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Academic year 2023/24

Progression to higher education or training

This is the latest release

Published 16 October 2025

Next update October 2026

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The latest data in this release covers students

who left 16 to 18 study in 2021/22.

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.

Releases in this series

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Methodologies

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

Headline facts and figures - 2023/24

Sustained a level 4 or higher destination

65.0%

► What is a sustained destination?

The proportion of students that progressed to a sustained level 4 or higher destination was 65.0%.



The way we decide when a student is at the end of 16 to 18 study changed last year and impacts the students included in this years cohort. As such comparisons to previous cohorts should be treated with caution. See the ‘Changes to the data’ section for more detail.

Of the 65.0%, their destinations were as follows:

- 60.1% were studying for a degree (a level 6 qualification)
- 2.4% were participating in an apprenticeship at level 4 or higher
- 2.5% were studying other qualifications at level 4 or 5

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Changes to the data

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The latest data in this release covers students who left 16 to 18 study in 2021/22 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 changed last year and impacts the students included in this year's cohort. As such comparisons to previous cohorts should be treated with caution and have not been made in the commentary of this release

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. 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 removed to prevent students that spend three years in 16 to 18 study being included in destinations and attainment measures before they complete their study.

A larger proportion of students who met the removed trigger rule study in further education. These students are less likely to go on to sustain a higher education destination. Therefore, removing them from the 2020/21 cohort (published last year) meant that whilst the number of students progressing to higher education or training fell, the proportion of the cohort increased. The further education students removed from the cohort last year have now met the criteria via the remaining two rules and so the higher education destination rate has reduced, despite the number of students progressing increasing.

Removal of value-added progression scores

Value-added progression scores and other related indicators are not included in this year's publication. Value-added progression scores take into account the key stage 4 prior attainment of students. The latest cohort (2021/22 leavers) were subject to a different grading approach at key stage 4 due to changes made during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department made a commitment not to use grades awarded in 2021/22 for accountability measures and therefore the progression score has not been included for this cohort in this release.

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What is progression to higher education or training?

 [Hide](#)

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 2021/22 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. For previous cohorts it also calculated value-added scores which took 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 2022, and considers their destination activity up to summer 2024.

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 destinations. 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 2021/22, and focuses on activity during the two years after they last attended a 16 to 18 provider.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic disruption

Destination outcomes in 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years were affected by the disruption to the economy and educational settings caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. 2020, 2021 and 2022 leavers (with destination outcomes 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23) were also impacted by changes to grading approaches during these years as well as the ongoing uneven impacts of the pandemic on different schools, colleges and pupils,

Removal of value-added progression scores

Value-added progression scores and other related indicators are not included in this year's publication. Value-added progression scores take into account the key stage 4 prior attainment of students. The latest cohort (2021/22 leavers) were subject to a different grading approach at key stage 4 due to changes made during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department made a commitment not to use grades awarded in 2021/22 for accountability measures and therefore the progression score has not been included for this cohort in this release.

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Student characteristics

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Disadvantaged students (those eligible for pupil premium in year 11) were less likely to sustain a level 4 or higher destination (58.0%) than other students (66.6%)

This gap is primarily seen in degree destinations, with disadvantaged students 7.9 percentage points less likely to sustain a degree destination (53.7%) than non-disadvantaged students (61.6%). This gap widens when looking at sustained destinations in a top-third higher education destination, with disadvantaged students 10.0 percentage points less likely to sustain a destination (10.8%) than non-disadvantaged students (20.8%).

Non-disadvantaged students were 1.4 percentage points more likely to sustain an apprenticeship destination (2.6%) than disadvantaged students (1.2%). In contrast, disadvantaged students were 0.6 percentage points more likely to sustain a level 4 or 5 destination (3.0%) than non-disadvantaged students (2.4%).

Chart

Table

► Export options

The gap between disadvantaged students and not-disadvantaged students progressing to higher education or training remains

	2021/22	
	Disadvantage Y11 Status	
	Disadvantaged	Not Disadvantaged
Sustained a level 4 or higher destination	58.0	66.6
Sustained degree destination	53.7	61.6
Top third HE destination	10.8	20.8
Sustained apprenticeship destination	1.2	2.6
Sustained level 4 or 5 destination	3.0	2.4
Academic/AGQ students who sustained L4+ destination	67.5	73.2
Tech level students who sustained L4+ destination	37.2	40.1
Other level 3 students who sustained L4+ destination	31.9	37.4

[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

1. Note that the methodology used to determine the top third Higher Education Institutions changed in 2020 for the 2016/17 cohort. Instead of the top 33% of institutions, institutions are now only added to the list until 33% of the student intake is represented. Additionally, qualifications equivalent to A levels are now included in the process, rather than solely A levels. Top third results from the 2015/16 cohort are thus not directly comparable with 2016/17 and later cohorts.
2. State-funded mainstream schools & colleges covers all state-funded mainstream schools, academies, free schools, city technology colleges (CTCs), sixth forms and other FE sector colleges. Excludes alternative provision, special schools, other government department funded colleges and independent schools.

[Show 4 more footnotes](#)

Source: National Pupil Database

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Explore data

Female students were more likely to progress to a level 4 or higher destination (68.1%) than male students (61.3%)

This was a gap of 6.8 percentage points. This was driven by degree destinations, with female students 8.5 percentage points more likely to sustain a degree destination (64.0%) than males students (55.5%). However, the gap between female (19.8%) and male (17.9%) students sustaining a top third higher education destination students was closer with just a 1.9 percentage points gap.

