

Summary statistics for attainment and initial leaver destinations, no. 6: 2024 edition

February 2024

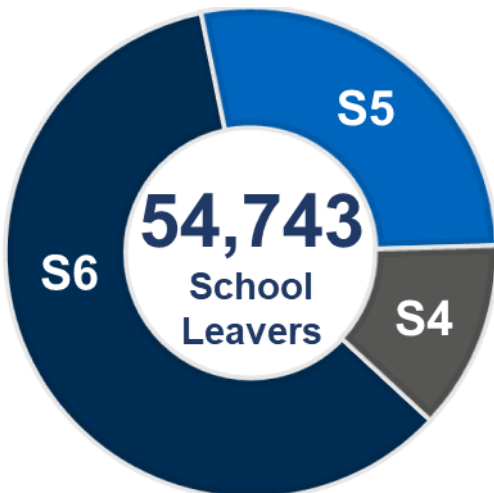
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School leaver cohort

The majority of 2022-23 school leavers (57.1%) left from S6. The proportion of leavers from S5 was 28.5%, and 14.4% left from S4.



57.1% of school leavers left in S6, down 2.7pp since 2021-22.

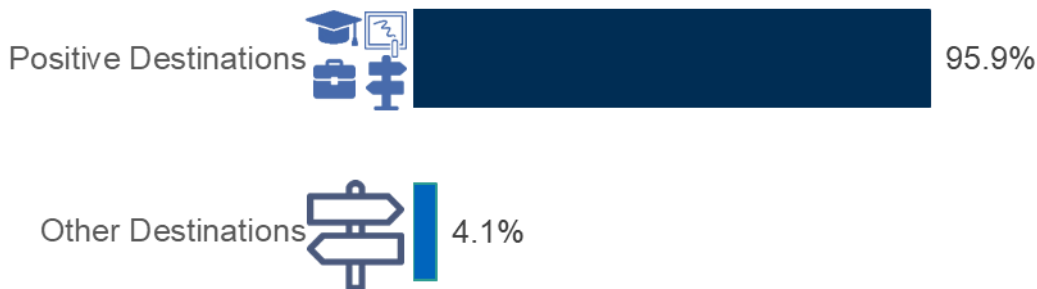
28.5% of school leavers left in S5, up 0.8pp since 2021-22.

14.4% of school leavers left in S4, up 2.0pp since 2021-22.

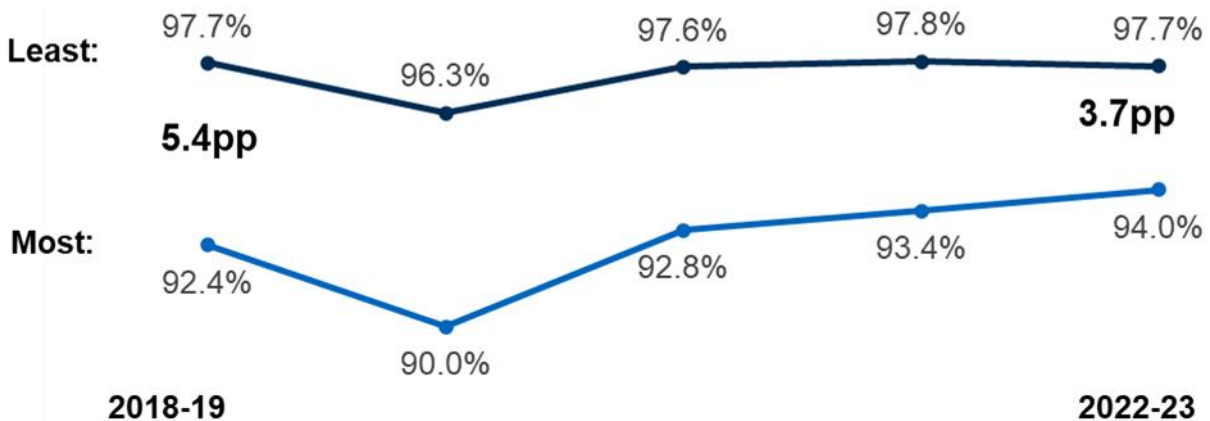
Note: Less than 0.1% left in S3 or another stage in 2022-23.

School leaver initial destinations

In 2022-23, 95.9% of school leavers were in positive initial destinations, and 4.1% were in other destinations. The proportion of leavers in a positive destination is up 0.1pp from 95.7% in 2021-22.



The gap between leavers from the most deprived and least deprived areas in a positive initial destination was 3.7pp 2022-23. This has narrowed from 4.4pp in 2021-22.



School leaver attainment, National Qualifications measure

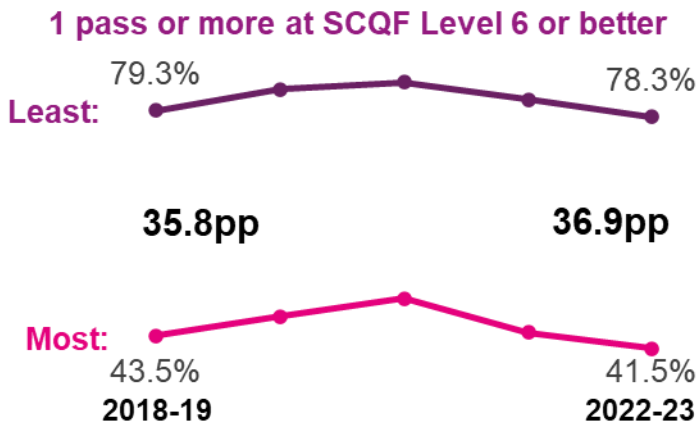
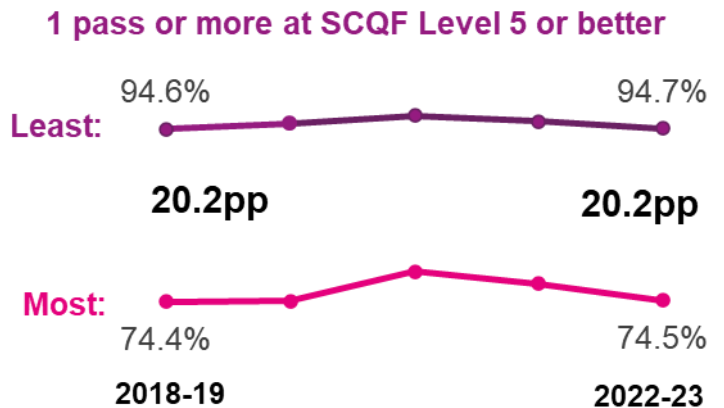
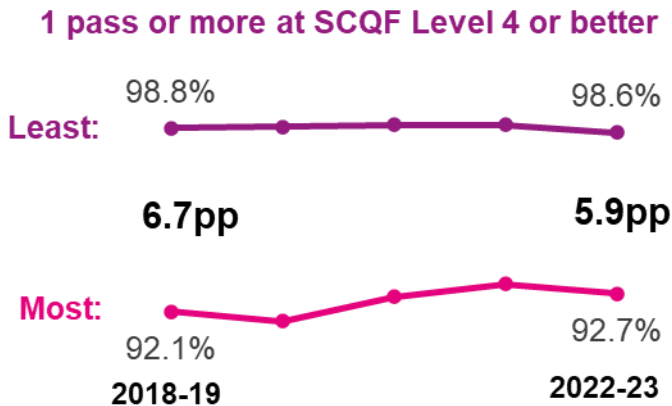
These statistics describe attainment in the **Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications only**. These are the National Courses (such as National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher), plus Skills for Work courses.

All qualifications at a given SCQF level are associated with the same number of notional learning hours.

These statistics provide three of the key measures used by the Scottish Government in its National Improvement Framework to measure progress over time in closing the poverty related attainment gap.

- **96.0 per cent** left with **one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better** in 2022-23.
- **84.8 per cent** left with **one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better** in 2022-23.
- **57.9 per cent** left with **one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better** in 2022-23.
- **2.2 per cent** of leavers attained **no passes at SCQF level 3 or better** in 2022-23.

The attainment gap between leavers from the **most deprived** and **least deprived** areas, under the National Qualifications measure, 2018-19 to 2022-23:



The gap between the **most deprived** and **least deprived** areas in 2022-23 for leavers attaining 1 pass or more under the National Qualifications measure at:

SCQF Level 4 or better is 5.9 pp
SCQF Level 5 or better is 20.2 pp
SCQF Level 6 or better is 36.9 pp

School leaver attainment, All SCQF measure

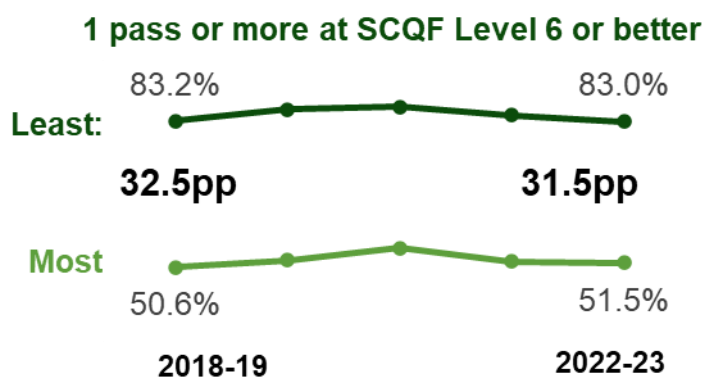
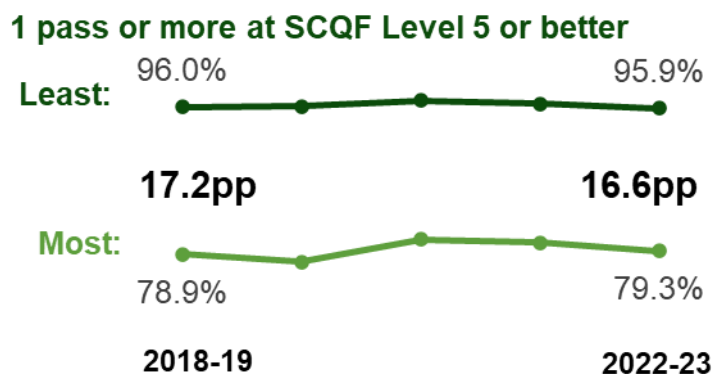
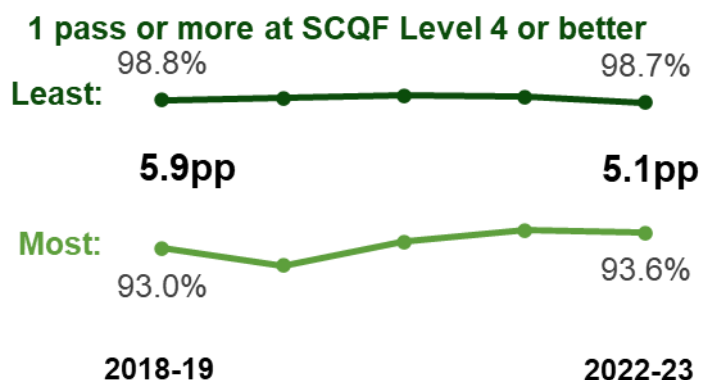
These statistics describe attainment in **any qualification or learning programme on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)**. This includes the SQA National Qualifications, other SQA qualifications and qualifications from other providers. The qualifications included will change over time, reflecting the changing types of qualifications pupils are undertaking.

They include all qualifications at a given SCQF level, which can be of varying lengths of study, from 10 notional learning hours to 240 (or more) notional learning hours.

These statistics are used to measure wider school leaver attainment across all qualifications on the SCQF.

- **96.5 per cent** left with **one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better** in 2022-23.
- **87.9 per cent** left with **one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better** in 2022-23.
- **65.6 per cent** left with **one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better** in 2022-23.
- **2.0 per cent** of leavers attained **no passes at SCQF level 3 or better** in 2022-23.

The attainment gap between leavers from the **most deprived** and **least deprived** areas, under the All SCQF measure, 2018-19 to 2022-23:



The gap between the **most deprived** and **least deprived** areas in 2022-23 for leavers attaining 1 pass or more under the All SCQF measure at:

SCQF Level 4 or better is 5.1 pp
SCQF Level 5 or better is 16.6 pp
SCQF Level 6 or better is 31.5 pp

Notes:

- The COVID-19 pandemic affects these statistics. See section 1.6.
- pp = percentage point. Percentage point gaps are affected by rounding.

Introduction

This publication:

- Covers 2022-23 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.
- For the first time in this edition: 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 6.4 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 outlines data sources, concepts and methodology associated with the data used in this publication.

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 2022-23 school leavers, the leaver year is 14th September 2022 to 12th September 2023.

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.](#))

Initial leaver destination statistics and school leaver attainment in National Qualifications include school leavers from **all stages** of secondary school.

The statistics on attainment in all qualifications and learning programmes accredited under the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (the All SCQF measure discussed in Section 1.5 and in Section 5) cover school leavers from **S4-S6** only.

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 the [supplementary tables](#).

Section 1.2 School leaver initial destinations

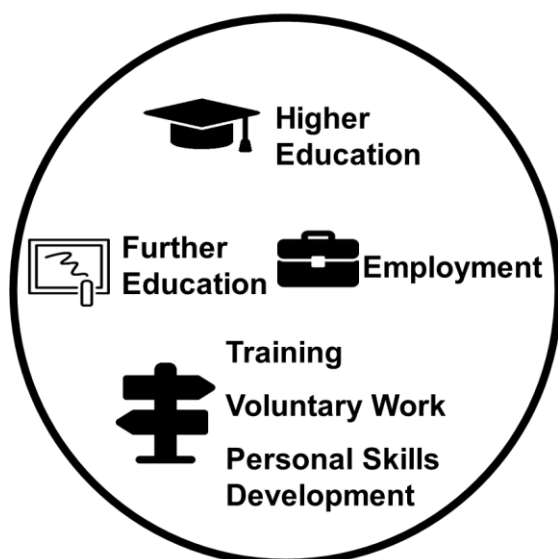
This publication provides information on the initial destinations of 2022-23 school leavers, relating to outcomes approximately three months after the end of the school year (2nd October 2023).

A separate publication - 'Summary Statistics for Follow-up Leaver Destinations' – will follow in June 2024 and will provide information on the follow-up destinations of 2022-23 school leavers, approximately nine months after the end of the school year (1st Monday in April 2024).

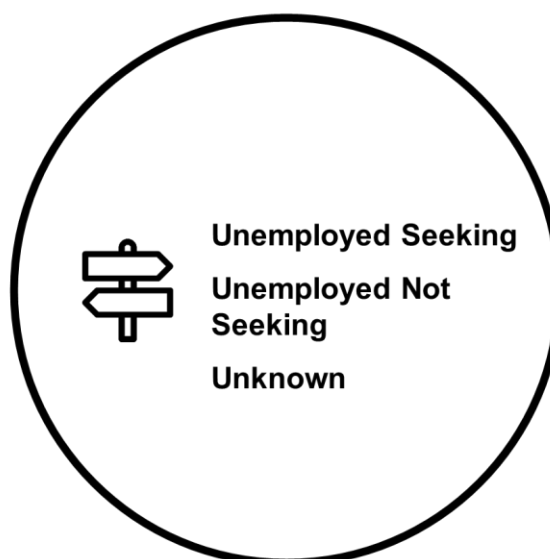
School leaver destinations data is based on the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) 'Opportunities for All' shared dataset, matched with pupil census records for the school year 2022-23. More information can be found in section 8.1.

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

Positive Destinations



Other Destinations



Section 1.3 School leaver attainment in this publication

This year, for the first time, 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 previous versions of this publication. More information is included in Section 1.4.

The second measure, referred to as the **All SCQF** measure, is new to this publication this year. It covers school leavers' attainment in all qualifications and learning programmes on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), from a range of providers. Further information on this new measure is provided in Section 1.5.

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.

Section 1.4 National Qualifications measure

The school leaver attainment data in Section 4 covers Scottish Qualifications Authority ([SQA](#)) National Qualifications, achieved throughout all stages of a pupil's education at school. The data include leavers from all stages of school, including leavers from S3 and other stages.

The National Qualifications measure consists of the National Courses (such as National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher), plus Skills for Work courses.

It does not include attainment in the SQA's National Units, the Scottish Baccalaureate, or National Qualifications below Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 3 (such as National 1 and National 2).

More information is available in Section 8.2.

Section 1.5 All Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (All SCQF) qualifications measure

The school leaver attainment data in Section 5 covers attainment by school leavers in any qualification or learning programme on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework ([SCQF](#), see Section 1.3). It covers qualifications and learning programmes achieved during the senior phase of school (years S4 to S6), and relates to pupils who left school from years S4-S6. For simplicity, throughout the remainder of this publication the range of qualifications and learning programmes on the SCQF will be referred to simply as 'qualifications'.

The qualifications in the All SCQF measure include National Qualifications – as in Section 4 – and also other qualifications. They include qualifications provided by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and also by other providers. They do not include National Units or the Scottish Baccalaureate (although the Highers and Advanced Highers that make up the Scottish Baccalaureate are included), or qualifications below SCQF Level 3.

More information on the qualifications included in each measure is provided below, and Figure 1 provides an illustration of examples of qualifications included in each measure.

