Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Government Statistical Service

Statistical Digest of Rural England:

6 - Education, Qualifications and Training

January 2025

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Cover photos

		Ward 2011	Rural-Urban Classification
TL	Helmsley marketplace	Helmsley	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
TC	Horton-in-Ribblesdale train station with Penyghent behind	Penyghent	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
TR	St Giles Church, Skelton	Rural West York	Rural Town and Fringe
CL	Fishing Boat, Marske-by-the-Sea with Hunt cliff in the distance	St Germain's; Saltburn	Rural Town and Fringe
CR	Thornton Force Waterfall, Ingleton Waterfalls Trail	Ingleton and Clapham	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
BL	Farmer working the fields in Knapton	Rural West York	Rural Town and Fringe
BC	Remote pub at Ribblehead viaduct	Ingleton and Clapham	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
BR	Glamping pod in the North York Moors	Pickering East	Rural Town and Fringe in a sparse setting

All cover photos provided by Martin Fowell.

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About the Statistical Digest of Rural England

The Statistical Digest of Rural England (hereafter the Digest) is a collection of statistics on a range of social and economic topics and provides broad comparisons between Rural and Urban areas by settlement type. For more information on our classifications, including maps and diagrams explaining the classification, see Appendix 2: Defining Rural areas.

The Digest has been restructured into thematic reports and incorporates the previously separate publication the Rural Economic Bulletin.

The Digest consists of the following thematic reports:

1. Population
2. Housing
3. Health and Wellbeing
4. Communities and Households
5. Connectivity and Accessibility
6. Education, Qualifications and Training
7. Rural Economic Bulletin
8. Energy

In March 2024 the content relating to energy that was previously split across the Housing and Communities and Households chapters has been consolidated into a new Energy report. Appendix 1, shows the sub-themes within each of the 8 Digest reports. Thematic reports will be updated individually and not every report with be updated every month.

The most recent updates for this theme are shown in Table 1. In Sept 2024, only the apprenticeships part of the Apprenticeships and training section was updated to include information for the 2022/23 academic year and expanded to cover Male and Female apprenticeship starts. In January 2025 two new sections called ‘Schools and their workforce’ and ‘class sizes’ were added to the digest for the first time.

Table 1: Update monitor for Education, Qualifications and Training subsections
where “✔" indicates the topic has been updated, “✘" indicates the topic has not been updated, and “New” indicates a new topic with analysis not previously included within the Digest.

Section	September 2023	January 2024	April 2024	September 2024	January 2025
Schools and their workforce					New
Class sizes					New
Secondary education attainment	✘	✘	✔	✘	✘
School inspections	✔	✘	✘	✘	✘
Free school meals - eligibility		New	✘	✘	✘
Alternative and specialist education provision		New	✘	✘	✘
Progression to higher education	✘	✘	✔	✘	✘
Apprenticeships and on-the-job training	✔	✘	✘	✔	✘
Workforce education level	✔	✘	✘	✘	✘

Official Statistics

These statistics have been produced to the high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, which sets out eight principles including meeting user needs, impartiality and objectivity, integrity, sound methods and assured quality, frankness and accessibility.

More information on the Official Statistics Code of Practice can be found at: Code of Practice for Statistics.

This publication has been compiled by the Rural Statistics Team within the Rural and Place Team in Defra:

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There is a 2011 Census version of the Digest which looks at the data from the 2011 Census and where possible makes comparisons to the 2001 Census results.

This can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/2011-census-results-for-rural-england

The 2021 Rural-Urban Classification was released on 6 March 2025. Details of the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rural-urban-classification. It will take some time for the Digest to be updated throughout using the new classification. Where relevant Statistics drawing on the 2021 Census will be added to Digest thematic reports.

Education, Qualifications and Training

This part of the Statistical Digest of Rural England focuses on Education, Qualifications and Training. It covers the following:

- Schools and their workforce (Section A);
- Class sizes (Section B);
- Secondary Education attainment for pupils living in and attending schools in Rural areas (Section C);
- results of Ofsted school inspections for Rural areas (Section D);
- free School Meals – eligibility (Section E);
- alternative and specialist education provision, which covers both home schooling and special educational needs (Section F);
- progression to higher education (Section G);
- apprenticeships and training (Section H); and
- the education level of the workforce, with separate analyses according to where people work and live (Section I).

The key findings from this chapter are summarised with the following set of headline clouds:

Schools and their workforce - key findings

In 2023/24 there were 42 fewer schools in Rural areas than in 2014/15, but 71 more in Urban areas

Schools in Rural areas had 20 more pupils per school in 2023/24 than they did in 2014/15, and for Urban areas it was 38 more pupils

In 2023/24, schools in Predominantly Rural areas had 1.3 FTE fewer leadership teachers per school than in Predominantly Urban areas

1 in 3 school technician posts were lost over the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period

In 2023/24, there were 9.4 FTE teaching assistants per school in Rural areas and 14.5 FTE teaching assistants per school in Urban areas

In 2023/24, there were 18% more FTE teaching assistant positions in Rural areas than in 2014/15 compared to 8% more in Urban areas

Class sizes - key findings

There are around 650 thousand primary school pupils in Rural areas

There are around 540 thousand secondary school pupils in Rural areas

The average primary school class size in Rural areas is 25 but in Urban areas it is 27

The average secondary school class size in Rural and Urban areas is 22

The average infant class size in Rural areas is 25 but in Urban areas it is 27

25 in every 1,000 infant classes in Rural areas were over the statutory limit of 30 pupils per teacher

32 in every 1,000 infant classes in Urban areas were over the statutory limit of 30 pupils per teacher

2 rural areas had more than 5% of infant pupils in classes with 31 to 35 pupils per teacher

5 Urban areas had more than 10% of infant pupils in classes with 31 to 35 pupils per teacher

Secondary education attainment – key findings

More than 7 in 10 Rural pupils passed their English and Maths GCSEs in 2022/23

More Rural pupils passed their English and Maths GCSEs than those living in Urban areas

Rushcliffe had the highest English and Maths GCSE pass rate across all Rural areas

Just over 1/3 of Rural students entered the English Baccalaureate in 2022/23

Blackpool had the lowest English and Maths GCSE pass rate in England; St Albans had the highest, and both are Urban

The more deprived an area is, the lower the proportion of students passing their English and Maths GCSEs

Pupils who **lived** in Rural areas had proportionally higher GCSE attainment than those who **attended schools** in Rural areas

Pupils in Rural areas made slightly more progress between the end of primary school and the end of secondary school than the national average

Pupils in Urban areas made slightly less progress between the end of primary school and the end of secondary school than the national average

School inspections – key findings

13% of secondary schools in Rural areas were “outstanding”, compared to 16% of those in Urban areas

1 in 6 Rural secondary schools were underperforming, compared to 1 in 5 secondary schools in Urban areas

Kensington had up to 75% of secondary schools rated “outstanding” - the highest of any Urban constituency

50% of secondary schools in the (rural) Kenilworth and Southam constituency were “outstanding”

50% of primary schools in the (urban) Hackney South and Shoreditch constituency were “outstanding”

No Rural constituencies had more than 30% of inspected primary schools rated “outstanding”

Free school meals – key findings

Proportionally, fewer pupils are eligible for free school meals in rural areas than urban areas

Eligibility for free school meals has increased over time for all area types

In rural areas, eligibility for free school meals is higher in sparse areas

Alternative and specialist education provision – key findings

Almost 16 thousand children are home schooled in Rural areas

Norfolk has the largest number of home schooled pupils, more than two thousand

3 in every 100 children on the Isle of Wight are home schooled – 3 times the national average

Proportionally there are more children with special educational needs in Rural areas than in Urban areas

There are around 260,000 pupils with special education needs in Rural areas and around 60,000 of them have an EHC plan

Around 4 in 10 children in Urban areas with an EHC plan attended a state funded special school

Around 3 in 10 children in Rural areas with an EHC plan attended a state funded special school

In 16 Urban areas more than half of the children with an EHC attended state funded special schools

County Durham and Northumberland are the only Rural areas where more than half of the children with an EHC plan attended a state funded special school

Progression to higher education – key findings

Just over 6 out of 10 Rural students studying an A-level or equivalent course progress to university within 2 years

One in five of the 2019/20 Rural A-level or equivalent students progressed to a top university from the Russell Group Universities

For the 5 most recent cohorts, students from Rural areas are less likely to progress to university, but are marginally more likely to progress to a good university, than Urban students

In Yeovil only 1 in 4 A-level or equivalent students progressed to university – the lowest progression rate in Rural areas

There are 9 Rural constituencies where pupil progression rates to university are at least 15% below expected levels based on potential of the students within them

Only 9 Rural constituencies have pupil progression rates to university above expected levels based on potential of the students within them

Over 180 Urban constituencies have pupil progression rates to university above expected levels based on potential of the students within them

Apprenticeships and on the job training – key findings

Overall, proportionally more apprenticeship starts in Rural areas than in Urban areas

4 out of 10 Rural Apprenticeship starts are at an "Advanced" level

80,000 Rural apprenticeship starts in 22/23

'Agriculture, horticulture and animal care' is not amongst the 5 most popular Rural apprenticeship categories

Proportionally more apprentices start Manufacturing and Engineering apprenticeships in rural areas than in Urban areas

3 out of 10 apprentices are within 'Health, Public Services and Care', making this the most popular apprenticeship category in both rural and urban areas

Proportionally more Males than Females start apprenticeships in Rural areas; the reverse is true in Urban areas

Proportionally more Females start "Higher" level apprenticeship than Males in both Rural and Urban areas

Workforce education level – key findings

Attainment levels for Level 1 qualifications (such as lower grade GCSEs) are similar in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban workplaces

Attainment levels for Level 2 (5 GCSEs at good grades or equivalent) and higher level qualifications like degrees, are higher in Predominantly Urban workplaces

Residence based attainment levels for Level 1 and 2 qualifications (GCSEs and equivalents) are higher in Predominantly Rural areas

Attainment levels for higher level qualifications like degrees used to be slightly higher for Predominantly Rural residences, but since 2017 have been higher for Predominantly Urban residences

A. Schools and their workforce

The number of schools in Predominantly Rural areas has reduced over the last decade; schools in Predominantly Rural area on average have fewer students than in Predominantly Urban areas and are less likely to employ a full-time head teacher. The increased number of pupils per school over the last decade led to an increased number of teachers, but the pupil to teacher ratio has risen.

Summary

Data from the School Workforce Census can be used to track the evolution of the teaching workforce and the number of schools for state-funded schools in England over the last decade.

In the 2023/24 academic year there were just over 5,800 schools in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies and 13,360 schools in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. When compared with 2014/15, in 2023/24 there were fewer schools in Predominantly Rural areas but more schools in Predominantly Urban areas. In 2023/24, the average number of pupils per school was smaller in Predominantly Rural areas (279) than in Predominantly Urban areas (436). Over the period 2014/15 to 2023/24, the average school size increased by 7.7% in Predominantly Rural areas and by 9.5% Predominantly Urban areas.

In Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies in the 2023/24 academic year there was a Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 87,300 qualified teachers, whilst in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies there was an FTE of 311,700 qualified teachers. Over the period 2014/15 to 2023/24, the number of FTE qualified teachers increased by 2.9% in Predominantly Rural areas and by 3.2% Predominantly Urban areas; however the number of qualified teachers in Predominantly Rural areas declined in the second half of the 2010s before increasing in the first part of the 2020s. Around 15% of all teachers are leadership teachers. In 2023/24, in Predominantly Rural areas there were 5,500 FTE head teachers and in Predominantly Urban areas there were 13,800 FTE head teachers. The FTE number of head teachers per school in Predominantly Rural areas was 0.95, whereas in Predominantly Urban areas it was 1.03. When all leadership teachers are considered, in 2023/24 there were 2.4 leadership teachers per school in Predominantly Rural areas and 3.7 leadership teachers per school in Predominantly Urban areas.

The Pupil to Teacher Ratio is the total number of pupils in schools divided by the FTE number of teachers. It is lower than the average class size because it includes all teachers in the calculation irrespective of what proportion of their time they spend teaching classes. The pupil to teacher ratio in 2023/24 was 18.5 in Predominantly Rural areas and 18.7 in Predominantly Urban areas. This was the first time over the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period that the pupil to teacher ratio had been lower in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.

Between 2014/15 and 2023/24 a third of technician posts had been lost in both Predominantly Rural (1,700 FTE posts) and Predominantly Urban areas (5,400 FTE posts). In 2014/15 there was 46,200 FTE teaching assistants in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies and 180,100 FTE in Predominantly Urban areas. By 2023/24 the number of teaching assistants had grown to 54,400 FTE in Predominantly Rural areas and 194,000 FTE in Predominantly Urban areas.

Where the term “areas” has been used in this summary it refers to Parliamentary Constituencies.

Source data

The School Workforce Census (SWC) runs each November, collecting information from schools and local authorities on the school workforce in state-funded schools in England. Independent schools, non-maintained special schools, sixth-form colleges and further education establishments are not included as part of this data collection process. The Department for Education (DfE) use this census as the main source for their annual publication called School workforce in England. This publication includes statistics on teaching and support staff including their characteristics, teacher retention and pay. More details on the School workforce in England publication can be found in the methodological note for the publication (Note A-1).

The School workforce in England publication has provided information on teachers and other school staff working in state funded schools in England, since 2010. The latest data are for reporting year 2023 and were published in June 2024. In the following analysis we have created a 10-year time series and therefore include data from reporting year 2014 to reporting year 2023. To be consistent with figures throughout the rest of this education report, from this point forwards we will refer to these as academic years 2014/15 through to 2023/24.

The data used in this analysis are at Parliamentary Constituency level and use the set of Parliamentary Constituency boundaries that were in place prior to the 2024 General Election. There were therefore 533 Parliamentary Constituencies, 116 of which were Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies and 353 that were Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. Sometimes in this chapter we will use the term “areas” instead of Parliamentary Constituencies to simplify the text, so **in the context of this chapter, “areas” means Parliamentary Constituencies**.

Number of schools in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas

In the 2023/24 academic year there were just over 5,800 schools in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies. This is 42 schools fewer than in the 2014/15 academic year (Note A-3). The number of schools in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies has increased from 13,290 in 2014/15 to 13,360 in 2023/24. This was an increase of 71 schools across the 10-year period.

Figure A-1 is a line chart showing the number of schools across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the number of schools in 2014/15. It shows that in Predominantly Rural areas the number of schools fell year-on-year between 2014/15 and 2018/19, by which point the index value for the number of schools in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies was 99.1. This means that there had been a 0.9% decrease in the number of schools in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies between 2014 and 2018/19, in numeric terms this was a loss of 54 schools. Between 2018/19 and 2021/22 the index rose slightly to 99.4 with an increase of 17 schools. The number of schools has remained at just over 5,000 for the last 3 academic years. By contrast in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies the index value rose year-on-year between 2015/16 and 2019/20 to a value of 100.4. This 0.4% increase in the number of schools corresponds to an increase of 48 schools. Since 2019/20 the index has risen by a further 0.1 with the addition of a further 23 schools.

The average number of pupils per school is smaller in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies than in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. In 2014/15 schools in Predominantly Rural areas had an average of 259 pupils, by 2022/23 this value had risen to 280 pupils per school and remained at 279 in 2023/24. In Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies the average number of pupils per school rose from 398 in 2014/15 to 436 in 2023/24. So, in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies schools had on average 20 more pupils in 2023/24 than they did in 2014/15 and in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies they had on average 38 more pupils than in 2014/15.

Figure A-1: A line chart showing the number of schools across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the number of schools in 2014/15. (Note A-1, Note A-2, Note A-3)
An index value of 100 is equivalent to the number of schools in 2014/15 in that area type and is shown with the thicker horizontal line. By extension an index of 99 or 101 means that there was 1% fewer or 1% more schools respectively than in 2014/15.