In contrast, female students were 1.7 percentage points less likely to sustain a higher apprenticeship destination (1.6%) than male students (3.3%). Female and male students were equally likely to sustain a level 4 or 5 destination (2.5%).

Chart

Table

► Export options

Female students continue to progress at a higher rate than male students

	2021/22	
	Sex	
	Female	Male
Sustained a level 4 or higher destination	68.1	61.3
Sustained degree destination	64.0	55.5
Top third HE destination	19.8	17.9
Sustained apprenticeship destination	1.6	3.3
Sustained level 4 or 5 destination	2.5	2.5
Academic/AGQ students who sustained L4+ destination	74.9	69.0
Tech level students who sustained L4+ destination	38.2	40.5
Other level 3 students who sustained L4+ destination	39.0	33.1

[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

1. Note that the methodology used to determine the top third Higher Education Institutions changed in 2020 for the 2016/17 cohort. Instead of the top 33% of institutions, institutions are now only added to the list until 33% of the student intake is represented. Additionally, qualifications equivalent to A levels are now included in the process, rather than solely A levels. Top third results from the 2015/16 cohort are thus not directly comparable with 2016/17 and later cohorts.
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Source: National Pupil Database

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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 (80.8%), 21.0 percentage points ahead of students from the White major ethnicity group, who had the lowest progression rate. This gap widens when comparing sustained degree destinations, with students of the Any other ethnicity group 21.4 percentage points more likely to sustain a degree destination (76.0%) than White ethnicity students (54.6%).

However, while Black or Black British ethnicity students had near the highest rates of progression to a level 4 or higher destination (78.6%) and degree destination (74.9%), they had the lowest rate of progression to a top third higher education destination (16.7%). This was 7.4 percentage points below the highest progression rate for this destination type - Asian or Asian British ethnicity students (24.1%).

Students of White ethnicity were more likely to sustain a higher apprenticeship destination (2.6%) and a level 4 or 5 destination (2.6%) than other major ethnicity groups. Black or Black British ethnicity students were least likely to sustain a higher apprenticeship destination (1.3%, a 1.3 percentage point gap) and students of the Mixed Dual Background and Any other ethnicity groups least likely to sustain a level 4 or 5 destination (2.0%, a 0.6 percentage point gap to the figure for students from the White major ethnicity group).

