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Academic year 2022/23

Progression to higher education or training

This is the latest data

Published 24 October 2024

Release type [Official statistics](#) 

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Produced by [Department for Education](#)

The latest data in this release covers students who left 16 to 18 study in 2020/21.

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Releases in this series

These statistics show the percentage of level 3 pupils (e.g. those that studied A levels, tech levels and applied general qualifications) continuing to a sustained education or training destination at level 4 or higher (such as degrees, higher apprenticeships and higher national diplomas) in the two years after completing 16 to 18 study.

The release also provides information on destination outcomes for different groups of pupils and education providers.

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[Progression to higher education and training - Institution level \(csv, 6 Mb\)](#)

Institution level data for the progression to higher education and training measure

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Changes to the data in 2020/21

The latest data in this release covers students who left 16 to

18 study in 2020/21 and follows their destinations in the two years following their last attendance at a 16 to 18 institution. The following should be considered when using this data:

The way we decide when a student is at the end of 16 to 18 study has changed this year and comparisons to previous cohorts should be treated with caution

Students are included in this statistical release when they reach the end of 16 to 18 study. The 'trigger' rules for deciding when this happens changed in 2020/21. Further details can be found below and in the accompanying methodology document. Students are no longer automatically triggered after spending two years in the same school or college. The two remaining criteria for assessing a student to be at the end of 16 to 18 study are by entering two A levels or other equally-substantial level 3 qualification(s), or by turning 18 in that academic year.

This two-year rule has been removed from 2020/21 to reduce the number of students being triggered too early. The impact of the trigger rule change is to reduce the number of students reported in accountability measures in 2020/21, but numbers will return to normal from 2021/22.

There was also no checking exercise for this cohort of students

The checking exercise ordinarily allows schools and colleges to confirm whether the students we report are at end of 16 to 18 study. Due to disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this did not go ahead in the 2020/21 academic year. This means that this data may not accurately represent whether students were at the end of 16 to 18 study in 2020/21.

This release no longer reports on the proportion of students who go to Oxbridge or Russell Group universities

This release previously contained data on the proportion of students who go to Oxbridge or Russell Group universities. This national data complimented the provider level accountability measures on the [Compare School and college Performance \(CSCP\) \(opens in a new tab\)](#) website. As these are no longer accountability measures we no longer report on them. Any feedback is welcome [by emailing this address](#).

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What is progression to higher education or training?

Progression to higher education or training shows the percentage of students that sustain an education course or apprenticeship at level 4 or higher in the two years following their 16 to 18 study. The most recent data reports on students who completed 16 to 18 study in the 2020/21 academic year and identifies their education and/or apprenticeship destinations in the two years following their last attendance at a 16 to 18 institution.

The measure is designed to complement the existing destination measures (Destinations after KS4 and 16-18 study) which provide more information on the destinations that are not featured here such as employment and further study at level 3 or below. These measures are produced for a number of purposes, including to assist with provider choice and encourage provider improvement via the school performance data, and to inform the public and stakeholders for policy development.

This progression measure differs from the original measures in that it uses a two-year destination window (rather than one) in order to better report students that take gap years and similar breaks. It also calculates value-added scores which take both prior attainment at GCSE and main qualification type into account.

Timeliness of data

There is a time lag between students completing their 16 to 18 study and this measure being published. Two years have to elapse during which young people are participating in their chosen destination, and datasets have to be combined before measuring sustained participation in education or apprenticeships. This publication reports on students that completed their 16 to 18 study in summer 2021, and considers their destination activity up to summer 2023.

What is a 'sustained' destination?

To be counted in a level 4 or higher destination, students have to be recorded as having sustained participation for a 6 month period in the two-year destination window. This participation can include activity in a single destination or a combination, as long as there are six consecutive months at level 4 or higher.

Who is included in the cohort?

This measure is restricted to students that studied level 3 qualifications as there is less expectation for students studying qualifications at lower levels to progress to

level 4 or higher. It thus includes students that studied academic qualifications such as A levels, applied general qualifications, technical levels, or other qualifications that have not been included in performance data but are notionally level 3. The cohort includes students who completed their 16 to 18 study in state-funded mainstream schools and colleges in 2020/21, and focuses on activity during the two years after they last attended a 16 to 18 provider.

How does the value-added score (“Progression score”) work?

