



Level 2 and 3 attainment in England: Attainment by age 19 in 2019, 29 April 2020



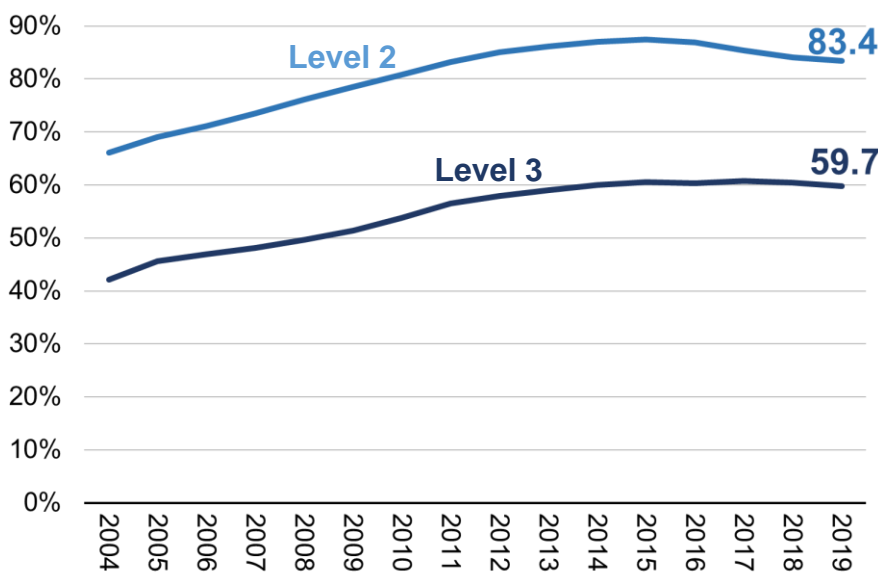
In these statistics, the attainment of the following measures refers to the proportion of people who achieved them as at 31st August i.e. the end of the academic year (e.g. 2019 refers to 31st August 2019):

- Level 2 is 5 (or more) GCSEs at grades 9-4/A*-C or equivalent e.g. Level 2 vocational qualification
- Level 3 is 2 (or more) A levels or equivalent e.g. Level 3 vocational qualification
- Level 2 in English and maths is GCSEs at grades 9-4/A*-C in those subjects or equivalent qualifications.
- Progression in English and maths is those people who did not achieve level 2 in English and/or maths at 16 but had achieved both at 19.

For further information as to what qualifications are included at each Level, see technical document (page 4).

Whilst Level 2 and Level 3 attainment at age 19 has continued to fall from peaks in 2015 and 2017 respectively, both have increased compared with 2004 and 2010.

Level 2 and Level 3 attainment at 19, 2004-2019



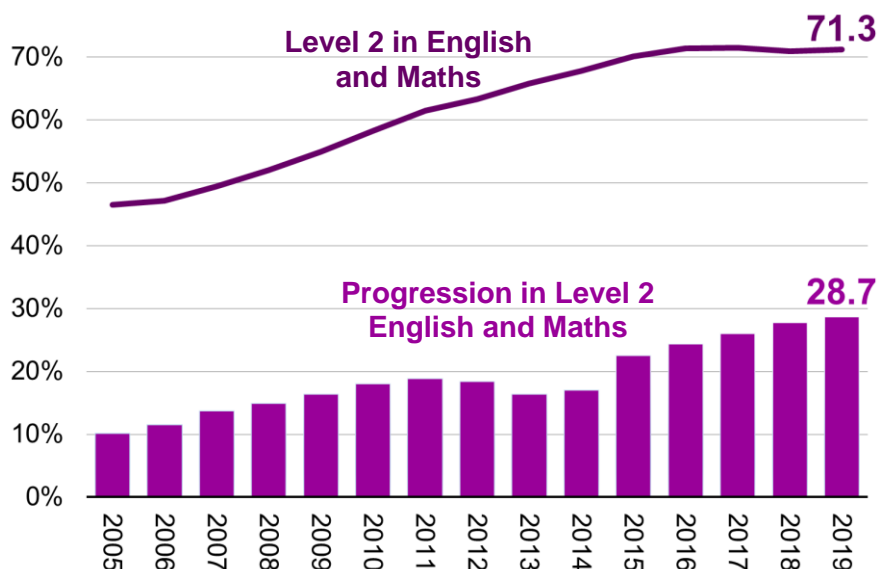
	Percentage point change since:		
	2004	2010	2018
Level 2	17.4	2.6	-0.6
Level 3	17.6	5.9	-0.7



Level 2 attainment at 19 in English & maths increased, as did the progression rate of those achieving this for the first time between 16 and 19, compared with 2005, 2010 and 2018.

Level 2 in English and maths: attainment at 19 and progression between 16 and 19, 2005-2019

Based on pupils recorded in mainstream state-funded schools in England in year 11



	Percentage point change since:		
	2005	2010	2018
Level 2 in English and Maths	24.8	13.0	0.3
Progression in Level 2 English and Maths	18.5	10.6	0.9



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About this publication

These National Statistics provide information at both national and local authority level on the attainment of 19-year olds at the end of each academic year (e.g. 2019 refers to 31 August 2019). They are used to monitor trends in attainment over time and changes in attainment within different groups.