Figure 1 - Examples of award providers and qualifications included in the National Qualifications measure and the All SCQF measure

National Qualifications measure

- SQA – National 3
- SQA – National 4
- SQA – National 5
- SQA – Higher

- SQA – Advanced Higher
- SQA – Skills for Work

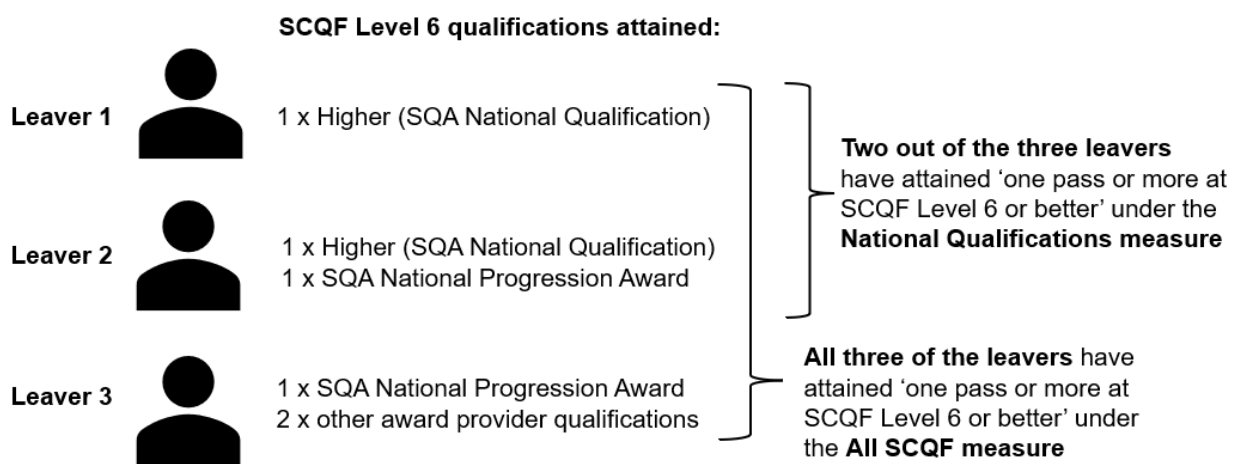
All SCQF measure (examples, not an exhaustive list)

- SQA – National 3
- SQA – National 4
- SQA – National 5
- SQA – Higher
- SQA – Advanced Higher
- 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)
- Scottish Schools Education Research Centre - SCQF Level 6 Award in STEM Leadership
- Sports Leaders UK - Qualification in Sports Leadership
- Young Enterprise Scotland – Young Enterprise Scotland Company Programme
- SafeCert - SCQF Level 6 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work

Figure 2 – Examples of qualifications attained by school leavers, and how that attainment is counted under the two measures



More information is available in Section 8.3.

1.5.1 Why have we introduced the All SCQF measure?

Historically this publication has presented attainment in National Qualifications i.e. National 3, National 4, National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher and Skills for Work. However, many school pupils in Scotland take a range of other types of qualifications either instead of, or in addition to, National Qualifications. Attainment by school pupils in a broader range of qualifications has been increasing over the last few years, although the extent of this varies across the country depending on local presentation policies. Consultation with a range of internal and external stakeholders demonstrated a user need for recognition of the wider range of attainment by pupils in schools in Scotland. Therefore the All SCQF measure has been added to this publication.

The All SCQF measure has been in use for a number of years by stakeholders in education to understand school pupils' attainment. It has been available via 'Insight' - the benchmarking tool used by local authorities and schools - and to the public via the [School Information Dashboard](#).

The data visible on the Insight tool presents information on the five most recent years of school leaver attainment under the All SCQF. For this publication a back series has been created so that, as for the National Qualifications measure, data are available from 2009-10.

As the Insight tool was developed for a different purpose, there are a number of methodological differences between the All SCQF measure and the National Qualifications measure. These are described in Section 1.5.2.

Alongside introducing the All SCQF measure, we are continuing to report on attainment under the National Qualifications measure. The user consultation identified a need to continue to report on this basis. The National Qualifications measure provides three of the key measures used by the Scottish Government in its [National Improvement Framework](#) to measure progress over time in closing the poverty-related attainment gap. By continuing to report on attainment under the National Qualifications measure, these statistics provide a consistent time series in measuring that progress.

1.5.2 What are the differences between the two measures of attainment?

The main difference between the National Qualifications measure (Section 4) and the All SCQF measure (Section 5) is that the National Qualifications measure considers school leavers' attainment only in National Qualifications. The All SCQF measure considers attainment in any qualification on the SCQF. See section 1.5 for more information.

A summary of the other differences between the two measures is provided below. It is important to understand these differences when deciding on which measure of attainment to use (see Section 1.5.5).

More details on each of the methodologies are available in Section 8.

National Qualifications measure:

- Qualifications and award providers: Includes National Qualifications provided by the SQA
- SCQF credit points / notional learning hours: All qualifications at a given SCQF level are associated with an equal number of notional learning hours and SCQF credit points (see Section 8.2.2)
- Treatment of Grade Ds: A grade D is counted as a pass at the SCQF level below (e.g. a grade D achieved at SCQF Level 6 is counted as a pass at SCQF Level 5)
- Leaver cohort: All school leavers from mainstream publicly funded schools
- Stage of schooling in which qualifications are attained: Considers all attainment achieved in the previous 6 years, irrespective of the stage in which it was achieved

All SCQF measure:

- Qualifications and award providers: Includes all qualifications and learning programmes on the SCQF which are reported to the Scottish Government Insight team. From a variety of providers.
- SCQF credit points / notional learning hours: Qualifications at a given SCQF level can be associated with differing numbers of notional learning hours and SCQF credit points. Each qualification, irrespective of this, is counted as a single pass or award. (see Section 8.4.2)
- Treatment of Grade Ds: A grade D is counted as a pass or award at that SCQF level (e.g. a grade D achieved at SCQF Level 6 is counted as an award at SCQF Level 6)
- Leaver cohort: S4-S6 school leavers from mainstream publicly funded schools
- Stage of schooling in which qualifications are attained: Considers attainment achieved in S4-S6 only

Other factors which may affect attainment under the All SCQF measure which should be kept in mind are:

- The numbers of award providers, and qualifications, included in the All SCQF measure has risen over time. This could be because new providers or courses have been added to the SCQF framework, because the Scottish Government has started receiving data for courses or from providers we were not previously receiving data from, or it could reflect changing presentation policies in schools or local authorities. See section 8.3.2 for more information.
- There may be some award providers delivering awards that are on the SCQF to senior phase pupils in schools that do not report this to the Insight team at present – this attainment will not be included within the measure.
- The numbers of SCQF credit points (based on the number of notional learning hours) associated with the qualifications included in the All SCQF measure have changed over time. See section 8.3.3 for more information.

- Just as there can be differences in the make-up of the qualifications included in the All SCQF measure over time there can also be differences from one local authority to another, due to differing presentation policies in courses of differing SCQF credit points. There can also be variation within a single local authority over time. See section 8.3.4 for more information.

1.5.3 How might the levels of attainment be different, under the two measures?

Attainment as measured under the All SCQF measure will typically be the same as, or higher than, attainment as measured under the National Qualifications measure. This is because the All SCQF measure includes attainment in National Qualifications and also attainment in other qualifications. There may be some small exceptions due to other methodological differences between the measures but, typically, the attainment figures presented in Section 5 will be higher than those presented in Section 4.

The difference between the two measures is likely to be larger when considering greater numbers of passes. The reason for this is explained in the next two paragraphs.

The headline statistics in this report focus on school leavers with one pass or award or more at a given SCQF level or better. Where a school leaver has attainment in both a 'wider' qualification and a National Qualification they will be counted as having one pass or more under both measures. For example, a school leaver who has achieved a National Progression Award at SCQF Level 6, and also has a Higher, will be counted as having 1 pass or more in both the National Qualification measure and the All SCQF measure. Therefore the differences in attainment under the two measures may not be very large when comparing them at 'one pass or more'.

This report also presents figures on the proportions of school leavers who have larger numbers of passes (2 passes or more, 3 passes or more, 4 passes or more etc.) at a given SCQF level. In the example above the school leaver would be counted as having 2 passes under the All SCQF measure but only one pass under the National Qualifications measure. The differences between the National Qualifications measure and the All SCQF measure may therefore be larger when considering greater numbers of passes.

Figure 3 illustrates this.

Figure 3 – Example of how attainment under the two measures may appear different as larger numbers of qualifications are considered

| | SCQF Level 6 qualifications attained | |
|---|---|---|
| | Leaver 1 1 x Higher (SQA National Qualification) | Leaver 2 1 x Higher (SQA National Qualification) 1 x SQA National Progression Award |
| Attainment under the two Measures: | | |
| 1 pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better – NQ's measure | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1 pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better – All SCQF measure | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2 passes or more at SCQF Level 6 or better – NQ's measure | ✗ | ✗ |
| 2 passes or more at SCQF Level 6 or better – All SCQF measure | ✗ | ✓ |

1.5.4 What can be concluded by comparing the two measures?

The main difference between the two measures is the wider set of qualifications which are included in the All SCQF measure compared to the National Qualification measure.

Comparisons between the two measures will give an indication of the impact of the wider range of qualifications (i.e. non-National Qualifications) on school leaver attainment. However, the difference between the two measures does not equal attainment in non-National Qualifications. Many pupils with attainment in the wider set of qualifications covered by the All SCQF measure will also have attainment in National Qualifications and so will be included in both measures.

It should also be kept in mind that there are some other methodological differences between the two measures which may also affect comparisons (see section 1.5.2).

1.5.5 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, keep in mind that not all courses at a given SCQF Level will be associated with the same numbers of credit points (notional learning hours). See Section 8.4.2.

Section 1.6 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.

Impact of the pandemic on school leaver attainment

The pandemic led to changes to the assessment and certification of National Qualifications from 2019-20 onwards. This will have directly affected the attainment of school leavers under the National Qualifications measure in this publication. The biggest impacts are likely to have been seen for leavers in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, but there may still be effects for some leavers in 2022-23. For more information, see section 8.7.2.

The attainment of school leavers as measured under the All SCQF measure will also have been directly affected by the pandemic. As well as the changes to the assessment and certification of National Qualifications, the assessment and certification of many other qualifications also changed in 2019-20 and subsequent years, in response to the pandemic. Again, the biggest impacts are likely to have been seen for leavers in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, but there may still be effects for some leavers in 2022-23. For more information, see section 8.7.3.

In addition, the pandemic may also have indirectly affected school leavers' attainment, through any effect it had on pupils' decisions about when to leave school. For more information, see section 8.7.1.

Impact of the pandemic on school leaver destinations

The pandemic will have directly affected the statistics on school leaver destinations through its impact on the availability of certain opportunities (e.g. employment opportunities). The greatest effect of the pandemic on school leaver destinations is likely to have been seen for school leavers in 2019-20.

However, it is likely that there has been some ongoing impact on the destinations of some school leavers in subsequent years. One reason for this may be the effect of the different approaches to certification of qualifications since 2019-20 on pupils' attainment and, consequently, on the opportunities available to them. The pandemic may also have influenced some pupils' decisions on when to leave school, in turn affecting their total attainment and/or the opportunities available to them.

For more information, see section 8.7.1.

Section 2. The school leaver cohort

Section 2.1 Key points

- 54,743 pupils left school in 2022-23 – a decrease from 55,237 school leavers in 2021-22, but the second largest school leaver cohort since 2009-10.
- 57.1 per cent of the 2022-23 school leaver cohort were in S6, down from 59.8 per cent in 2021-22.
- 28.5 per cent were S5 leavers (up from 27.7 per cent in 2021-22) and 14.4 per cent were S4 leavers (up from 12.4 per cent in 2021-22).

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 referred to in the statistics in section 3 (destinations), section 4 (attainment in National Qualifications) and section 6 (additional qualifications).

Statistics on destinations and attainment in National Qualifications that also include leavers from Scotland's publicly-funded special schools are available in the [supplementary tables](#).

Section 2.2 The size and composition of the school leaver cohort

The 2022-23 school leaver cohort was 54,743 pupils. It is the second largest leaver cohort since 2009-10, when the current time series started. It has decreased by 494 pupils from 2021-22 (when it was at its largest since 2009-10 at 55,237).

The biggest increase between 2021-22 and 2022-23 – in absolute numbers – was in S4 leavers, which rose from 6,863 leavers in 2021-22 to 7,890 in 2022-23, an increase of 1,027 pupils. S5 leaver numbers increased by 276 pupils (from 15,308 in 2021-22 to 15,584 in 2022-23) while S6 leaver numbers decreased, falling by 1,794 (from 33,039 in 2021-22 to 31,245 in 2022-23).

As Chart 1a shows, the size of the school leaver cohort fluctuates each year. It is affected by both the number of pupils starting the relevant stages (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: Number of leavers by stage of leaving, 2018-19 to 2022-23

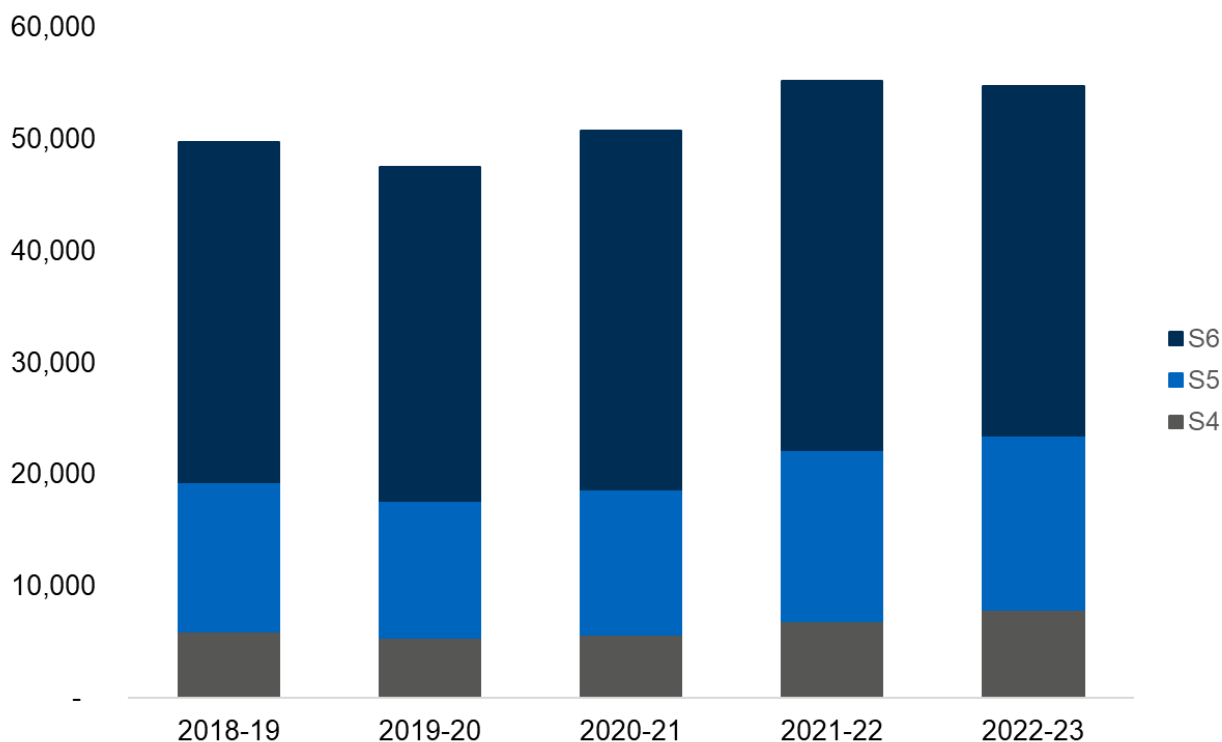
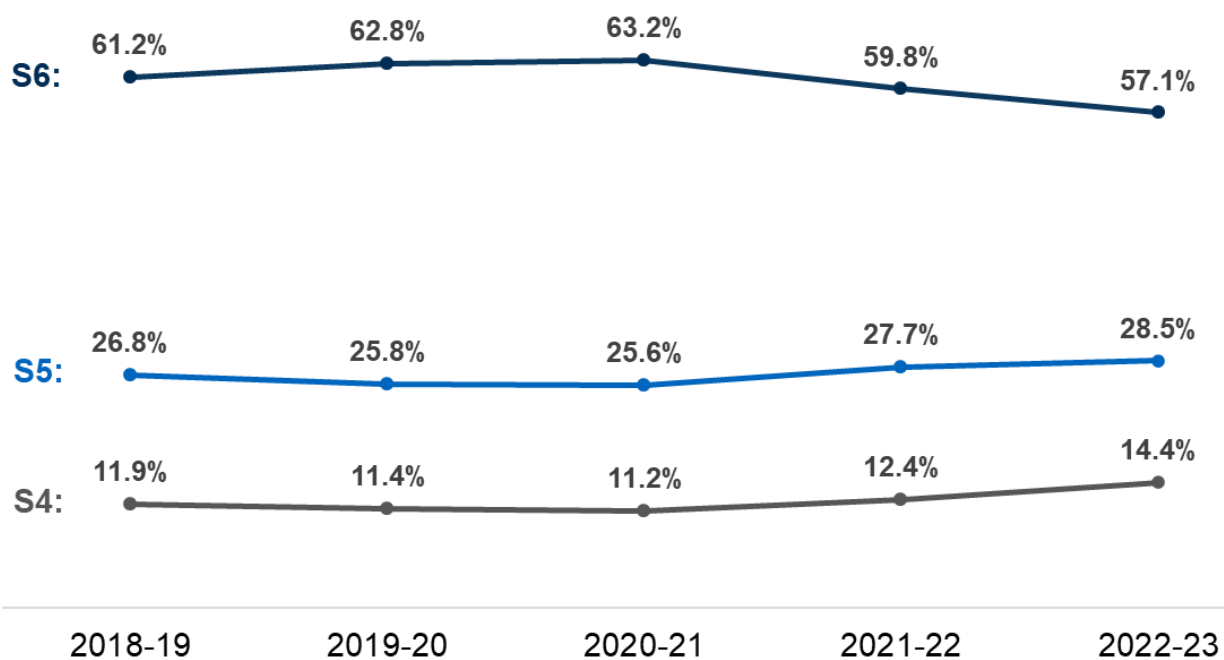


Chart 1b shows the percentage of school leavers by stage, between 2018-19 and 2022-23. In 2022-23 the percentage of all leavers who are from S6 has decreased compared to 2021-22, while the percentage of leavers from S4 and S5 has risen.