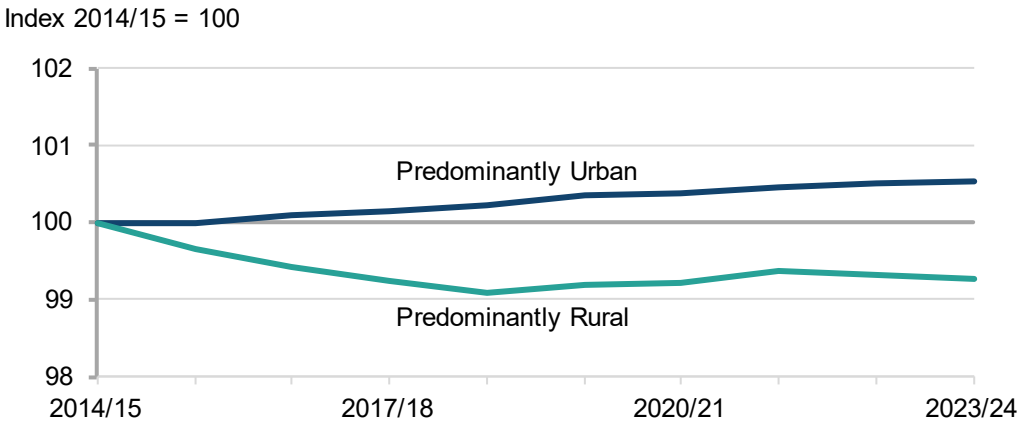
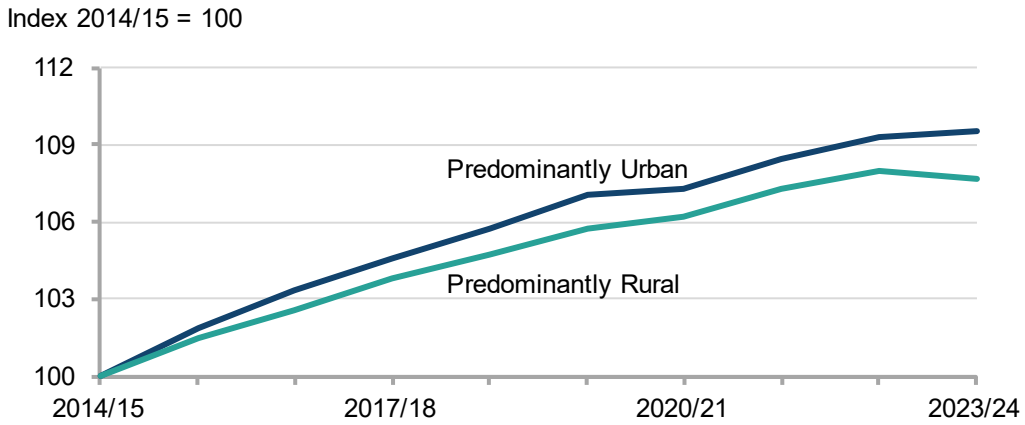


Figure A-2 is a line chart showing the average number of pupils per school across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the average number of pupils per school in 2014/15. It shows how the average number of pupils per school in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas rose steadily year-on-year between 2014/15 and 2022/23 and then held steady between 2022/23 and 2023/24.

The divergence of the two lines on Figure A-2 shows that average school size is growing slower in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies than in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. In 2023/24 the average school size in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies had an index value of 108, meaning that the average school size had grown by 8% across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period. Whereas in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies the average school size index was 110, meaning that the average school size had grown by 10% across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period.

Figure A-2: A line chart showing the number of pupils per school across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the number of pupils per school in 2014/15. (Note A-1, Note A-2, Note A-3 and Note A-5)

An index value of 100 is equivalent to the number of pupils per school 2014/15 in that area type and is shown with the thicker horizontal line. By extension an index of 106 means that there was 6% more number of pupils per school than in 2014/15.



Teachers in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas

The School workforce in England publication includes data for all teachers and for qualified teachers. For this analysis we have focused on just the qualified teachers. In their publication DfE report that 97% of teachers held a qualified status. To be counted in the headcount for a given school, a teacher must have had a live contract on census day (Note A-6) and a Full Time Equivalent (FTE) estimate is used so that part-time staff and those working in multiple part-time roles are weighted appropriately in the analysis.

In Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies there were just under 85,000 FTE qualified teachers in the 2014/15 academic year. By the 2023/24 academic year the FTE headcount in Predominantly Rural areas had grown to over 87,000 qualified teachers (Note A-7). Overall, the increase across the 10-year period was 2,500 FTE qualified teachers. There was also an increase in the qualified teacher headcount across this period in Predominantly Urban areas. This headcount increased from 302,000 to 312,000, an increase of 9,600 FTE qualified teachers across the 10-year period.

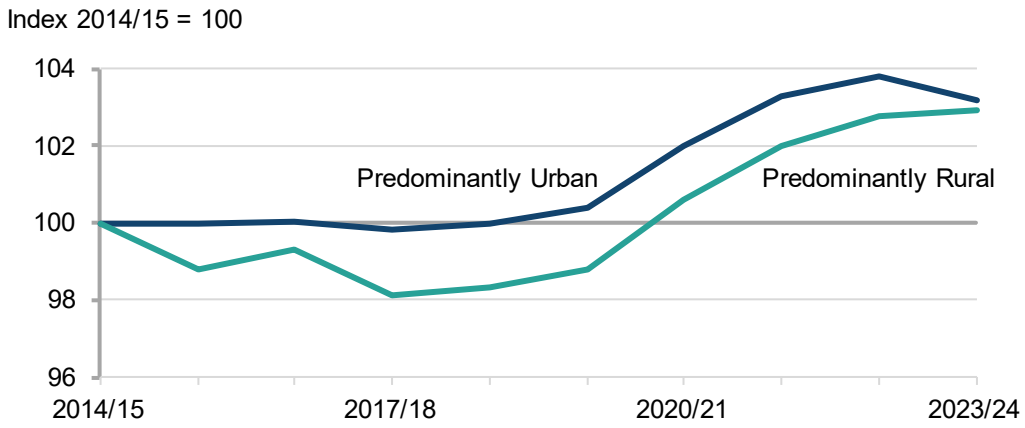
Figure A-3 is a line chart showing the FTE number of qualified teachers across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the FTE number of qualified teachers in 2014/15. It shows that the increased teacher headcount in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas is not a gradual increase across the 10-year period, it has come during the second half of the analysis period.

In Predominantly Rural areas between 2015/16 and 2019/20 the FTE headcount for qualified teachers in Predominantly Rural areas was lower than in 2014/15. The index value fell to 98.1 in 2017/18 meaning that there were almost 2% fewer FTE qualified teachers in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies in 2017/18 than in 2014/15. After which point the FTE teacher headcount in Predominantly Rural areas began climb, initially slowly and then much more rapidly between 2019/20 and 2022/23 (Figure A-3). The index value reached 102.8 in 2022/23 and

increased by a further 0.1 through to 2023/24. This means that there were almost 3% more qualified teachers in Predominantly Rural areas in 2023/24 than in 2014/15.

Figure A-3: A line chart showing the FTE number of qualified teachers across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the FTE number of qualified teachers in 2014/15. (Note A-1, Note A-2, Note A-6 and Note A-7)

An index value of 100 is equivalent to the number of qualified teachers in 2014/15 in that area type and is shown with the thicker horizontal line. By extension an index of 98 or 102 means that there was 2% fewer or 2% more qualified teacher respectively than in 2014/15.



In Predominantly Urban areas the index value changed little up to 2018/19 with the FTE number of teachers remaining at around 302,000. Like in Predominantly Rural areas the most rapid growth in the qualified teach headcount was between 2019/20 and 2022/23 (Figure A-3). In 2022/23 the index value reached 103.8, meaning that there were almost 4% more qualified FTE teachers in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies than in 2014/15. The index value then dropped back to 103.2 in 2023/24, and the FTE headcount of qualified teachers reduced by 1,800 relative to the previous academic year.

Teachers have different levels of seniority and responsibility within schools, and this affects the balance of their time spent in the classroom and / or preparing lessons and the time spent on administrative and other tasks associated with the functioning of the school. Broadly speaking teachers fit into 2 groups, classroom teachers and leadership teachers like head teachers and deputy heads.

Classroom teachers

Classroom teachers spend the vast majority of their time directly engaged in the process of teaching students, be that teaching in the classroom, preparing for sessions in the classroom or undertaking post session activity. In England in 2023/24 there was just under 400 thousand FTE classroom teachers, this is the equivalent of around 85% of all teachers.

In 2023/24 in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies there were 75,500 FTE classroom teachers and in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies there were 273,200 FTE classroom teachers (Table A-1). In 2014/15 the corresponding values were 73,400 FTE classroom teachers in Predominantly Rural areas and 267,600 FTE classroom teachers in Predominantly Urban areas (Table A-1). This means that there were 3% more classroom teachers in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies in 2023/24 than 10 years previously in 2014/15.

Whilst in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies the number of classroom teachers had increased by 2% compared to 2014/15.

Table A-1: The number of FTE classroom teachers by broad Rural-Urban Classification in 2014/15, 2017/18, 2020/21 and 2023/24 (Note A-6 and Note A-8)

2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Areas	2014/15	2017/18	2020/21	2023/2024
Predominantly Rural	73,400	71,900	73,900	75,500
Urban with Significant Rural	43,300	42,300	43,500	44,300
Predominantly Urban	267,600	265,300	270,800	273,200
England	**384,300**	**379,500**	**388,300**	**392,900**

As the data in Table A-1 shows it was not simply a case of the number of classroom teachers going up year-on-year. The number of classroom teachers was lower in 2017/18 than it was in 2014/15, after which the number of classroom teachers in Predominantly Rural areas began to rise. With classroom teachers making up such a high proportion of all teachers, their overall trend looks very similar to the one depicted for teachers overall in Figure A-3, therefore a chart for classroom teachers has not been shown (Note A-8).

Leadership teachers

Leadership teachers spend less of their time directly engaged in the process of teaching students replacing this with functions key to the overall running of the school. Both head teachers and deputy head teachers are considered part of the leadership group. In England in 2023/24 there were just over 70 thousand leadership teachers, this is the equivalent of around 15% of all teachers.

In 2023/24 in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies there were 5,500 FTE head teachers and in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies there were 13,800 FTE head teachers (Table A-2). In 2014/15 the corresponding values were 5,400 FTE head teachers in Predominantly Rural areas and 13,100 FTE head teachers in Predominantly Urban areas (Table A-2). This means that there were 60 more (1% more) head teachers in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies in 2023/24 than 10 years previously in 2014/15. Whilst in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies the number of head teachers had increased by 600 (5%) compared to 2014/15.

Table A-2: The number of FTE head teachers by broad Rural-Urban Classification in 2014/15, 2017/18, 2020/21 and 2023/24 (Note A-6 and Note A-8)

2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Areas	2014/15	2017/18	2020/21	2023/2024
Predominantly Rural	5,400	5,400	5,400	5,500
Urban with Significant Rural	2,700	2,700	2,800	2,800
Predominantly Urban	13,100	13,600	13,700	13,800
England	**21,300**	**21,800**	**21,900**	**22,100**

Figure A-4 is a line chart showing the FTE number of head teachers across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the FTE number of head teachers in 2014/15. It shows that in Predominantly Rural areas, with the exception of 2015/16 the number of head teachers changes very little between 2014/15 and 2021/22 and remained close to an index value of 100. There was then an increase in 2022/23 to an index value of just over 101 and then little change. In Predominantly Urban areas the index of FTE headteachers climbed between 2015/16 and 2019/20 to reach 105, meaning that there was 5% more headteachers in 2019/20 than in 2015/16. After 2019/20 the index has remained between 104 and 105.

The differing trend for headteachers seen between Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas can partly be explained by the fact that over the period the number of schools has decreased in Predominantly Rural areas but grown in Predominantly Urban areas (Figure A-1). When the FTE headteacher to school ratio is considered (as shown on the line chart Figure A-5) its value has been lower than 1.0 across Predominantly Rural areas and, since 2017/18, it has been at least 1.0 in Predominantly Urban areas.

Figure A-4: Line chart showing the FTE number of head teachers across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the FTE number of head teachers in 2014/15. (Note A-6 and Note A-8)

An index value of 100 is equivalent to the number of head teachers in 2014/15 in that area type and is shown with the thicker horizontal line. By extension an index of 95 or 105 means that there were 5% fewer or 5% more head teachers respectively than in 2014/15.

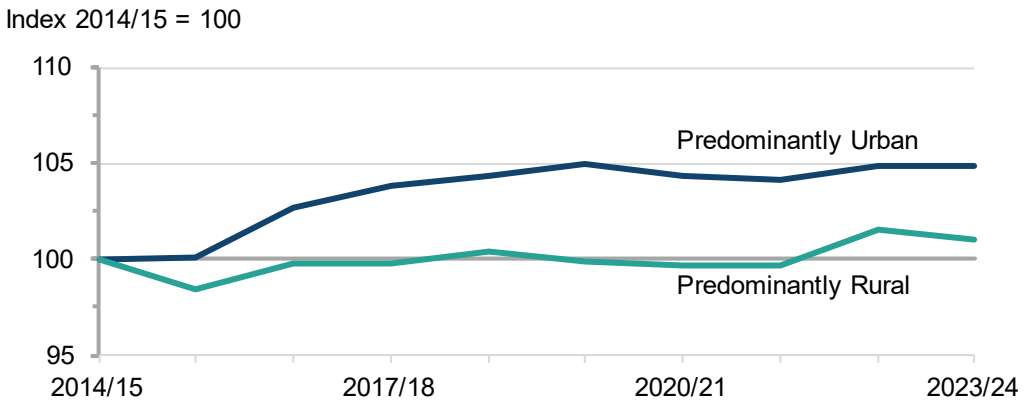
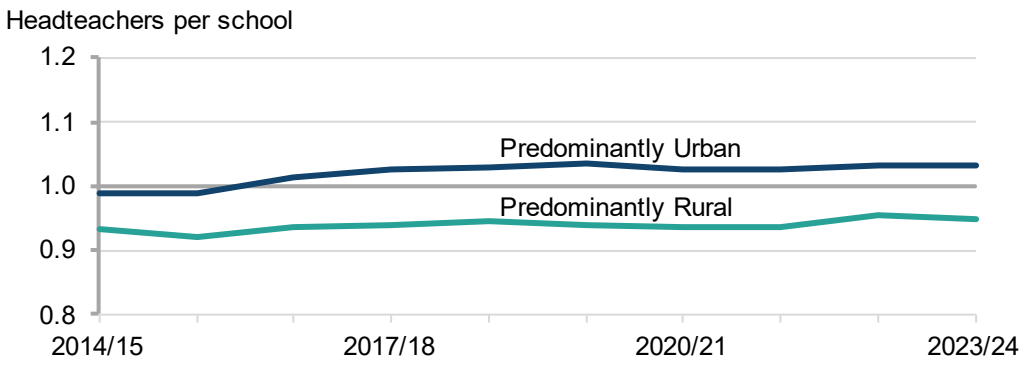


Figure A-5: Line chart showing the FTE number of head teachers per school across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. (Note A-6 and Note A-8)



In Predominantly Rural areas the likely explanation is that some of the head teacher positions, often in smaller schools, are not full-time positions. In some cases, one head teacher could be leading several schools or others could be working part time. As an example, in the Parliamentary Constituency of North Norfolk there were 47 schools in the 2023/24 academic year and these schools had 34 FTE head teachers between them (Table A-3). This ratio of 0.72 head teacher FTE per school was the lowest of any Parliamentary Constituency in the 2023/24 academic year (Note A-9). Looking at the numbers in more detail shows that there were 47 head teachers in North Norfolk (1 per school) but only 26 of them (55%) were in a full-time role during the 2023/24 academic year. The other 21 heads were part-time and account for 8 FTE between them (which is on average just under 0.4 FTE per head teacher).

Table A-3: Head teachers in North Norfolk (a Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituency) in the 2023/24 academic year (Note A-6, Note A-9 and Note A-13).