The figures are based on a matched administrative dataset produced by the Department for Education consisting of data from the Individualised Learner Record (ILR), key stage 4 and 5 awarding body results and the School Census.

The statistics are based on two cohorts as follows:

- An overall national cohort has a numerator based on all young people captured in the dataset (not just those in the state-sector in year 11), and has a denominator based on the whole school population (including state-funded maintained schools, independent schools, Alternative Provision (APs) and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)), as recorded at academic age 14 i.e. year 10, or the penultimate year of secondary school.
- The state-funded cohort is based on pupils recorded in mainstream state-funded schools at academic age 15 i.e. year 11 or the final year of secondary school (the state-funded cohort also includes a small number of learners who attended non-maintained special schools). The state-funded cohort includes breakdowns by various pupil characteristics (as recorded at academic age 15).

There are differences in the methodology in the attainment measures for the national and state-funded cohorts, which mean that they should not be directly compared.

For further background information on these statistics, including on the data sources and the methodology, please see the accompanying technical document. Accompanying data tables and underlying data are also published alongside this release.

Feedback

We would welcome feedback on any aspect of this publication at:
































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1. Level 2 and 3 attainment at 19 – national cohort

Level 3 attainment at 19

As shown in the table below, Level 3 attainment at age 19 has fallen for the second consecutive year in 2019. In 2017, which was the series peak, and in earlier years, this increased on an annual basis (apart from in 2016). Despite the recent falls, Level 3 attainment at 19 has increased by 18 percentage points compared with 2004 (when the series began) and by 6 percentage points compared with a decade earlier.

Table 1: Level 3 attainment at 19, 2004-2019

Year	Level 3 attainment (percentage)	Annual change (percentage point)
2004	42.1 	
2005	45.6 	3.5 
2006	46.9 	1.2 
2007	48.2 	1.3 
2008	49.6 	1.5 
2009	51.4 	1.7 
2010	53.8 	2.5 
2011	56.5 	2.7 
2012	58.0 	1.4 
2013	59.1 	1.1 
2014	60.0 	1.0 
2015	60.5 	0.5 
2016	60.3 	-0.2 
2017	60.7 	0.4 
2018	60.4 	-0.3 
2019	59.7 	-0.7 

Level 3 attainment at 19 by qualification type

As shown in the chart on the next page, the overall increase in Level 3 attainment at 19 between 2004 and 2017 has been mainly driven by a rise in vocational qualification attainment.

However, Level 3 attainment at 19 has declined by 1 percentage point since 2017, and this has been driven by a fall in AS level¹ and vocational qualification attainment (although this has been offset in part by a rise in A level attainment).

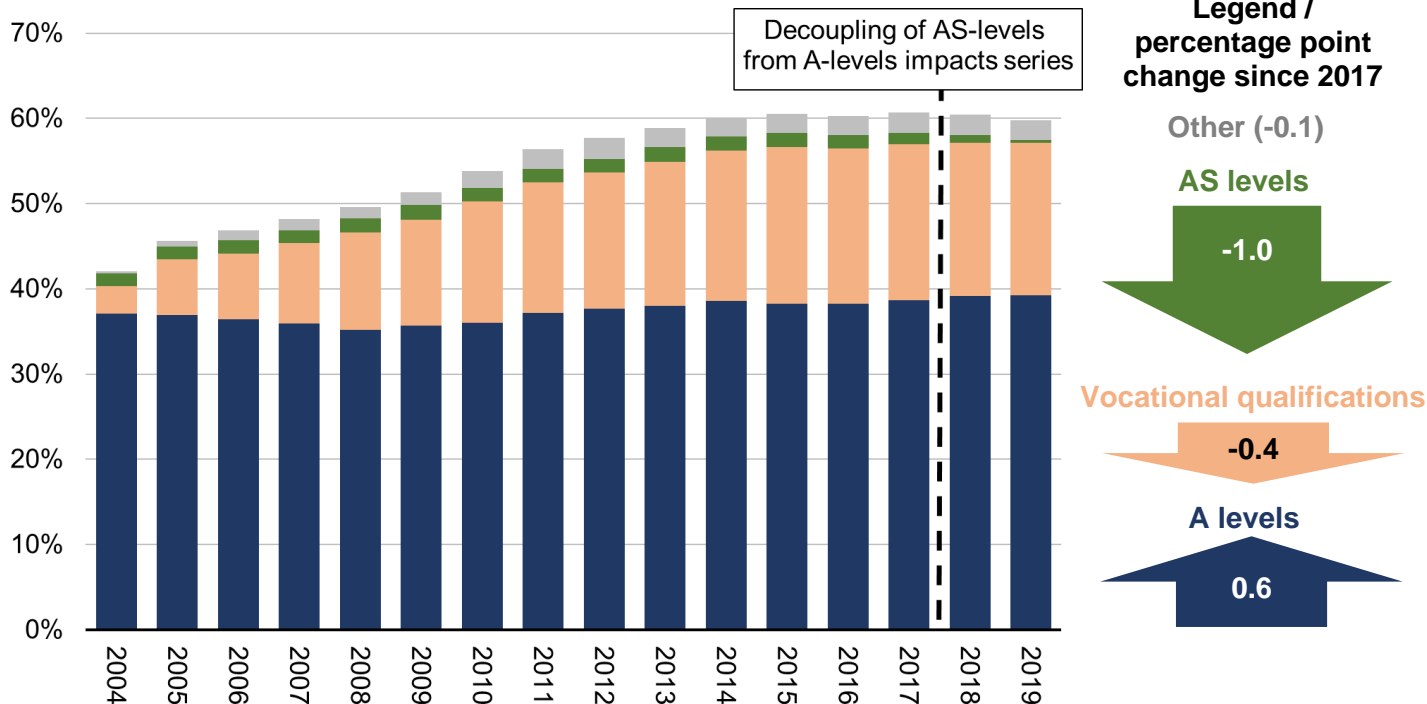
The fall in AS level attainment coincides with the decoupling of AS levels from A levels as part of reforms which started in the 2015/16 academic year. This has resulted in AS results no longer counting towards an A level (and AS levels becoming standalone qualifications), which has led to a reduction in AS level entries². In turn, this had resulted in a fall in Level 3 attainment via AS levels, with just 0.3% of 19-year olds having achieved Level 3 through this route in 2019³.