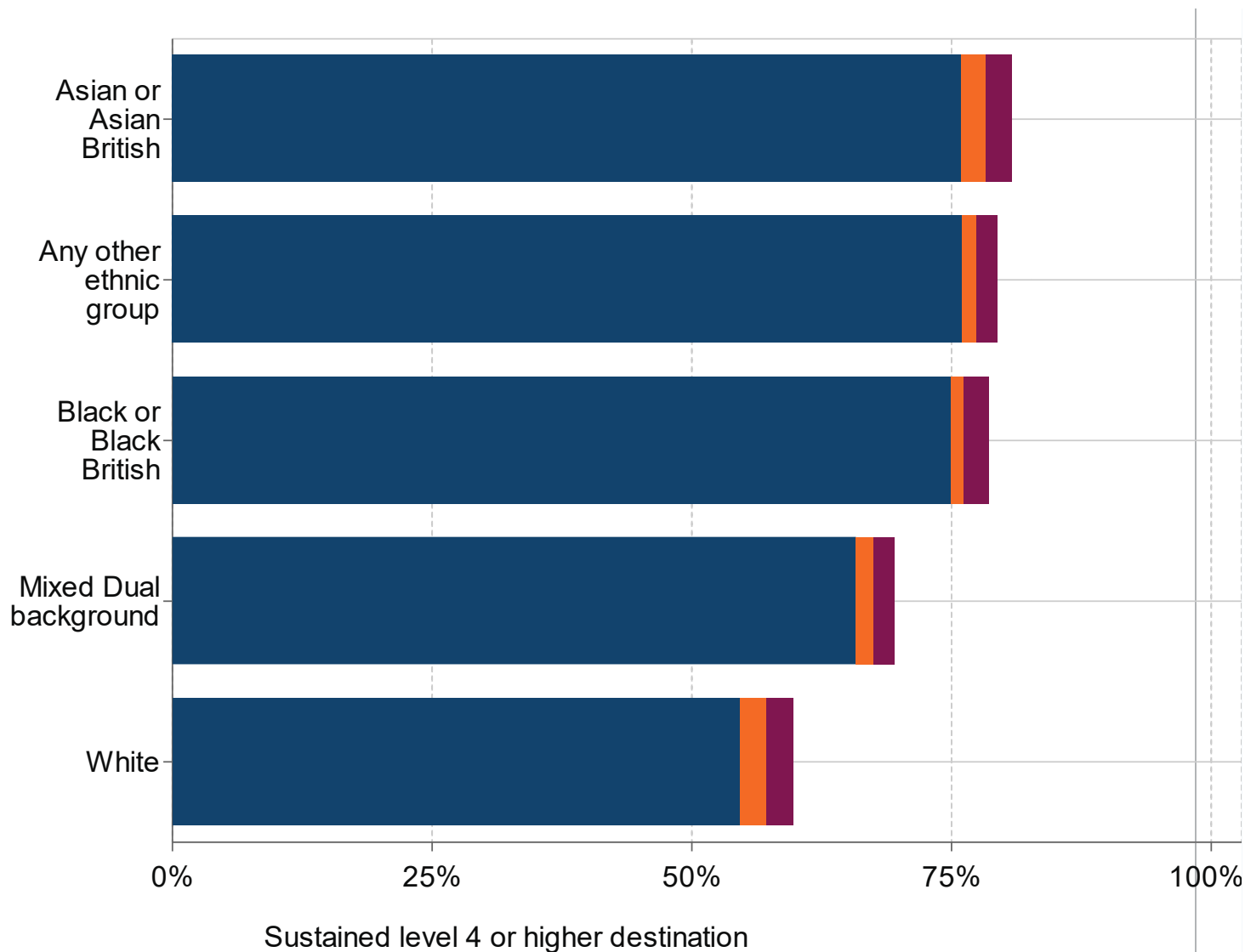
Chart

Table

► Export options

Students from the Asian or Asian British ethnicity-major group had the highest progression rate

Progression to higher education or training by ethnicity major, England, 2021/22 cohort of level 3 students



- Sustained degree destination
- Sustained apprenticeship destination
- Sustained level 4 or 5 destination

Footnotes

1. Note that the methodology used to determine the top third Higher Education Institutions changed in 2020 for the 2016/17 cohort. Instead of the top 33% of institutions, institutions are now only added to the list until 33% of the student intake is represented. Additionally, qualifications equivalent to A levels are now included in the process, rather than solely A levels. Top third results from the 2015/16 cohort are thus not directly comparable with 2016/17 and later cohorts.
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Source: National Pupil Database

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Explore data

Students of White ethnicity have the largest disadvantage gap for progression to level 4 or higher destinations

Students of White ethnicity had the largest disadvantage gap (16.3 percentage points) of all major ethnicities. In comparison, students of the Any other ethnicity group had the smallest disadvantage gap (2.5 percentage points).

For disadvantaged students, students of White ethnicity had the lowest rate of progression to a level 4 or above destination (45.9%), while students of any other ethnic group had the highest (77.8%), a 31.9 percentage point difference.

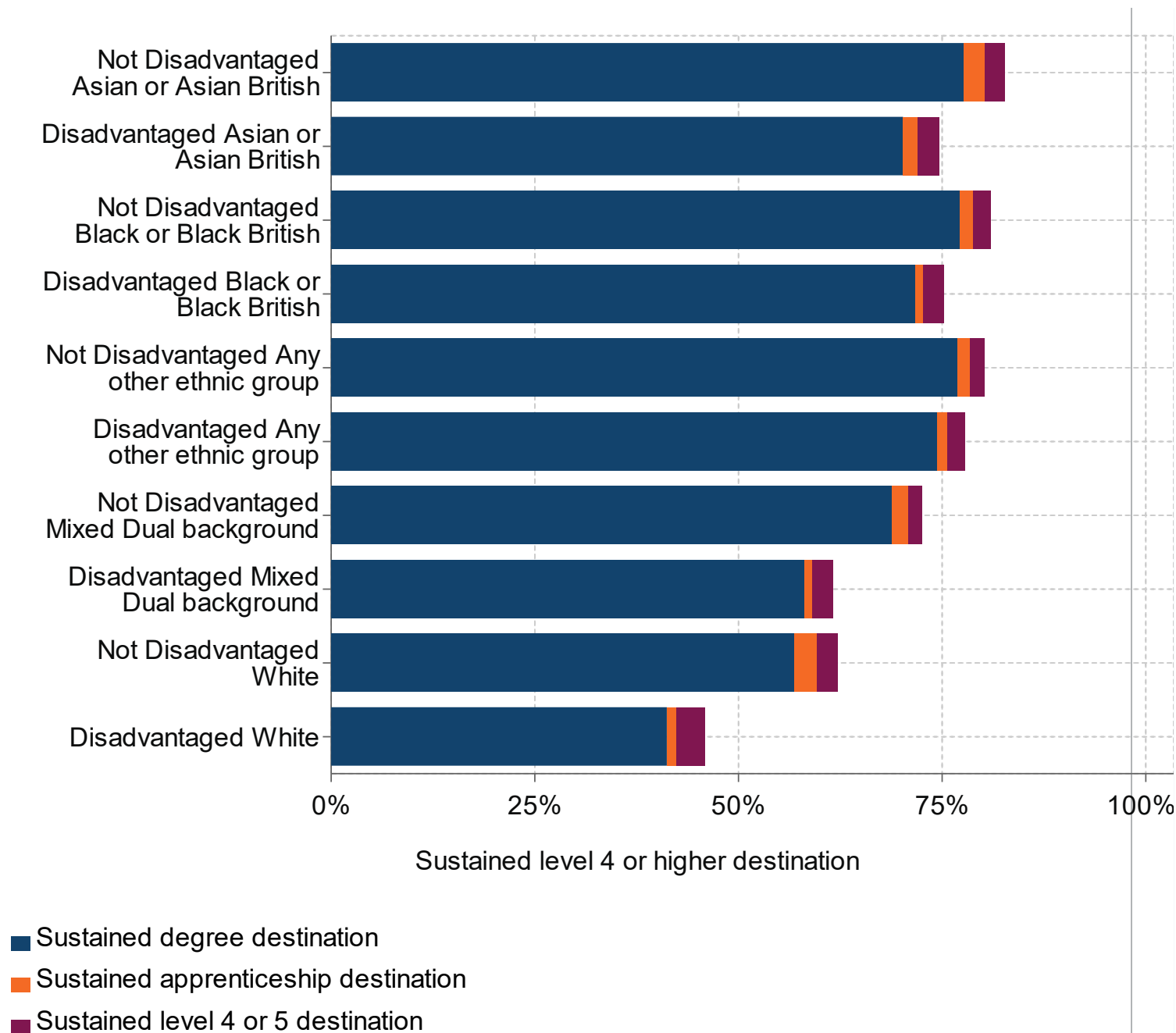
For non-disadvantaged students, students of White ethnicity had the lowest rate of progression to a level 4 or above destination (62.2%), while Asian or Asian British ethnicity students had the highest (82.7%), a 20.5 percentage point difference. Non-disadvantaged white students also had a lower rate of progression to a level 4 or higher destination than most disadvantaged ethnicity major groups, above only disadvantaged Mixed Dual Background ethnicity students (61.7%) and disadvantaged White ethnicity students (45.9%).

