination was Personal Skills Development or Training were less likely to remain in the same destination. This may be due, in part, to the fact that some of these activities are short-term in nature (see section 4.6). Table L1.8 in the [supplementary tables](#) shows that for those leaving Training, the most common follow-up destination was Employment. For those leaving Personal Skills Development, the most common follow-up destination was Training.

More information on school leavers who sustained a destination or moved into another destination category is available in the [supplementary tables](#). A list of these tables is available in section 4.11.

Chart 4: Percentage of school leavers whose follow-up destination was the same as their initial destination, 2020/21



Chapter 4: Background notes

4.1 National Statistics publication

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

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

4.2 Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The statistics in this report are based on data held on the SDS 'Opportunities for All' shared dataset. They provide information on school leavers' latest destination status recorded as at Monday, 4th April 2022 and extracted from the dataset in early May 2022 (see section 4.4).

Destinations figures reflect both choices made by pupils, and the opportunities available to them on leaving school. The availability of particular opportunities to school leavers (for example, employment opportunities) may have been directly affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The initial and follow-up destinations of 2019/20 school leavers are most likely to have been affected by COVID-19. However the destinations of 2020/21 leavers may also be affected.

For 2019/20 school leavers, the start dates for some opportunities such as apprenticeship programmes, college courses etc. were delayed, leading to a direct impact on the initial and follow-up destinations recorded for some pupils. The pandemic may also have affected local partnerships' ability to track some school leavers through home visits. Where 2018/19 and 2019/20 school leavers were in employment and on the UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ("Furlough scheme") in April 2020, October 2020 or April 2021, they were recorded as being in Employment in initial and/or follow-up destinations statistics.

For 2020/21 school leavers these issues are not thought to have affected follow-up destinations data. However, it is likely that the pandemic will have continued to affect the choices made by, and opportunities available to, some school leavers.

In addition to possible ongoing direct impacts on the availability of some opportunities, the approaches taken to the certification of SQA qualifications in 2020 and 2021 will have affected the attainment of some school leavers in 2019/20 and 2020/21. The pandemic may also have influenced some pupils' decisions on when to leave school (for example, delaying leaving from 2019/20 to 2020/21). Together these factors could have affected the attainment of some school leavers, which may in turn have affected the destination choices and opportunities available to them.

For all these reasons, caution should be used when comparing statistics on follow-up destinations for 2020/21 school leavers to those for 2019/20 school leavers, and when comparing statistics on either of those leaver cohorts to previous years. The possible effects of the COVID-19 pandemic should also be considered when comparing initial and follow-up destinations for the two cohorts.

4.3 Sources and quality assurance

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

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) aim to validate statuses of the school leaver cohort using a combination of data received through data sharing, ongoing case management of customers and direct follow up of customers by staff in SDS centres and their local contact centre. Most statuses are confirmed throughout March and April. In some cases, it is not possible to confirm a status, in which case latest status recorded is used. This is particularly the case for the employment category which is more reliant on manual data collection by SDS staff as SDS does not currently have any regular administrative data feed of employment information. SDS is currently engaging with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to establish a robust source of employment data.

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

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

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

4.4 Methodology

A pupil is counted as a school leaver if they have a leaver record on the 'Opportunities for All' shared data set, a pupil census record for the same academic year, and no pupil census record in the following academic year. School leavers do not include pupils who transferred to another school or moved outwith Scotland.

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

Further, a relatively small number of school leavers identified in the initial leaver cohort are not included in the follow-up leaver cohort. This is typically where the individual has been identified as having moved outwith Scotland, as having returned to school or, in rare circumstances, having deceased. In 2020/21, 97 school leavers identified in the initial cohort were not included in the follow-up leaver cohort.

The follow-up destination statistics in this publication only relate to leavers from mainstream schools. They do not include data on destinations of leavers from special schools.

4.5 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Scotland. The SIMD ranks small geographical areas – called data zones - from most deprived (ranked 1) to least deprived (ranked 6,976). The data zones can then be grouped into five quintiles, covering the 20% most deprived areas to the 20% least deprived areas.

In this publication, the SIMD is used to assess how the destinations of school leavers differ based on the level of deprivation in their home (or school) area. Pupils are assigned to an SIMD quintile based on the data zone recorded for their home address in the Scottish Government's pupil census. If the pupil does not have a data zone recorded in the pupil census data, the data zone of the pupil's school is used.