Table source: DfE online query tool

Parliamentary Constituency	Headcount of head teachers	Headcount of full-time head teachers	Headcount of part-time head teachers	FTE of head teachers	Total number of schools	Head FTE to school ratio
North Norfolk	47	26	21	34	47	0.72

If we broaden out the category and consider all leadership teachers, then in 2023/24 in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies there were 14,000 FTE leadership teachers and in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies there were 49,200 FTE leadership teachers (Table A-4). In 2014/15 the corresponding values were 13,300 FTE leadership teachers in Predominantly Rural areas and 45,000 FTE leadership teachers in Predominantly Urban areas So, there were 680 more (5% more) leadership teachers in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies in 2023/24 than 10 years previously in 2014/15. Whilst in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies the number of leadership teachers had increased by 4,200 (9%) compared to 2014/15.

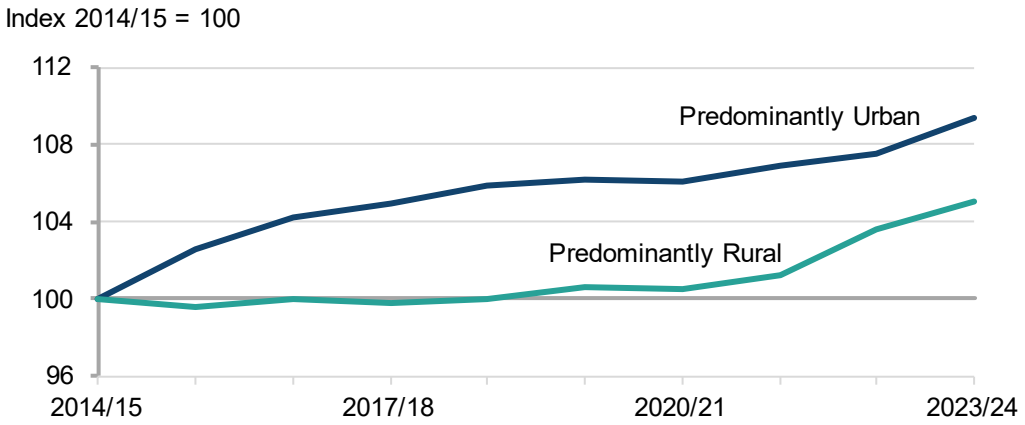
Table A-4: The number of FTE leadership teachers by broad Rural-Urban Classification in 2014/15, 2017/18, 2020/21 and 2023/24 (Note A-6 and Note A-8)

2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Areas	2014/15	2017/18	2020/21	2023/2024
Predominantly Rural	13,300	13,300	13,400	14,000
Urban with Significant Rural	7,600	7,700	7,800	8,100
Predominantly Urban	45,000	47,200	47,700	49,200
England	**65,900**	**68,200**	**68,900**	**71,300**

Figure A-6 is a line chart showing the FTE number of leadership teachers across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the FTE number of leadership teachers in 2014/15. It shows that in Predominantly Rural areas, the number of leadership teachers changed very little between 2014/15 and 2020/21. In absolute terms the number of leadership teachers over this period differed by less than 70 from

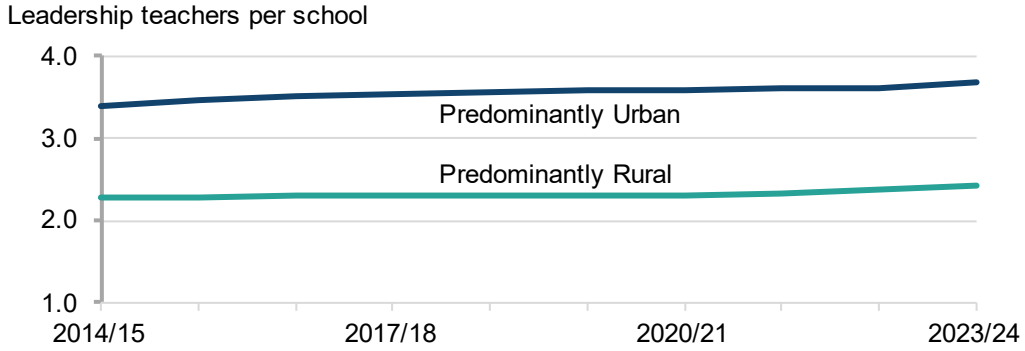
the 2014/15 value. From 2021/22 to 2023/24 there was year-on-year growth in the number of leadership teachers in Predominantly Rural areas. In other words, the increase in leadership teachers in Predominantly Rural areas has largely come in the last 3 academic years reported, whereas in Predominantly Urban areas there has been year-on-year growth across the 10-year period from 2014 to 2023/24. The only exception to this year-on-year growth was during the academic years affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure A-6: Line chart showing the FTE number of leadership teachers across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the FTE number of leadership teachers in 2014/15. (Note A-6 and Note A-8)



The growth in leadership teachers is largely due to the increased number of teachers overall rather than schools only bolstering their leadership cohort.. Leadership teachers represented 15.4% of all teachers in 2014/15 and in 2023/24 they represented 15.6% so the proportion of teachers in leadership roles has grown very little over a 10-year period. Figure A-7 is a line chart showing that the average number of leadership teachers per school in Predominantly Rural areas was little changed across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period. In 2014/15 to 2021/22 there were on average 2.3 FTE leadership teachers per school and in 2022/23 and 2023/24 this value had grown to 2.4 leadership teachers per school.

Figure A-7: Line chart showing the FTE number of leadership teachers per school across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. (Note A-6 and Note A-8)



As Figure A-7 also shows the FTE for leadership teachers per school was lower in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas throughout the 10-year period. In 2014/15

Predominantly Urban areas had, on average, 3.4 FTE leadership teachers per school and this slowly increased to 3.7 by 2023/24. In 2023/24, Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies had 1.3 FTE fewer leadership teachers per school than in Predominantly Urban areas. This reflects that the average school size in Predominantly Urban areas is about 1.5 times bigger than in Predominantly Rural areas - 440 pupils compared to 280 pupils (Note A-3).

Pupil to Teacher Ratios (PTR)

The Pupil to Teacher Ratio (PTR) is simply the total number of pupils in schools divided by the Full Time Equivalent numbers of teachers (Note A-10). For our purposes we use qualified teachers, and we present the average PTR for Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas as a weighted average ratio rather than a straight average ratio (Note A-11). The purpose of the PTR is to demonstrate the size of the workforce in relation to the size of the pupil population. **The PTR is not the same as average class sizes**, average class sizes are covered in Section B Class sizes. The source data also allows users to calculate a Pupil to Adult ratio by including the additional support staff who directly support teaching (such as technicians) but not the administrative and clerical staff. We do not cover the Pupil to Adult ratio here.

The PTR includes all qualified teachers in the calculation irrespective of what proportion of their time they spend teaching classes. In secondary schools where teachers cover specific subjects, they are not usually teaching classes for the full school day, they will have some free periods where they work on lesson planning or marking and are available to provide short term cover for colleagues. Similarly, leadership teachers, such as a head or a deputy head teacher will have a lower number of teaching hours than classroom teachers. For the purposes of PTR, as long as these secondary school teachers or head teachers are full time they will count as 1 teacher just the same as a primary school teacher who spends all day with their class. This means that the PTR for a school, a Parliamentary Constituency, a Local Authority or Rural area will be smaller than the average class sizes for the same school, Parliamentary Constituency Local Authority or Rural area.

Figure A-8 is a line chart showing the PTR for 2014/15 to 2023/24. It shows that, with the exception of 2023/24, the PTR has been higher in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies than in Predominantly Urban areas. In 2014/15 the PTR was 17.8 pupils per qualified teacher in Predominantly Rural areas and 17.5 pupils per teacher in Predominantly Urban areas. In both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas the PTR rose between 2014/15 and 2019/20. In Predominantly Rural areas the PTR reached 18.9 pupils per teacher and in Predominantly Urban areas it reached 18.7 pupils per teacher. After 2019/20 the PTR in Predominantly Rural areas started to fall slowly, as the number of teachers grew (Figure A-3), and had dropped to 18.5 pupils per teacher in 2023/24. Whilst in Predominantly Urban areas the PTR dropped to 18.5 pupils per teacher across the 3 academic years from 2020/21 to 2022/23 before it rose back to 18.7 in 2023/24. The recent reduction in the PTR indicates that in the last few years the number of teachers has grown faster than the number of pupils.

Figure A-9 is a line chart showing the PTR across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the PTR in 2014/15. It shows that the rise in the PTR between 2014/15 and 2019/20 corresponded to a 6% increase in Predominantly Rural areas and a 7% increase in Predominantly Urban areas. After 2019/20 the index value fell in Predominantly Rural dropping from 106 to 104 in 2023/24 meaning that the PTR for the most recent data is 4% higher than it was 10 years previously in 2014/15. Whereas in Predominantly Urban areas the PTR index dropped between 2019/20 and 2021/22

before climbing back up to 107. So, in Predominantly Urban areas the PTR for the most recent data was 7% higher than it was 10 years previously in 2014/15.

Figure A-8: A line chart showing the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) for qualified teachers across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. (Note A-1, Note A-2, Note A-6, Note A-10, Note A-11)
The PTR is not the same as average class sizes.

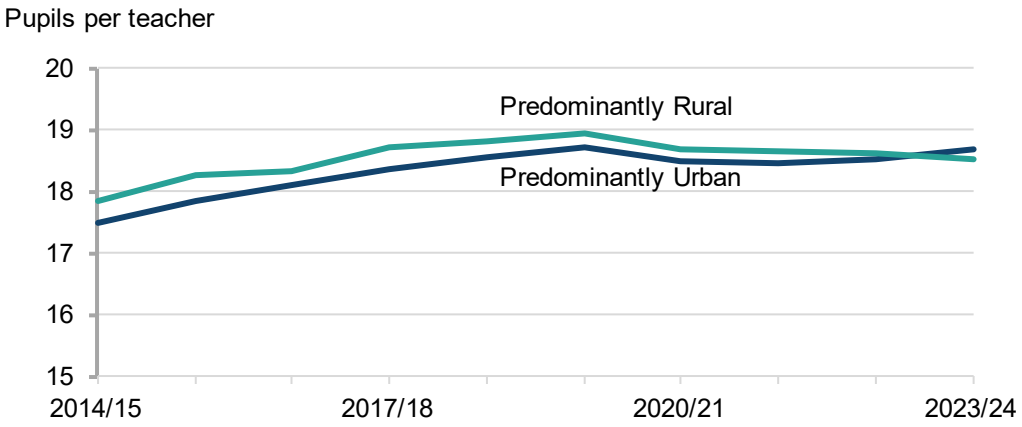
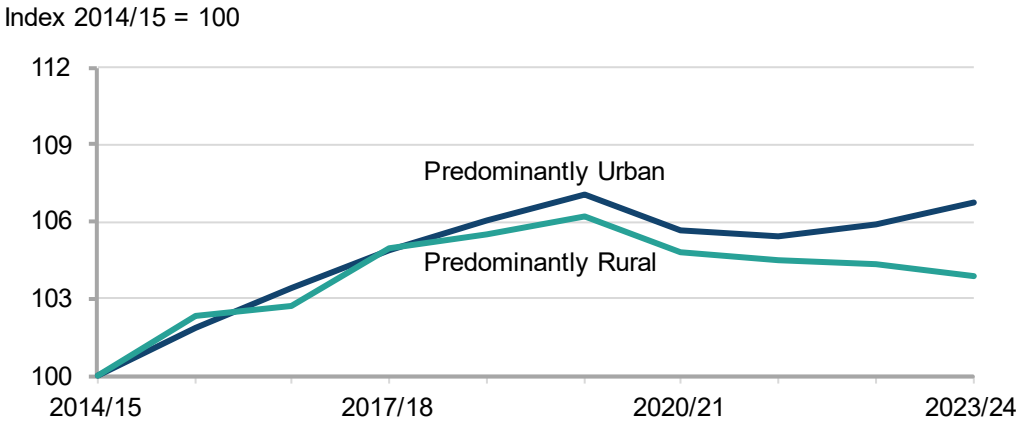


Figure A-9: A line chart showing the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) for qualified teachers across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the PTR in 2014/15. (Note A-1, Note A-2, Note A-6, Note A-10, Note A-11)
The PTR is not the same as average class sizes. An index value of 100 is equivalent to the PTR in 2014/15 in that area type and is shown with the thicker horizontal line. By extension an index of 103 means that the PTR was 3% higher than in 2014/15.



Support staff

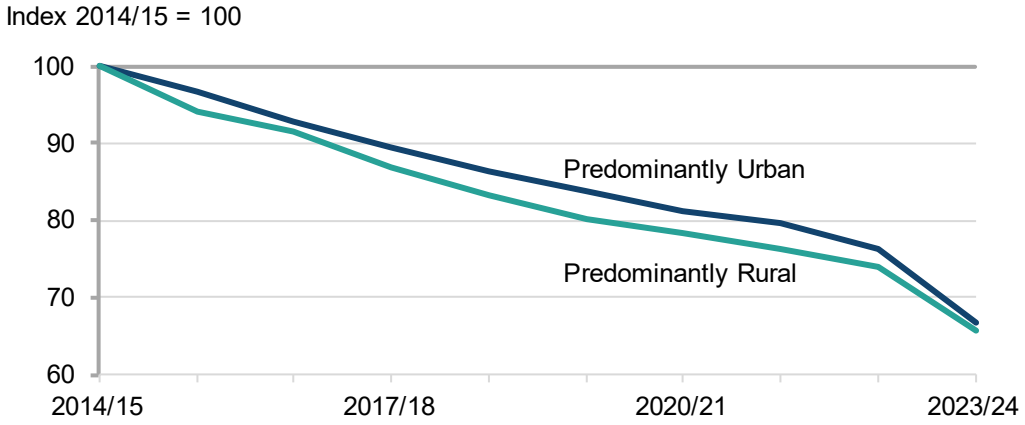
Various support staff are needed to make schools function effectively, including in catering, administration, maintenance, and cleaning staff. However, this section focuses on 2 groups of workers that are more directly involved in the teaching process, technicians and teaching assistants.

Technicians support classes that have a practical element, such as science or design and technology, by preparing, maintaining and then clearing away equipment needed for these classes. Due to their role, they predominantly work in secondary schools (or colleges and universities) and as Figure A-10 shows, using a line chart, their presence in schools is in decline in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. In 2014/15 there were 5,000 technicians in Predominantly Rural areas and 16,400 in Predominantly Urban areas (Note A-12). In both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas the number of technicians has fallen year-on-year and in 2023/24 it stood at 3,300 in Predominantly Rural areas and 10,900 in Predominantly Urban areas. So, over a 10-year period 1,700 technician posts have been lost in Predominantly Rural areas and 5,400 have been lost in Predominantly Urban areas. The index values from Figure A-10 show that around a third of the technician posts have been lost over the 10-year period from 2014/15 through to 2023/24. Across the full period the losses were slightly greater in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas and by 2023/24 there were 34.2% fewer technician posts in Predominantly Rural areas and 33.2% fewer in Predominantly Urban areas.

In 2014/15 in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies there were 0.86 technicians per school, in other words for every 100 Predominantly Rural schools 86 of them had a technician. By 2023/24 this ratio was down to 57 schools in every 100 Predominantly Rural schools having a technician. In Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies the ratio is higher because secondary schools make up a larger proportion of the total number of schools. The technician to school ratio fell from 123 technicians per 100 Predominantly Urban schools in 2014/15 down to 82 per 100 schools in 2023/24.

Figure A-10: A line chart showing the number of school technicians across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the number of school technicians in 2014/15. (Note A-1, Note A-2, Note A-6, Note A-12)

An index value of 100 is equivalent to the number of technicians in 2014/15 in that area type and is shown with the thicker horizontal line. By extension an index of 80 means that there were 20% fewer technicians than in 2014/15.