A little under three-fifths (57.1 per cent) of 2022-23 school leavers left in S6, a decrease from 59.8 per cent in 2021-22. Over a quarter (28.5 per cent) of 2022-23 school leavers left in S5 (an increase from 27.7 per cent in 2021-22) and 14.4 per cent left in S4 (an increase from 12.4 per cent in 2021-22). Less than 0.1 per cent of 2022-23 school leavers left in S3 or another stage (similar to 2021-22).

This is the second year in succession in which the proportion of school leavers from S6 has fallen and the proportions from S4 and S5 have increased. The proportion of school leavers from S6 is now at its lowest level since 2009-10. The proportion leaving in S5 is at the highest level on record (since 2009-10) and the proportion leaving in S4 is at the highest level since 2010-11. A full time series for 2009-10 to 2022-23 can be found in the [supplementary tables](#).

Chart 1b: Percentage of leavers by stage of leaving, 2018-19 to 2022-23



Comparing the leaver cohort to the pupil census from September 2023 suggests that a larger proportion of S4 and S5 pupils left school during or at the end of 2022-23 than has been seen in recent years.

The larger proportion of S4 and S5 leavers this year compared to recent years – and the smaller proportion of S6 leavers – may have an effect on the destinations and attainment of 2022-23 leavers compared to 2021-22 and earlier years. For example, it is unlikely that an individual would be able to achieve a qualification at SCQF level 7 if they were an S4 leaver.

Section 3. School leaver initial destinations

Section 3.1 Key points

- 95.9 per cent of 2022-23 school leavers were in a positive initial destination. This is a small increase from 2021-22 (95.7 per cent) and the highest figure since consistent records began in 2009-10.
- The most common initial destination was Higher Education, with 40.3 per cent of leavers in this category. This is a decrease from 2021-22 (41.2 per cent).
- 24.3 per cent of leavers were in Employment. This is a decrease from 2021-22 (25.1 per cent).
- The percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination has increased for leavers from the (20%) most deprived areas and slightly decreased for those from the (20%) least deprived areas, compared to 2021-22.
- The gap between the two groups has decreased from 4.4 percentage points in 2021-22 to 3.7 percentage points in 2022-23, the lowest it has been since consistent records began in 2009-10.

As described in section 1.6, the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) will have had an impact on the initial destination choices made by, and opportunities available to, school leavers. The greatest effect of the pandemic on school leaver destinations is likely to have been seen in 2019-20. However, it is likely that there has been some ongoing impact on the destinations of some 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 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 3.2 Initial destinations of school leavers

Table 1 shows that 95.9 per cent of all 2022-23 school leavers were in a positive initial destination. This was higher than in 2021-22 (95.7 per cent) and the highest since consistent records began in 2009-10.

The proportion of school leavers in Higher Education decreased from 41.2 per cent in 2021-22 to 40.3 per cent in 2022-23. This brings the proportion of school leavers in Higher Education in 2022-23 back into line with figures seen before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proportion of school leavers in Further Education increased from 25.5 per cent in 2021-22 to 26.6 per cent in 2022-23. This also brings the proportion of school leavers in Further Education in 2022-23 more into line with figures seen before the pandemic.

Combining the results for these two categories shows that 66.9 per cent of 2022-23 school leavers were in Higher or Further Education three months after the end of

the school year. This is a slight increase from 2021-22 (66.7 per cent), driven by the increase in the proportion of leavers in Further Education.

The percentage of school leavers in Employment three months after leaving school decreased from 25.1 per cent in 2021-22 to 24.3 per cent in 2022-23, a fall of 0.8 percentage points. Despite this, it is the second highest proportion since consistent records began in 2009-10.

The percentage of school leavers who were Unemployed (either Unemployed Seeking or Unemployed Not Seeking) decreased slightly from 3.9 per cent in 2021-22 to 3.8 per cent for 2022-23 school leavers. This is the lowest proportion since consistent records began.

Table 1: Percentage of school leavers by initial destination category, 2018-19 to 2022-23 [note 1] [note 2] [note 3] [note 4]

| Destination Category | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Higher Education | 40.3 | 44.2 | 45.1 | 41.2 | 40.3 |
| Further Education | 27.3 | 28.1 | 23.3 | 25.5 | 26.6 |
| Training | 3.5 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 2.9 | 3.4 |
| Employment | 22.9 | 16.2 | 22.6 | 25.1 | 24.3 |
| Voluntary Work | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| Activity Agreement | [z] | [z] | [z] | [z] | [z] |
| Personal Skills Development | 0.5 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| Positive Destinations | 95.0 | 93.3 | 95.5 | 95.7 | 95.9 |
| Unemployed Seeking | 3.1 | 4.1 | 2.5 | 2.3 | 2.2 |
| Unemployed Not Seeking | 1.4 | 1.8 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.6 |
| Unknown | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.3 |
| Other Destinations | 5.0 | 6.7 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 4.1 |
| Number of Leavers | 49,760 | 47,454 | 50,746 | 55,237 | 54,743 |

Note 1: The 'Unknown' status in 2019-20 may have been affected by local partnerships' ability to track school leavers through home visits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Note 2: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Note 3: Data from 2009-10 to 2022-23 are available in the [supplementary tables](#).

Note 4: [z] = not applicable (see Section 7 for a full list of symbols used in the tables).

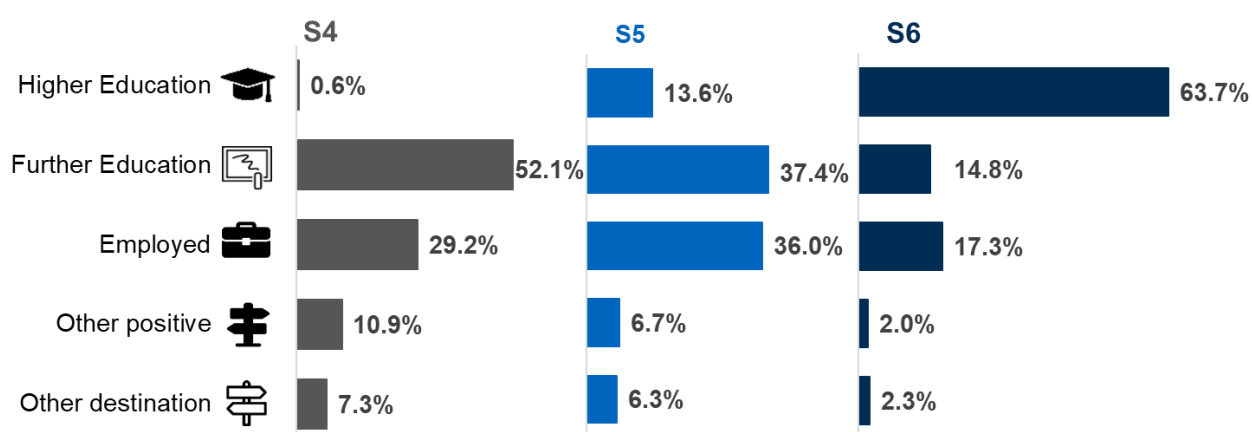
The composition of the school leaver cohort each year is likely to influence the percentages of total school leavers in each destination. The most common initial destination for leavers varies by stage of leaving (see section 3.3). As noted in section 2, the 2022-23 leaver cohort had a lower than usual 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 is likely to be the reason for some of the changes seen in the overall proportions entering each initial destination compared to previous years.

Section 3.3 Initial destinations by stage of leaving

Chart 2 shows the initial destinations of 2022-23 school leavers by stage of leaving. It shows that:

- the majority of S6 leavers entered Higher Education (63.7 per cent);
- the most common initial destination for S5 leavers was Further Education (37.4 per cent) followed closely by Employment (36.0 per cent);
- over half of S4 leavers entered Further Education (52.1 per cent).

Chart 2: Initial destinations of school leavers by stage of leaving, 2022-23
[note 5] [note 6]



Note 5: 'Other positive' includes Personal Skills Development, Training and Voluntary Work.

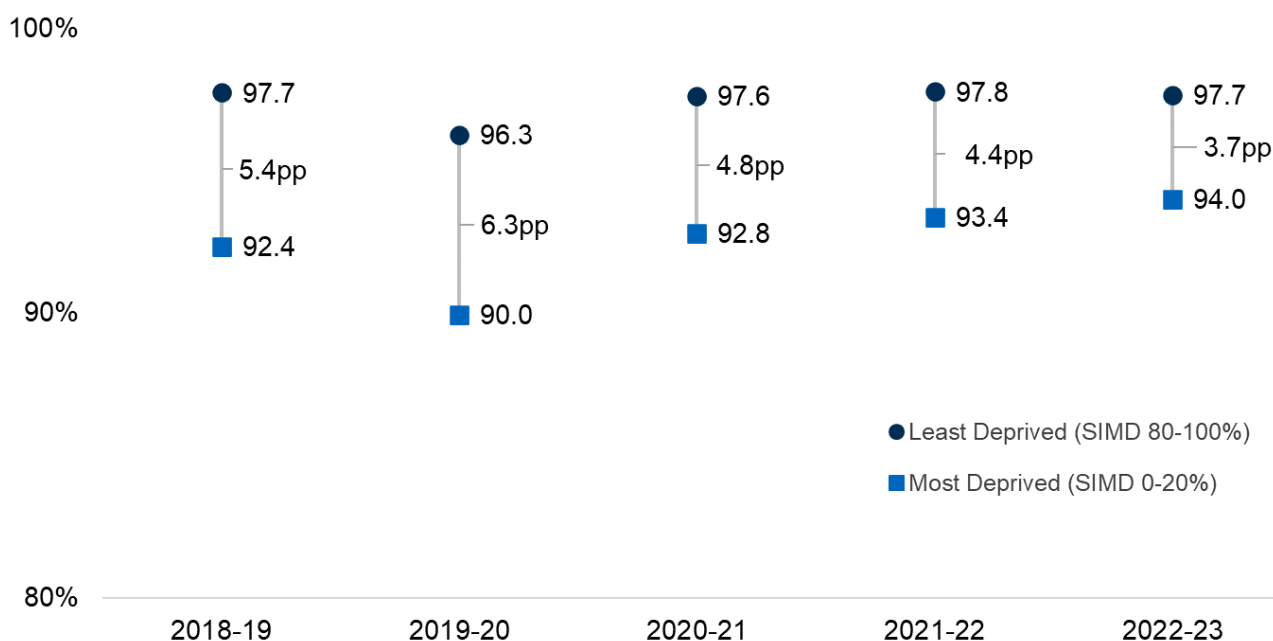
Note 6: 'Other destination' includes Unemployed Seeking, Unemployed Not Seeking and Unknown.

Section 3.4 Initial destinations by deprivation

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 4.3

Chart 3 shows that the percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination increased in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22, for leavers from the (20%) most deprived areas as defined by the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation \(SIMD\)](#) (see section 8.5.2). In the (20%) least deprived areas, the percentage of school leavers in a positive destination decreased slightly. Together this has led to a narrowing of the deprivation gap, from 4.4 percentage points in 2021-22 to 3.7 percentage points in 2022-23 – the smallest gap since consistent records began in 2009-10. The proportion of leavers from the most deprived areas in a positive destination increased from 93.4 per cent in 2021-22 to 94.0 per cent in 2022-23. The proportion of leavers from the least deprived areas in a positive destination decreased slightly from 97.8 per cent to 97.7 per cent.

Chart 3: Percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination, by SIMD, 2018-19 to 2022-23 [note 7] [note 8]



Note 7: pp = percentage point difference between most deprived 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, 2021-22 and 2022-23. More information can be found on the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#).

Time series data of destinations by deprivation (available in Table 2 in the [supplementary tables](#)) suggests that the narrowing of the gap between 2021-22 and 2022-23 is mainly due to the proportions of school leavers in higher education. The proportion of school leavers from the most deprived areas entering Higher Education increased slightly in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22 whilst the proportion from the least deprived areas decreased. The proportion of school leavers entering further education increased across all SIMD groups between 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of initial school leaver destinations for 2022-23, for pupils from the 20% most deprived and 20% least deprived areas. It shows, for example, that pupils from the most deprived areas continue to be less likely to enter Higher Education than those from the least deprived areas.

In 2022-23, the most common destination for leavers from the most deprived areas was Further Education at 36.8 per cent.

In 2022-23, 5.6 per cent of leavers from the most deprived areas were unemployed, compared to 2.1 per cent of leavers from the least deprived areas.

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

Table 2: Percentage of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas, by initial destination category, 2022-23 [note 9] [note 10] [note 11] [note 12]

| 2022-23 Initial Destination | 0-20% (Most Deprived) | 80-100% (Least Deprived) | Percentage point gap | Total |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Higher Education | 26.8 | 60.3 | 33.5 | 40.3 |
| Further Education | 36.8 | 15.4 | -21.4 | 26.6 |
| Training | 6.5 | 1.4 | -5.1 | 3.4 |
| Employment | 21.9 | 19.9 | -2.1 | 24.3 |
| Voluntary Work | 0.6 | 0.5 | -0.1 | 0.5 |
| Personal Skills Development | 1.4 | 0.3 | -1.1 | 0.7 |
| Positive Destinations | 94.0 | 97.7 | 3.7 | 95.9 |
| Unemployed Seeking | 3.4 | 1.2 | -2.2 | 2.2 |
| Unemployed Not Seeking | 2.2 | 0.9 | -1.3 | 1.6 |
| Unknown | 0.4 | 0.2 | -0.1 | 0.3 |
| Other Destinations | 6.0 | 2.3 | -3.7 | 4.1 |
| Number of Leavers | 12,151 | 10,374 | [z] | 54,743 |

Note 9: Based on the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020](#).

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

Note 11: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Note 12: [z] = not applicable. (See Section 7 for a full list of symbols used in the tables.)

Section 3.5 Initial destinations by pupil characteristics

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

School leavers in 2022-23 with an Additional Support Need (ASN) were less likely to be in a positive initial destination (93.7 per cent) than leavers without a recorded ASN (97.4 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 2022-23 who were declared or assessed disabled were also less likely to be in a positive initial destination (93.2 per cent) than leavers who were not (96.0 per cent).

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 2022-23 was amongst African/ Black/ Caribbean leavers (98.5 per cent).

Female pupils continue to be more likely to enter positive destinations than male pupils: 96.4 per cent of female school leavers were in a positive initial destination in

2022-23, compared to 95.3 per cent of male leavers. This result is consistent with previous years.

Remote Rural areas had the highest proportions of leavers in positive initial destinations in 2022-23 (96.4 per cent), whilst Accessible Small Towns and Remote Small Towns had the lowest (95.4 per cent).

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

Table 3: Percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination, by pupil characteristic, 2018-19 to 2022-23 [note 13] [note 14] [note 15] [note 16] [note 17]

| Pupil Characteristic | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Sex | | | | | |
| Male | 94.2 | 92.1 | 94.7 | 95.2 | 95.3 |
| Female | 95.9 | 94.6 | 96.2 | 96.3 | 96.4 |
| Ethnicity | | | | | |
| White – Scottish | 94.9 | 93.2 | 95.5 | 95.6 | 95.8 |
| White – non-Scottish | 95.8 | 93.3 | 95.1 | 95.6 | 95.4 |
| Mixed or multiple ethnic groups | 93.8 | 92.3 | 96.5 | 94.6 | 96.1 |
| Asian – Indian | 97.2 | [c] | [c] | [c] | [c] |
| Asian – Pakistani | 97.1 | 97.2 | 96.7 | 98.6 | 98.3 |
| Asian – Chinese | [c] | [c] | [c] | [c] | [c] |
| Asian – Other | [c] | 95.0 | 97.0 | 97.4 | 97.2 |
| African/ Black/ Caribbean | 96.4 | 94.7 | 97.5 | 98.8 | 98.5 |
| All other categories | 93.7 | 93.4 | 94.9 | 96.3 | 96.4 |
| Not Disclosed/Not known | 92.8 | 91.2 | 92.7 | 95.5 | 95.8 |
| Urban/Rural | | | | | |
| Large Urban Areas | 95.0 | 93.1 | 95.6 | 96.3 | 96.2 |
| Other Urban Areas | 94.5 | 92.7 | 94.9 | 95.0 | 95.6 |
| Accessible Small Towns | 95.7 | 94.2 | 95.7 | 96.2 | 95.4 |
| Remote Small Towns | 94.9 | 92.9 | 94.7 | 93.9 | 95.4 |
| Accessible Rural | 96.1 | 94.7 | 96.5 | 96.6 | 96.2 |
| Remote Rural | 95.8 | 94.5 | 96.7 | 96.6 | 96.4 |
| Additional Support Needs | | | | | |
| ASN | 91.9 | 89.6 | 92.8 | 93.4 | 93.7 |
| No ASN | 96.5 | 95.4 | 97.0 | 97.3 | 97.4 |
| Disabled status | | | | | |
| Declared or assessed disabled | 93.3 | 90.0 | 92.6 | 92.3 | 93.2 |
| Not declared or assessed disabled | 95.1 | 93.4 | 95.6 | 95.8 | 96.0 |
| All Leavers | 95.0 | 93.3 | 95.5 | 95.7 | 95.9 |

Note 13: Some categories have been grouped together due to small numbers. Some categories (typically 'Asian – Indian', 'Asian – Chinese' contain between 100-200 leavers and due to relatively small numbers, may be subject to fluctuation. Comparisons between groups should take this into account.