¹ In these statistics AS levels count for 25% of Level 3 and can be aggregated, so that four AS levels or two AS levels and one A level (which counts as 50% of Level 3) are counted as achievement of Level 3.

² See [Revised A level and other 16-18 results in England, 2017/18](#).

³ This figure does not include those who may also have achieved Level 2 via two (or more) A levels, as the statistics are recorded in a prioritised order, with Level 3 via A levels superseding Level 3 via AS levels.

Figure 1: Level 3 attainment at 19 by qualification type⁴, 2004-2019



Level 2 attainment at 19

As the table below shows, there have been consecutive annual falls in Level 2 attainment at 19 since 2016. Prior to then, there were consecutive annual rises, with the series peaking in 2015. Despite the recent falls, Level 2 attainment at 19 has increased by 17 percentage points compared with 2004 and by 3 percentage points compared with a decade earlier.

Table 2: Level 2 attainment at 19, 2004-2019

Year	Level 2 attainment (percentage)	Annual change (percentage point)
2004	66.1	
2005	69.1	3.0
2006	71.1	2.0
2007	73.5	2.4
2008	76.2	2.7
2009	78.5	2.4
2010	80.8	2.3
2011	83.3	2.4
2012	85.1	1.8
2013	86.1	1.1
2014	87.0	0.9
2015	87.5	0.5
2016	86.9	-0.6
2017	85.4	-1.5
2018	84.1	-1.4
2019	83.4	-0.6

⁴ These are based on qualifications held at 19 prioritised in the following order: A levels, International Baccalaureates (displayed in the 'Other' category), AS levels, Advanced Apprenticeships (displayed in the 'Other' category) and Vocational Qualifications.