Chart Table

► Export options

Students of White ethnicity have the largest disadvantage gap for progression to level 4 or higher destinations

Progression to higher education or training by disadvantage status and ethnicity major, England, 2021/22 cohort of level 3 students



Footnotes

1. Note that the methodology used to determine the top third Higher Education Institutions changed in 2020 for the 2016/17 cohort. Instead of the top 33% of institutions, institutions are now only added to the list until 33% of the student intake is represented. Additionally, qualifications equivalent to A levels are now included in the process, rather than solely A levels. Top third results from the 2015/16 cohort are thus not directly comparable with 2016/17 and later cohorts.
2. State-funded mainstream schools & colleges covers all state-funded mainstream schools, academies, free schools, city technology colleges (CTCs), sixth forms and other FE sector colleges. Excludes alternative provision, special schools, other government department funded colleges and independent schools.

[Show 3 more footnotes](#)

Source: National Pupil Database

Explore and edit this data online

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Explore data

Disadvantaged male students were the least likely to sustain a level 4 or above destination

Disadvantaged male students were 6.8 percentage points less likely to sustain a level 4 or above destination (54.1%) than disadvantaged female students (60.9%). This was mainly seen in a 7.6 percentage point gap in degree destinations. However, for top-third higher education destinations, this gap narrowed to 1.1 percentage points.

Non-disadvantaged male students were 7.0 percentage points less likely to sustain a level 4 or above destination (62.9%) than non-disadvantaged female students (69.9%), meaning the gap in progression for each sex remained similar regardless of disadvantage status. This was again driven by a large gap in degree destinations (9 percentage points), with this gap narrowing to 2.3 percentage points for top-third higher education destinations.

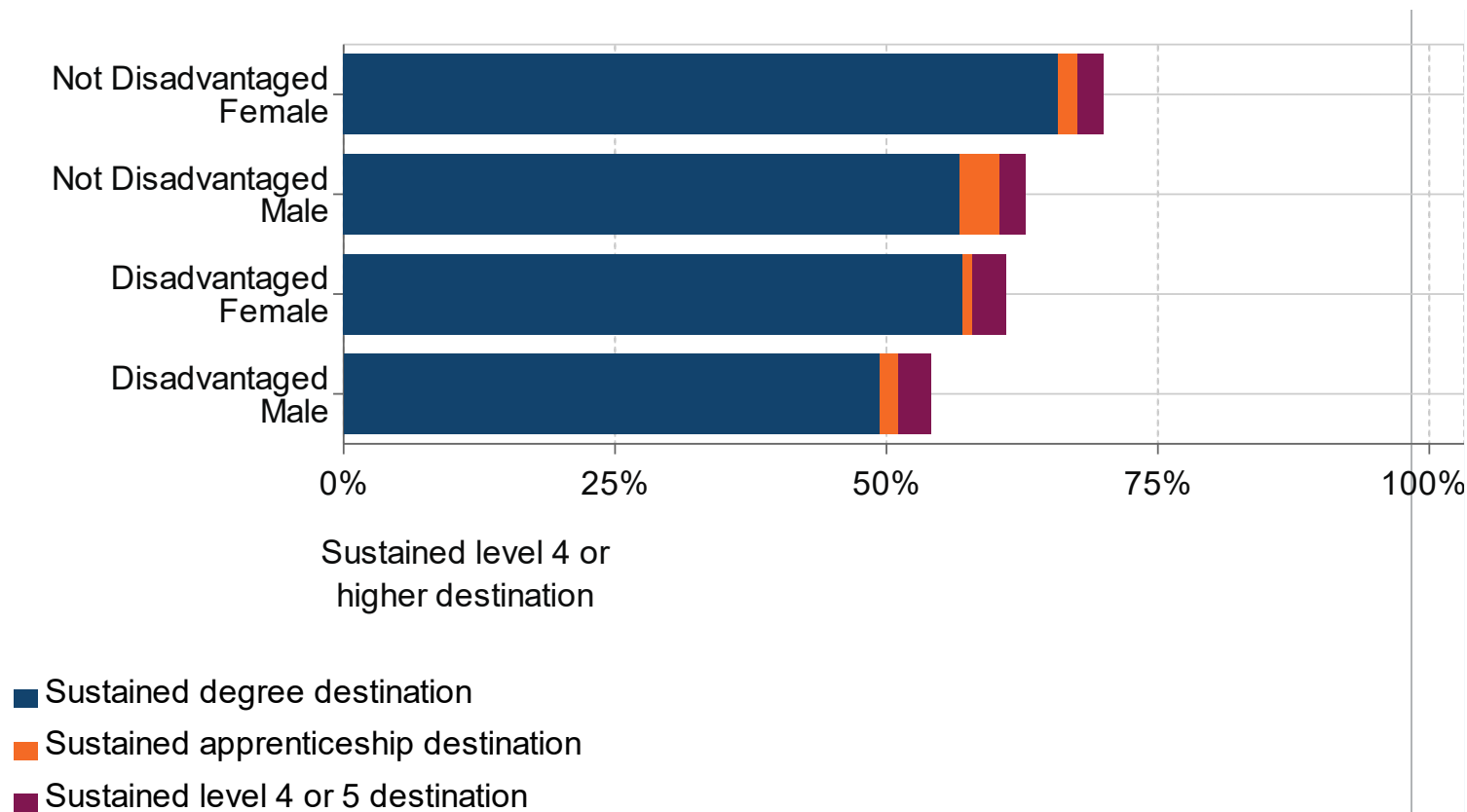
The disadvantage gap also remains regardless of sex, with non-disadvantaged males 8.8 percentage points more likely to sustain a level 4 or above destination than disadvantaged males, and non-disadvantaged females 9.0 percentage points more likely to sustain a level 4 or above destination than disadvantaged females. For both sexes, the disadvantage gap was driven by degree destinations, with an 8.8 and 7.4 percentage point gap for females and males, respectively. Both sexes also had a large disadvantage gap for top third higher education destinations, with a 10.6 and 9.4 percentage point gap for females and males, respectively.