Note 14: The 'African/ Black/ Caribbean' category includes 'African', 'African - Other', and the 'Caribbean or Black' categories.

Note 15: 'All other categories' includes 'Other - other' and 'Other - Arab'.

Note 16: Pupils who have a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP), Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) or Child's Plan are assessed or declared disabled or have another need.
Note 17: [c] = value suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosure of personal information. (See Section 7 for a full list of symbols used in the tables.)

Section 4. School leaver attainment in National Qualifications

Section 4.1 Key points

- 84.8 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better in National Qualifications in 2022-23. This is a decrease from 2021-22 (86.4 per cent).
- 57.9 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better in National Qualifications in 2022-23. This is a decrease from 2021-22 (61.3 per cent).
- 2.2 per cent of school leavers attained no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better in National Qualifications in 2022-23. This is an increase from 2021-22 (2.1 per cent).
- The different approaches to determining results in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 should be kept in mind when considering changes in school leaver attainment between years.

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 1.4. They refer to all school leavers from mainstream schools, including S3, S4, S5, S6 and 'other' stages.

As described in section 1.6, the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) led to changes in how National Qualifications were assessed and graded in the years 2020 to 2023. This will have had an impact on the attainment of school leavers in 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23. We have placed a **dashed line break** in the series between 2018-19 and 2019-20 to highlight where the change happened. Care must be taken when comparing attainment of school leavers in 2018-19 and before, with that of school leavers in 2019-20 and beyond. 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.

Section 4.2 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications

Table 4 shows the highest SCQF Level achieved by school leavers based on the National Qualifications measure. In 2022-23, 1.7 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more in National Qualifications at SCQF Level 3 as their highest level, 11.2 per cent with one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 and 26.9 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5. A total of 39.8 per cent of 2022-23 school leavers therefore left with one pass or more at SCQF Levels 3 to 5 as their highest qualification under the National Qualifications measure. This was an increase from 2021-22, when 36.7 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Levels 3 to 5 as their highest qualification.

Table 4 also shows that, based on the National Qualifications measure, 37.7 per cent of 2022-23 school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 as their highest level, and 20.2 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 7. These proportions have both decreased from 2021-22, when 39.8 per cent of leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 as their highest level, and 21.5 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 7.

A small proportion (2.2 per cent) of school leavers attained no passes in National Qualifications at SCQF Level 3 or better in 2022-23. This has increased slightly as a proportion from 2021-22. 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.

Table 4: Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the National Qualifications measure, 2018-19 to 2022-23 [note 18]

| SCQF Level | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| No passes at SCQF 3 or better | 2.2 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.2 |
| SCQF Level 3 | 1.9 | 2.2 | 1.8 | 1.5 | 1.7 |
| SCQF Level 4 | 10.9 | 10.1 | 8.5 | 10.0 | 11.2 |
| SCQF Level 5 | 24.5 | 21.8 | 21.7 | 25.1 | 26.9 |
| SCQF Level 6 | 41.4 | 40.6 | 41.8 | 39.8 | 37.7 |
| SCQF Level 7 | 19.1 | 23.2 | 24.2 | 21.5 | 20.2 |
| Number of leavers | 49,760 | 47,454 | 50,746 | 55,237 | 54,743 |

Note 18: A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018-19 and 2019-20. This reflects the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on attainment in years from 2019-20 onwards. Further information can be found in Sections 1.6, 4.1 and 8.7.

Table 5 provides information on the number of passes in National Qualifications achieved by school leavers at each SCQF Level or better. In 2022-23, 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. These proportions have both decreased from 2021-22, when 86.4 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better, and 61.3 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better.

In addition to the impact of alternative approaches to certification resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the change in the make-up of the school leaver cohort in 2022-23 compared to recent years may have had an effect on overall school leaver attainment. As described in section 2.2, 2022-23 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 2022-23 is presented in Table 5 in the [supplementary tables](#).

Table 5: Total leaver attainment under the National Qualifications measure, percentage of leavers, 2018-19 to 2022-23 [note 19] [note 20]

2022-23

| SCQF Level | 1 pass or more | 2 passes or more | 3 passes or more | 4 passes or more | 5 passes or more | 6 passes or more | 7 passes or more |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 3 or better | 97.8 | 96.1 | 93.6 | 90.8 | 86.6 | 78.9 | 66.6 |
| 4 or better | 96.0 | 93.4 | 90.6 | 87.3 | 82.7 | 75.7 | 63.8 |
| 5 or better | 84.8 | 77.0 | 70.0 | 63.2 | 56.0 | 48.5 | 39.6 |
| 6 or better | 57.9 | 48.7 | 41.9 | 35.5 | 28.4 | 18.5 | 9.0 |
| 7 | 20.2 | 8.8 | 3.3 | 0.3 | [low] | [low] | [low] |

2021-22

| 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 | 97.9 | 96.5 | 94.5 | 92.1 | 88.3 | 81.2 | 68.9 |
| 4 or better | 96.4 | 94.1 | 91.7 | 88.8 | 84.4 | 77.7 | 65.6 |
| 5 or better | 86.4 | 79.5 | 73.0 | 66.4 | 59.2 | 51.6 | 42.6 |
| 6 or better | 61.3 | 52.4 | 45.7 | 38.6 | 30.7 | 19.9 | 9.9 |
| 7 | 21.5 | 9.5 | 3.3 | 0.4 | [low] | [low] | 0.0 |

2020-21

| 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 | 97.9 | 96.5 | 94.6 | 92.4 | 89.1 | 82.9 | 70.6 |
| 4 or better | 96.2 | 93.9 | 91.8 | 89.2 | 85.5 | 79.3 | 67.6 |
| 5 or better | 87.7 | 81.9 | 76.3 | 69.9 | 62.6 | 54.1 | 43.6 |
| 6 or better | 66.0 | 57.7 | 50.5 | 43.4 | 35.3 | 23.6 | 12.2 |
| 7 | 24.2 | 11.0 | 3.7 | 0.4 | [low] | 0.0 | 0.0 |

2019-20

| SCQF Level | 1 pass or more | 2 passes or more | 3 passes or more | 4 passes or more | 5 passes or more | 6 passes or more | 7 passes or more |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 3 or better | 98.0 | 96.3 | 94.1 | 91.8 | 88.1 | 81.2 | 67.9 |
| 4 or better | 95.8 | 93.3 | 90.9 | 88.1 | 84.1 | 77.6 | 64.9 |
| 5 or better | 85.7 | 79.2 | 73.0 | 66.4 | 59.2 | 51.0 | 40.5 |
| 6 or better | 63.9 | 55.2 | 47.9 | 40.9 | 32.9 | 21.5 | 10.7 |
| 7 | 23.2 | 10.4 | 3.5 | 0.3 | [c] | [c] | 0.0 |

2018-19

| SCQF Level | 1 pass or more | 2 passes or more | 3 passes or more | 4 passes or more | 5 passes or more | 6 passes or more | 7 passes or more |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 3 or better | 97.8 | 96.1 | 94.0 | 91.6 | 87.7 | 80.5 | 66.3 |
| 4 or better | 95.9 | 93.6 | 91.2 | 88.2 | 84.0 | 77.1 | 63.5 |
| 5 or better | 85.1 | 77.6 | 70.5 | 63.4 | 55.8 | 47.8 | 37.6 |
| 6 or better | 60.5 | 50.6 | 43.0 | 36.1 | 28.7 | 18.5 | 8.9 |
| 7 | 19.1 | 8.0 | 2.7 | 0.3 | [c] | [c] | 0.0 |

Note 19: A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018-19 and 2019-20. This reflects the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on attainment in years from 2019-20 onwards. Further information can be found in Sections 1.6, 4.1 and 8.7.

Note 20: [c] = value suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosure of personal information. [low] = value less than 0.05% but greater than zero. See Section 7 for a full list of symbols used in the tables.

Section 4.3 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 Sections 1.6 and 4.1, 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 between 2022-23 and earlier years. Any increase or decrease should not be interpreted as indicating improving or worsening performance without further evidence.

Chart 4 shows the proportions of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas who attained one pass or more in National Qualifications at SCQF Levels 4 or better, 5 or better and 6 or better. As described in Sections 1.6 and 4.1, care should be taken when making comparisons between 2022-23 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 1 pass or more in National

Qualifications was 5.9 percentage points. This is slightly wider than in 2021-22, when it was 5.8 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 2021-22 and 2022-23. But it decreased by slightly more for those from the most deprived areas, which 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). 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 the [supplementary tables](#).

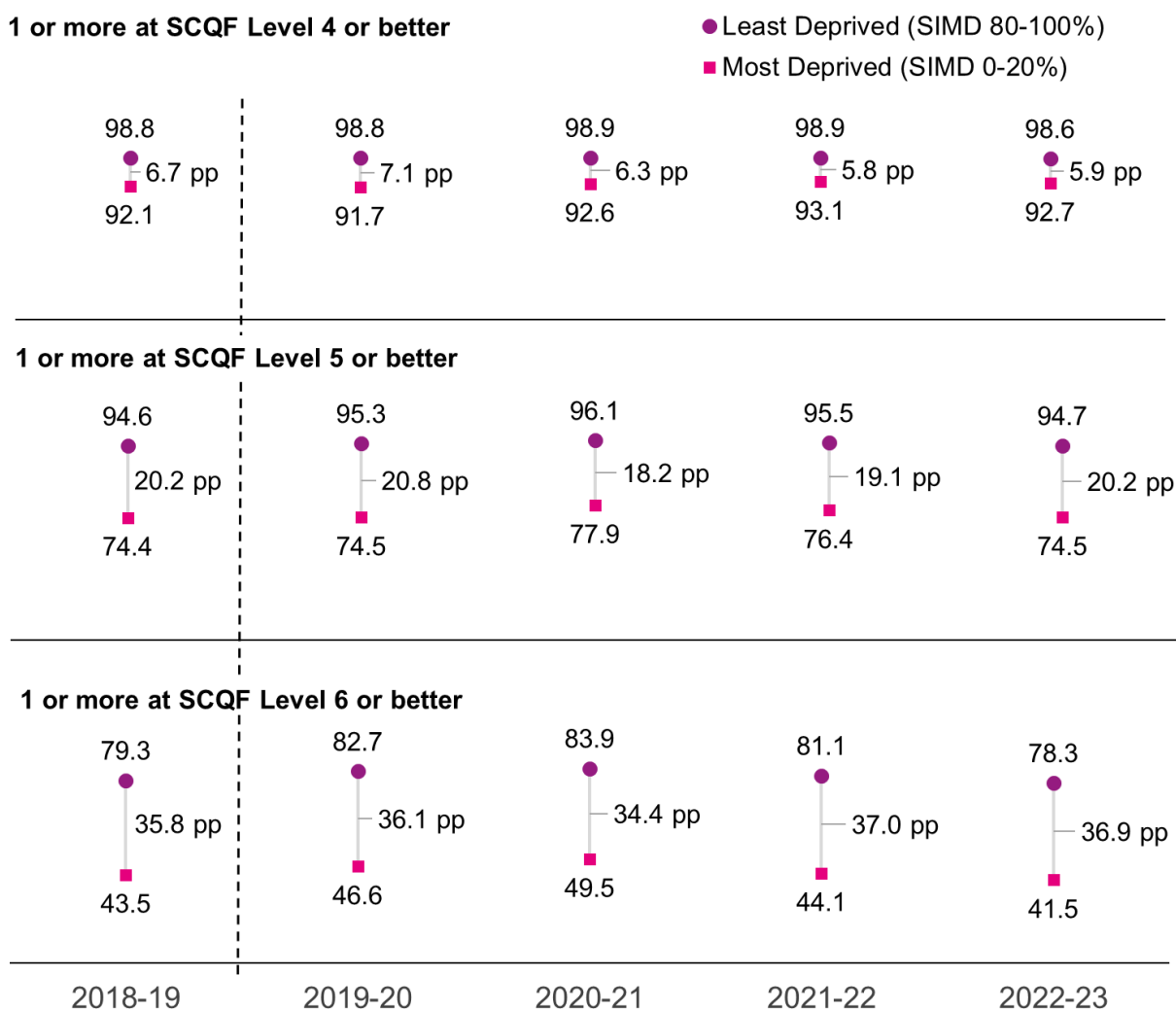
At SCQF Level 5 or better, the gap was 20.2 percentage points in 2022-23. This is wider than in 2021-22 (19.1 percentage points). The proportion attaining 1 pass or more in National Qualifications at this level decreased for school leavers from both the most and the least deprived areas between 2021-22 and 2022-23. But it decreased by slightly 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).

At SCQF Level 6 or better, the gap was 36.9 percentage points in 2022-23. This is slightly narrower than in 2021-22 (37.0 percentage points). The proportion attaining 1 pass or more in National Qualifications decreased for school leavers from both the most and the least deprived areas between 2021-22 and 2022-23. But it decreased by more for those from the least deprived areas, which has led to the gap between the two groups narrowing.

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).

Chart 4: 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 2022-23
 [note 21] [note 22] [note 23]



Note 21: pp = percentage point difference between most and least deprived quintile.

Note 22: Based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (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, 2021-22 and 2022-23. More information on the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#).

Note 23: A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018-19 and 2019-20. This reflects the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on attainment in years from 2019-20 onwards. Further information can be found in Sections 1.6, 4.1 and 8.7.

Section 4.4 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications, by pupil characteristic

Table 6 shows school leaver attainment by pupil characteristic, such as sex and ethnicity. It shows that 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 91.3 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. In both cases, the gap is wider at higher SCQF levels.

In 2022-23 pupils living in Accessible Rural areas and Remote Rural areas are the most likely to achieve National Qualifications at SCQF Level 4 or better. Those living in Accessible Rural and Remote Rural areas are most likely to achieve at SCQF Level 5 or better. And 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. Table 6 shows that a lower percentage of 2022-23 school leavers achieved one pass or more in National Qualifications at all SCQF Levels than in 2021-22, across almost all characteristic breakdowns.

Table 6: Percentage of school leavers by attainment at SCQF Level 4 to 6 or better under the National Qualifications measure, by pupil characteristic, 2021-22 and 2022-23 [note 24] [note 25] [note 26] [note 27] [note 28]

| Pupil Characteristic | 2021-22 | | | 2022-23 | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | 1 or more at SCQF Level 4 or better | 1 or more at SCQF Level 5 or better | 1 or more at SCQF Level 6 or better | 1 or more at SCQF Level 4 or better | 1 or more at SCQF Level 5 or better | 1 or more at SCQF Level 6 or better |
| Sex | | | | | | |
| Male | 96.0 | 85.5 | 56.9 | 95.7 | 83.8 | 53.4 |
| Female | 96.8 | 87.4 | 65.8 | 96.4 | 85.8 | 62.7 |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | |
| White – Scottish | 96.3 | 85.9 | 60.0 | 96.0 | 84.3 | 56.4 |
| White – non-Scottish | 96.5 | 86.4 | 62.0 | 95.5 | 84.1 | 57.9 |
| Mixed or multiple ethnic groups | 97.0 | 91.0 | 71.0 | 96.4 | 89.3 | 71.1 |
| Asian – Indian | [c] | [c] | 83.6 | [c] | 94.9 | 83.3 |
| Asian – Pakistani | 98.7 | 93.3 | 76.6 | 98.6 | 92.4 | 74.5 |
| Asian – Chinese | [c] | [c] | 93.6 | [c] | 98.0 | 91.3 |
| Asian – Other | 98.2 | 93.6 | 76.2 | [c] | 90.8 | 77.6 |
| African/ Black/ Caribbean | 98.8 | 95.1 | 78.1 | 98.1 | 93.2 | 74.2 |
| All other categories | 96.1 | 85.6 | 63.7 | 93.2 | 83.7 | 58.9 |
| Not Disclosed/Not known | 94.9 | 82.9 | 55.9 | 92.8 | 81.3 | 57.0 |
| Urban/Rural | | | | | | |
| Large Urban Areas | 96.1 | 86.0 | 63.0 | 95.7 | 85.0 | 60.5 |
| Other Urban Areas | 96.3 | 85.4 | 59.3 | 95.8 | 83.0 | 55.1 |
| Accessible Small Towns | 96.9 | 87.6 | 62.5 | 96.1 | 85.6 | 57.9 |
| Remote Small Towns | 95.8 | 84.2 | 55.8 | 95.3 | 81.7 | 48.1 |
| Accessible Rural | 97.2 | 89.1 | 63.8 | 97.4 | 87.7 | 60.7 |
| Remote Rural | 96.8 | 89.3 | 62.6 | 96.6 | 88.1 | 58.9 |
| Additional Support Needs | | | | | | |
| ASN | 93.0 | 75.0 | 42.9 | 92.5 | 73.3 | 40.9 |
| No ASN | 98.6 | 93.8 | 73.3 | 98.5 | 93.0 | 70.1 |
| Disabled status | | | | | | |
| Declared or assessed disabled | 87.3 | 66.1 | 34.5 | 86.0 | 66.0 | 34.6 |
| Not declared or assessed disabled | 96.7 | 87.1 | 62.2 | 96.4 | 85.4 | 58.7 |
| All Leavers | 96.4 | 86.4 | 61.3 | 96.0 | 84.8 | 57.9 |

Note 24: Some categories have been grouped together due to small numbers. Some categories (typically 'Asian – Indian' and 'Asian – Chinese') contain between 100-200 leavers and due to relatively small numbers may be subject to fluctuation. Comparisons between groups should take this into account.