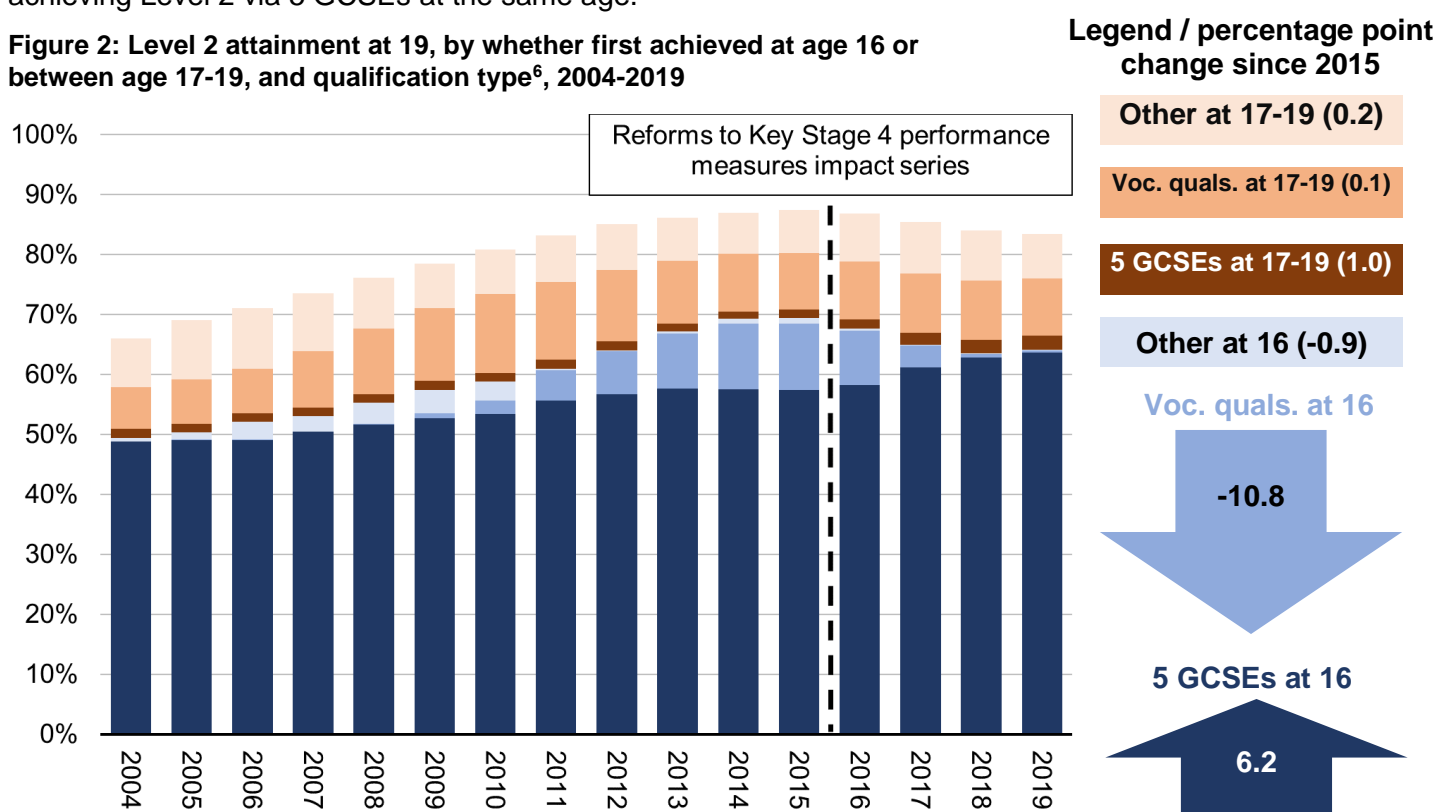
Level 2 at 19 by qualification type

Published for the first time in this release are figures on Level 2 by qualification type at 16, to provide more insight on reforms introduced further to Professor Alison Wolf's review⁵, which changed how vocational qualifications count in Key stage 4 performance measures from the 2013/14 academic year.

As the figure below shows, the 4 percentage point fall in Level 2 at 19, between 2015 and 2019, has been driven by a decrease in the attainment of large vocational qualifications by the same cohort at 16. Whilst these qualifications still count as Level 2 in these statistics, they no longer count in Key stage 4 performance measures. Or, if they still do, they no longer count as equivalent to more than one GCSE. This has significantly reduced the offering and take-up of large vocational qualifications at Key stage 4.

However, the fall in Level 2 via vocational qualifications at 16, between 2015 and 2019, has been partially offset by an increase in Level 2 at 16 via GCSEs. Therefore, it is probable that at least some, but not all, of the pupils who would otherwise have achieved Level 2 via vocational qualifications at 16 are instead achieving Level 2 via 5 GCSEs at the same age.

Figure 2: Level 2 attainment at 19, by whether first achieved at age 16 or between age 17-19, and qualification type⁶, 2004-2019



The impact of the reforms on these statistics may now be starting to settle. As Table 2 on the preceding page shows, compared with the annual Level 2 falls in 2017 and 2018, the fall in 2019 is smaller. Linked to this, for the same cohort, whilst there has been a slight annual fall in Level 2 at 16 via vocational qualifications (-0.3 percentage points), this is smaller than the annual falls in 2017 and 2018 (-5.5 and -3.0 percentage points respectively).

As the figure above shows, the attainment of Level 2 via vocational qualifications between ages 17 and 19 has remained stable since the reforms, so whilst these large qualifications are mostly no longer being achieved at 16, they are still being achieved post-16.

⁵ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report>.

⁶ These are based on qualifications prioritised in the following order: GCSEs, Apprenticeships (displayed in the 'Other' category), Vocational qualifications, Level 3 qualifications (displayed in the 'Other' category) and combinations of qualifications (displayed in the 'Other' category).

2. Level 2 and 3 attainment at 19 by pupil characteristics – state-funded cohort

This section reports on the attainment of 19-year olds who were recorded in the mainstream state sector in year 11 (i.e. the final year of secondary school) and their associated characteristics at that time.

There are differences in the methodology in the attainment measures for the state-funded cohort and for the national cohort, which mean that they should not be directly compared – see coverage section in the Technical Document for further details.