The probability of a student progressing to a level 4 or higher destination is strongly correlated with their prior attainment at key stage 4 (GCSE and equivalents) and the qualification type they study at 16 to 18. An institution that starts with an intake of high-prior-attainment pupils will naturally have a higher rate of progression to level 4+ than an institution with an intake of low-prior-attainment pupils. For this reason we calculate a “value-added” score which is presented alongside the progression rate, and is an indication as to how the institution has performed once prior attainment and qualification types are taken into account. The score is calculated by comparing each individual student’s outcome (a 1 if they progress to level 4 or higher, a 0 if they do not) against the national average for the group of students nationally with similar prior attainment and qualification type. If, for example, 85% of the highest-prior-attainment academic students progressed to higher education or training nationwide, then an individual student in that group will score $1 - 0.85 = +0.15$ if they progress, but $0 - 0.85 = -0.85$ if they do not.

These individual student scores are then averaged for the institution and multiplied by 100 to obtain the VA score. A VA score of e.g. +7 thus represents a seven percentage point increase on progression into level 4 or higher destinations for that institution (or group) than similar students nationally. A VA score of zero shows that progression for that group was as expected according to the national average.

At institution level we also include confidence intervals, as the score is likely to be a more accurate representation of the value added by the institution for larger cohorts than small ones.

Individual student scores have also been averaged at local authority level, parliamentary constituency level, national level, and for various characteristics.

Impact of Covid-19 on destination measures

This release covers the 2020/21 cohort of leavers and as such has been impacted by measures taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus

(COVID-19) and associated disruption to education settings and the economy.

Students received Centre Assessed Grades in 2020/21, with students more likely to achieve higher grades than in previous years. This led to more students being accepted to HE and in particular to high-tariff institutions which may explain the increased progression rates compared with last year.

Comparisons with previous years should therefore be treated with caution.

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Comparison to previous years

Making comparisons over time

This release covers the 2020/21 cohort of leavers and as such has been impacted by measures taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and associated disruption to education settings and the economy.

Additionally, this cohort is the first to be affected by a change to the rules that determine when a student has reached the end of 16 to 18 study (and thus gets included in this measure). Previously a student was deemed to have reached the end of 16 to 18 study when they met any of the following criteria:

1. entered for two A levels or other equally-substantial qualifications
2. studied for two consecutive years at the same provider
3. reached the age of 18

The second criteria has now been dropped, to prevent students that spend three years in 16 to 18 study being included in destinations and attainment measures after two years. This change mostly affected students of level 2 qualifications and below, but did also have some impact on the cohort of level 3 students that comprise this measure.

Comparisons with previous years should therefore be treated with caution.

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This year we see an increase in students progressing to higher education, and thus a similar increase in overall progression to level 4 or higher destinations in the two years after completing 16-18 study. This could be driven by centre assessed grades being used in 2020/21, which made students more likely to achieve higher grades than in previous years. This led to more students being accepted to HE and in particular to high-tariff institutions. Additionally, many employers took on fewer individuals during the pandemic, which may have resulted in education looking to be a more viable destination for students. These effects may however be conflated with the impact of this year's cohort excluding students that would previously have only triggered for inclusion due to their having studied for two consecutive years at the same provider.

The results follow the pattern we observed in the 16-18 destination measures release for this cohort.

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Provider type

Students from state-funded mainstream schools were more likely to progress to level 4 or higher education and training (77.8%) than students from state-funded mainstream colleges (58.7%).

However, this might be due in part to different intentions between school and college students. For example, the 16 to 18 standard destination measures for this cohort (published last year, as the standard measure only considers one year of activity rather than the two used here) showed that while students from schools and colleges completing level 3 study had more similar rates of overall sustained destinations (90.1% vs 87.0% respectively), students from colleges were much more likely to sustain an employment destination at 27.4% than the 20.2% seen from school students, and less likely to sustain an education destination.

Another factor in the difference between schools and colleges is likely to be that schools tend to have higher prior-attainment intakes, while colleges are more likely to have students opting for vocational qualifications and employment destinations. This can be seen in the value-added progression scores: +1.6 for schools vs -2.5 for colleges, which demonstrates that despite a gap in overall progression of around 20 percentage points, this reduces to 4.1 percentage points once prior attainment and qualification type are taken into account.

Students from non-selective schools in highly-selective areas

continue to progress below the national average even once prior attainment is taken into account.