Note 25: The 'African/Black/Caribbean' category includes 'African', 'African – Other' and 'Caribbean or Black' categories

Note 26: 'All other categories' includes 'Other – other' and 'Other – Arab'.

Note 27: Pupils who have a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP), Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) or Child's Plan are assessed or declared disabled or have another need.

Note 28: [c] = value suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosure of personal information. (See Section 7 for a full list of symbols used in the tables.)

Section 4.5 School leaver destinations and attainment in National Qualifications

Table 7 shows that for 2022-23, the majority of school leavers with one pass or more in a National Qualification at SCQF Level 6 or Level 7 entered Higher Education (56.8 per cent and 88.0 per cent respectively). For all other leavers, the most common destination was Further Education. For example, 49.4 per cent of leavers whose highest National Qualification was at SCQF Level 5 entered Further Education. This compares to 46.4 per cent of those whose highest qualification was at SCQF Level 4 and 36.0 per cent of those whose highest qualification was at SCQF Level 3. Amongst those with no passes at SCQF Level 3, 25.3 per cent entered Further Education.

Leavers with no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better were the most likely to be in Other Destinations (26.6 per cent), and leavers with one pass or more at SCQF Level 7 were the least likely to be in Other Destinations (0.7 per cent).

Table 7: Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the National Qualifications measure and initial destinations category, 2022-23 [note 29]

| 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 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 3.7 | 56.8 | 88.0 | 40.3 |
| Further Education | 25.3 | 36.0 | 46.4 | 49.4 | 16.8 | 3.0 | 26.6 |
| Training | 17.3 | 19.0 | 11.2 | 4.0 | 0.7 | 0.2 | 3.4 |
| Employment | 21.5 | 17.7 | 27.3 | 37.4 | 23.7 | 7.5 | 24.3 |
| Voluntary Work | 1.0 | 1.8 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.5 |
| Personal Skills Development | 6.4 | 4.6 | 2.4 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.7 |
| Positive Destinations | 73.4 | 79.1 | 88.7 | 95.6 | 98.4 | 99.3 | 95.9 |
| Unemployed Seeking | 8.4 | 10.1 | 6.2 | 2.8 | 1.0 | 0.4 | 2.2 |
| Unemployed Not Seeking | 15.2 | 10.0 | 4.4 | 1.2 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 1.6 |
| Unknown | 3.0 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.3 |
| Other Destinations | 26.6 | 20.9 | 11.3 | 4.4 | 1.6 | 0.7 | 4.1 |
| Number of Leavers | 1,220 | 948 | 6,158 | 14,704 | 20,658 | 11,055 | 54,743 |

Note 29: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

Section 4.6 School leaver attainment in National Qualifications, by local authority

This chapter describes the range of attainment in National Qualifications by school leavers in the 32 local authorities, and compares it to the national level results.

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.

Table 8 shows the percentage of leavers in each local authority – and for Scotland – who attained one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better, SCQF Level 5 or better and SCQF Level 6 or better, in 2022-23. Note that some figures at local authority level have been suppressed due to the small numbers of school leavers involved.

In 2022-23, for one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 and above, attainment in the local authorities under the National Qualifications measure ranges from 91.6 per cent to 99.2 per cent, a range of 7.6 percentage points. For one pass or more SCQF Level 5 or better, National Qualifications attainment ranges from 78.6 per cent to 96.2 per cent, a range of 17.6 percentage points. For one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better, National Qualifications attainment ranges from 48.5 per cent to 84.2 per cent, a range of 35.7 percentage points.

Table 8: Total school leaver attainment under the National Qualifications measure, by local authority, 2022-23 (percentage of leavers) [note 30] [note 31].

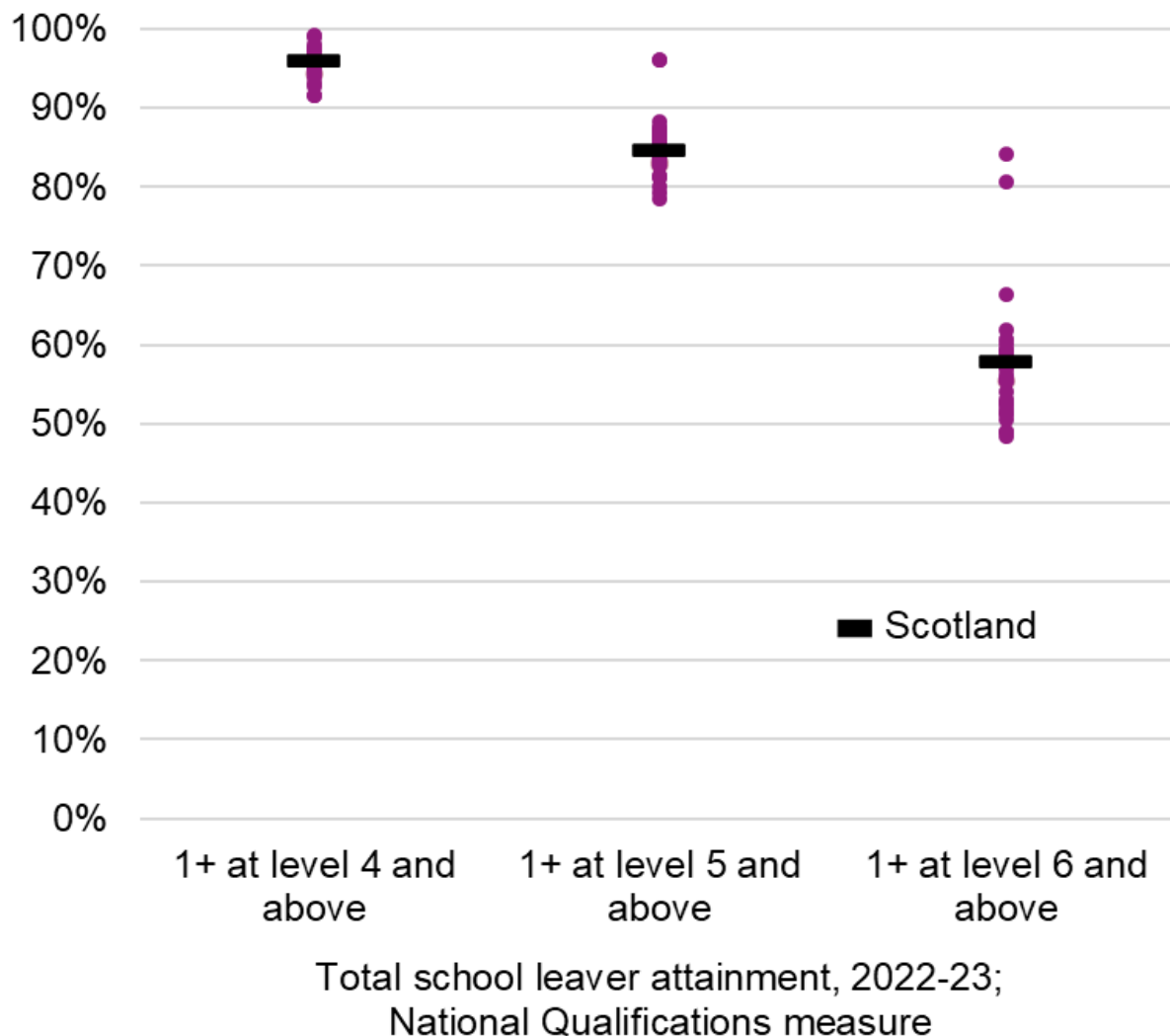
| Local Authority | 1+ at SCQF Level 4 or better | 1+ at SCQF Level 5 or better | 1+ at SCQF Level 6 or better |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| Aberdeen City | 95.9 | 83.3 | 55.5 |
| Aberdeenshire | 96.3 | 87.6 | 57.4 |
| Angus | 94.4 | 82.9 | 52.6 |
| Argyll & Bute | 95.4 | 86.2 | 57.0 |
| Clackmannanshire | 91.6 | 81.3 | 49.0 |
| Dumfries & Galloway | 95.7 | 85.9 | 53.6 |
| Dundee City | 92.9 | 80.0 | 51.4 |
| East Ayrshire | 96.7 | 83.3 | 53.1 |
| East Dunbartonshire | 99.2 | 96.0 | 80.6 |
| East Lothian | 95.4 | 78.6 | 55.4 |
| East Renfrewshire | 99.1 | 96.2 | 84.2 |
| Edinburgh, City of | 96.2 | 83.9 | 62.0 |
| Falkirk | 98.0 | 85.5 | 58.9 |
| Fife | 95.7 | 79.3 | 50.6 |
| Glasgow City | 94.6 | 83.9 | 58.6 |
| Highland | 95.8 | 85.1 | 55.7 |
| Inverclyde | 97.4 | 86.7 | 60.2 |
| Midlothian | 97.8 | 82.8 | 48.5 |
| Moray | 96.3 | 83.7 | 51.9 |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 94.0 | 85.2 | 51.3 |
| North Ayrshire | 96.2 | 82.9 | 54.0 |
| North Lanarkshire | 95.0 | 83.3 | 56.3 |
| Orkney Islands | 95.4 | 87.6 | [c] |
| Perth & Kinross | 96.7 | 86.1 | 59.4 |
| Renfrewshire | 97.2 | 88.2 | 59.4 |
| Scottish Borders | 95.4 | 82.8 | 57.4 |
| Shetland Islands | 97.2 | 87.0 | 55.4 |
| South Ayrshire | 96.3 | 86.6 | 57.8 |
| South Lanarkshire | 97.3 | 87.1 | 60.7 |
| Stirling | 96.9 | 86.2 | 66.5 |
| West Dunbartonshire | 93.1 | 81.5 | 52.6 |
| West Lothian | 97.0 | 85.6 | 57.2 |
| Scotland | 96.0 | 84.8 | 57.9 |

Note 30: [c] value suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosure of personal information

Note 31: keep in mind the context of each local authority if making comparisons between them.

Chart 5 also illustrates the range in attainment under the National Qualifications measure between the local authorities for which data can be presented. It shows that the range in attainment increases as the SCQF level considered increases.

Chart 5. Total school leaver attainment under the National Qualifications measure, by local authority, 2022-23 (percentage of leavers) [note 32]



Note 32: keep in mind the context of each local authority if making comparisons between them.

Further data on attainment by local authority for years 2009-10 to 2022-23 are provided in the [supplementary tables](#). The supplementary tables also include a breakdown of attainment in National Qualifications in each local authority by deprivation.

Section 5. School leaver attainment in All SCQF qualifications

Section 5.1 Key points

- 87.9 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better under the All SCQF measure in 2022-23. This is a decrease from 2021-22 (88.9 per cent).
- 65.6 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better under the All SCQF measure in 2022-23. This is a decrease from 2021-22 (67.1 per cent).
- 2.0 per cent of school leavers attained no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better under the All SCQF measure in 2022-23. This is an increase from 2021-22 (1.9 per cent).
- The different approaches to determining results in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 due to the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic should be kept in mind when considering changes in school leaver attainment between years.

The statistics presented in Section 5 relate to attainment in all qualifications on the SCQF. These include the National Qualifications (National Courses and Skills for Work), as well as other qualifications available from other award providers. **It is important to note that, for example, the SCQF Level 6 figures presented in this section cover a wider range of qualifications than just Highers.** There is more information in section 1.5.

The attainment figures presented in these sections are likely to be higher than those presented in Section 4 because the All SCQF measure includes attainment in other qualifications in addition to National Qualifications. As explained in Section 1.5.3, these differences are likely to be bigger for higher numbers of passes.

As outlined in Section 1.5 there are a number of features of this measure which need to be considered when interpreting the figures, especially when making comparisons over time or between local authorities. In particular, the qualifications included in this measure can be associated with different numbers of SCQF credit points (section 8.4.2). Some qualifications are associated with smaller numbers of SCQF credit points than others. The numbers of pupils attaining these qualifications can vary over time and between local authorities.

There are also some other methodological differences which mean that the number of leavers referred to in the statistics in this section may be different to the number referred to in statistics in the other sections of this publication. See section 8.4 for more information.

As described in section 1.6, the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) led to changes in the way that many qualifications were assessed and graded in the years 2020 to 2023. This will have had an impact on the attainment of school leavers in years

2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23. We have placed a **dashed line break** in the series 2018-19 and 2019-20 to highlight where the change happened. Care must be taken when comparing attainment of school leavers in 2018-19 and before, with that of school leavers in 2019-20 and beyond. 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.

Section 5.2 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure

Table 9 shows the highest SCQF level achieved by school leavers under the All SCQF measure. In 2022-23, 1.5 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 3 as their highest level, 8.5 per cent with one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 and 22.3 per cent with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5. A total of 32.4 per cent of 2022-23 school leavers therefore left with one pass or more at SCQF Levels 3 to 5 as their highest qualification. This was an increase from 2021-22, when 31.0 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Levels 3 to 5 as their highest qualification.

Table 9 also shows that, based on the All SCQF measure, 40.2 per cent of 2022-23 school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 as their highest level, and 25.4 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 7. These proportions have decreased from 2021-22, when 41.1 per cent of leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 as their highest level, and 26.0 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 7.

A small proportion (2.0 per cent) of school leavers attained no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better in 2022-23, under the All SCQF measure. This is very similar to the proportions observed over the last few years.

In addition to the impact of alternative approaches to certification resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the change in the make-up of the school leaver cohort in 2022-23 compared to recent years may have had an effect on overall school leaver attainment. As described in section 2.2, 2022-23 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.

Table 9: Percentage of school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the All SCQF measure, 2018-19 to 2022-23 [note 33]

| SCQF Level | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| No passes at SCQF 3 or better | 2.0 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 2.0 |
| SCQF Level 3 | 1.7 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| SCQF Level 4 | 8.4 | 8.1 | 7.0 | 7.8 | 8.5 |
| SCQF Level 5 | 21.8 | 19.8 | 19.3 | 21.8 | 22.3 |
| SCQF Level 6 | 44.1 | 42.7 | 42.2 | 41.1 | 40.2 |
| SCQF Level 7 | 22.1 | 25.5 | 28.0 | 26.0 | 25.4 |
| Number of leavers | 49,717 | 47,430 | 50,719 | 55,211 | 54,719 |

Note 33: A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018-19 and 2019-20. This reflects the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on attainment in years from 2019-20 onwards. Further information can be found in sections 1.6, 5.1 and 8.7.

Table 10 provides information on the number of passes achieved by school leavers at each SCQF Level or better, based on the All SCQF measure. In 2022-23, 87.9 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better, and 65.6 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better. These proportions have both decreased from 2021-22, when 88.9 per cent of school leavers left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better, and 67.1 per cent left with one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better.

A time series from 2009-10 to 2022-23 is presented in Table 10 in the [supplementary tables](#).