Teaching assistants, also known as classroom assistants or learning support assistants, have a more varied role than a technician. They help the teacher prepare materials and set-up the classroom, but they can also help children with reading, writing and learning activities or work with individual / small groups of children. They might also be asked to care for unwell children. Teaching assistants work in both primary and secondary schools.

In 2014/15 there were 46,200 FTE teaching assistants in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies and 180,100 FTE in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. By 2023/24 the number of teaching assistants had grown to 54,400 FTE in Predominantly Rural areas and 194,000 FTE in Predominantly Urban areas. This is an increase of 8,200 FTE teaching assistants in Predominantly Rural areas and an increase of 14,000 FTE in Predominantly Urban areas.

Figure A-11 is a line chart that shows when the growth in teaching assistant roles occurred between 2014/15 and 2023/24. In Predominantly Rural areas, the growth in teaching assistant roles over the period from 2014/15 to 2019/20 was quite modest in comparison to the more recent period. In 2019/20 there were 48,300 FTE teaching assistants in Predominantly Rural areas, which was an increase of 4.5% relative to 2014/15. Fast forward to 2023/24 and the index value for Predominantly Rural areas on Figure A-11 has grown to almost 118, meaning that in 2023/24 there were almost 18% more teaching assistants in Predominantly Rural areas than in 2014/15. In Predominantly Urban areas the growth in teaching assistant roles was also greater during the last 4 academic years. In Predominantly Urban areas the index increased up to 103 in 2019/20 (which is an increase in teaching assistants of 3% relative to 2014/15) before continuing to rise up to almost 108 (an increase of 8% relative to 2014/15).

Figure A-11: A line chart showing the number of teaching assistants across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies indexed against the number of teaching assistants in 2014/15. (Note A-1, Note A-2, Note A-6, Note A-12)

An index value of 100 is equivalent to the number of technicians in 2014/15 in that area type and is shown with the thicker horizontal line. By extension an index of 110 means that there were 10% more teaching assistants than in 2014/15.

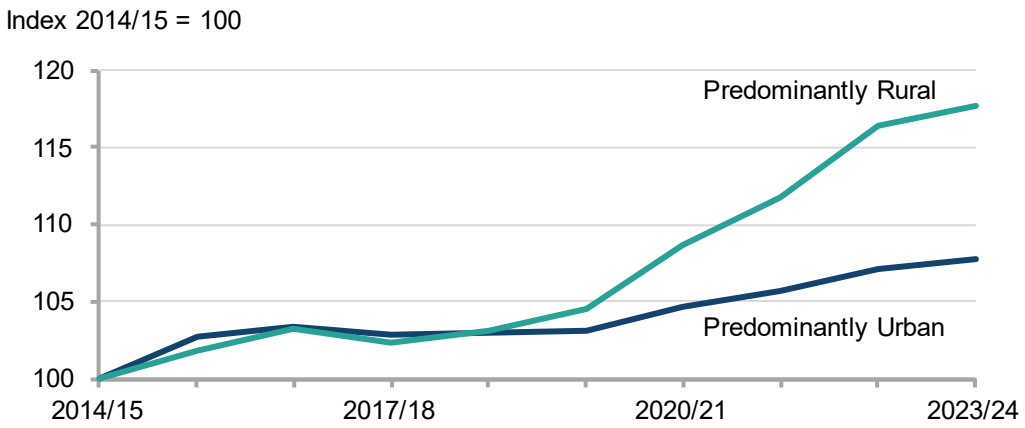
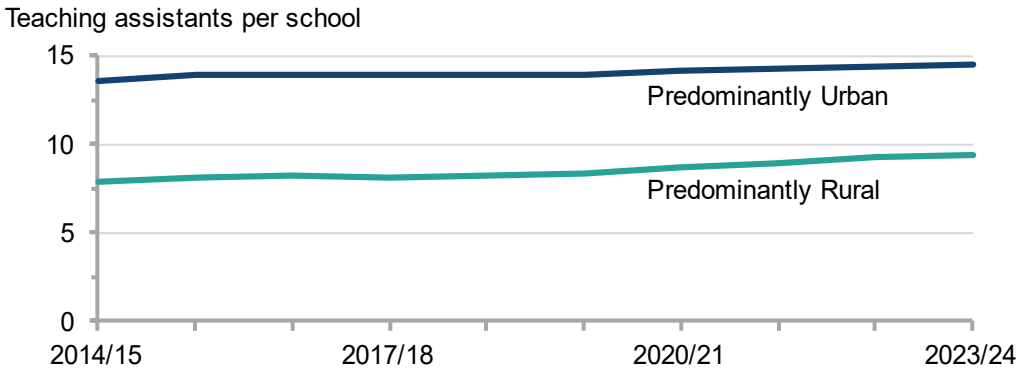


Figure A-12 is a line chart that shows that over the last decade there have been fewer teaching assistants per school in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas and that the teaching assistant to school ratio grew over the 10-year reference period in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. However, the faster growth in Predominantly Rural areas seen Figure A-11 has narrowed the gap between the number of teaching assistants per school in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas.

Back in 2014/15 in Predominantly Rural areas there were 7.9 FTE teaching assistants per school in Predominantly Rural areas and 13.5 FTE teaching assistants per school in Predominantly Urban areas. This was a difference of 5.6 FTE teaching assistants per school. In 2023/24 the number of teaching assistants had risen to 9.4 FTE teaching assistants per school in Predominantly Rural

areas and 14.5 FTE teaching assistants per school in Predominantly Urban areas. This has closed the gap between Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas by 0.5 FTE teaching assistants per school over the 10-year period.

Figure A-12: Line chart showing the FTE number of teaching assistants per school across the 2014/15 to 2023/24 period within Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies (Note A-1, Note A-2, Note A-6)



Schools and their workforce explanatory notes

- **Note A-1**

The main data source for this chapter is School workforce in England. This Department for Education Accredited Official statistics publication is largely based on the School Workforce Census (SWC). The census, which runs each November, collects information from schools and local authorities on the school workforce in state-funded schools in England.
The methodological note associated with this publication is now available in HTML format at: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/methodology/school-workforce-in-england.

- **Note A-2**

The SWC collects information on school staff from all state funded schools in England, which includes: (1) Local Authority (LA) maintained nursery, primary, secondary, special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs); (2) Academy schools: free schools, University Technical Colleges, Studio Schools, City Technology Colleges, academy special schools and state-funded alternative provision schools and (3) LA centrally employed teachers and support staff who spend more than half their working time in schools.
Independent schools, non-maintained special schools, sixth-form colleges and further education establishments are not included in the SWC and therefore are not covered by this analysis.

- **Note A-3**

Time series showing (a) the number of schools in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies for the period 2014/15 to 2023/24 and (b) the number of students per school in in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies for the period 2014/15 to 2023/24 are on Worksheet AA in the Education supplementary tables

- **Note A-4**

In the commentary the total number of schools in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas is rounded to the nearest 10. Year-to-year changes in the number of schools is shown as actual values because the changes are small.

- **Note A-5**

Where the average number of pupils per school is calculated this is based on the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) number of pupils recorded in the January School Census and published in Schools, pupils and their characteristics.

- **Note A-6**

The School Workforce Census collects individual level data for all types of staff in schools with a contract of 28 days or longer. The size of the school's workforce figures includes only those staff with a contract open on census day.
Teachers with more than one open contract on census day (for example working part-time in two schools) have their information combined into one record with their main contract taking precedence. Combining teacher data in this way simplifies the linking of data across years, which helps identify whether teachers are still in service.

- **Note A-7**

Worksheet AB in the Education supplementary tables contains a time series for the number of Full Time Equivalent qualified teachers by Broad Rural-Urban classification.

- **Note A-8**

Worksheet AC in the Education supplementary tables contains a full time-series for (a) the Full Time Equivalent number of classroom teachers; (b) the Full Time Equivalent number of head teachers by Broad Rural-Urban classification and (c) the Full Time Equivalent number of leadership teachers by Broad Rural-Urban classification.

- **Note A-9**

Worksheet AD in the Education supplementary tables contains a table showing the head teacher to school ratio in each Parliamentary Constituency in the 2023/24 academic year. The head teacher headcount information for the North Norfolk Parliamentary Constituency in Table A-3 was generated for just a few Parliamentary Constituencies in the DfE tabulation tool. A copy of the information can be accessed here: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/5d3cb870-355d-4ba9-1daf-08dd2d8a762c

- **Note A-10**

The pupil teacher ratio presented in the raw data calculated by dividing the total FTE number of pupils on roll in schools by the FTE numbers of qualified teachers. These use the November teacher and staffing data from the School Workforce Census and the pupil data collected in the following January School Census. Only those schools that provided both pupil and workforce information are included in the figures. The pupil numbers used in the calculation of the pupil teach ratio statistics include dual registered pupils. For statistical purpose only pupils who did not attend both morning and afternoon sessions are regarded as part-time (part-time are always 0.5 FTE).

- **Note A-11**

The pupil teacher ratio (Note A-10) is included within the raw dataset for each Local Authority and a straight average could be taken whereby each Local Authority carries the same weight into the calculation of Rural and Urban estimates.
Instead, we have calculated the pupil teacher ratio in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas based upon the total number of pupils living in Predominantly Rural or Predominantly Urban areas divided by the FTE number of qualified teachers in Predominantly Rural or Predominantly Urban areas. This approach yields a weighted average for the pupil to teacher ratio such that Local Authorities with more pupils and teachers carry more weight in the calculation than smaller Local Authorities with fewer pupils and teachers. Pupil teacher ratios were calculated using both methods for the full time-series and the difference between the values was very small. For Predominantly Rural areas the difference was less than ± 0.04 and for Predominantly Urban areas it was less than ± 0.06.

- **Note A-12**

Worksheet AE in the Education supplementary tables contains time series for the number of FTE teaching assistants and the number of FTE technicians by Broad Rural-Urban classification.

- **Note A-13**

Parliamentary Constituency boundaries changed for the 2024 UK General Election. Full details of all of the boundary changes can be found at Boundary review 2023: Which seats will change in the UK?

School workforce in England used the Parliamentary Constituency boundaries in place prior to the 2024 General Election.

Two Parliamentary Constituencies are specifically mentioned in this chapter: (1) Greenwich and Woolwich; and (2) North Norfolk. Both of them retained their Constituency name after the boundaries change but their areas were adjusted. Greenwich and Woolwich had its area reduced and North Norfolk had its area increased. Greenwich and Woolwich lost area and 11.5% of its population to Erith and Thamesmead. North Norfolk gained 1.7% of its new population from Broadland.

B. Class sizes

The average primary class size was around 2 pupils per class smaller in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas, but the average secondary school class size was the same in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas.

Summary

For primary schools overall and for secondary schools there is no legal limit on class sizes. However, for pupils who will attain the age of five, six or seven during the course of the school year, the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 dictates that the maximum class size is 30 pupils or 30 pupils per teacher where there are multiple teachers conducting the teaching session.

In the 2023/24 academic year, there were 645,000 primary school pupils living in Predominantly Rural areas and 2,561,000 primary school pupils living in Predominantly Urban areas. In 2023/24 the secondary school cohort stood at 544,000 pupils living in Predominantly Rural areas and 2,041,000 pupils living in Predominantly Urban areas.

In Predominantly Rural areas the average class size in primary schools in 2023/24 was 25.2 pupils per class, 1.8 pupils lower than the 27.0 pupils per class in Predominantly Urban areas. In 2023/24 the average secondary school class size was similar in both Predominantly Rural (22.2 pupils per class) and Predominantly Urban areas (22.4 pupils per class). Average class sizes have changed little over the last 3 academic years in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas.

In Predominantly Rural areas the average infants class size in 2023/24 was 24.7 pupils per class, 2.3 pupils less than the 27.1 pupils per class in Predominantly Urban areas. In 2023/24, 3.2% of infant pupils in Predominantly Rural areas were in infant classes with a class size of over 30, but all of these classes had between 31 to 35 pupils. In 2 Predominantly Rural areas (Herefordshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire) more than 5% of infant classes had 31 to 35 pupils. In Predominantly Urban areas 3.7% of infant pupils were in classes with a class size of over 30 pupils. There were 18 Predominantly Urban areas where more than 5% of infant classes had between 31 and 35 pupils.

Introduction to the source data

Schools and local authorities are required to provide the Department for Education (DfE) with a school census return covering a wide range of information on the characteristics of schools and the pupils within them in January each year. Additionally, independent schools, general hospital schools and alternative provision provide (via the local authority) details on the number and characteristics of their pupils.

DfE combine the data from these sources together and produce an annual publication called Schools, pupils and their characteristics. This publication includes statistics on school and pupil numbers and their characteristics, including age, gender, ethnicity, school characteristics, and class sizes. The latest data is for Academic year 2023/24 and was published in June 2024 (Note B-1).

In the following analysis we include figures for the 2021/23 and 2022/23 academic years that were first published in June 2022 and June 2023 respectively. City of London and the Scilly Isles are excluded from this analysis and Note B-6 explains boundary changed across the analysis period.

Number of primary and secondary pupils in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas

In the 2023/24 academic year there were 4.1 million primary school pupils in England (Note B-3). In each of the last 3 academic years, there have been around 650 thousand primary school pupils living in Predominantly Rural areas and around 2.6 million primary school pupils living in Predominantly Urban areas (Table B-1). Figure B-1 is a stacked bar chart and it shows the proportion of primary school pupils (top bar) and secondary school pupils (bottom bar) living in each area type within the Local Authority broad Rural-Urban Classification. In the 2023/24 academic year, 16% of primary school pupils were from Predominantly Rural areas and 62% of primary school pupils were from Predominantly Urban areas. The remaining 22% lived in Urban with Significant Rural areas.

Table B-1: The number of primary schools pupils during the last 3 academic years by broad Rural-Urban Classification (Note B-1, Note B-2 and Note B-3)

2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Areas	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Predominantly Rural	654,000	655,000	645,000
Urban with Significant Rural	928,000	934,000	927,000
Predominantly Urban	2,588,000	2,583,000	2,561,000
England	**4,170,000**	**4,172,000**	**4,134,000**

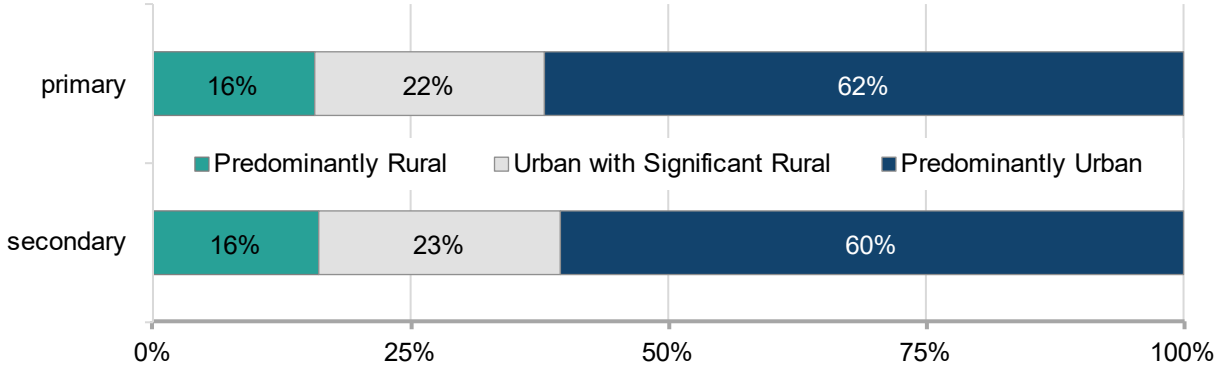
The cohort of secondary school pupils in England is smaller than for primary schools and was 3.4 million in the 2023/24 academic year. In each of the last 3 academic years, there has been around 540 thousand secondary school pupils living in Predominantly Rural areas and around 2.0 million secondary school pupils living in Predominantly Urban areas (Table B-2). Figure B-1 shows that in the 2023/24 academic year, 16% of secondary school pupils were from Predominantly Rural areas

and 60% of secondary school pupils were from Predominantly Urban areas. The remaining 23% lived in Urban with Significant Rural areas.