Level 3 attainment at 19 by gender, special educational need (SEN) status, free school meal (FSM) eligibility and the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)⁷

Looking at Level 3 attainment at 19 by pupil characteristics (as recorded in year 11), as shown in Table 3 below:

- Whilst attainment across all characteristics have fallen (or remained stable) in 2019, all have increased compared with a decade earlier, with those who lived in the 25% most deprived areas having experienced the largest rise.
- The attainment gaps for gender and those who lived in the 25% most/least deprived areas have widened since last year. However, the SEN/non-SEN and FSM/non-FSM gaps have closed.
- Compared with a decade earlier, the gender and FSM/non-FSM attainment gaps have widened. However, the gaps for SEN/non-SEN and for those who lived in the 25% most/least deprived areas have closed, with the gap for the latter narrowing by 6 percentage points.
- In 2019, the non-SEN population were more than twice as likely to have achieved Level 3 than the SEN population.

Table 3: Level 3 attainment at 19 by pupil characteristics, 2010 to 2019

Based on pupils recorded in mainstream state-funded schools in England in year 11.

Characteristics (as recorded in year 11)	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	diff. 2018 & 2019	diff. 2010 & 2019
All	50.8	53.6	55.1	56.3	57.0	57.5	57.2	57.6	57.4	56.9	- 0.5	6.1
Gender												
Male	45.5	48.8	51.1	52.0	52.7	52.9	52.3	52.7	52.3	51.3	- 1.0	5.9
Female	56.2	58.6	59.4	60.7	61.5	62.3	62.2	62.7	62.7	62.7	0.0	6.5
Attainment gap	10.8	9.8	8.3	8.8	8.9	9.3	9.9	10.0	10.4	11.4	1.0	0.6
SEN status												
No identified SEN	58.4	62.1	64.3	65.6	66.2	65.8	64.9	64.8	63.3	62.2	- 1.1	3.8
Identified SEN	19.4	22.9	26.0	27.9	28.2	28.7	28.0	28.2	26.8	25.9	- 0.8	6.5
Attainment gap	38.9	39.2	38.3	37.7	38.0	37.1	36.9	36.6	36.6	36.3	- 0.3	-2.7
FSM eligibility												
Not eligible for FSM	53.9	56.7	58.3	59.5	60.5	61.0	60.8	61.2	60.9	60.3	- 0.7	6.4
Eligible for FSM	29.7	32.0	34.1	35.3	35.7	36.4	36.3	36.0	35.2	35.0	- 0.1	5.3
Attainment gap	24.2	24.7	24.2	24.3	24.8	24.6	24.6	25.3	25.8	25.2	- 0.5	1.1
IDACI												
25% most deprived	35.4	39.5	41.7	43.7	45.0	46.2	46.2	46.9	46.8	44.7	- 2.1	9.2
25% least deprived	66.9	68.9	70.2	70.5	71.3	71.1	70.5	71.0	70.6	70.2	- 0.4	3.3
Attainment gap	31.5	29.5	28.5	26.8	26.3	25.0	24.3	24.2	23.8	25.5	1.7	-5.9

⁷ See Technical Document for more information about Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI).