Table 10: Leaver attainment by SCQF Level or better and number of passes achieved under the All SCQF measure, percentage of leavers; 2018-19 to 2022-23 [note 34] [note 35]

2022-23

| SCQF Level | 1 pass or more | 2 passes or more | 3 passes or more | 4 passes or more | 5 passes or more | 6 passes or more | 7 passes or more |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3 or better | 98.0 | 96.4 | 94.2 | 91.9 | 88.6 | 83.0 | 74.2 |
| 4 or better | 96.5 | 94.0 | 91.5 | 88.7 | 85.0 | 79.7 | 71.2 |
| 5 or better | 87.9 | 82.2 | 77.0 | 71.8 | 66.3 | 59.9 | 52.1 |
| 6 or better | 65.6 | 57.4 | 51.1 | 44.9 | 37.9 | 28.4 | 18.3 |
| 7 | 25.4 | 12.1 | 4.6 | 0.7 | 0.1 | [low] | [low] |

2021-22

| SCQF Level | 1 pass or more | 2 passes or more | 3 passes or more | 4 passes or more | 5 passes or more | 6 passes or more | 7 passes or more |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3 or better | 98.1 | 96.8 | 95.0 | 92.9 | 90.1 | 84.6 | 75.7 |
| 4 or better | 96.7 | 94.6 | 92.5 | 89.9 | 86.5 | 81.2 | 72.3 |
| 5 or better | 88.9 | 83.5 | 78.6 | 73.5 | 67.7 | 60.9 | 52.7 |
| 6 or better | 67.1 | 59.2 | 53.0 | 46.3 | 38.7 | 28.2 | 17.4 |
| 7 | 26.0 | 12.3 | 4.4 | 0.7 | 0.1 | [low] | [low] |

2020-21

| SCQF Level | 1 pass or more | 2 passes or more | 3 passes or more | 4 passes or more | 5 passes or more | 6 passes or more | 7 passes or more |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3 or better | 98.1 | 96.8 | 95.1 | 93.1 | 90.5 | 85.8 | 77.2 |
| 4 or better | 96.5 | 94.4 | 92.5 | 90.1 | 87.1 | 82.3 | 73.9 |
| 5 or better | 89.5 | 84.9 | 80.6 | 75.8 | 70.4 | 63.7 | 55.0 |
| 6 or better | 70.2 | 63.0 | 56.6 | 49.7 | 42.1 | 31.1 | 19.6 |
| 7 | 28.0 | 13.4 | 4.8 | 0.7 | 0.1 | [low] | 0.0 |

2019-20

| SCQF Level | 1 pass or more | 2 passes or more | 3 passes or more | 4 passes or more | 5 passes or more | 6 passes or more | 7 passes or more |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3 or better | 98.1 | 96.6 | 94.6 | 92.5 | 89.6 | 84.3 | 74.6 |
| 4 or better | 96.1 | 93.9 | 91.7 | 89.2 | 85.8 | 80.5 | 71.1 |
| 5 or better | 88.0 | 82.7 | 78.2 | 73.2 | 67.5 | 60.8 | 51.6 |
| 6 or better | 68.2 | 61.2 | 54.7 | 47.9 | 40.2 | 29.2 | 17.5 |
| 7 | 25.5 | 11.8 | 4.1 | 0.5 | [low] | [low] | 0.0 |

2018-19

| SCQF Level | 1 pass or more | 2 passes or more | 3 passes or more | 4 passes or more | 5 passes or more | 6 passes or more | 7 passes or more |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 3 or better | 98.0 | 96.4 | 94.5 | 92.3 | 89.1 | 83.2 | 72.2 |
| 4 or better | 96.3 | 94.0 | 91.8 | 89.1 | 85.5 | 79.6 | 68.9 |
| 5 or better | 87.9 | 82.1 | 76.7 | 70.9 | 64.3 | 56.6 | 46.2 |
| 6 or better | 66.2 | 57.9 | 50.9 | 43.8 | 36.0 | 25.1 | 14.4 |
| 7 | 22.1 | 9.6 | 3.4 | 0.4 | [low] | [low] | 0.0 |

Note 34: A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018-19 and 2019-20. This reflects the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on attainment in years from 2019-20 onwards. Further information can be found in sections 1.6, 5.1 and 8.7.

Note 35: [low] = value less than 0.05% but greater than zero. See Section 7 for a list of all symbols used in the tables.

Section 5.3 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).

Chart 6 shows the proportions of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas who attained 1 pass or more at SCQF Levels 4 or better, 5 or better and 6 or better, as measured under the All SCQF measure.

The All SCQF measures are not currently amongst the 13 key National Improvement Framework measures (which are presented in Section 4.3) which are used to assess progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

As described in Sections 1.6 and 4.1, 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 2022-23 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 5.1 percentage points in 2022-23. This has narrowed from 5.3 percentage points in 2021-22. The proportion attaining one pass or more at this level decreased for school leavers from both the most and the least deprived areas between 2021-22 and 2022-23. But it decreased by more for those from the least deprived areas, which has led to the gap between the two groups narrowing.

The gap is currently at its narrowest since 2009-10, having started at 11.0 percentage points in 2009-10 and having narrowed almost every year since. 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 the [supplementary tables](#).

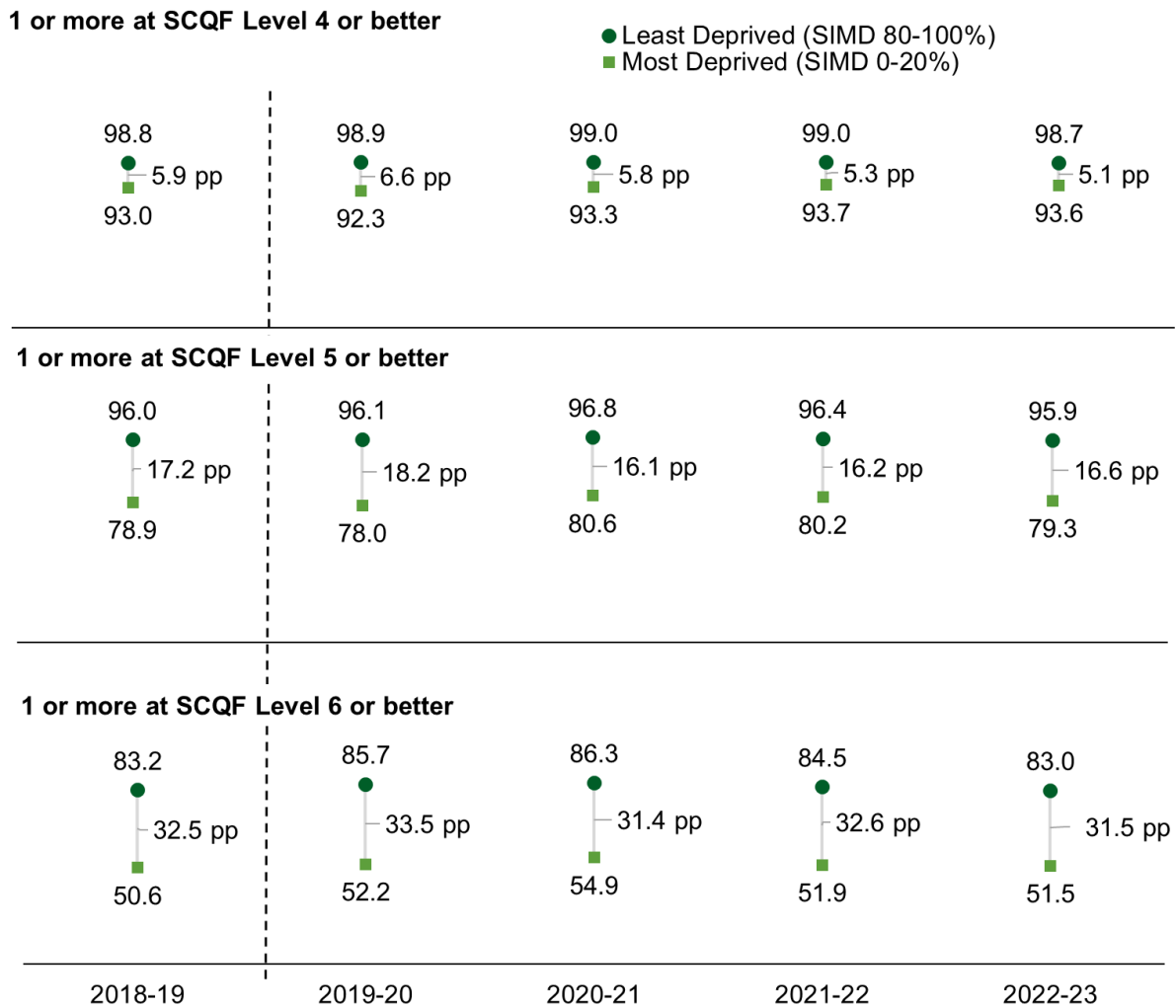
At SCQF Level 5 or better, the attainment gap under the All SCQF measure was 16.6 percentage points in 2022-23. This is wider than in 2021-22 (16.2 percentage points). The proportion attaining 1 pass or more decreased for school leavers from both the most and the least deprived areas between 2021-22 and 2022-23. But it decreased by more for those from the most deprived areas, which has led to the gap 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). The gap in 2022-23 is narrower than in all years other than 2020-21 and 2021-22.

At SCQF Level 6 or better, the attainment gap under the All SCQF measure was 31.5 percentage points in 2022-23. This is narrower than in 2021-22 (32.6 percentage points). The proportion attaining one pass or more decreased for school leavers from both the most and the least deprived areas between 2021-22 and 2022-23. But it decreased by more for those from the least deprived areas, which has led to the gap between the two groups narrowing.

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 2022-23 is narrower than in all years other than 2020-21.

Chart 6: 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 2022-23 [note 36] [note 37] [note 38]



Note 36: pp = percentage point difference between most and least deprived quintile.

Note 37: Based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (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, 2021-22 and 2022-23. More information on the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#).

Note 38: A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018-19 and 2019-20. This reflects the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on attainment in years from 2019-20 onwards. Further information can be found in sections 1.6, 5.1 and 8.7.

Section 5.4 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by pupil characteristic

Table 11 shows school leaver attainment by pupil characteristic, such as sex and ethnicity, based on the All SCQF measure. It shows that 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 91.7 per cent achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better in 2022-23.

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. In both cases, the gap is wider at higher SCQF levels.

In 2022-23 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. And 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. Table 11 shows that a lower percentage of 2022-23 school leavers achieved one pass or more at all SCQF Levels than in 2021-22, across almost all characteristic breakdowns.

Table 11: Percentage of school leavers attaining at SCQF Level 4 to 6 or better under the All SCQF measure, by pupil characteristic, 2021-22 and 2022-23 [note 39] [note 40] [note 41] [note 42] [note 43]

| Pupil Characteristic | 2021-22 | | | 2022-23 | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | 1 or more at SCQF Level 4 or better | 1 or more at SCQF Level 5 or better | 1 or more at SCQF Level 6 or better | 1 or more at SCQF Level 4 or better | 1 or more at SCQF Level 5 or better | 1 or more at SCQF Level 6 or better |
| Sex | | | | | | |
| Male | 96.4 | 88.2 | 63.4 | 96.2 | 87.3 | 61.8 |
| Female | 97.1 | 89.8 | 71.0 | 96.7 | 88.6 | 69.7 |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | |
| White – Scottish | 96.6 | 88.5 | 66.0 | 96.5 | 87.5 | 64.3 |
| White – non-Scottish | 96.7 | 89.0 | 67.5 | 95.9 | 87.3 | 64.7 |
| Mixed or multiple ethnic groups | 97.5 | 92.2 | 76.3 | 97.4 | 91.6 | 76.3 |
| Asian – Indian | [c] | 96.8 | 86.3 | [c] | [c] | 88.2 |
| Asian – Pakistani | 98.7 | 95.4 | 82.6 | 99.0 | 94.6 | 82.3 |
| Asian – Chinese | [c] | 98.0 | 94.4 | [c] | [c] | 91.7 |
| Asian – Other | 98.2 | 94.4 | 81.0 | [c] | 93.9 | 82.8 |
| African/ Black/ Caribbean | 99.0 | 96.3 | 84.9 | 98.2 | 95.2 | 82.5 |
| All other categories | 96.3 | 87.7 | 67.8 | 94.1 | 87.3 | 67.7 |
| Not Disclosed/Not known | 95.4 | 86.4 | 61.1 | 93.4 | 85.3 | 63.8 |
| Urban/Rural | | | | | | |
| Large Urban Areas | 96.3 | 88.4 | 67.9 | 96.2 | 87.7 | 67.4 |
| Other Urban Areas | 96.7 | 88.1 | 66.5 | 96.2 | 86.8 | 64.5 |
| Accessible Small Towns | 97.1 | 89.8 | 68.0 | 96.3 | 88.3 | 64.8 |
| Remote Small Towns | 96.1 | 86.6 | 60.2 | 95.4 | 85.3 | 53.8 |
| Accessible Rural | 97.4 | 91.8 | 69.0 | 97.7 | 90.6 | 67.8 |
| Remote Rural | 96.9 | 91.4 | 66.9 | 97.0 | 90.7 | 64.5 |
| Additional Support Needs | | | | | | |
| ASN | 93.6 | 79.3 | 50.5 | 93.4 | 78.3 | 50.4 |
| No ASN | 98.7 | 95.2 | 77.9 | 98.7 | 94.7 | 76.4 |
| Disabled status | | | | | | |
| Declared or assessed disabled | 88.4 | 71.3 | 40.9 | 87.0 | 71.8 | 43.4 |
| Not declared or assessed disabled | 97.0 | 89.5 | 68.0 | 96.8 | 88.5 | 66.4 |
| All Leavers | 96.7 | 88.9 | 67.1 | 96.5 | 87.9 | 65.6 |

Note 39: Some categories have been grouped together due to small numbers. Some categories (typically 'Asian – Indian' and 'Asian – Chinese') contain between 100-200 leavers and due to relatively small numbers may be subject to fluctuation. Comparisons between groups should take this into account.

Note 40: The 'African/Black/Caribbean' category includes 'African', 'African – Other' and 'Caribbean or Black' categories

Note 41: 'All other categories' includes 'Other – other' and 'Other – Arab'.

Note 42: Pupils who have a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP), Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) or Child's Plan are assessed or declared disabled or have another need.

Note 43: [c] = value suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosure of personal information. See Section 7 for a full list of symbols used in the tables.

Section 5.5 School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by local authority

This chapter describes the range of attainment under the All SCQF measure by school leavers in the 32 local authorities and compares it to the national level results. It is important to remember that the All SCQF measure includes a wide range of qualifications (section 1.5). So, for example, **figures presented for SCQF Level 6 in this section cover a wider range of qualifications than just Highers.**

As outlined in sections 5.1 and 8.3.4, 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 in Section 8.3.4 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 2017-18 to 2022-23. 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 1.5.2 and 8.3.3).

There can also be variation in presentation policy within a single local authority over time, which may affect the attainment figures.

Table 12 shows the percentage of school leavers in each local authority – and for Scotland – who attained one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better, SCQF Level 5 or better and SCQF Level 6 or better, in 2022-23, under the All SCQF measure. Be aware some figures at local authority level have been suppressed due to the small numbers of school leavers involved.

In 2022-23, for one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better, attainment in the local authorities under the All SCQF measure ranges from 92.0 per cent to 99.2 per cent, a range of 7.2 percentage points. For one pass or more SCQF Level 5 or better, All SCQF attainment ranges from 82.1 per cent to 96.9 per cent, a range of 14.8 percentage points. For one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better, All SCQF attainment ranges from 53.9 per cent to 87.6 per cent, a range of 33.7 percentage points.

Table 12. Total school leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by local authority, 2022-23 (percentage of leavers) [note 44] [note 45].

| Local Authority | 1+ at SCQF Level 4 or better | 1+ at SCQF Level 5 or better | 1+ at SCQF Level 6 or better |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| Aberdeen City | 96.0 | 88.0 | 62.0 |
| Aberdeenshire | 96.8 | 90.4 | 64.3 |
| Angus | 94.9 | 86.1 | 60.1 |
| Argyll & Bute | 95.6 | 89.1 | 62.6 |
| Clackmannanshire | 92.0 | 86.2 | 53.9 |
| Dumfries & Galloway | 96.3 | 88.4 | 58.3 |
| Dundee City | 93.2 | 83.1 | 59.1 |
| East Ayrshire | 97.3 | 85.6 | 60.0 |
| East Dunbartonshire | 99.2 | 96.8 | 85.2 |
| East Lothian | 95.5 | 82.1 | 60.7 |
| East Renfrewshire | 99.1 | 96.9 | 87.6 |
| Edinburgh, City of | 96.6 | 86.8 | 68.1 |
| Falkirk | 98.3 | 88.4 | 68.1 |
| Fife | 96.0 | 83.4 | 61.6 |
| Glasgow City | 95.6 | 86.3 | 65.7 |
| Highland | 96.2 | 87.5 | 61.3 |
| Inverclyde | 97.9 | 88.8 | 65.7 |
| Midlothian | 98.1 | 86.9 | 57.1 |
| Moray | 96.2 | 86.9 | 56.6 |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 94.3 | 87.2 | 54.0 |
| North Ayrshire | 96.7 | 88.5 | 66.2 |
| North Lanarkshire | 95.5 | 85.8 | 61.9 |
| Orkney Islands | 95.9 | 90.5 | [c] |
| Perth & Kinross | 97.1 | 89.8 | 65.7 |
| Renfrewshire | 97.5 | 90.9 | 70.5 |
| Scottish Borders | 95.7 | 86.5 | 61.9 |
| Shetland Islands | 98.2 | 89.5 | 61.8 |
| South Ayrshire | 97.0 | 88.8 | 63.0 |
| South Lanarkshire | 97.4 | 90.0 | 67.0 |
| Stirling | 97.3 | 88.9 | 72.3 |
| West Dunbartonshire | 93.8 | 83.0 | 58.5 |
| West Lothian | 97.7 | 94.1 | 85.2 |
| Scotland | 96.5 | 87.9 | 65.6 |