Table B-2: The number of secondary schools pupils during the last 3 academic years by broad Rural-Urban Classification (Note B-1, Note B-2 and Note B-3)

2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Areas	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Predominantly Rural	535,000	543,000	544,000
Urban with Significant Rural	768,000	779,000	790,000
Predominantly Urban	1,992,000	2,026,000	2,041,000
England	**3,295,000**	**3,348,000**	**3,375,000**

Figure B-1: A stacked bar chart showing the proportion of primary and secondary school pupils living in each area type within the Local Authority broad Rural-Urban Classification during the 2023/24 academic year. (Note B-2 and Note B-3)
The legend is shown in the same order and orientation as the bars.



Average primary and secondary class sizes in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas

Figure B-2 is a bar chart that shows average class sizes (Note B-4) in primary schools were smaller in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas, and that in both areas the average size was little changed across the 3 most recent academic years. In Predominantly Rural areas the average class size in 2021/22 was 25.3 pupils per class and for 2022/23 and 2023/24 it was 25.2 pupils per class. In Predominantly Urban areas the average class size in 2021/22 was 26.9 pupils per class and for 2022/23 and 2023/24 it was 27.0 pupils per class. So, in the most recent academic year (2023/24) the average class size was 1.8 pupils per class smaller in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.

Figure B-3 is a bar chart that shows average class sizes (Note B-4) in secondary schools were a similar size in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas, and that in both areas the average size was little changed across the 3 most recent academic years. In Predominantly Rural areas the average class size in 2021/22 was 22.0 pupils per class and for 2022/23 and 2023/24 it was 22.2 pupils per class. In Predominantly Urban areas the average class size in 2021/22 was 22.3 pupils per class and for 2022/23 and 2023/24 it was 22.4 pupils per class. So, in

the most recent academic year (2023/24) the average class size was only 0.2 pupils per class smaller in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.

Figure B-2: A bar chart showing the average class sizes (pupils per class) in primary schools in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas during the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years. (Note B-2, Note B-3 and Note B-4).
On the X-axis, PR means Predominantly Rural and PU means Predominantly Urban.

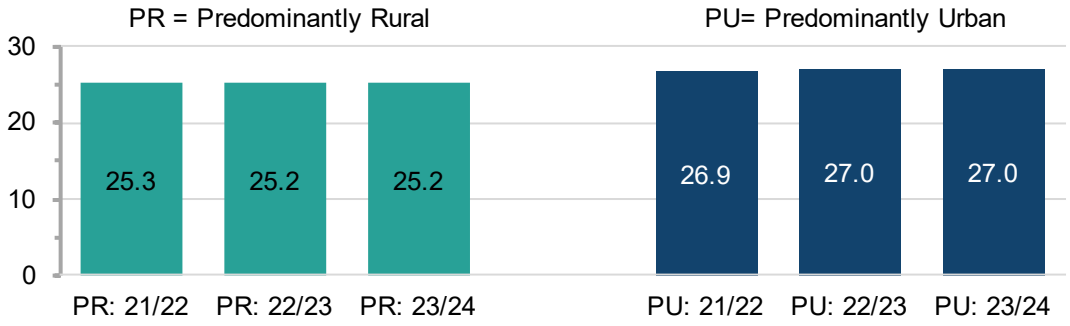
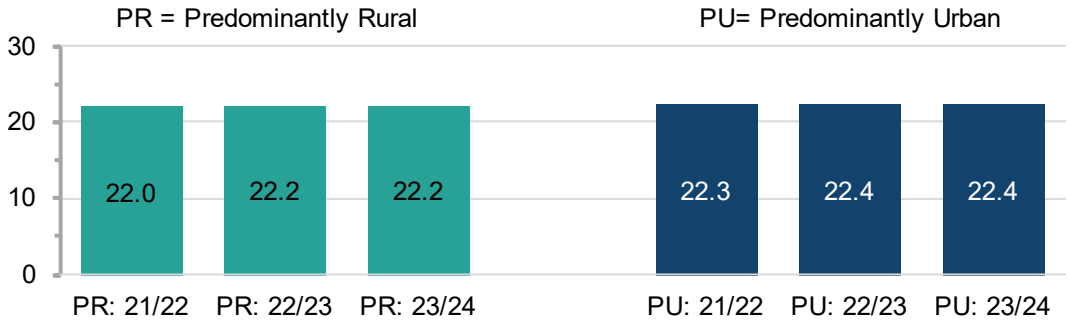


Figure B-3: A bar chart showing the average class sizes (pupils per class) in secondary schools in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas during the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years. (Note B-2, Note B-3 and Note B-4).
On the X-axis, PR means Predominantly Rural and PU means Predominantly Urban.



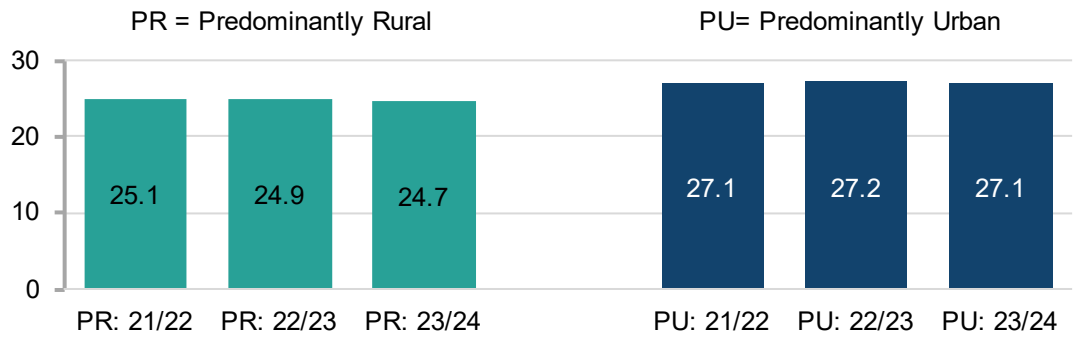
Large infant class sizes

For primary schools overall and for secondary schools there is no limit on class sizes in legislation. However, legislation does exist for infant classes, which are those containing pupils who will attain the age of five, six or seven during the course of the school year. An alternative way to describe these is Reception plus Key Stage 1 classes. The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 (Note B-5) dictates that the maximum size for infant classes is 30 pupils or 30 pupils per teacher where there are multiple teachers conducting the teaching session. An infant class is described as “large” when it exceeds the statutory limit of 30 pupils.

Figure B-4 is a bar chart that shows average infants class size (Note B-4) in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. The chart shows that average infant class sizes were smaller in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas and that the change in average class size across the last 3 academic years was small. In Predominantly Rural areas the average infant class size in 2021/22 was 25.1 pupils per class, for 2022/23 it dropped slightly to 24.9 pupils per class and then dropped again in 2023/24 to 24.7 pupils per class. Overall, this is a drop of 0.4

pupils per class across the 3-year period. In Predominantly Urban areas the average class size in 2021/22 was 27.1 pupils per class, this value increased to 27.2 pupils per class in 2022/23 before falling back to 27.1 pupils per class in 2023/24. In the most recent academic year (2023/24) the average class size was 2.3 pupils per class smaller in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.

Figure B-4: A bar chart showing the average class sizes (pupils per class) for infant classes in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas during the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years. (Note B-2, Note B-3, Note B-4 and Note B-5).
On the X-axis, PR means Predominantly Rural and PU means Predominantly Urban.



In Schools, pupils and their characteristics DfE define “large” infant classes as those where the class size exceeds the statutory limit of 30 pupils. With the exception of Rutland, in 2023/24 every Predominantly Rural Authority had at least one infant class that was large. Across the 22 Predominantly Rural Local Authorities, there were 232 infant classes that had a class size of 31 to 35 pupils. These classes consisted of around 7,300 pupils, which means that for large infant classes the average size in Predominantly Rural areas was 31.3 pupils.

Overall, 3.2% of infant pupils in Predominantly Rural areas were in large infant classes. As Table B-3 shows, there were 2 Predominantly Rural areas (Herefordshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire) where more than 5% of infant classes had 31 to 35 pupils. With Somerset, Devon, and Wiltshire all recording more than 4% of their infant pupils in large class sizes, large infant classes were a greater issue in south west England than in north east England where County Durham and Northumberland had 1% or fewer infants in large classes. No Predominantly Rural areas have any infant classes with sizes above 35.

Table B-3: Predominantly Rural Local Authorities where more than 5% of infant classes had a class size of 31 to 35 pupils. (Note B-3, Note B-4, Note B-5)

Upper Tier Local Authority	Proportion of classes with 31 to 35 pupils	Proportion of pupils in classes with 31 to 35 pupils
East Riding of Yorkshire	5.7%	7.3%
Herefordshire	5.2%	6.7%
All Predominantly Rural	**2.5%**	**3.2%**

Across the 109 Predominantly Urban Local Authorities, there were 1,171 infant classes that had a class size of 31 to 35 pupils. These classes consisted of around 36,600 pupils. There were also a

further 8 classes with 36 or more pupils (Note B-7). When these groups are combined, the average class size for large infant classes in Predominantly Urban areas was 31.3 pupils. Overall, 3.7% of infant pupils in Predominantly Urban areas were in large infant classes.

As Table B-4 shows, in 2023/24 there were 5 Predominantly Urban areas (Coventry, Havering, Medway, Southend-on-Sea and Walsall) where more than 10% of infant classes had sizes between 31 and 35 pupils. There were also 18 Predominantly Urban areas where more than 5% of classes were between 31 and 35 pupils. Of these 18 areas, 5 were in the North West region and 4 were in the Yorkshire and Humber region. The East Midlands, North East and South West regions all had no Predominantly Urban areas where more than 5% of infant classes were between 31 and 35 pupils. In 2023/24, the largest infant class size in the country was recorded in Doncaster where there was one class with 40 pupils (Note B-7).

Table B-4: Predominantly Urban Local Authorities where more than 10% of infant classes had a class size of 31 to 35 pupils. (Note B-3, Note B-4, Note B-5)

Upper Tier Local Authority	Proportion of classes with 31 to 35 pupils	Proportion of pupils in classes with 31 to 35 pupils
Coventry	10.8%	11.6%
Havering	10.4%	11.1%
Medway	10.1%	11.1%
Southend-on-Sea	15.3%	16.5%
Walsall	12.1%	13.5%
All Predominantly Urban	**3.2%**	**3.7%**

Class sizes explanatory notes

- **Note B-1**

The source dataset for the analysis on pupil numbers and class sizes is the DfE accredited official statistics publication: Schools, pupils and their characteristics. Data was downloaded for the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2023/24 academic years at Upper Tier Local Authority level.

- **Note B-2**

State-funded primary schools and state-funded secondary schools – primary schools typically accept pupils aged 5-10 and secondary schools aged 11 and above, but there are increasing numbers of all-through schools, who take pupils of all compulsory school ages. These schools include academies and free schools and are included in the totals for secondary schools.

- **Note B-3**

The numbers of pupils and classes used to calculate class sizes include state-funded nursery, primary, secondary, alternative provision (AP) schools and special schools, and non-maintained special schools. They do not include independent schools.

- **Note B-4**

Average class sizes for each school level in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas are based upon the total number of pupils at that level living in Predominantly Rural or Predominantly Urban areas divided by the total number of classes at that level in Predominantly Rural or Predominantly Urban areas. This approach yields a weighted average for the class size so that Local Authorities with more pupils carry more weight in the calculation than smaller Local Authorities with fewer pupils.

The dataset does include values for average class sizes for each Local Authority and a straight average could be taken whereby each Local Authority carries the same weight into the calculation. These were calculation for the 2023/24 academic year and yielded the same average class sizes for secondary schools and slightly smaller average class sizes for primary schools.

- **Note B-5**

School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 and came into force on 1st February 2012 dictate that: “No infant class may contain more than 30 pupils while an ordinary teaching session is conducted by a single school teacher”. “Where an ordinary teaching session is conducted by more than one school teacher, the class may not contain more than 30 pupils for every one of those teachers”.
An “ordinary teaching session” is regular classroom activity, it does not include a school assembly or other school activity usually conducted with large groups of pupils.
An “infant class” means a class containing pupils the majority of whom will attain the age of five, six or seven during the course of the school year.
The legislation prescribes certain limited circumstances in which pupils may be admitted as lawful exceptions to the infant class size limit of 30 for one-teacher classes. This means that a class of, for example, 32 pupils is lawful if two or more of those pupils have been admitted under lawful exceptions. If fewer than two have been admitted as lawful exceptions then the class is termed ‘unlawful’.

- **Note B-6**

Local boundary changes took place in April 2023, this means that the 2023/24 estimates were calculated using different boundaries to the 2021/22 and 2022/23 estimates. As a result of these changes North Yorkshire switched from North Yorkshire E10000023 to North Yorkshire E06000065 and Somerset changed from Somerset E10000027 to Somerset E06000066. These are just coding changes, the coverage remains unchanged. Whereas Cumbria was split into ‘Westmorland and Furness’ and ‘Cumberland’.
Unlike with regular Local Authority breakdowns, for these Upper Tier Local Authorities the boundary change does not result in data previously classified as Urban with Significant Rural (Barrow-in-Furness, Carlisle, Harrogate and Scarborough) switching to Predominantly Rural. The estimates for 2023/24 are therefore directly comparable with the 2 previous years.
City of London and Isles of Scilly are excluded from the analysis.

- **Note B-7**

In 2023/24, just 8 Local Authorities, all of them Predominantly Urban, had any class sizes of 36 or more. They were as follows: Middlesbrough, 1 class of 37; Bury, 1 class of 37; Doncaster, 1 class of 40; Rotherham, 1 class of 36 and 1 class of 37; Greenwich 1 class of 36; Lewisham, 1 class of 36; and Slough, 1 class of 36.

C. Secondary Education attainment

Summary

From 2016, the General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSE) attainment was measured on a points system from 9 to 1 instead of the old A* to G system. The Attainment 8 score is the average measure of an individual student's progress across their 8 best performing subjects taken at GCSE-level. A student's Attainment 8 score is then used to help calculate a school's overall Progress 8 score, which measures progress since the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) at Key Stage 2.

In the 2022/23 academic year, 71.0% of pupils living in Rural areas left school with English and Maths GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (equivalent to A* to C). This was higher than for pupils living in Urban areas (67.3%).

In 2022/23, 36.4% of pupils living in Rural areas entered into the English Baccalaureate (by studying English language and literature, maths, the sciences, geography or history, and a language at GCSE level). This is 3.6 percentage points lower than for pupils living in Urban areas. In 2018/19, 40.7% of pupils living in Rural areas entered into the EBacc, meaning the entrance rate has decreased by 4.3 percentage points between 2018/19 and 2022/23.

For pupils living in Rural areas, the average Attainment 8 score decreased from 49.0 to 47.7 between 2018/19 and 2022/23. Comparatively, the average Attainment 8 score for all Urban pupils decreased from 46.5 to 46.2 over the same period. In 2022/23, the average Progress 8 score for pupils living in Rural areas was 0.03, whereas for those living in Urban areas it was -0.04. This means that in Rural areas, pupils made more progress than the national average, whereas in Urban areas pupils made less progress than average.

The more deprived an area is, the lower the percentage of students achieving a 9 to 4 passing grade in English and Maths; this is true for both Rural and Urban areas. For a given level of deprivation, the attainment levels of pupils living in Rural areas were lower than for pupils living in Urban areas with a similar level of deprivation.

In 2022/23, pupils who lived in Rural areas (regardless of where their school was located) had a higher attainment than those who attended schools in Rural areas (regardless of where they lived); 71.0% of those living in Rural areas achieved a 9 to 4 pass in English and Maths compared to 68.9% of those attending schools in Rural areas.