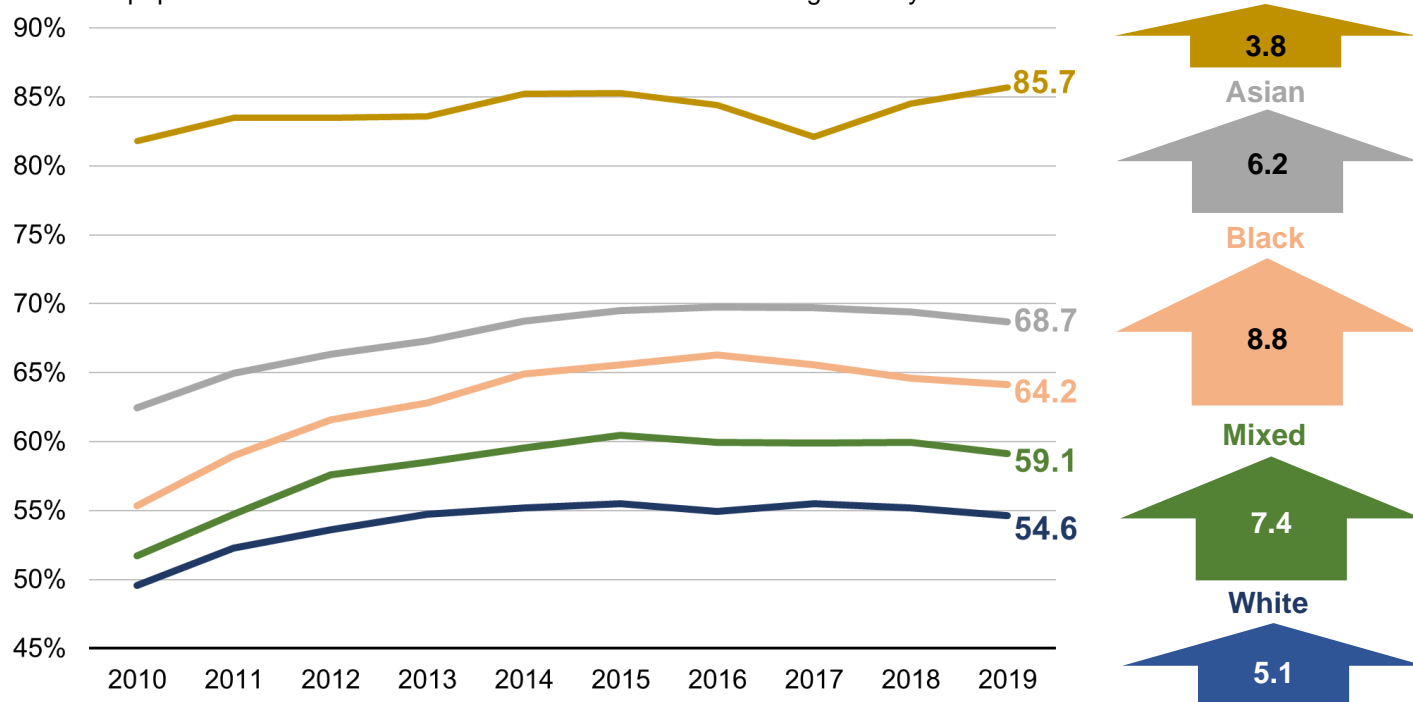
Level 3 attainment at 19 by ethnicity

In terms of Level 3 attainment at 19 by ethnicity, as shown in the chart below:

- Whilst attainment for all ethnicities, apart from for the Chinese population, fell in 2019, all ethnicities have had overall increases compared with a decade earlier, with the black population having experienced the largest rise.
- For the Chinese population, their attainment was the highest on record in 2019. All other ethnicities peaked in 2015 or 2016 and have experienced falls since.
- Attainment has consistently been the highest for the Chinese population throughout the decade and consistently been the lowest for the white population, with the Chinese population being over one and a half times more likely to have achieved Level 3 in 2019 than the white population.

Figure 3: Level 3 attainment at 19 by ethnicity, 2010 to 2019

Based on pupils recorded in mainstream state-funded schools in England in year 11.



Level 2 attainment at 19 by gender, special educational need (SEN) status, free school meal (FSM) eligibility and the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)

Looking at Level 2 attainment at 19 by pupil characteristics (as recorded in year 11), as shown in the table on the next page:

- Whilst attainment across all characteristics has fallen in 2019, all have increased compared with a decade earlier, with the population who lived in the 25% most deprived areas having experienced the largest rise.
- The attainment gaps across all characteristics have widened since last year.
- Compared with a decade earlier, the gender and FSM/non-FSM attainment gaps have widened. However, the gaps for SEN/non-SEN and for those who lived in the 25% most/least deprived areas have closed.
- In 2019, the non-SEN population were more than one and a half times more likely to have achieved Level 2 than the SEN population.

Table 4: Level 2 attainment at 19 by pupil characteristics, 2010 to 2019

Based on pupils recorded in mainstream state-funded schools in England in year 11.

Characteristics (as recorded in year 11)	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	diff. 2018 & 2019	diff. 2019 & 2019
All	78.9	81.5	83.8	84.9	85.6	86.1	85.3	83.6	82.2	81.8	- 0.5	2.9
Gender												
Male	75.5	78.5	81.0	82.2	82.9	83.4	82.4	80.5	78.8	78.2	- 0.6	2.7
Female	82.3	84.8	86.7	87.8	88.4	88.9	88.3	86.9	85.9	85.5	- 0.4	3.2
Attainment gap	6.9	6.3	5.7	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.9	6.4	7.1	7.3	0.2	0.5
SEN status												
No identified SEN	85.8	88.5	90.8	91.8	92.1	91.9	90.9	89.4	87.6	86.7	- 0.9	0.9
Identified SEN	50.2	56.3	61.3	64.2	65.2	65.8	64.1	60.1	54.6	52.8	- 1.8	2.6
Attainment gap	35.6	32.2	29.4	27.6	26.9	26.1	26.8	29.3	33.0	33.9	0.9	-1.8
FSM eligibility												
Not eligible for FSM	81.4	83.9	86.0	87.1	87.9	88.4	87.9	86.5	85.3	84.7	- 0.6	3.3
Eligible for FSM	61.4	65.3	68.8	70.8	71.3	72.0	70.4	66.5	63.4	62.6	- 0.7	1.3
Attainment gap	20.1	18.6	17.2	16.3	16.6	16.5	17.5	20.1	21.9	22.1	0.2	2.0
IDAC1												
25% most deprived	67.8	72.1	75.6	77.7	78.7	79.3	78.5	75.4	73.5	72.2	- 1.3	4.3
25% least deprived	89.0	90.5	91.8	92.2	92.4	92.7	92.1	91.6	90.9	90.6	- 0.3	1.6
Attainment gap	21.1	18.4	16.1	14.5	13.7	13.3	13.6	16.1	17.4	18.4	1.0	-2.7