Chart Table

► Export options

Disadvantaged male students were the least likely to sustain a level 4 or above destination

Progression to higher education or training by disadvantage status and sex, England, 2021/22 cohort of level 3 students



Footnotes

1. Note that the methodology used to determine the top third Higher Education Institutions changed in 2020 for the 2016/17 cohort. Instead of the top 33% of institutions, institutions are now only added to the list until 33% of the student intake is represented. Additionally, qualifications equivalent to A levels are now included in the process, rather than solely A levels. Top third results from the 2015/16 cohort are thus not directly comparable with 2016/17 and later cohorts.
2. State-funded mainstream schools & colleges covers all state-funded mainstream schools, academies, free schools, city technology colleges (CTCs), sixth forms and other FE sector colleges. Excludes alternative provision, special schools, other government department funded colleges and independent schools.

[Show 4 more footnotes](#)

Source: National Pupil Database

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Explore data

Provider type

 Hide

Students from state-funded mainstream schools were more likely to progress to level 4 or higher education and training (75.0%) than students from state-funded mainstream colleges (51.4%).

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 (88.6% vs 83.9% respectively), students from colleges were much more likely to sustain an employment destination (32.7% compared to the 21.2% 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. However, data on value-added progression scores, which take account of prior-attainment, is not available this year due to changes to grading approaches for this cohort during the pandemic.