Background information

Key Stage 4 is the end of secondary-level education in England. The introduction of a new secondary school accountability system in 2016 has changed how GCSE performance is measured. A 9 to 1-point measure was introduced to replace the A* to G system, where a 9 to 4 score is equivalent to the previous A* to C measure (Note C-1).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures, the summer exam series was cancelled in 2020. Pupils scheduled to sit GCSE exams in 2020 were awarded either a centre assessment grade submitted by their teachers or their calculated grade using a model developed by Ofqual - whichever was the higher of the two. These changes continued into 2021, and therefore data are not directly comparable with earlier or later years (as recommended by DfE; for more information, see the Key stage 4 performance methodology, DfE).

English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

The EBacc is a set of subjects at GCSE-level that keeps young people's options open for further study and future careers.

The EBacc consists of:

- English language and literature
- maths
- the sciences
- geography or history
- a language (ancient, e.g. Latin; or modern, e.g. French)

For the sciences, pupils could study GCSE combined science; this means pupils take 2 GCSEs that cover the 3 main sciences (biology, chemistry, and physics). They could alternatively study 3 single sciences at GCSE-level; this means pupils choose 3 subjects from biology, chemistry, physics, and computer science.

The EBacc is made up of the subjects which are considered essential to many degrees and open up lots of doors. Research shows that a pupil's socio-economic background impacts the subjects they choose at GCSE-level, and that this determines their opportunities beyond school. A study by the University College London Institute of Education shows that studying subjects included in the EBacc provides students with greater opportunities in further education and increases the likelihood that a pupil will stay on in full-time education. Sutton Trust research reveals that studying the EBacc can help improve a young person's performance in English and Maths.

Attainment 8

The Attainment 8 score is the average measure of an individual student's progress across their 8 best performing subjects taken at GCSE-level. A student's Attainment 8 score is then used to help calculate a school's overall Progress 8 score.

The measurable Attainment 8 qualifications are split into buckets, as follows:

Bucket 1: English and Maths

The score for Maths will be double weighted, whereas the English score will only be double weighted if both English Language and English Literature are taken. The highest scoring English mark will then take the double weighted space in Bucket 1, whilst the remaining English score can be used in the third bucket, but only if it is of a higher score than other subjects in this bucket. This is the only bucket in which scores are double weighted.

Bucket 2: EBacc subjects

The student's three highest performing grades from the remaining subjects included within the English Baccalaureate.

Bucket 3: Other subjects

The final bucket will be filled by the three 'Other' subjects in which students have received their highest grades. These can include the remaining English subject (dependent on whether both English Literature and Language were taken, although the score will not be double weighted), and lower graded EBacc subjects. Slots can also be filled by 'Other' GCSEs or academic, arts or vocational qualifications approved by the DfE.

It is not mandatory for students to fill all three buckets or to take 8 qualifications, however, if a slot in any bucket is not filled, students will receive a score of 0.

Progress 8

Progress 8 is the new accountability measure that will determine students' progress across the 8 subjects used to calculate their Attainment 8 score. This is a value-added measure whereby students' results will be compared to those who had the same prior attainment score at KS2. Student progress will no longer be based on whether or not students are able to achieve a C grade or above, as not all students start at the same point. Instead, it will focus on the progress they make throughout their time in secondary school.

It is a pupil's Progress 8 score that will be published in performance tables and will replace the current system of pupils being expected to make 3 'levels' of progress from KS2 to KS3. A student's estimated Attainment 8 score is the average Attainment 8 score for all pupils with the same prior Attainment score at KS2. A student's actual Attainment 8 score is the score achieved based on their GCSE results. In order to calculate a student's individual Progress 8 score, a student's estimated score is subtracted from their actual score and divided by 10.

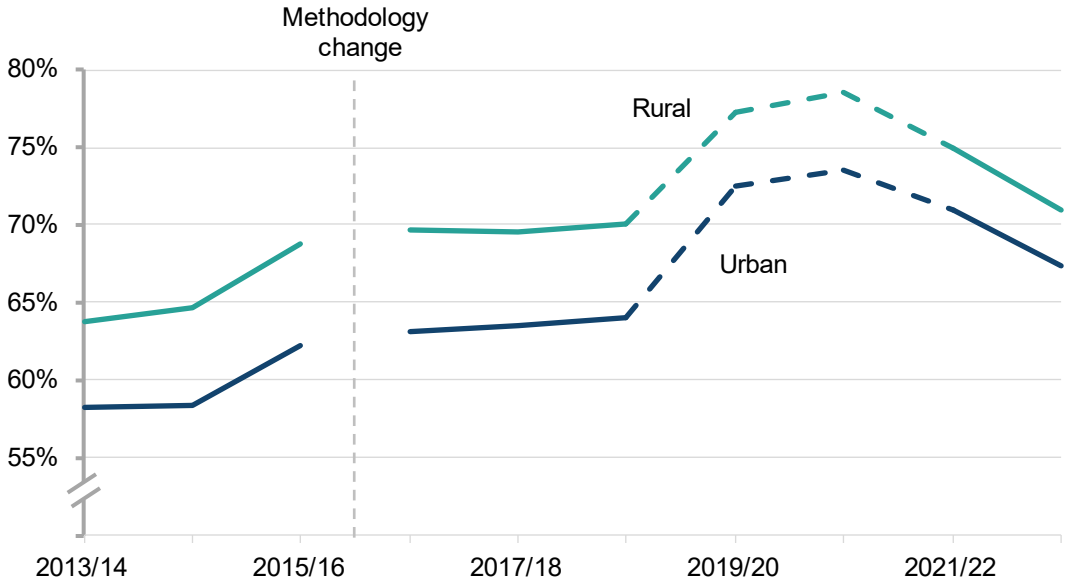
The new Progress 8 score for schools will now be the only measure used for floor standards. A score of +1 means that, on average, pupils are making one grade more progress than expected (and similarly, a score of -1 would indicate one grade less progress than average. A score of +0.5 indicates well above average progress. If a school's overall Progress 8 score is below -0.5 the school will fall below the new floor standard. As a result, this will trigger a visit from Ofsted and the school will be flagged as failing, as the -0.5 indicates that the school's average attainment for pupils is half a grade lower than the national average.

Maths and English GCSE attainment - based on residency of pupils

Based on the residency of the pupils, Figure C-1 shows the proportion of pupils achieving English and Maths 9 to 4 grades or equivalent in their GCSEs; data from 2016/17 onwards presents the 9 to 4 measure, whereas data prior to academic 2016/17 presents the previous A* to C measure.

Figure C-1: Line chart showing the percentage of pupils achieving a 9 to 4 pass in their English and Maths GCSEs in England, based on Rural-Urban Classification of pupil residence, academic years 2013/14 to 2022/23

The vertical dashed line represents the change in the classification system for GCSEs. The dashed segments in the series represent the cancellation of exams and alternative assessment techniques due to COVID-19, therefore proportions may not be comparable to attainment seen in other years.



Pupil attainment can be summarised as follows:

- 71.0% of pupils living in Rural areas achieved grades 9 to 4 in their English and Maths GCSEs in 2022/23, compared to 67.3% in Urban areas
- The proportion of students achieving grades 9 to 4 in their English and Maths GCSEs was consistently at least 5 percentage points higher for those living in Rural than in Urban areas (until 2020/21, after which the gap narrowed to 3.7 percentage points in 2022/23)
- The proportion of students achieving grades 9 to 4 in their English and Maths GCSEs increased between 2013/14 and 2022/23 for both Rural (+7.3 percentage points) and Urban areas (+9.2 percentage points)
- The proportion of students achieving grades 9 to 4 in their English and Maths GCSEs increased between 2016/17 (when the new grading system was introduced) and 2022/23 in Rural and Urban areas, by 1.3 percentage points and 4.2 percentage points respectively
- The highest proportion of pupils achieving grades 9 to 4 in their English and Maths GCSEs (excluding years where exams were cancelled due to COVID-19) was in 2021/22 for both Rural (74.9%) and Urban (71.0%) areas.

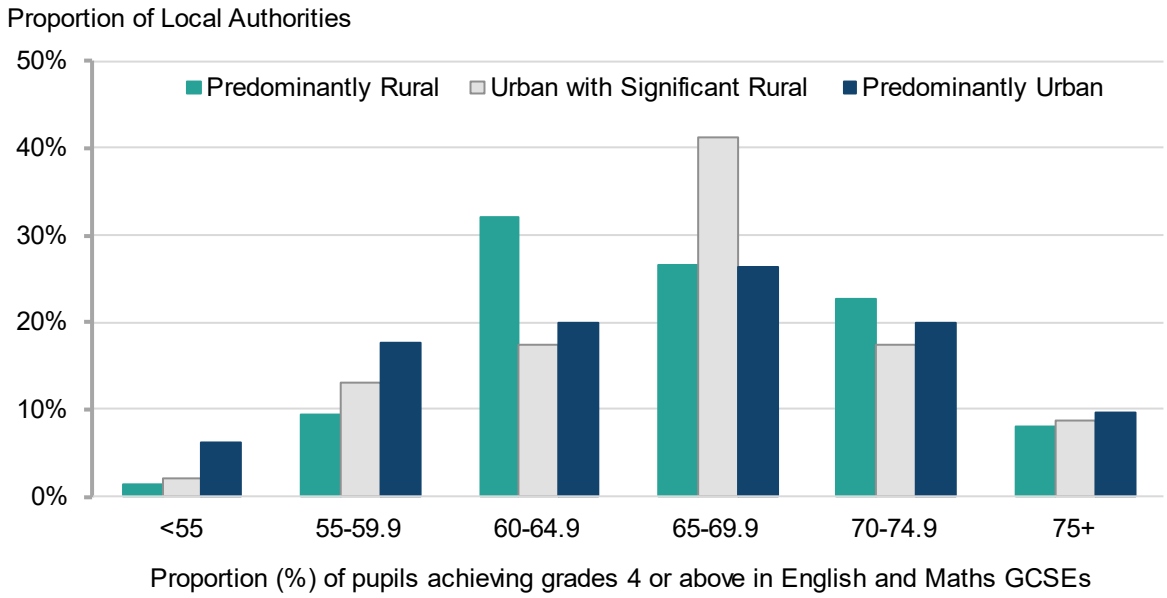
Maths and English GCSE attainment - based on residency of pupils (Local Authority level)

Analysing the attainment of pupils at detailed Local Authority level helps to highlight any particularly low or high proportions of pupils achieving passing grades 9 to 4 (equivalent to A* to C).

In 47% of Predominantly Rural Local Authorities, at least two-thirds of students obtained a 9 to 4 pass (equivalent to A* to C grades) in GCSE Maths and English in 2022/23. The median percentage of pupils obtaining a 9 to 4 pass (equivalent to A* to C grades) in GCSE Maths and English is the same in Predominantly Rural Local Authorities and Predominantly Urban Local Authorities, at 66%. Figure C-2 shows that when comparing areas with at least three-quarters of students obtaining a 9 to 4 pass in their English and Maths GCSEs, there were proportionally fewer in Predominantly Rural areas (8%) compared to Predominantly Urban areas (10%).

Figure C-2: Bar chart showing the distribution of Local Authority English and Maths GCSEs at a 9 to 4 pass in England, based on Rural-Urban Classification of pupil residence, academic year 2022/23

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of columns.

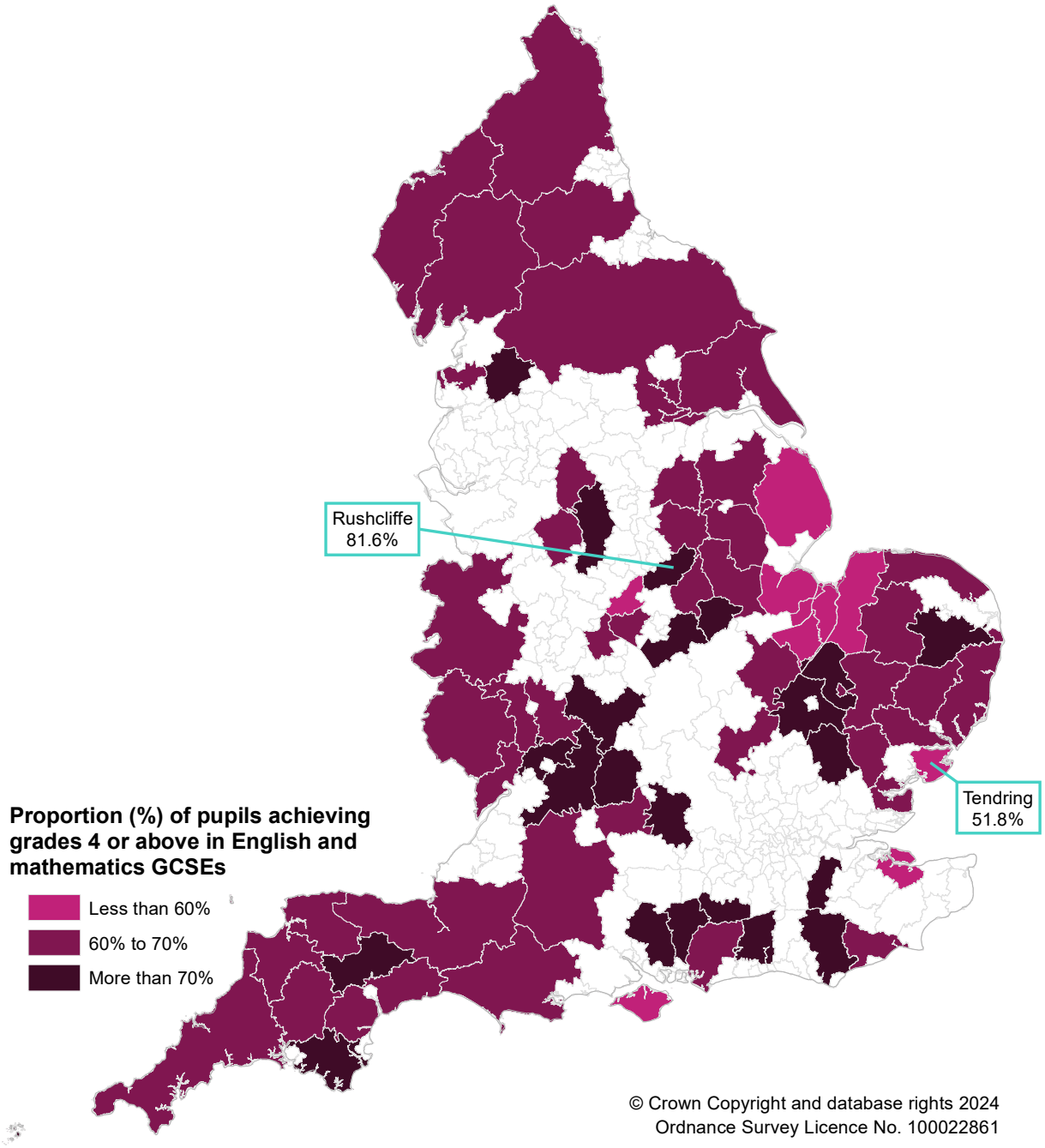


The maps presented as Figure C-3 and Figure C-4 show the variation in the proportion of students achieving a 9 to 4 pass (equivalent to A* to C) in Maths and English GCSEs at Local Authority level. Figure C-3 shows Predominantly Rural Local Authorities (where at least half of the population lives in Rural areas or associated hub towns) and Figure C-4 shows Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural Local Authorities (where less than half of the population lives in Rural areas or associated hub towns).

The proportion of pupils achieving these results in their English and Maths GCSEs at the end of Key Stage 4 (2022/23) was highest overall in St Albans at 84% (a Predominantly Urban Local Authority - Figure C-4) and lowest overall in Blackpool at 48% (another Predominantly Urban Local Authority). This means there was a 36 percentage point difference in the proportion of pupils attaining a 9 to 4 pass in pupils' English and Maths GCSEs between the highest and lowest performing Local Authorities in England, both of which were Predominantly Urban.