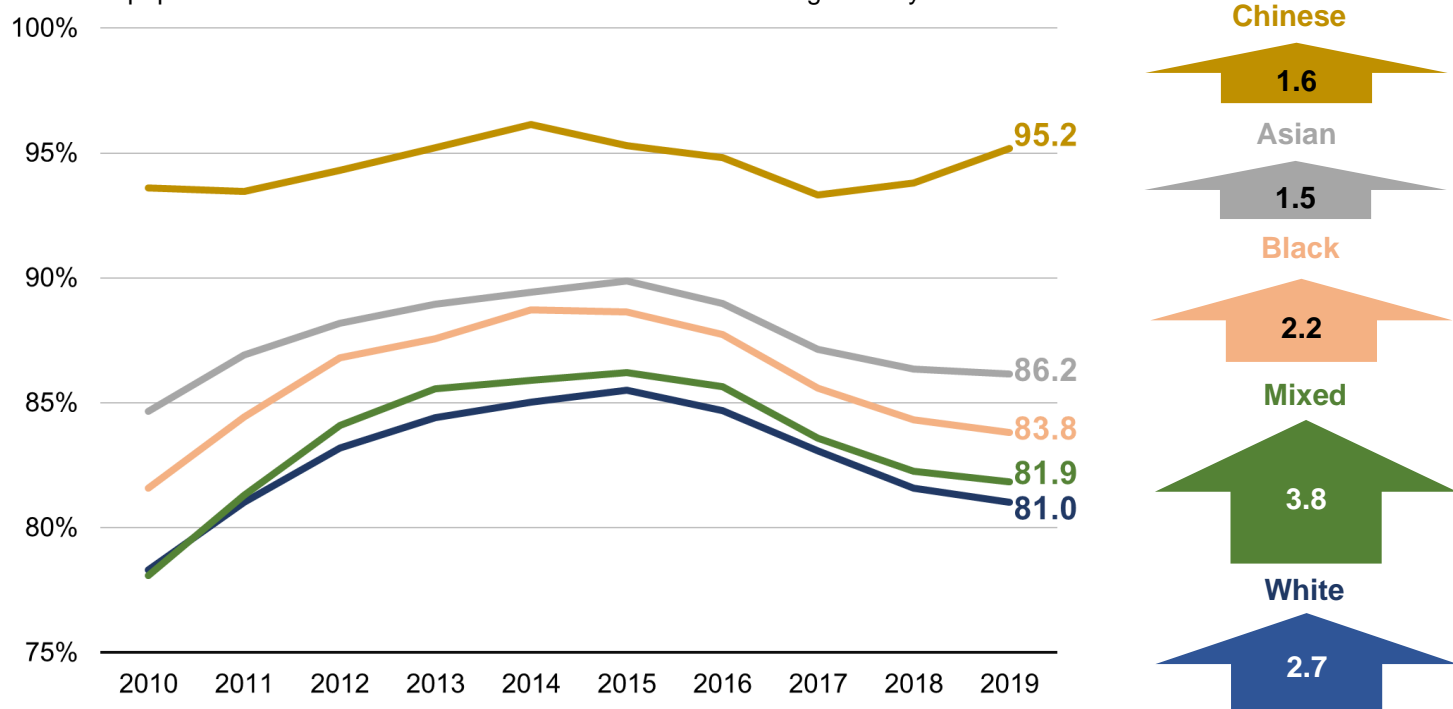
Level 2 attainment at 19 by ethnicity

In terms of Level 2 attainment at 19 by ethnicity, as shown in the chart below:

- Whilst attainment for all ethnicities, apart from for the Chinese population, fell in 2019, all groups have had overall increases compared with a decade earlier, with mixed ethnicities having experienced the largest rise.
- All ethnicities peaked in 2014 or 2015, and have experienced falls since, apart from the Chinese population, who have had consecutive annual rises in 2018 and 2019.
- Attainment has consistently been the highest for the Chinese population throughout the decade and consistently been the lowest for the white population, apart from in 2010.

Figure 4: Level 2 attainment at 19 by ethnicity, 2010 to 2019

Based on pupils recorded in mainstream state-funded schools in England in year 11.



3. Level 2 in English and maths at 19 and progression in Level 2 English and maths between 16 and 19 – state-funded cohort

This section reports on the attainment of 19-year olds who were recorded in the mainstream state sector in year 11 (i.e. the final year of secondary school) and their associated characteristics at that time.

There are differences in the methodology in the attainment measures for the state-funded cohort and for the national cohort, which mean that they should not be directly compared – see coverage section in the Technical Document for further details.

As the table below shows, there have been consecutive annual rises in Level 2 attainment in English and maths each year, apart from in 2018. The series peak was in 2017. Compared with 2005 and 2010, attainment has increased by 25 and 13 percentage points respectively.

Whilst 71% of 19-year olds had Level 2 English and maths in 2019, the figures are higher for those with Level 2 English alone at 80% (irrespective of whether maths was achieved) and Level 2 maths alone at 76% (irrespective of whether English was achieved).

Table 5: Level 2 in English and maths: attainment at 19 and progression between 16 and 19, 2005-2019
Based on pupils recorded in mainstream state-funded schools in England in year 11.