The SIMD is updated periodically (typically every three or four years) and therefore the SIMD used in these statistics is also updated in line with this to ensure that the most appropriate version is used. For example, SIMD 2016 was first used for 2016/17 school leavers and, in line with this, for the 2020/21 school leavers covered by this report, SIMD 2020 has been used for the first time.

4.6 Definitions

Leaver destinations are categorised by 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 HND (Higher National Diploma) or HNC (Higher National Certificate) 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 education which is not higher education and who are no longer on a school roll. This may include National Qualifications.

Training: includes leavers who are on a training course and in receipt of an allowance or grant, such as the Employability Fund national training programme. It also includes leavers who are on local authority or third sector funded training programmes who 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 proportion of 2018/19 school leavers with a destination category of Training cannot be directly compared to the proportion recorded for previous years. Further information can be found in the Activity Agreements definition below.

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

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

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

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

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

The way in which school leavers undertaking Personal Skills Development are counted in these statistics changed in 2018/19 and data for previous years was revised to allow

consistent comparisons over time. Further information can be found in section 4.1 of the [June 2020 release of this publication](#).

Activity Agreements: prior to 2018/19 this included leavers 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'¹ means that although local authorities will provide the same type of support and opportunities for young people, this activity will no longer be funded under the banner of 'Activity Agreements'. This means it is no longer appropriate to record school leavers receiving this support using this category. Instead they are recorded in the Training category for 2018/19 onwards. Note that data for earlier years continues to include the Activity Agreements category, reflecting the support that was available at the time. This means that the proportion of school leavers recorded in the Training category from 2018/19 onwards is not directly comparable with the proportion recorded in this category prior to 2018/19.

Unemployed Seeking: includes those known by SDS or their partners to be seeking employment or training. This includes those receiving support from SDS, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) 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 DWP 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.

4.7 Rounding

Figures used in the commentary of this report are based on the unrounded data which can be found in the [supplementary tables](#). This means that they may not always match with figures that are derived using the rounded data displayed in tables and charts.

4.8 Symbols

The following symbols are 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%

pp = percentage point difference

¹ 'No One Left Behind: review of employability services' set out the steps to be taken to deliver more effective and joined-up employability support across Scotland. As part of it, the funding streams associated with Activity Agreements and other programmes were integrated into a new local employability delivery model, managed collaboratively between Scottish Government and Local Government from April 2019.

4.9 Additional Support Needs

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

4.10 UK comparisons

The information presented here is for young people who have left school in Scotland. In England and Wales information is also collected on school leaver destinations, but these statistics are not directly comparable as they use different methodology. For example, the Scotland follow-up figures use a snapshot of status as at April, while figures for England and Wales consider the sustained destination over a six-month period (October – March). Information is also collected in England and Wales on participation of 16-18 year olds in education, employment or training at a snapshot in time. However these figures include all young people of ages 16-18 irrespective of whether they were a school leaver or not. As a result direct comparisons cannot be made. Additionally, in Northern Ireland (NI), statistics are published on destinations of school leavers, but due to differences in methodology direct comparisons cannot be made. For example, the NI destinations collection is based on a survey of destinations manually inputted by schools. The timing of the collections is also different: NI destinations are as at November/December, compared to April for follow-up destination statistics in Scotland.

4.11 List of supplementary tables

Additional tables on follow-up leaver destinations are available in the [supplementary tables](#). These tables on school leaver follow-up destinations include breakdowns by: characteristics of leavers; local authority; reason(s) for additional support needs; and stage of leaving. Table A1.1 shows attainment by follow-up destination category. Information on school leaver attainment and how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic affects these statistics is available in [‘Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 4: 2022 Edition’ \(chapter 1\)](#).