Figure C-3: Map of the percentage of pupils achieving grades 4 or above in English and Maths GCSEs, based on pupils residing in Predominantly Rural Local Authorities, academic year 2022/23

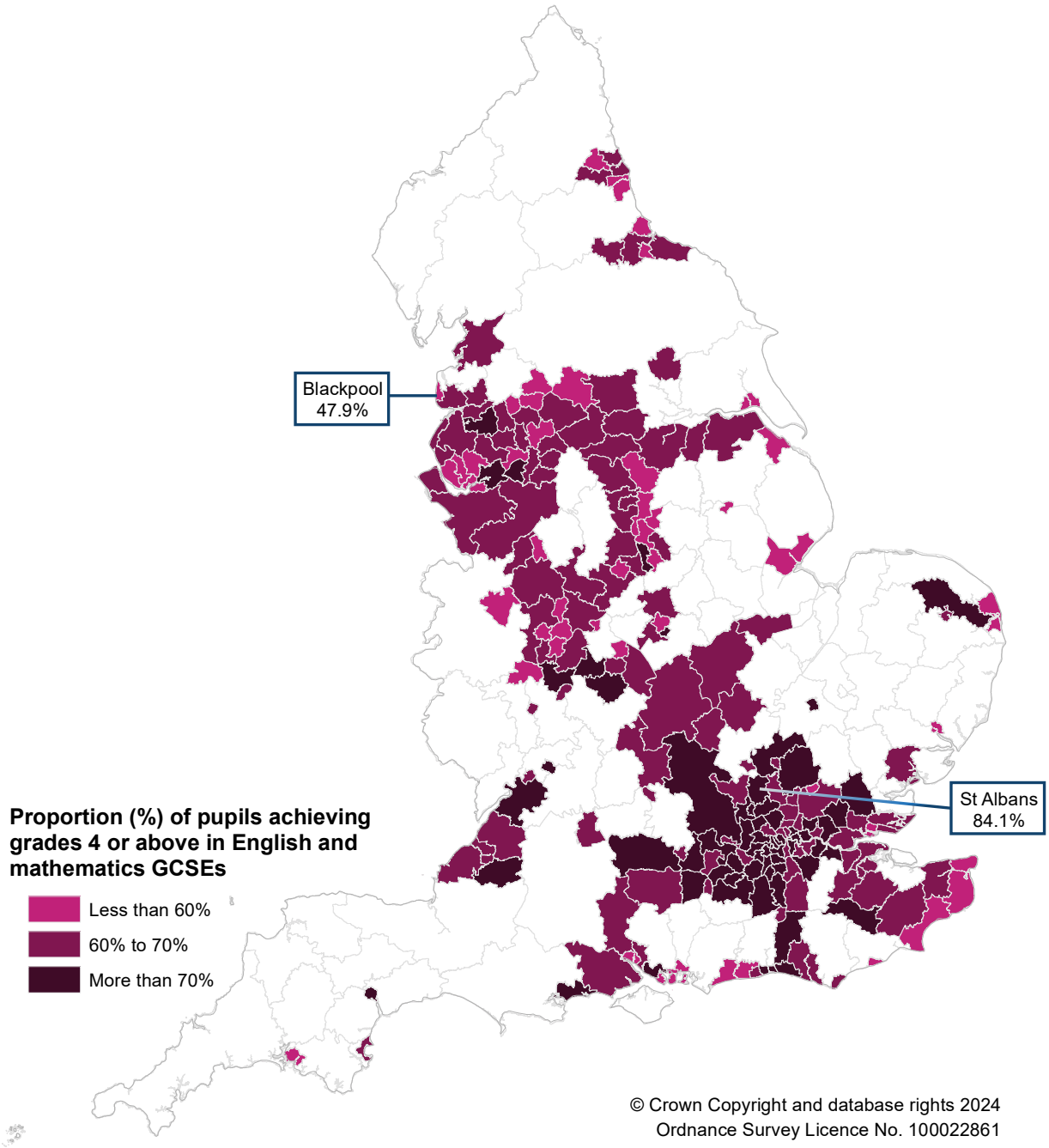
The locations of the Predominantly Rural authorities with highest (Rushcliffe) and lowest (Tendering) attainment levels are shown as annotations. White areas on the map represent Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural areas.



The Predominantly Rural area with the highest attainment was Rushcliffe, where 82% of pupils obtained grades 9 to 4 in Maths and English in 2022/23 (Figure C-3). Only one Predominantly Rural Local Authority (Tendring) had less than 55% of pupils achieving grades 9 to 4 in Maths and English. This means there was a 30 percentage point difference in the proportion of pupils attaining a 9 to 4 pass in pupils' English and Maths GCSEs between the highest and lowest performing Predominantly Rural Local Authorities.

Figure C-4: Map of the percentage of pupils achieving grades 4 or above in English and Maths GCSEs, based on pupils residing in Predominantly Urban or Urban with Significant Rural Local Authorities, academic year 2022/23

The locations of the of the Predominantly Urban authorities with highest (St Albans) and lowest (Blackpool) attainment levels are shown as annotations. White areas on the map represent Predominantly Rural areas.



Proportionally more Predominantly Urban Local Authorities had less than 60% of pupils obtaining a 9 to 4 pass (equivalent to A* to C grades) in GCSE Maths and English than for Predominantly Rural Local Authorities (Figure C-2).Overall, most of the authorities with higher attainment levels are found in the West Midlands, South East, and London regions. Very few Local Authorities with higher attainment levels are found in the North of England and none of these are in the North East region.

English Baccalaureate (EBacc) - based on residency of pupils

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is a suite of core academic subjects that the large majority of young people should study to the age of 16. It was introduced in 2010 as a performance measure to encourage the study of English, mathematics, science, a modern or ancient foreign language, and either history or geography. See English Baccalaureate (EBacc) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

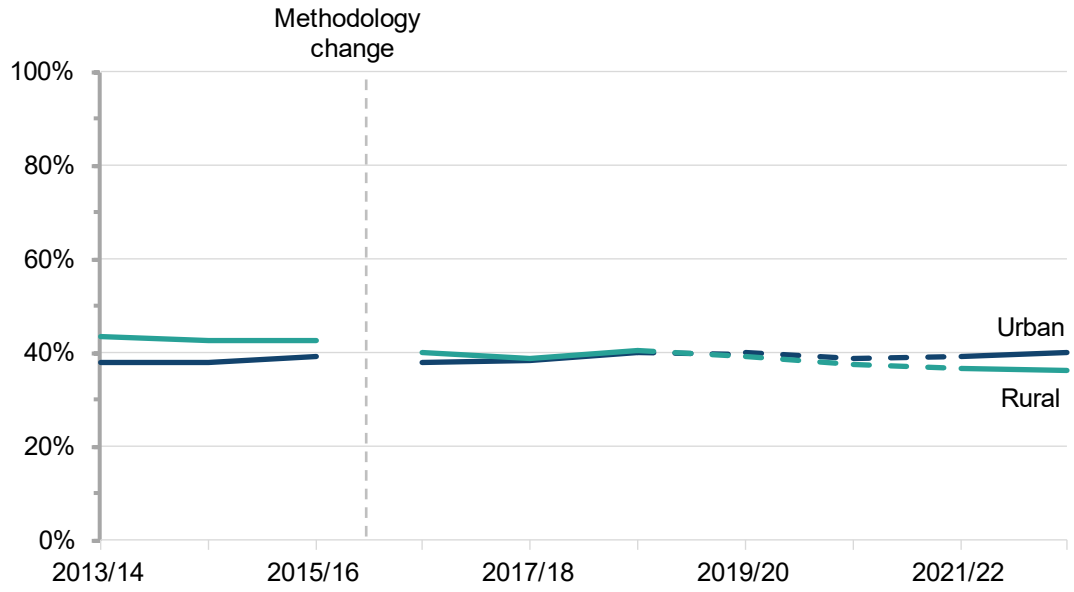
Figure C-5 shows the proportion of pupils entering the EBacc between 2013/14 and 2022/23; it is split by the Rural-Urban Classification of a pupil's residence. Whilst the proportion of pupils living in Rural areas entering the EBacc decreased over time, in Urban areas, the opposite was true between 2013/14 and 2022/23.

In Rural areas, the proportion of pupils studying the EBacc subject combination at GCSE-level was highest in 2013/14, at 43.5%. The proportion of Rural pupils entering the EBacc decreased by 7.1 percentage points to 36.4% in 2022/23.

In Urban areas, 37.9% of pupils studied the EBacc subject combination at GCSE-level in 2013/14; this was the lowest level seen between 2013/14 and 2022/23, and was 5.5 percentage points lower than in Rural areas. 40.0% of Urban pupils entered the EBacc in 2022/23, meaning the proportion of pupils studying the correct subject combination increased by 2.1 percentage points, and was 3.6 percentage points higher than in Rural areas.

Figure C-5: Line chart showing the proportion of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) in England, based on Rural-Urban Classification of pupil residence, academic years 2013/14 to 2022/23

The vertical dashed line represents the change in the classification system for GCSEs. The dashed segments in the series represent the cancellation of exams and alternative assessment techniques due to COVID-19.



Due to changes in approach to grading and methodology changes, DfE recommends that users exercise caution when considering comparisons over time – particularly between years affected by COVID-19. Therefore, the most meaningful comparison would be between 2022/23 and 2018/19. The proportion of pupils entering the EBacc in Rural areas decreased by 4.3 percentage points between 2019 and 2023; in Urban areas, the proportion of pupils entering the EBacc in 2023 was similar to that of 2019.

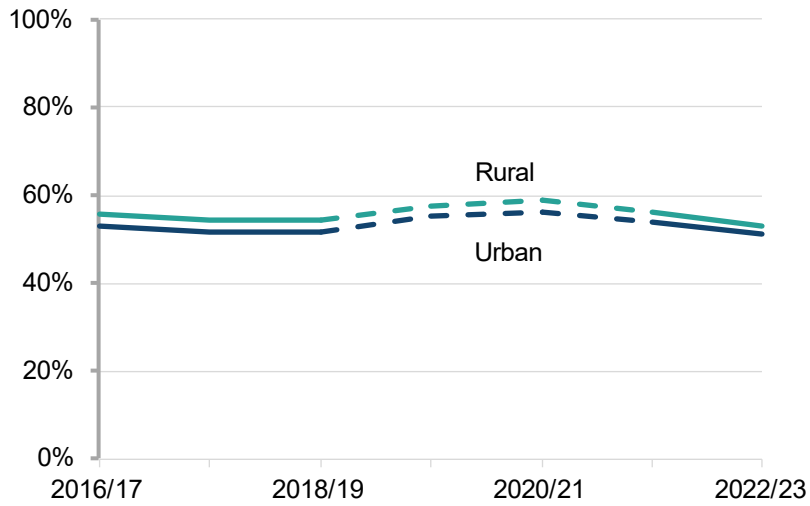
Attainment 8 and Progress 8 – based on residency of pupils

The Attainment 8 score is the average measure of an individual student's progress across their 8 best performing subjects taken at GCSE-level. A student's Attainment 8 score is then used to help calculate a school's overall Progress 8 score.

Attainment 8

From 2018, Attainment 8 has had a maximum point score of 90, compared to a maximum of 87 in 2017 and 80 in 2016. This is a consequence of the phased introduction of reformed GCSEs graded on the 9-1 scale. In order to create a fair comparison, an “Attainment 8 index” has been created to show the average Attainment 8 score of all pupils as a proportion of the maximum score for that year. For example, where the average Attainment 8 score for pupils in Rural areas was 52.3 in 2015/16, this is 65% of the maximum possible score that year (80). This Attainment 8 index is shown in Figure C-6 for pupils living in both Rural and Urban areas.

Figure C-6: Line chart showing the Attainment 8 index by Rural-Urban Classification of pupil residence, academic years 2013/14 to 2022/23
The Attainment 8 index is the average Attainment 8 score achieved as a proportion of the maximum possible score for that year. The dashed breaks in the series represent the cancellation of exams and alternative assessment techniques due to COVID-19.



There was a minimal difference between the Attainment 8 index of pupils in Rural areas compared to Urban areas; between 2016/17 and 2022/23, the average Attainment 8 index for Rural pupils was 2 to 3 percentage points higher than that of pupils living in Urban areas.

There was a greater decrease in the Attainment 8 index between 2016/17 and 2022/23 for pupils living in Rural areas than for those living in Urban areas. The average Attainment 8 index of all Rural pupils was proportionally 3 percentage points lower in 2022/23 (53%; score of 47.7 out of 90) than in 2016/17 (56%; score of 48.6 out of 87). In Urban areas, the average Attainment 8 index of all pupils decreased from 53% (score of 46.1 out of 87) in 2016/17 to 51% (score of 46.1 out of 90) in 2022/23.

Due to changes in approach to grading and methodology changes, DfE recommends that users exercise caution when considering comparisons over time – particularly between years affected by COVID-19. Therefore, the most meaningful comparison would be between 2022/23 and 2018/19,

especially as these years had the same maximum possible Attainment 8 score. In Rural areas, the average Attainment 8 score for all pupils decreased from 49.0 to 47.7 between 2018/19 and 2022/23. Comparatively, the average Attainment 8 score for all Urban pupils decreased from 46.5 to 46.2 over the same period. This means that, whilst there were greater decreases in the average Attainment 8 score for pupils living in Rural areas compared to Urban areas, the average score itself remains higher in Rural areas. For more detail regarding the average Attainment 8 scores over time, see Worksheet CD in the Education, Qualifications and Training supplementary tables.

Progress 8

Progress 8 aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) to the end of KS4. It compares pupils' achievement – their Attainment 8 score – with the national average Attainment 8 score of all pupils who had a similar starting point (or 'prior attainment'), calculated using assessment results from the end of primary school. Progress 8 is a relative measure, therefore the national average Progress 8 score for mainstream schools is very close to zero. The average Progress 8 score for 2022/23 is given in Table C-1. For the Local Authority-level data, see Worksheet CE from the Education, Qualifications and Training supplementary tables.

In 2022/23, the average progress 8 score for pupils living in Rural areas was 0.03, whereas for those living in Urban areas it was between -0.04. This means that in Rural areas, pupils made slightly more progress than the national average, whereas in Urban areas pupils made slightly less progress than average.

Table C-1: Average Progress 8 score of all pupils by Rural-Urban Classification of pupil residence, academic year 2022/23

Rural-Urban Classification	Average Progress 8 score of all pupils
Rural areas	0.03
Urban areas	-0.04

Maths and English GCSE attainment - based on deprivation of pupil residence

Presenting the results by the level of deprivation in the area where the pupil lives (using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index, or IDACI) adds context to the results presented above by taking into account the circumstances of children outside the influence of the school; see Note C-3 for more information on the IDACI.

Figure C-7 shows that when comparing results using deprivation level (IDACI decile bands), Rural areas had lower achievement levels in English and Maths for almost all levels of deprivation compared with Urban areas. The differing outcome at the aggregated Rural level (Rural areas seeing higher levels of attainment) and individual deprivation levels is explained by the different proportions of relative deprivation within Rural and Urban areas. The lower the band of deprivation, the higher the proportion of pupils achieving grades 9 to 4 in their English and Maths GCSEs.