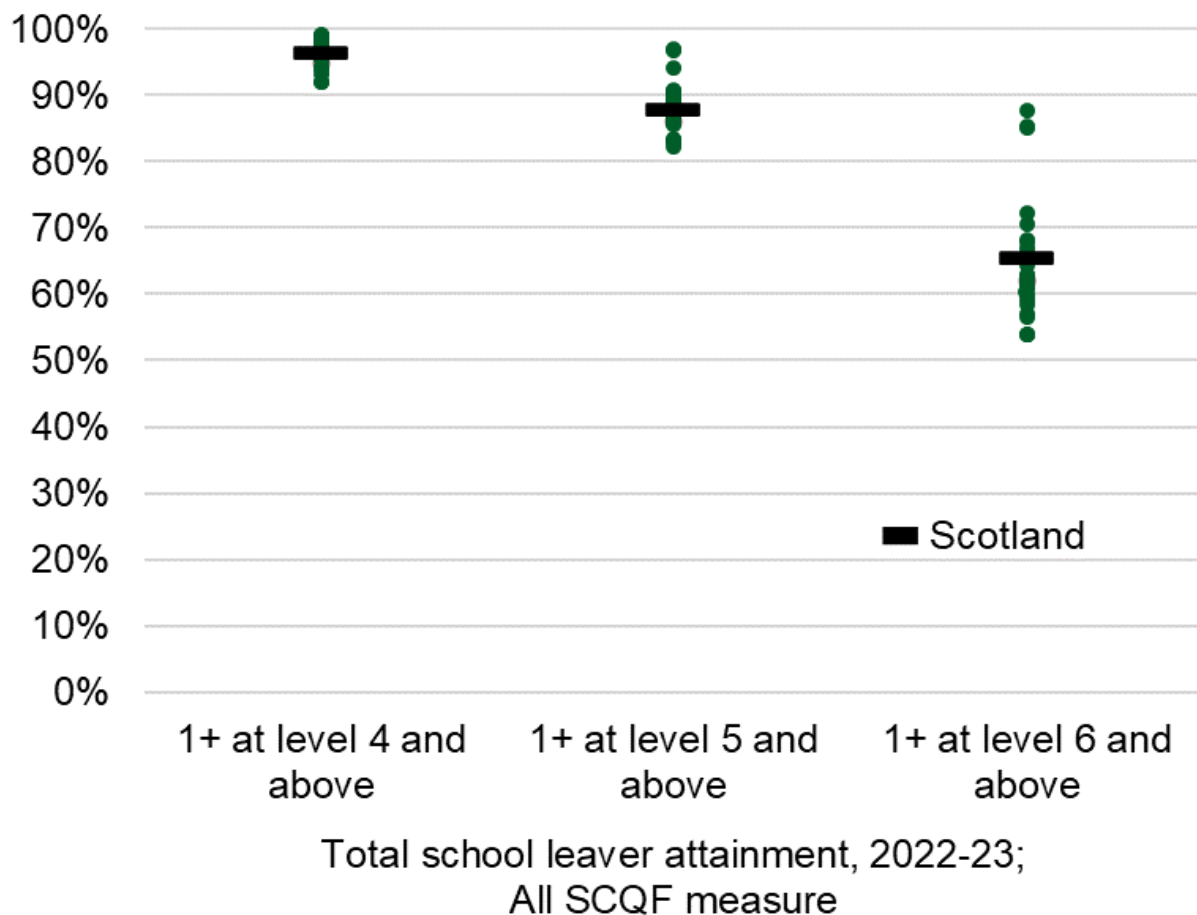
Note 44: [c] value suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosure of personal information

Note 45: Keep in mind the context of each local authority if making comparisons between them.

When compared to the equivalent data for the National Qualifications measure in Section 4.6 it is apparent that the size of 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.

Chart 7 also illustrates the range in attainment under the All SCQF measure between the local authorities for which data can be presented. It shows that the range in attainment increases as the SCQF level considered increases.

Chart 7. Total school leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure, by local authority, 2022-23 (percentage of leavers) [note 46].



Note 46: Keep in mind the context of each local authority if making comparisons between them.

Further data on attainment by local authority for years 2009-10 to 2022-23 are provided in the [supplementary tables](#). The supplementary tables also include a breakdown of attainment under the All SCQF measure in each local authority by deprivation.

Section 6. Other groups of qualifications

Section 6.1 Key points

- In 2022-23, 81.5 per cent of school leavers had attained literacy at SCQF Level 5 and above. This is slightly lower than in 2021-22 when the figure was 82.0 per cent.
- In 2022-23, 70.8 per cent of school leavers had attained numeracy at SCQF Level 5 and above. This is slightly higher than in 2021-22 when the figure was 70.7 per cent.
- In 2022-23, 30.4 per cent of 2022-23 mainstream and special school leavers had achieved one or more vocational qualifications at SCQF Level 5 or better. This compares to 27.2 per cent in 2021-22, and to 7.3 per cent in 2013-14.

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 refer to leavers from mainstream and special schools.

Previous versions of this publication have included an 'All SQA Qualifications Attainment' measure as statistics in development (previously referred to as Experimental Statistics). These have not been updated for this release on the basis that the All SCQF measure (Section 5) provides a more complete picture of wider attainment amongst school leavers and so replaces the All SQA Qualifications measure. The 'All SCQF Qualifications Attainment' measure time series from 2009-10 to 2021-22 is still available in the [supplementary tables of last year's publication Summary statistics for attainment and initial leaver destinations no. 5: 2023 edition](#).

Section 6.2 Literacy and Numeracy levels achieved by school leavers

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

A range of courses are included in the literacy and numeracy measures, as set out in Section 8.8. 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 1.6, 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 2022-23 and earlier years. Any increase or decrease should not be interpreted as indicating improving or worsening performance without further evidence.

Table 13 shows the percentage of mainstream school leavers attaining literacy and numeracy at SCQF Levels 3 to 5 or better. At each level, more leavers attained literacy skills than numeracy skills, and this was more marked at higher SCQF levels.

At SCQF Level 3 or better, 95.9 per cent of 2022-23 school leavers attained literacy and 95.3 per cent attained numeracy. At SCQF Level 4 or better, 93.9 per cent of school leavers attained literacy and 90.9 per cent attained numeracy. At SCQF Level 5 or better, 81.5 per cent of school leavers attained literacy and 70.8 per cent attained this level in numeracy.

Table 13: Leaver attainment in literacy and numeracy by SCQF Level, percentage of leavers, 2018-19 to 2022-23 [note 47]

| | Literacy | | | | |
|--------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| SCQF Level | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
| 3 or better | 96.1 | 96.2 | 96.5 | 96.3 | 95.9 |
| 4 or better | 93.9 | 93.9 | 94.6 | 94.4 | 93.9 |
| 5 or better | 81.7 | 81.7 | 83.4 | 82.0 | 81.5 |

| | Numeracy | | | | |
|-------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| SCQF Level | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
| 3 or better | 95.8 | 96.1 | 96.1 | 95.9 | 95.3 |
| 4 or better | 91.4 | 91.6 | 91.6 | 91.3 | 90.9 |
| 5 or better | 68.7 | 71.0 | 72.4 | 70.7 | 70.8 |

Note 47: A dashed line break has been placed between the attainment figures for 2018-19 and 2019-20. This reflects the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on attainment in years from 2019-20 onwards. Further information can be found in sections 1.6 and 8.7.

Section 6.3 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.

Table Z2.1b in the [supplementary tables](#) shows that 30.4 per cent of 2022-23 mainstream and special school leavers achieved one or more vocational qualifications at SCQF Level 5 or better. This compares to 27.2 per cent in 2021-22, and to 7.3 per cent in 2013-14.

Section 6.4 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.

[Supplementary table](#) Z1.1 covers the number of school leavers between 2019/20, and 2022/23 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. 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 6.3).

SQA provides two extracts of data to the Scottish Government (SG); one in August (pre-review data) and one in December (post-review data). The data in table Z1.1 includes Foundation Apprenticeship attainment:

- (i) that had been certified by the date on which the data was taken for the first extract (August 2023) and had a result date between 01 August 2022 and 31 July 2023,
- (ii) where a Foundation Apprenticeship was recorded on the first data extract with a result of E (this means that the FA was evaluated but did not have the required components to obtain a result) and then obtained the required components by the time of the second extract (December) or,
- (iii) for which a Letter of Recognition (LoR) was issued. Note: The LoR was introduced in 2020 as a short-term solution during the pandemic and was issued to some students who were on track to achieve the full FA award but were unable to complete all components due to Covid-19 restrictions. Similarly, in 2021 a LoR was issued to some Accountancy FA students due to continued disruption to the exam process for professional accountancy units.

Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF level 6 have been available since 2016 and were delivered over two years initially, with a shorter more intensive one-year delivery option introduced as the qualification became embedded in schools. The first set of school leavers to attain Foundation Apprenticeships would have left school in 2018. However, table Z1.1 presents data for 2019/2020 onwards.

Skills Development Scotland has been working with SQA, the Scottish Government and others to improve the data recording of Foundation Apprenticeships in school attainment data. In 2021/22, the funding mechanism for FA changed, with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) taking responsibility for funding any FAs delivered through colleges. SDS retain responsibility for funding FAs that are delivered via independent Learning Providers or Local Authorities.

The data in this table, designated as Official Statistics in Development, provide a valid indication of the number of school leavers who attained a Foundation Apprenticeship. Despite this, there will be some completed Foundation Apprenticeships that have not been included, largely due to timing variances in reporting across FA learning providers.

Work to capture all Foundation Apprenticeship results continued throughout 2023 and additional, updated information will be included in the joint SDS/SFC annual FA progress report, due for publication later this year. The latest version of this report (2022) is available from the [SDS website](#). Please note that data published in SDS / SFC reports relates to individual Foundation Apprenticeship cohorts, rather than school leavers as presented in these statistics.

These statistics are being published as Official Statistics in Development to provide useful information for users, while reflecting that they are undergoing testing to ensure they meet quality standards of Official Statistics in future. The statistics are undergoing ongoing development work with stakeholders including SDS, SFC and SQA. They will remain with the 'Experimental' label for the duration of this work as more knowledge and quality improvements are built into the data to improve coverage in future outputs. Outputs will be compared on an ongoing basis with other sources to ensure that statistics presented are of sufficient quality.

[Supplementary tables](#) are available as supporting files to this publication.

Section 7. Glossary and symbols used

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% 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% 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% but greater than zero.

Section 8. Data, Methodology and Sources

Section 8.1 Leaver destinations

Source and Quality Assurance

School leaver destination data is sourced from the Opportunities for All shared dataset which is managed and hosted by [Skills Development Scotland](#) (SDS) on behalf of partners. The data is held on the SDS operational Customer Support System (CSS). This data set contains information shared by local authorities, colleges, Scottish Funding Council, Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) via a secure online portal known as the 16+ Data Hub.

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 works 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.

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. In addition, final checks of shared data are made to ensure destinations are consistent with data sources e.g. matching information about modern or graduate apprentices.

Methodology

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

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

Definitions of the destination categories included in this publication can be found in Section 7.

Throughout this publication the initial destination statistics exclude special school leavers from the calculations. Initial destination statistics which include special school leavers can be found in table L3.1 of the [supplementary tables](#).

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, which were previously used to update the status of individuals to 'unemployed seeking'.

For releases of these statistics up to and including 2019-20, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) did not receive data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on Universal Credit claimants.

SDS now receives UC data from DWP, which they used to validate the initial destinations of school leavers for 2020-21, 2021-22 and again in 2022-23.

It is likely that this UC data has had a limited impact on the initial destination figures presented at a national level. 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 most cases, have confirmed the statuses of school leavers which had already been determined through this engagement.

Section 8.2 The National Qualifications measure

8.2.1 The National Qualifications measure: general methodology

Source and Quality Assurance

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

SQA provide two extracts of data to the Scottish Government (SG): one in August (pre-appeals data) and one in December (post-appeals data). The December extract is used in this publication.

For 2023, the August data extract includes records with a result date between 01 August 2022 and 31 July 2023 (where a candidate has been entered, has a final result or has been certificated), Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) credit information, SCQF credit points, SCQF levels and qualification types (where available) and excludes records on qualification types that are out of scope.

The SQA data extract is merged with school roll data provided by the Scottish Government (Scottish Candidate Number (SCN), centre number and stage information) from the SG pupil census. Data are retained and provided to the

Scottish Government only where there is a match by SCN on the SQA data extract and the school roll data. This ensures SQA only provide records for which Scottish Government have legitimate interest to process.

The December data extract is formed of the August data extract, updated with information from the results of appeals. The December extract contains records provided in the August attainment data transfer which match with the SQA APS on SCN and product code. Any records that were present in the August extract, but are no longer present in SQA APS, will not feature in the December extract; such changes will typically be due to course withdrawals/changes.

Methodology

The National Qualification attainment data presented in this publication (and [supplementary tables](#)) include qualifications achieved throughout all stages of a pupil's schooling.

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

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

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

Attainment statistics exclude special school pupils unless otherwise stated.

8.2.2 Learning hours and 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. All of the qualifications counted in the National Qualifications measure at a given SCQF Level have the same number of notional learning hours. So, for example, at SCQF Level 6, all Highers are associated with 24 SCQF credit points or 240 notional hours of learning.

Section 8.3 The All SCQF measure

8.3.1 The All SCQF measure: general methodology

Source, Quality Assurance and Methodology

This measure includes attainment data from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) - including but not limited to National Qualifications - and from a number of other award providers.

SQA data is extracted from the live SQA Awards Processing System and provided to the Scottish Government twice yearly, as described in section 8.2.1.

Attainment data from other award providers is received by the Scottish Government in July each year. Each award provider submits a file containing attainment records for the academic year just gone (i.e. from 01 August to mid-July). The data includes information about the qualification type, SCQF level, SCQF credit points and grade of each award, as well as the Scottish Candidate Number of the pupil and the centre number of the presenting centre.

Wider award providers are given the opportunity to submit a revised attainment file in December each year with records updated to reflect the outcomes of appeals. Only amended records that were present in the July data are accepted in December – no new attainment is added. Where applicable, the December (i.e. post-appeals) version of these attainment files are used in this publication.

Attainment records can only be included if received from providers in the correct timescales and with a valid Scottish Candidate Number attached. We endeavour to include as many award providers as possible and encourage schools and local authorities to let us know of any new providers as soon as they begin offering qualifications within their school, so that we can get in touch with them. Only awards which are on the SCQF framework are included.

The qualifications included in the All SCQF measure can be associated with different numbers of SCQF credit points. More information can be found in Section 8.4.2.

As for the National Qualifications measure, the All SCQF measure uses the 'latest and best' approach where only the best result within a subject is counted.

8.3.2 Numbers of qualifications included in the All SCQF measure over time

When considering changes in attainment over time under the All SCQF measure, it is important to keep in mind that the numbers of qualifications included in the measure has changed over time. There are a number of reasons for this. For example, it could be because new providers or courses have been added to the SCQF, it could be because data has been received for courses or from providers for

which data has previously not been provided or it could reflect changing presentation policies in schools or local authorities.

Generally speaking, the range of qualifications in which school leavers have gained attainment has been increasing over time. Further information is available on request.

8.3.3 Sizes of qualifications included in the All SCQF measure over time

Just as the numbers of qualifications included in the All SCQF measure can change over time, so can the types of qualifications and the numbers of SCQF credit points associated with them.

The proportions of qualifications gained by school leavers that are associated with one or two SCQF credit points has increased over time, particularly since 2018-19. Almost three per cent of qualifications gained by school leavers at SCQF level 6 or above under the All SCQF measure in 2022-23 were associated with one or two SCQF credit points, up from around zero in 2017-18.

8.3.4 Variation between local authorities under the All SCQF measure, and over time

Just as there can be differences in the make-up of the qualifications included in the All SCQF measure over time, there can be differences in attainment from one local authority to another due to differing presentation policies. And there can also be variation within a single local authority over time.

Table 14 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, at Scotland level and across the local authorities. There is considerable variation between local authorities, and also over time within individual local authorities. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons between local authorities and when comparing attainment over time within individual local authorities.

Table 14: Proportion of all All SCQF qualifications attained by school leavers at SCQF Level 6 and above that were associated with 1-2 credit points, by local authority, 2017-18 to 2022-23 [note 48]

| | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Aberdeen City | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.3% | 0.4% |
| Aberdeenshire | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.7% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| Angus | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.1% |
| Argyll & Bute | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.5% |
| Clackmannanshire | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% |
| Dumfries & Galloway | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% |
| Dundee City | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 1.9% |
| East Ayrshire | 0.0% | 0.0% | 1.9% | 0.8% | 0.7% | 1.0% |
| East Dunbartonshire | 0.0% | 0.4% | 2.1% | 1.9% | 0.7% | 2.6% |
| East Lothian | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.3% | 0.0% | 0.4% |
| East Renfrewshire | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 1.3% |
| Edinburgh City | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 1.0% | 2.1% |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.5% | 0.3% | 1.0% | 0.0% |
| Falkirk | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 1.2% | 6.6% |
| Fife | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.7% | 2.8% | 1.2% | 6.8% |
| Glasgow City | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.4% | 0.6% | 1.2% |
| Highland | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.6% | 0.2% |
| Inverclyde | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.6% | 0.2% | 0.2% |
| Midlothian | 0.0% | 0.0% | 3.1% | 1.1% | 0.2% | 4.0% |
| Moray | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.1% |
| North Ayrshire | 0.0% | 0.1% | 2.9% | 3.5% | 0.0% | 5.8% |
| North Lanarkshire | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Orkney Islands | 0.4% | 0.5% | 2.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Perth & Kinross | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 1.4% | 1.7% |
| Renfrewshire | 0.0% | 0.1% | 2.9% | 3.1% | 1.4% | 8.2% |
| Scottish Borders | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.6% | 0.1% | 0.6% |
| Shetland Islands | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 3.2% | 0.1% | 0.6% |
| South Ayrshire | 0.0% | 0.0% | 1.7% | 1.8% | 1.3% | 3.0% |
| South Lanarkshire | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 1.3% | 0.7% |
| Stirling | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.8% | 1.6% | 1.5% |
| West Dunbartonshire | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 1.6% | 0.0% |
| West Lothian | 0.1% | 5.1% | 12.1% | 13.4% | 16.3% | 17.0% |
| Scotland | 0.0% | 0.3% | 1.3% | 1.5% | 2.1% | 2.9% |

Note 48: Keep in mind the context of each individual local authority, if making comparisons between them.