Year	Level 2 in English and maths (percentage)	Annual change (percentage point)	Progression in level 2 English and Maths	Annual change (percentage point)
2005	46.5		10.2	
2006	47.2	0.7	11.5	1.3
2007	49.4	2.2	13.7	2.3
2008	52.0	2.6	14.9	1.2
2009	54.9	2.9	16.4	1.5
2010	58.3	3.3	18.1	1.7
2011	61.5	3.2	18.9	0.8
2012	63.3	1.9	18.4	-0.5
2013	65.8	2.4	16.4	-2.0
2014	67.8	2.0	17.0	0.6
2015	70.2	2.4	22.6	5.6
2016	71.4	1.3	24.4	1.8
2017	71.5	0.1	26.1	1.7
2018	71.0	-0.5	27.8	1.7
2019	71.3	0.3	28.7	0.9

The progression in Level 2 English and maths measure shows the proportion of students who had not achieved Level 2 in English and/or maths at 16 but had achieved both at 19. This allows the impact of Condition of Funding changes for young people to be monitored, as introduced by the Education and Skills Funding Agency from 2014/15 onwards. This has resulted in most students having to study English and/or maths at level 2 as part of their programmes between the ages of 16 and 19 if they are yet to achieve qualifications at this level. The exact qualifications that students are required to do depends on their personal circumstances. Further information is listed on GOV.UK⁸.

This measure has been rising each year since the changes in funding were introduced in the 2014/15 academic year, with the latest figure at 29% representing the series peak. Similarly, the progression measures in English alone (34%) and maths alone (24%) also represent the series highs. However, despite the improvements made, it means that in 2019 at least two-thirds of those who did not have Level 2 English and/or maths at 16 still had not achieved one or both qualifications at 19.

⁸ See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-maths-and-english-condition-of-funding>.

4. Experimental Statistics: Level 2 and 3 attainment at 25 – national cohort

The age 20-25 figures in this section are experimental statistics being published for the first time.

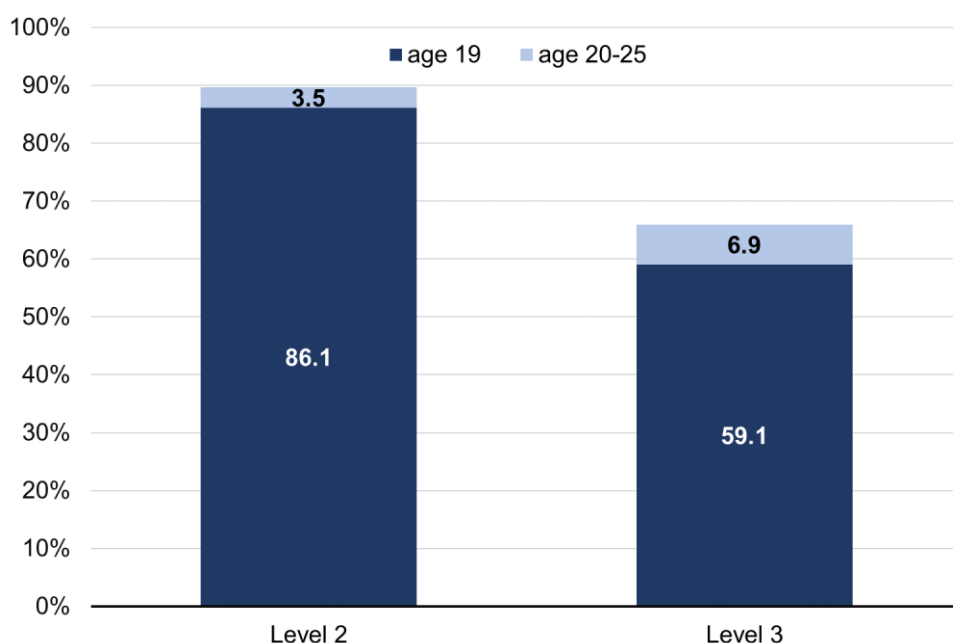
These experimental statistics are new official statistics that are undergoing evaluation and are being published to involve users and stakeholders in the assessment of their suitability and quality at an early stage.

These statistics should be treated with caution, as they and associated quality assurance processes are still being developed.

In 2019, as the below chart shows, more 25-year olds had Level 2 and Level 3 compared with 6 years earlier when they were 19, with the uplift being greater at Level 3. The improved attainment at ages 20-25 means that almost 90% of 25-year olds held Level 2 and almost two-thirds held Level 3 in 2019.

The age 19 figures in this chart correspond with the same national cohort figures provided in Table 2 for Level 2 and Table 1 for Level 3. Specifically, they relate to those aged 19 in 2013, as this is the year when those aged 25 in 2019 were 19-years old.

Figure 5: Level 2 and 3 attainment at 25, by whether first achieved by age 19 or age 20-25



5. National Statistics

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics in [July 2012](#), in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed. Information on improvements made to these statistics to continue their compliance with the Code of Practice are provided in the accompanying Technical document (see section 'Developments made to these statistics').



Department
for Education



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