Students from non-selective schools in highly-selective areas (i.e. local authorities with a large proportion of grammar schools such as Kent, Lincolnshire and Buckinghamshire) were much less likely to progress to a level 4 or higher destination (66.1%) than students at non-selective schools in other parts of the country (76.9%). While students at Other non-selective schools achieved an average progression score of +1.8, those from non-selective schools in highly-selective areas received a progression score of -2.8.

This can be interpreted as showing that for two students with the same GCSE results and studying the same qualification types, both at non-selective schools, the one studying in a highly-selective area is 4.6 percentage points less likely to progress to a level 4 or higher destination than the student studying elsewhere.

Students from selective schools continued to progress at a very high rate (89.7%) with an average progression score of +2.4.

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Regional results

The gap in progression between London and the South West remains

London continues to have the highest rates of progression to level 4 or higher (80.5%), while the South West continues to have the lowest (64.2%). This difference remains when prior attainment and qualification type are taken into account, with London having a progression score of +9, compared to the South West's -6.

Part of the reason for this large progression gap is likely to be proximity to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Students from London might have the opportunity to sustain degree destinations while living at home, while those from the South West, with far fewer local options, may find the necessary travel and rental costs prohibitive. Another contributing factor to London's high progression score could be that it has a higher-than-average ratio of schools to colleges, which might create a stronger bias towards education destinations over employment. However, demographics of the different regions may also play a role, as is discussed in the Student characteristics section.

The South East and East of England also continue to have low rates of progression

with scores of -4 and -3 respectively. The North East had a similarly low proportion of degree destinations (59.1%) to the South West (59.7%), but the North East had the highest rate of level 4 or level 5 course destinations (4.8%, nearly twice the national average of 2.5%).

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Local authority results

Urban local authorities show higher rates of progression than those in rural and coastal areas

The most striking feature of the map of progression scores by local authority is that the majority of high-scoring LAs appear to be clustered around the urban centres of large cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield and particularly London, while the LAs of coastal and rural areas are more likely to have negative scores.

As discussed in the context of the differences between London and the South West in the regional section of this publication, reasons for these differences might include demographics and also accessibility of local Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

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Student characteristics

Disadvantaged students (those eligible for pupil premium in year 11) were less likely to sustain a level 4 or higher destination (65.5%) than other students (71.2%)

This gap reverses however when looking at the value-added scores, which take prior attainment at GCSE and qualification type into account. Disadvantaged students scored +1.2, compared to -0.2 for other students, showing that a student of given prior attainment and qualification type is actually slightly more likely to progress if part of the disadvantaged cohort (the lower overall sustained level 4+ destinations for disadvantaged students can agree with this observation if disadvantaged students begin with lower prior attainment on average, or if they are more likely to study qualification types with lower rates of progression). This could be because disadvantaged students are more likely to enter into level 3 study with the intention of progression, or it could be that they are boosted by the “London effect”, as London has by far the highest proportion of disadvantaged students and a very high progression rate.

Disadvantaged students were much less likely to sustain a degree destination at a top-third higher education institution (15.4% vs 25.6%).

Female students were more likely to progress to a level 4 or higher destination (73.1%) than male students (66.7%)

This was a gap of 6.4 percentage point gap. The gap in progression scores (i.e., having taken prior attainment and qualification types into account) was slightly larger, with female students scoring 3.4 percentage points higher than males.

The pattern reversed for students of tech levels (note that these are older level 3 qualifications than the T levels that were introduced in September 2020) with male tech level students obtaining a higher progression score (1.9) than female students (-1.5). This may be due to gender bias in the particular tech level subjects chosen, as some subjects typically lead to higher rates of education or apprenticeship destinations than others.

Though female students were much more likely to sustain a degree destination, male students were slightly more likely to sustain a level 4 or level 5 destination and twice as likely to sustain an apprenticeship.

There is large variability in the rate of progression by ethnicity group

Students from the Asian or Asian British major ethnicity group were the most likely to sustain a level 4 or higher destination (85.4%), 19.9 percentage points ahead of students from the White major ethnicity group, who had the lowest progression rate. Once prior attainment and qualification type were accounted for, students from the Black or Black British major ethnicity group achieved the highest progression scores (+15.6).

Students from the White major ethnicity group were the only ones to average a negative progression score, however they were more likely than students from other groups to have a high-level apprenticeship or level 4/5 destination.

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[Progression to higher education and training: methodology](#)

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