Section 8.4 Differences between the National Qualification and All SCQF measures

8.4.1 Summary of differences between the two measures

There are a number of methodological differences between the All SCQF measure and the National Qualifications measure. This is because the two measures were originally developed for different purposes. The National Qualifications measure has been used in previous versions of this publication and contributes three of the key National Improvement Framework (NIF) measures. The All SCQF measure was developed for use in Insight – the benchmarking tool used by schools and local authorities – and is used across the education system to provide information on the range of attainment young people are gaining at school. Both measures are valid and provide important insights into the attainment of school leavers.

The main methodological differences between the National Qualifications measure and the All SCQF measure are set out below.

Qualifications and award providers:

The National Qualifications measure covers SQA National Qualifications, with the exceptions of National Units and Scottish Baccalaureates. The SQA National Qualifications included are therefore the National Courses – National 3, National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher – and Skills for Work.

The All SCQF measure covers all qualifications on the SCQF. These include the National Qualifications (as under the National Qualifications measure), along with other qualifications provided by SQA, such as National Progression Awards, Awards etc. and qualifications provided by other award providers.

SCQF credit points:

All of the qualifications at a given SCQF Level in the National Qualifications measure carry the same number of SCQF credit points (and notional learning hours).

The qualifications at a given SCQF Level in the All SCQF measure can be associated with different numbers of SCQF credit points and notional learning hours. See Section 8.4.2 for more information.

Treatment of Grade Ds:

In the National Qualifications measure a grade D at a given SCQF Level is counted as a pass at the SCQF Level below. So, for example, a grade D at SCQF Level 6 is counted as a pass at SCQF Level 5 but not as a pass at SCQF Level 6.

In the All SCQF measure a grade D at a given SCQF Level is counted as a pass at that SCQF level. So, for example, a grade D at SCQF Level 6 is counted as a pass / award at SCQF Level 6.

Leaver cohort:

The National Qualifications measure includes those who have left a publicly funded mainstream school from any stage. Those leaving from special schools are not included in the headline measures found in this report but are included in certain [supplementary tables](#).

The All SCQF measure includes those who have left a publicly funded mainstream school from the senior phase, i.e. from stages S4-S6 only. Those leaving from special schools are not included in this measure.

Stage of schooling in which qualifications are attained:

The National Qualifications measure considers all of the attainment in National Qualifications which a school leaver has gained over the previous 6 years. In practice, given the focus on the best level achieved, it is likely that the earlier years of this period will have a limited effect on attainment.

The All SCQF measure considers attainment which a school leaver has gained during the senior phase of schooling, i.e. in S4-S6 only.

8.4.2 Learning hours and SCQF credit points

One of the features of the National Qualifications measure is that all of the qualifications counted at a given SCQF Level have the same number of notional learning hours (see section 8.2.2). [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. So, for example, at SCQF Level 6, all Highers are associated with 24 SCQF credit points or 240 notional hours of learning. This means that, under the National Qualifications measure, a pass in one qualification at a given SCQF Level can be seen as being equivalent to a pass in another qualification at that SCQF Level.

Under the All SCQF measure this is not the case. Qualifications at the same SCQF Level can involve different numbers of notional learning hours. As outlined above, a Higher is associated with 24 SCQF credit points. Meanwhile, by way of example, the SCQF Level 6 Emergency First Aid at Work qualification is associated with one SCQF credit point or 10 notional learning hours, and the SCQF Level 6 Qualification in Sports Leadership is associated with 14 SCQF credit points (140 notional learning hours). Under the All SCQF measure, gaining any of these qualifications counts as attainment at SCQF Level 6.

Tables 15 and 16 demonstrate this point. They show the numbers of different qualifications gained by school pupils in 2022-23 broken down by SCQF level and SCQF credit points. Table 15 shows this for the qualifications in the All SCQF measure and table 16 shows it for the qualifications in the National Qualifications measure. (Note the data presented in these tables present qualifications gained by school pupils in 2022-23. School leavers are likely to have gained attainment over multiple years).

Table 15: Numbers of All SCQF measure qualifications by SCQF credit point banding, at each SCQF level, 2022-23

| | 1 - 2 pts | 3 - 17 pts | 18-23 pts | 24-31 pts | 32+ pts |
|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| SCQF level 3 | 2 | 11 | 44 | 3 | 0 |
| SCQF level 4 | 1 | 42 | 19 | 75 | 6 |
| SCQF level 5 | 13 | 28 | 40 | 93 | 57 |
| SCQF level 6 | 8 | 16 | 27 | 77 | 54 |
| SCQF level 7 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 23 | 79 |

Table 16: Numbers of qualifications associated with National Qualification measure by SCQF credit point banding, at each SCQF level, 2022-23

| | 1 - 2 pts | 3 - 17 pts | 18-23 pts | 24-31 pts | 32+ pts |
|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| SCQF level 3 | 0 | 0 | 37 | 0 | 0 |
| SCQF level 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 59 | 0 |
| SCQF level 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 67 | 0 |
| SCQF level 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 54 | 0 |
| SCQF level 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 37 |

Whilst qualifications associated with smaller numbers of SCQF credit points (e.g. one or two) are of the same level of difficulty as other courses at that SCQF Level, they may be achieved more quickly due to the smaller number of notional learning hours. This will have an impact on the patterns of attainment seen in the All SCQF measure.

Section 8.5 Other methodological details

8.5.1 Attainment and destinations data matching

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

All matching is done within certain constraints:

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

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

8.5.2 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 and attainment of school leavers differ based on the level of deprivation in their home (or school) area. Pupils are assigned to a 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. SIMD 2020 was used for the first time for the 2020/21 leaver cohort.

Section 8.6 Changes to the publication

Historically this publication has presented attainment in National Qualifications i.e. National 3, National 4, National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher and Skills for Work. However, many school pupils in Scotland take a range of other types of qualifications either instead of, or in addition to, National Qualifications. Consultation with a range of internal and external stakeholders demonstrated a user need for recognition of the wider range of attainment by pupils in schools in Scotland.

The All SCQF measure is an existing measure which has been used for a number of years by stakeholders in education to understand school pupils' achievements. It has been available via 'Insight' - the benchmarking tool used by local authorities and schools - and to the public via the [School Information Dashboard](#). These data have been included in this publication from this year, in order to report on a fuller range of attainment gained by school leavers. In order to do this a back series has been created so that, as for the National Qualifications measure, data are available from 2009-10.

Alongside introducing the All SCQF measure, we are continuing to report on attainment under the National Qualifications measure. Again, consultation with stakeholders identified a need to continue to report on this basis. The National Qualifications measure provides three of the key measures used by the Scottish Government in its [National Improvement Framework](#) to measure progress over time in closing the poverty-related attainment gap. By continuing to report on attainment under the National Qualifications measure, these statistics provide a consistent time series in measuring that progress.

Previous versions of this publication have included an ‘All SQA Qualifications Attainment’ measure as statistics in development (previously referred to as Experimental Statistics). These have not been updated for this release on the basis that the All SCQF measure (Section 5) provides a more complete picture of wider attainment amongst school leavers and so replaces the All SQA Qualifications measure. Data previously published for this measure remains available in [previous versions of this publication](#).

Section 8.7 Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on these statistics

8.7.1 School Leaver Destinations

The greatest effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on school leaver destinations is likely to have been seen in 2019-20 although it is likely that there has been some ongoing impact on the destinations of some 2020-21, 2021-22 and possibly 2022-23 school leavers.

2019-20

The availability of particular opportunities (employment opportunities, for example) to some 2019-20 school leavers was directly affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. For example, the start dates of some opportunities were delayed, leading to a direct impact on the destinations recorded for some pupils. The pandemic may also have affected the ability of local partnerships to track the destinations of some school leavers through home visits.

In addition to this, the approach taken to the certification of SQA qualifications in 2020 will have affected the attainment of many 2019-20 school leavers. This may in turn have affected the destination choices and opportunities available to them. The pandemic may also have influenced pupils’ decisions on when to leave school (for example, delaying leaving from 2019-20 to 2020-21).

2020-21

For 2020-21 school leavers, it is likely that the pandemic continued to affect the choices made by, and opportunities available to, some school leavers for the reasons outlined above.

2021-22 and 2022-23

For 2021-22 and 2022-23 school leavers there may again be some ongoing impact on school leavers destinations, resulting from the effect of alternative approaches to certification of SQA qualifications since 2020.

The impacts of COVID-19 should therefore be kept in mind when considering changes over time in school leavers’ destinations.

8.7.2 School Leaver Attainment under the National Qualifications measure

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to the cancellation of National 5 (SCQF Level 5), Higher (SCQF Level 6) and Advanced Higher (SCQF Level 7) exams in 2020 and 2021, and alternative approaches were taken to determining grades.

In 2022, there was a return to the use of exams. These were supported by a package of measures such as course modifications and revision support, which were designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching which young people had experienced, while maintaining standards. In addition a more generous approach to grading was adopted to help ensure fairness for learners.

In 2023, normal awarding procedures were in place. However, a sensitive approach to grading was adopted which was intended to provide an extra layer of protection for learners in light of ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

The National Qualifications measure also includes Skills for Work courses. Some further detail of arrangements for these courses can be found in Section 8.7.3.

Overall pass rates for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher were higher in 2020 and 2021 than they had been in 2019 (the last pre-pandemic year of exams). In 2022 overall pass rates reduced compared to 2020 and 2021, although they remained above 2019 levels. In 2023, overall pass rates again reduced compared to the previous three years, but still remained above 2019 levels.

The National Qualifications measure takes account of the qualifications pupils have gained throughout their schooling and so some leavers will have attainment gained under a variety of different approaches to grading. The different approaches to awards and grading between 2020 and 2023 will have affected the attainment of many school leavers between 2019-20 and 2022-23 presented in this report. The biggest impacts are likely to have been seen for leavers in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, with the higher National Qualification pass rates in 2020 and 2021 likely to have resulted in higher levels of attainment for some school leavers in these years. There may still be effects for some leavers in 2022-23. A dashed line break in the series has been placed between 2018-19 and 2019-20. This indicates that care must be taken when comparing attainment of school leavers in 2018-19 and before, with that of school leavers in 2019-20 and beyond.

In addition, care should also be taken when comparing the attainment of 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 school leavers. 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.

8.7.3 School Leaver Attainment under the All SCQF measure

Many of the qualifications included in the All SCQF measure are the SQA National Qualifications. The changes to the assessment and certification of these in 2019-20 and in subsequent years, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, are outlined in the previous section (Section 8.7.2). In addition, the assessment and certification of the other qualifications in the All SCQF measure also changed in 2019-20 and subsequent years, in response to the pandemic.

For example in 2020, for SQA National Certificates, National Progression Awards, Skills for Work courses, and other Awards, schools, colleges, employers and training providers could provide SQA with the results of internal assessment decisions using their teaching experience of candidates' work through the year.

In 2021 the approach for these qualifications was adapted depending on the circumstances and on what level of assessment evidence could be produced. In some cases assessment continued as normal. In others providers could use permitted adaptations in line with SQA guidance to generate assessment evidence. Where this was still not possible centres were advised to carry out holistic assessments to meet the aims of many of these awards and any critical competences for that award. In circumstances where this remained impossible, assessment may have been postponed.

Other qualifications may have required different approaches to assessment and certification throughout this period.

As for the National Qualifications measure, care must therefore be taken when comparing attainment of school leavers in 2018-19 and before, with that of school leavers in 2019-20 and beyond. Care should also be taken when comparing the attainment of 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 school leavers. 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.

Section 8.8 Literacy and numeracy attainment

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

SCQF Level 3 Literacy

- National 3 English
- National 3 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- National 3 Gàidhlig
- National 3 Literacy unit

- SCQF Level 3 Communication unit
- National 3 Gàidhlig Literacy unit
- National 3 ESOL unit group

SCQF Level 4 Literacy

- National 4 English
- National 4 ESOL
- National 4 Gàidhlig
- National 4 Skills for Work (SfW) Travel and Tourism
- National 4 Literacy unit
- SCQF Level 4 Communication unit
- National 4 Gàidhlig Literacy unit
- National 4 ESOL unit group

SCQF Level 5 Literacy

- National 5 English
- National 5 ESOL
- National 5 Gàidhlig
- National 5 SfW Travel and Tourism
- National 5 Literacy unit
- SCQF Level 5 Communication unit
- National 5 Gàidhlig Literacy unit
- National 5 English unit group
- National 5 ESOL unit group
- National 5 Gàidhlig unit group

SCQF Level 3 Numeracy

- National 3 Applications of Mathematics
- National 3 Gníomhachas Matamataigs (Applications of Mathematics)
- National 3 Numeracy unit
- National 3 Aireamhachd (Numeracy) unit
- SCQF Level 3 Numeracy unit

SCQF Level 4 Numeracy

- National 4 Applications of Mathematics
- National 4 Mathematics
- National 4 Gníomhachas Matamataigs (Applications of Mathematics)
- National 4 Matamataig (Mathematics)
- National 4 Numeracy unit
- National 4 Aireamhachd (Numeracy) unit
- SCQF Level 4 Numeracy unit

SCQF Level 5 Numeracy

- National 5 Applications of Mathematics
- National 5 Mathematics
- National 5 Gníomhachas Matamataigs (Applications of Mathematics)
- National 5 Matamataig (Mathematics)
- National 5 Numeracy unit
- National 5 Aireamhachd (Numeracy) unit
- SCQF Level 5 Numeracy unit
- SCQF Level 5 Data Science unit
- National 5 Applications of Mathematics unit group
- National 5 Mathematics unit group
- National 5 Gníomhachas Matamataigs (Applications of Mathematics) unit group

Section 8.9 Cost

8.9.1 Attainment

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

8.9.2 Leavers

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

Section 8.10 UK comparisons

8.10.1 Attainment

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

8.10.2 Destinations

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

Section 8.11 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.

School leaver cohort:

- Tables C1.1a and C1.1b: Number and percentage of secondary school leavers by stage of leaving, 2009-10 to 2022-23

School leaver initial destinations:

- Table L1.1: Percentage of secondary school leavers by initial destination category, 1992-93 to 2022-23
- Table L1.2: Percentage of secondary school leavers by initial destination category and sex, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Table L1.3: Percentage of secondary school leavers by initial destination category and 6-fold Urban Rural classification, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Table L1.4: Percentage of secondary school leavers by initial destination category and ethnic background, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Table L1.5: Percentage of secondary school leavers by initial destination category and national identity, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Table L1.6: Percentage of secondary school leavers by initial destination category and whether declared or assessed disabled, 2009-10 and 2014-15 to 2022-23
- Table L2.1: Percentage of secondary school leavers by initial destination category and local authority, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Table L2.1a: Number of secondary school leavers by initial destination category and local authority, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Table L3.1: Percentage of secondary and special school leavers by initial destination category and reason for Additional Support Need, 2009-10 to 2022-23

School leaver attainment under the National Qualifications measure:

- Table N1.1: Percentage of secondary school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the National Qualifications measure and SIMD quintile, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Table N1.2: Percentage of secondary school leavers by total attainment under the National Qualifications measure and SIMD quintile, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Tables N1.3a and N1.3b: Number and percentage of secondary school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved in each subject under the National Qualifications measure, 2011-12 to 2022-23
- Tables N1.4a and N1.4b: Number and percentage of secondary school leavers with no attainment at SCQF Level 3 or better under the National Qualifications measure, 2009-10 to 2022-23

- Table N2.1: Percentage of secondary school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the National Qualifications measure, by local authority, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Tables N2.2a and N2.2b: Number and percentage of secondary school leavers by total qualifications attained under the National Qualifications measure, by local authority and SIMD; 2012-13 to 2022-23
- Table N3.1: Percentage of secondary and special school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the National Qualifications measure and reasons for Additional Support Need, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Table N3.2: Percentage of secondary and special school leavers by total attainment under the National Qualifications measure and reasons for Additional Support Need, 2009-10 to 2022-23

School leaver attainment under the All SCQF measure:

- Table S1.1: Percentage of secondary school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the All SCQF measure and SIMD quintile, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Table S1.2: Percentage of secondary school leavers by total attainment under the All SCQF measure and SIMD quintile, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Table S2.1: Percentage of secondary school leavers by highest SCQF Level achieved under the all SCQF measure, by local authority, 2009-10 to 2022-23
- Tables S2.2a and S2.2b: Number and percentage of secondary school leavers by total qualifications attained under the All SCQF measure, by local authority and SIMD, 2022-23

School leaver attainment in other groups of qualifications:

- Table Z1.1: Number of secondary school leavers attaining Foundation Apprenticeships by subject, 2019-20 to 2022-23. (Note these are [Official Statistics in Development](#)).
- Tables Z2.1a and Z2.1b: Number and percentage of secondary and special school leavers attaining vocational and technical ('skills-based') qualifications and awards at SCQF Levels 2 to 7, by local authority, 2013-14 to 2022-23

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

Section 8.12 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 on an annual basis. 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.

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