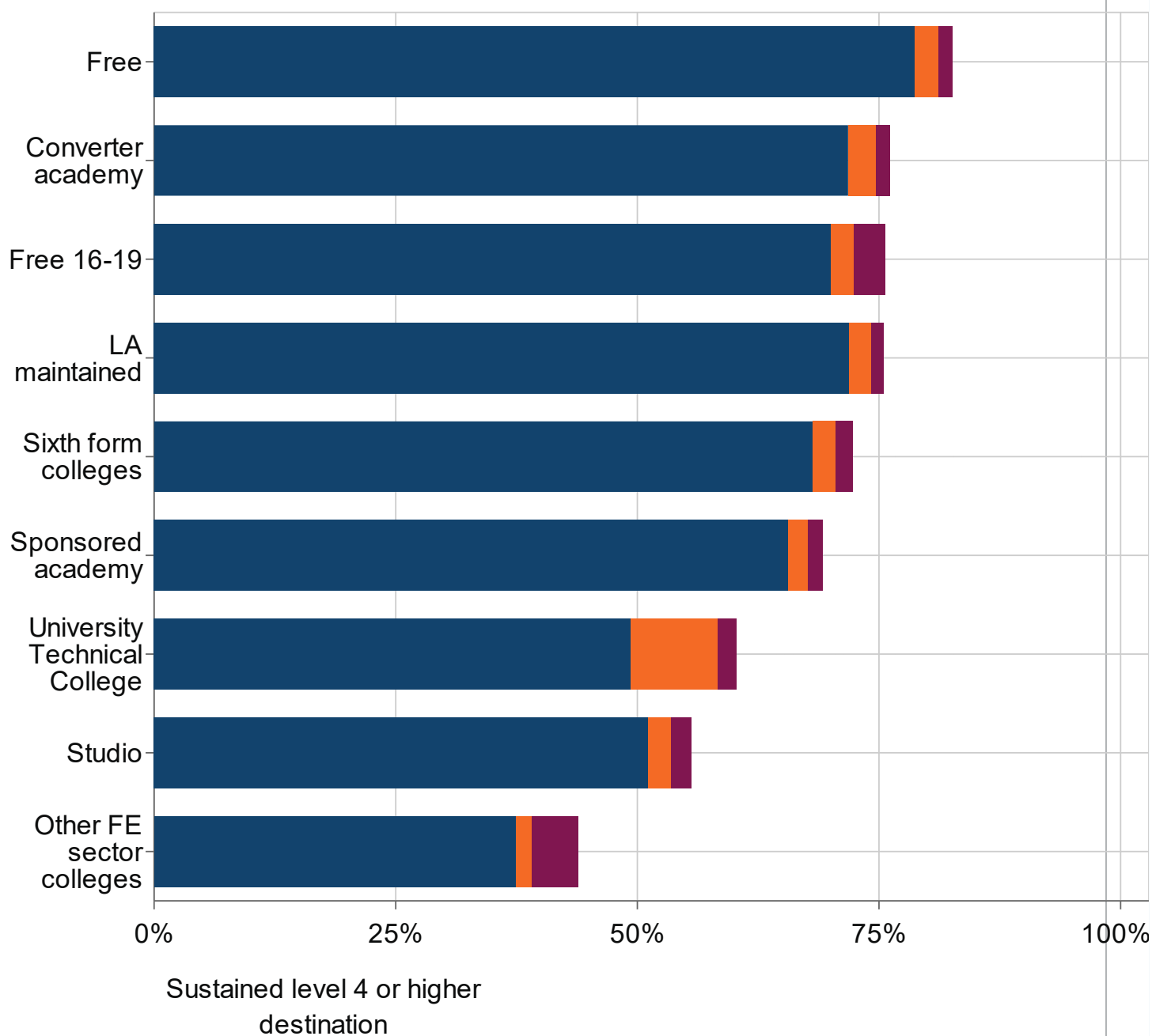
Chart

Table

► Export options

Free schools had the highest rate of progression to higher education or training

Progression to higher education or training by institution type, England, 2021/22 cohort of level 3 students



Footnotes

1. Local authority maintained includes community, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled and foundation schools.
2. Note that the methodology used to determine the top third Higher Education Institutions changed in 2020 for the 2016/17 cohort. Instead of the top 33% of institutions, institutions are now only added to the list until 33% of the student intake is represented. Additionally, qualifications equivalent to A levels are now included in the process, rather than solely A levels. Top third results from the 2015/16 cohort are thus not directly comparable with 2016/17 and later cohorts.

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Explore data

Students from non-selective schools in highly-selective areas continue to progress below non-selective schools in less selective areas.

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 10.2 percentage points less likely to progress to a level 4 or higher destination (63.8%) than students at non-selective schools in other parts of the country (74.0%).

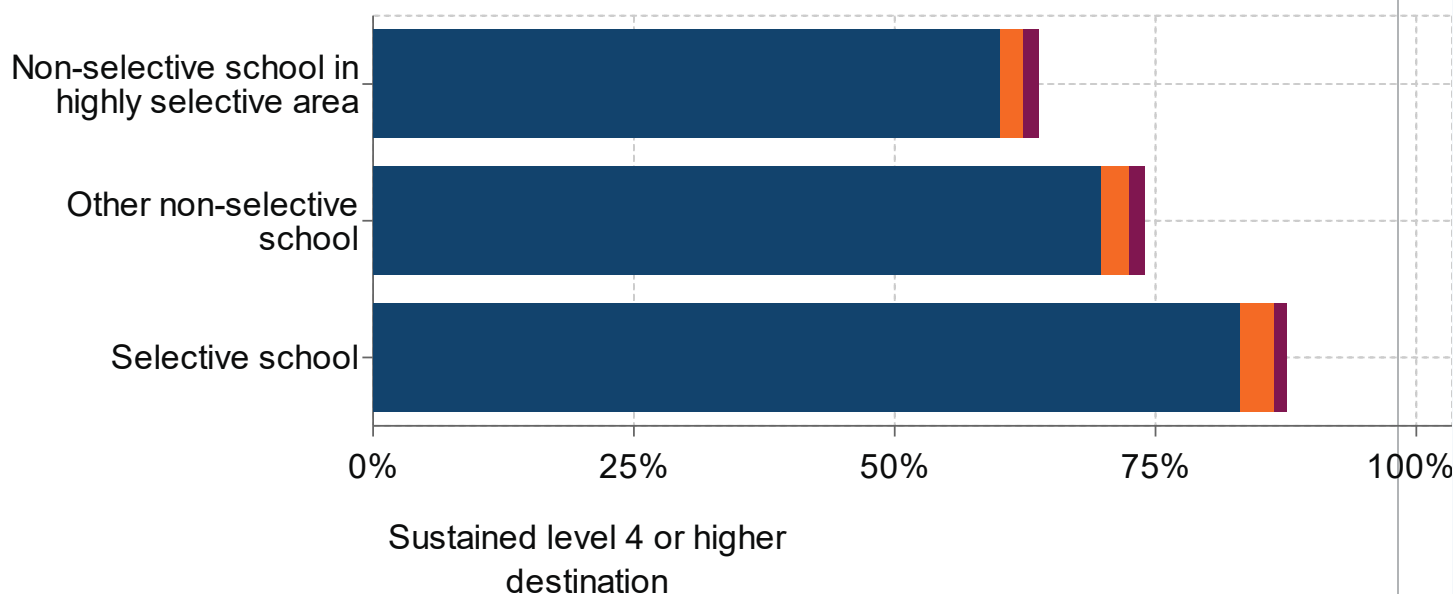
Students from selective schools continued to progress at a very high rate (87.6%), 22.6 percentage points higher than the national average. They were 32.8 percentage points more likely to sustain a top third higher education destination than the national average.