School Leaver Follow-up Destinations, Supplementary tables:

- Tables C1.1a and C1.1b: Number and percentage of follow-up school leavers by stage of leaving, 2009/10 to 2020/21
- Tables L1.1a and L1.1b. Percentage of school leavers by initial destination category (1992/93 to 2020/21) and follow-up destination category (2006/07 to 2020/21)
- Table L1.2. Percentage of school leavers by follow-up destination category and sex, 2009/10 to 2020/21
- Table L1.3. Percentage of school leavers by follow-up destination category and 6-fold Urban Rural classification of school, 2009/10 to 2020/21
- Table L1.4. Percentage of school leavers by follow-up destination category and Additional Support Need, 2009/10 to 2020/21
- Table L1.5. Percentage of school leavers by follow-up destination category and ethnic background, 2009/10 to 2020/21
- Table L1.6. Percentage of school leavers by follow-up destination category and national identity, 2009/10 to 2020/21

- Table L1.7. Percentage of school leavers by follow-up destination category and whether declared or assessed disabled, 2009/10, 2014/15 to 2020/21
- Table L1.8. Percentage of school leavers who sustained a destination or moved into another destination category, 2009/10 to 2020/21
- Table L2.1. Percentage of school leavers by follow-up destination category and local authority, 2009/10 to 2020/21
- Table L2.2. Number of school leavers by follow-up destination category and local authority, 2009/10 to 2020/21
- Tables L2.3. Number and percentage of school leavers in a positive follow-up destination, by local authority and SIMD, 2009/10 to 2020/21
- Table A1.1. Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved and follow-up destination category, 2009/10 to 2020/21

4.12 Recording of 'Unemployed Seeking' statuses

The rollout of Universal Credit (UC) commenced in March 2016 and has replaced out of work benefits, such as Jobseekers' Allowance, that were previously used to update the status of individuals to 'Unemployed Seeking'. For previous releases of these statistics, Skills Development Scotland did not receive data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on Universal Credit claimants.

SDS now receive UC data from DWP which they have used to validate the destinations of 2020/21 school leavers.

SDS maintains an accurate record of the circumstances of the school-leaver-aged young people in unemployment that it engages with, through the delivery of post-school services. The availability of UC data from DWP will, in many cases, simply have confirmed the statuses of school leavers which had already been determined through this engagement.

4.13 Transcript of the Infographic

The Infographic presented on page 2 shows the following:

That 93.2 per cent of all 2020/21 school leavers were in a positive follow-up destination (up from 92.2 per cent in 2019/20) and 6.8 per cent were in other follow-up destination.

That 40.3 per cent of 2020/21 leavers were in Higher Education (down from 42.9 per cent in 2019/20), 18.3 per cent were in Further Education (down from 23.6 per cent in 2019/20), and 31.5 per cent were in Employment (up from 21.3 per cent in 2019/20). 3.1 per cent of leavers were in Other Positive Destinations.

That in 2020/21, 95.5 per cent of leavers in a positive initial destination were also in a positive follow-up destination. This includes leavers in the same destination or in a different positive destination. Employment was the most sustained destination category. 94.2 per cent of leavers whose initial destination was Employment were also in Employment for their follow-up destination – although leavers may have changed their employer or type of employment during this time.

4.14 Cost

As part of the overall approach to delivering the Scottish Government's Opportunities for All commitment, the follow-up of school leavers is a business as usual activity for Skills Development Scotland and costs are embedded within their daily operations.

4.15 Further information

This publication is available on [the Scottish Government's website](#).

Information on positive initial destinations of senior phase school leavers (plus other school level information) is also available through Insight (a professional benchmarking tool used by local authorities and schools) and published on the [School Information Dashboard](#). However these sources do not include follow-up destination statistics.

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

The Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) produce 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 2021.

Skills Development Scotland have also more recently developed the [Monthly Participation Snapshot for 16 to 19 year olds](#) as a timely source of data on the participation of young people during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a source of monthly management information related to the activities 16 to 19 year olds were participating in on a given day each month. Figures are also published for the 16-17 year old cohort.

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

Source	Organisation, usual month of publication	Key points
Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations	Scottish Government, February	Provides information on the attainment of school leavers and on the activities being undertaken by school leavers on a given day ~3 months after the end of the school year . Coverage: School leavers

Summary Statistics for Follow-up Leaver Destinations (THIS PUBLICATION)	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
Annual Participation Measure	Skills Development Scotland, August	Reports on the sustained economic and employment activity of the wider 16-19 year old cohort , including those at school. Coverage: All 16-19 year olds
Monthly Participation Snapshot for 16 and 19 year olds	Skills Development Scotland, monthly	Reports on the economic and employment activity of 16 to 19 year olds , including those at school, on a given day. Figures for those aged 16 to 17 are also provided. Based on Management Information. Coverage: All 16-19 year olds

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