Chart Table

► Export options

Students from non-selective schools in highly-selective areas continue to progress below non-selective schools in less selective areas.

Progression to higher education or training by selectivity status, England, 2021/22 cohort of level 3 students



Footnotes

1. Note that the methodology used to determine the top third Higher Education Institutions changed in 2020 for the 2016/17 cohort. Instead of the top 33% of institutions, institutions are now only added to the list until 33% of the student intake is represented. Additionally, qualifications equivalent to A levels are now included in the process, rather than solely A levels. Top third results from the 2015/16 cohort are thus not directly comparable with 2016/17 and later cohorts.
2. Non-selective in highly selective area includes all non-selective schools in local authorities with a high level of selection (where 25% or more of state-funded secondary places are in state-funded selective schools). These local authorities are Bexley, Buckinghamshire, Kent, Lincolnshire, Medway, Poole, Slough, Southend-on-Sea, Sutton, Torbay, Trafford and Wirral.

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Source: National Pupil Database

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Regional results

 Hide

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 (75.7%), while the South West continues to have the lowest (58.0%).

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 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.

London also has the highest rates of progression to top third higher education destinations (24.1%), while the North East has the lowest (14.7%). In contrast, the North East has the highest rates of progression to level 4 or 5 course destinations (5.1%), just over twice the national average (2.5%).

Chart

Table

► Export options

The gap in progression between London and the South West remains

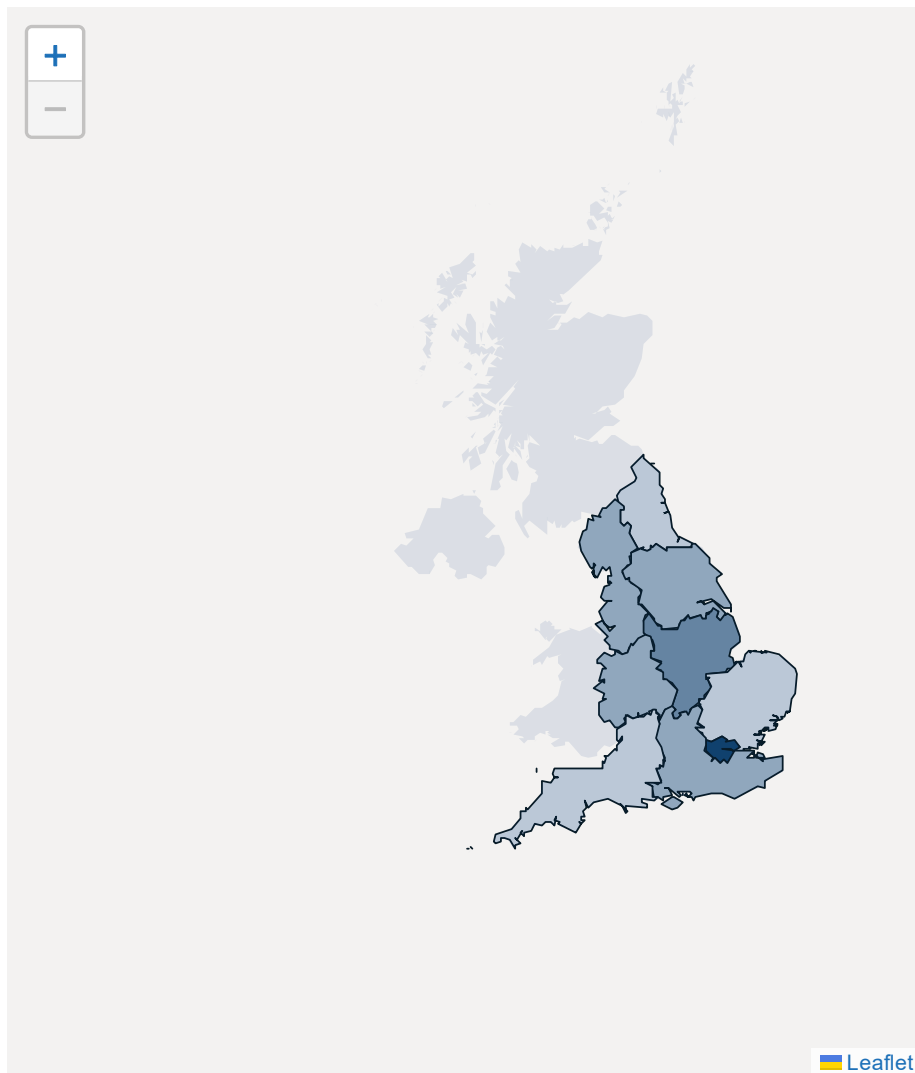
Progression to higher education and training for 2021/22 cohort of state-funded mainstream schools and colleges students in England

1. Select data to view

Sustained a level 4 or higher destination (Percentage, Stat

2. Select a Region

None selected



Key to Sustained a level 4 or higher destination (Percentage, State-funded mainstream schools & colleges, Local education authority area, 2021/22)

58.0 to 61.5
61.6 to 65.1
65.2 to 68.7
68.8 to 72.3
72.4 to 75.7

Footnotes

1. Note that the methodology used to determine the top third Higher Education Institutions changed in 2020 for the 2016/17 cohort. Instead of the top 33% of institutions, institutions are now only added to the list until 33% of the student intake is represented. Additionally, qualifications equivalent to A levels are now included in the process, rather than solely A levels. Top third results from the 2015/16 cohort are thus not directly comparable with 2016/17 and later cohorts.
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Local authority results

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Chart

Table

► Export options

Progression to higher education or training varied by local authority

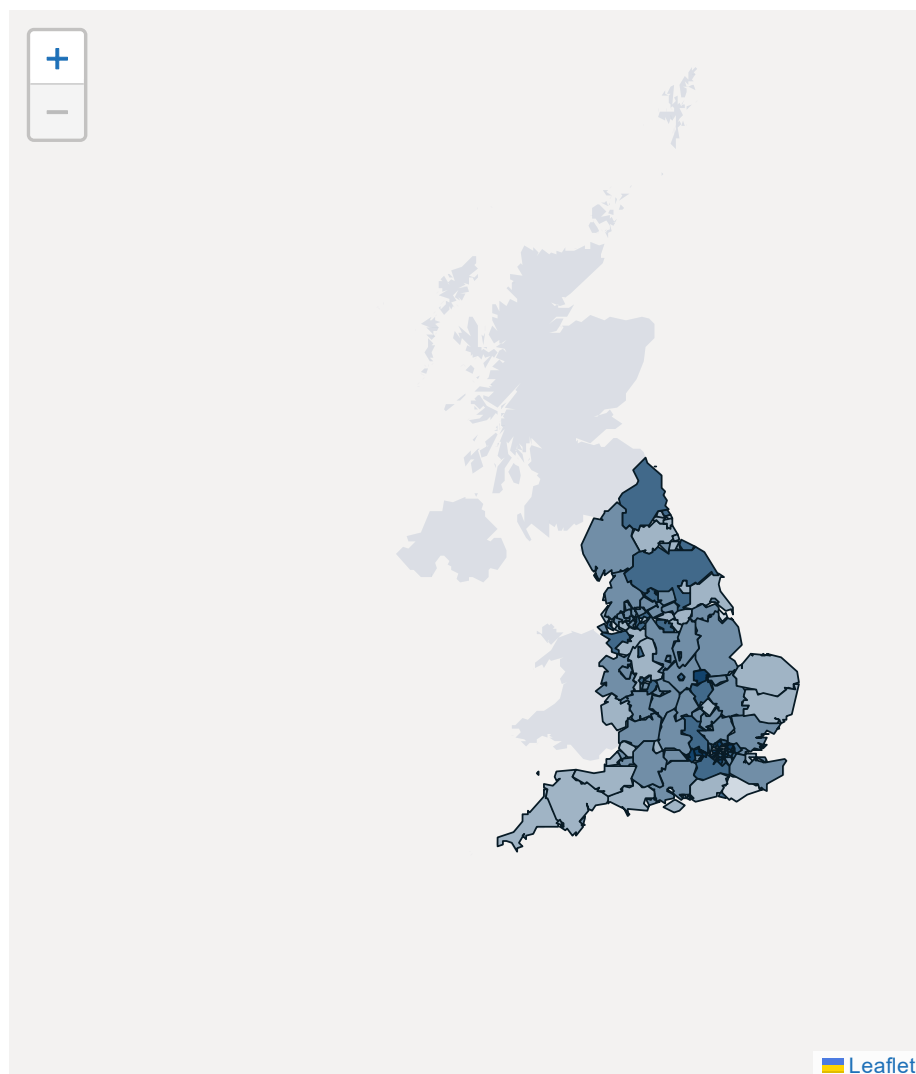
Progression to higher education and training for 2021/22 cohort of state-funded mainstream schools and colleges students in England

1. Select data to view

Sustained a level 4 or higher destination (Percentage, Stat

2. Select a Local Authority

None selected



Key to Sustained a level 4 or higher destination (Percentage, State-funded mainstream schools & colleges, Local education authority area, 2021/22)

38.9 to 48.7
48.8 to 58.6
58.7 to 68.5
68.6 to 78.4
78.5 to 88.1

Footnotes

1. Note that the methodology used to determine the top third Higher Education Institutions changed in 2020 for the 2016/17 cohort. Instead of the top 33% of institutions, institutions are now only added to the list until 33% of the student intake is represented. Additionally, qualifications equivalent to A levels are now included in the process, rather than solely A levels. Top third results from the 2015/16 cohort are thus not directly comparable with 2016/17 and later cohorts.
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[Progression to higher education and training: methodology](#)

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[\(opens in new tab\)](#).

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If you have a specific enquiry about Progression to higher education or training statistics and data:

Destination measures

Email: Destination.MEASURES@education.gov.uk

Contact name: Robin Davis

Press office

If you have a media enquiry:

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