In 2022/23, 47.1% of pupils living in the most deprived Rural areas (decile band 0 to 10) achieved grades 9 to 4 in their English and Maths GCSEs. In comparison, 78.6% of pupils living in the least

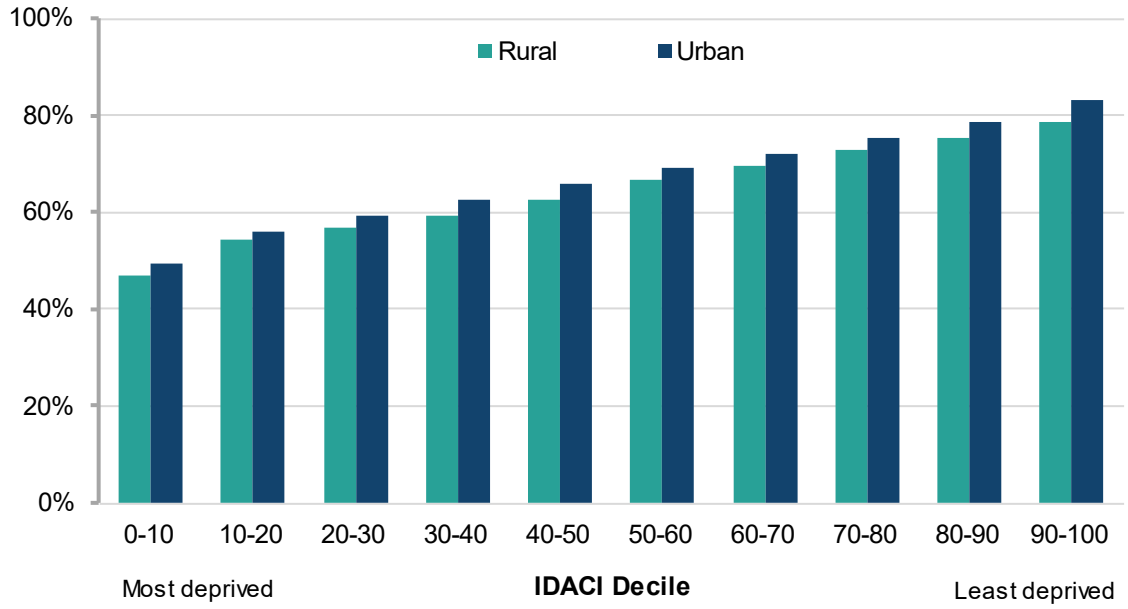
deprived Rural areas (decile band 90 to 100) achieved grades 9 to 4 in their English and Maths GCSEs. This means there was a 31.5 percentage point difference in proportional attainment between the most and least deprived Rural areas in England in 2022/23.

In Urban areas, 49.3% of pupils living in the most deprived areas (decile band 0 to 10) achieved grades 9 to 4 in their English and Maths GCSEs in 2022/23. For those living in the least deprived Urban areas (decile band 90 to 100), 83.2% of pupils achieved grades 9 to 4 in their English and Maths GCSEs. This means there was a 33.9 percentage point difference in proportional attainment between the most and least deprived Urban areas in England in 2022/23.

In Rural areas in academic year 2022/23, 9% of pupils were in relatively more deprived areas (decile bands 0 to 30) compared with 40% of pupils in Urban areas. Those pupils in these more deprived areas generally had lower achievement levels compared with those in relatively less deprived areas (decile bands 70 to 100) where there are proportionately more pupils in Rural areas (44% of pupils in Rural areas are in decile bands 70 to 100). This factor results in a higher attainment average overall for Rural pupils and the converse for Urban pupils.

Figure C-7: Bar chart showing the percentage of pupils achieving English and Maths GCSEs at a 9 to 4 pass in England, based on Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indices (IDACI) decile and residency of pupil, academic 2022/23

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of columns.



Maths and English GCSE attainment - based on school location

There will be differences between attainment figures presented by pupil residency and those presented by the location of school because some pupils living in Rural areas will travel to schools in Urban areas and vice versa. Further analysis regarding pupils' journey to school can be found in the Connectivity and Accessibility chapter of the Digest.

Figure C-8: Bar chart showing the percentage of pupils achieving English and Maths GCSEs at a 9 to 4 pass, by Rural-Urban Classification of pupil residence and school location, academic year 2022/23 shows that in 2022/23 those who lived in Rural areas (regardless of where their school was located) had a higher attainment than those who attend schools in Rural areas (regardless of

where they lived). 71.0% of those who lived in Rural areas achieved a 9 to 4 pass (equivalent to A* to C) compared to 68.9% of those who attended schools in Rural areas. In both cases the level of attainment is higher than the England average. There was little difference in attainment between those living in and those attending schools in Urban areas (67.3% vs 67.8%).

Figure C-8: Bar chart showing the percentage of pupils achieving English and Maths GCSEs at a 9 to 4 pass, by Rural-Urban Classification of pupil residence and school location, academic year 2022/23

Classification of pupil residence is shown in solid colour, whereas the classification of secondary school location is represented by a dotted bar.

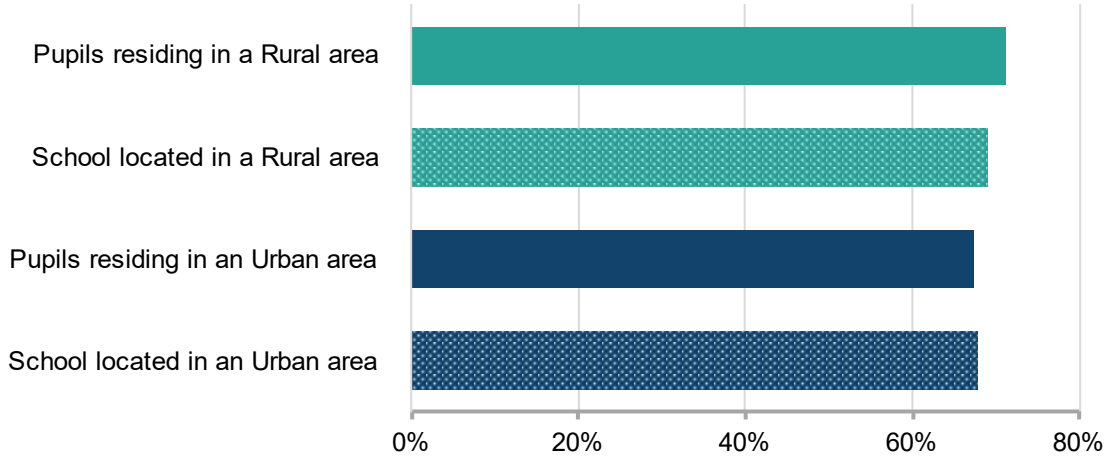


Figure C-9 shows that the percentage of pupils achieving English and Maths GCSEs at a 9 to 4 pass was higher for pupils who went to school in Rural areas than for those who went to school in Urban areas each year between 2010/11 and 2022/23.

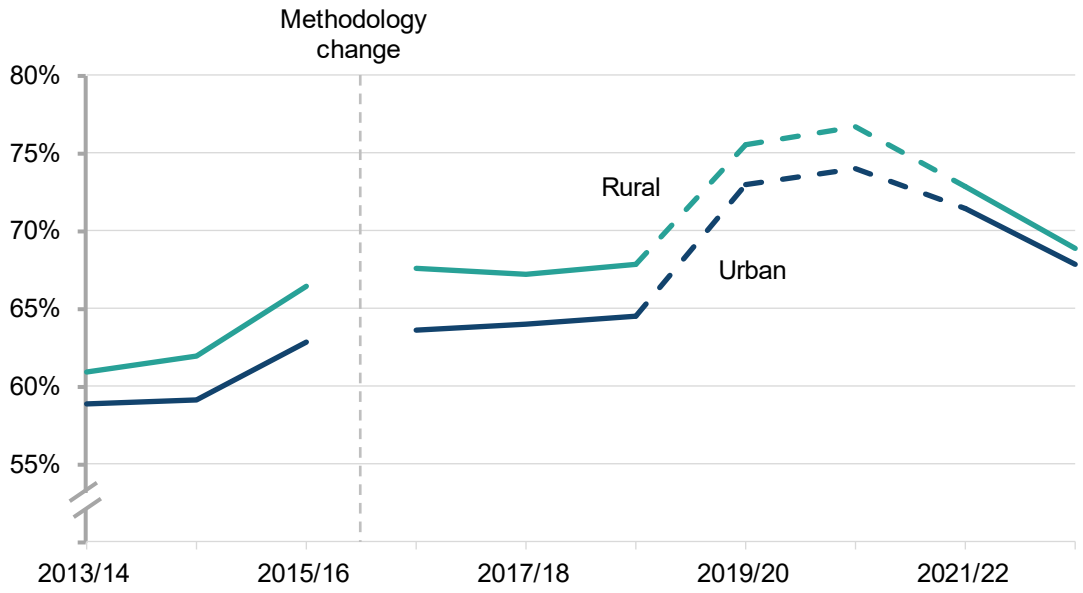
In 2022/23, 68.9% of pupils who attended secondary schools in Rural areas achieved grades 4 to 9 in their English and Maths GCSEs; this is 7.9 percentage points higher than in 2013/14. For schools in Urban areas, 67.8% of students achieved grades 4 to 9 in English and Maths – an increase of 8.9 percentage points on attainment rates seen in 2013/14.

The attainment rate seen in 2022/23 is lower than that of 2021/22 in both Rural and Urban areas; for schools in Rural areas, the proportion of pupils achieving grades 4 to 9 in their English and Maths GCSEs decreased by 4.0 percentage points from 72.8% to 68.9%, compared to a decrease of 3.6 percentage points for schools in Urban areas (from 71.4% to 67.8%).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures, the summer exam series was cancelled in 2020. Pupils scheduled to sit GCSE exams in 2020 were awarded either a centre assessment grade submitted by their teachers or their calculated grade using a model developed by Ofqual - whichever was the higher of the two. These changes continued into 2021, and therefore data are not directly comparable with earlier or later years (as recommended by DfE). The more meaningful comparison would be between 2023 and 2019; for those who attended schools in Rural areas, the proportion of students achieving passing grades in their English and Maths GCSEs increased by 1 percentage point between 2018/19 (67.8%) and 2022/23 (68.9%). For schools in Urban areas, the attainment rate increased by 3.3 percentage points across the same period (from 64.5% to 67.8%). This means that the difference between the proportions of pupils achieving passing grades in their English and Maths GCSEs in Rural and Urban areas is decreasing over time.

Figure C-9: Line chart showing the percentage of pupils achieving English and Maths GCSEs at a 9 to 4 pass, by Rural-Urban Classification of school location, academic years 2013/14 to 2022/23

The vertical dashed line represents the change in the classification system for GCSEs. The dashed segments in the series represent the cancellation of exams and alternative assessment techniques due to COVID-19.



Secondary education explanatory notes

- **Note C-1**

In 2016/17 the new 9-point scale for GCSE classification was introduced. On this scale a grade 4 or above is equivalent to the old A* to C measure. The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) produced this lookup table to show the mapping between the old and new systems.
Ofqual have developed grade descriptors for the reformed GCSEs graded 9 to 1. These grade descriptors are produced to give teachers and students an idea of likely performance at the mid-points of grades 2, 5 and 8 in each reformed subject.

- **Note C-2**

Data presented in this section can be found in the Education, Qualification and Skills supplementary data tables.

- **Note C-3**

The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) is a subset of the Index of Multiple Deprivation, it shows the proportion of children in each Lower-layer Super Output Area that live in families that are income deprived. Information on IDACI can be found at English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

- **Note C-4**

Department for Education data includes pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 in each academic year and those taking International GCSEs. Pupils with missing or incorrect residential postcodes are excluded. So, school-location and pupil-location results are not the same. A small number of pupils resident in Scotland or Wales who attend school in England are in the school-location analysis, but not pupil-location analysis.

- **Note C-5**

Methodological changes mean that from 2013/14 onwards data are not comparable with previous years. This is due to incorporation of the recommendations of Professor Wolf's independent review of vocational

education and new early entry rules. For a summary of these changes, see *Quality and methodology information: SFR41/2014*, (www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/366555/SFR41_2014_QualityandMethodology.pdf)
The Department for Education hosts the independent Wolf Report (www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report) and the final progress report (www.gov.uk/government/publications/wolf-recommendations-progress-report).

- **Note C-6**

This section uses data for academic years. These run from September to August the following year.

- **Note C-7**

Source data: Department for Education, GCSEs (key stage 4) statistics: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-gcses-key-stage-4
The Key stage 4 performance 2023 used in the analysis in this section came from the Education open data catalogue. The tables of interest within that workbook are:

KS4 IDACI decile and degree of Rurality of pupil residence data (2022/23)
KS4 degree of Rurality of school location data (2022/23)

D.School Inspections

There is a lower proportion of "outstanding" schools in Rural areas than Urban areas, but there is also a lower proportion of underperforming schools that were rated "inadequate" or "requires improvement"; in general the more deprived the Rural or Urban area the smaller the proportion of "outstanding" schools.

Summary

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills and it inspects the service provided by education and learning establishments. Following inspections schools receive an overall assessment of effectiveness using a four-point classification system as follows: "Outstanding", "Good", "Requires improvement", and "Inadequate". Further details of the inspection grading criteria can be found in Part 3 of the Ofsted School inspection handbook. Understanding the trends in inspection outcomes can indicate the quality of education providers in Rural and Urban areas.

84% of secondary schools in Rural areas had received an "outstanding" or "good" outcome from their most recent inspection as of 31 July 2023, compared with 81% in Urban areas. For primary schools, 89% of those in Rural areas received "outstanding" or "good" inspection outcomes compared with 90% in Urban areas.

5% of secondary schools in Rural areas were rated "outstanding" in both their latest and previous inspection, compared to 7% of those in Urban areas. For primary schools, 2% of those in Rural areas were rated "outstanding" in both their latest and previous inspection, compared to 3% of those in Urban areas. In Rural areas, a smaller proportion of secondary schools (but a larger proportion of primary schools) decreased from "outstanding" to "good" than in Urban areas.

The more deprived the Rural or Urban area the smaller the proportion of "outstanding" schools and the higher the proportion of schools that were inadequate or requiring improvement schools. 20% of Rural secondary schools in quintile 1 (i.e., the least deprived areas) received an "outstanding" inspection outcome, compared to 8% in quintiles 4 and 5 (i.e., the most deprived areas). In Urban areas, 31% of secondary schools in quintile 1 received an "outstanding" inspection outcome, compared to 11% in quintile 5.

Latest school inspection outcomes

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills and it inspects the service provided by education and learning establishments. Following inspections schools receive an overall assessment of effectiveness using a four-point classification system as follows: "Outstanding", "Good", "Requires improvement", and "Inadequate". Further details of the inspection grading criteria can be found in Part 3 of the Ofsted School inspection handbook (Note D-3).

Secondary schools

Figure D-1 shows that as of 31 July 2023, 13% of secondary schools in Rural areas had received "outstanding" as the most recent inspection outcome, compared with 16% of secondary schools in Urban areas. 71% of secondary schools in Rural areas had received a "good" inspection outcome. Overall, 84% of secondary schools in Rural areas had received "outstanding" or "good" inspection outcomes, compared with 81% in Urban areas. This means that 16% of Rural secondary schools were deemed "inadequate" or that they "required improvement" in the most recent inspection, compared with 19% of secondary schools in Urban areas.

Figure D-1: Proportion of inspected secondary schools with most recent graded school inspection outcome (%), as at 31 July 2023, based on Output Area Rural-Urban Classification of school location, England (Note D-3)

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars. Values smaller than 5% have not been labelled.

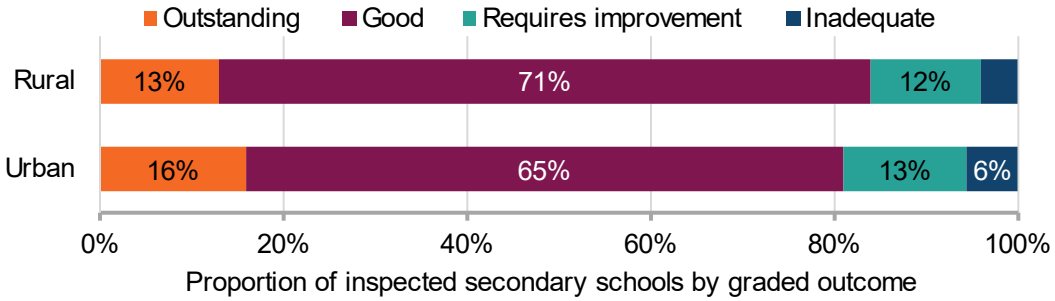


Figure D-2 shows the proportion of Rural secondary schools rated "outstanding" in their most recent graded inspection as at 31 July 2023 by Parliamentary Constituency (Note D-5). It can be summarised as follows: In Predominantly Rural areas,

- 11 constituencies had more than 30% of inspected secondary schools rated "outstanding",
- 12 constituencies had more than 20% and up to 30% of inspected secondary schools rated "outstanding",
- 38 constituencies had more than 10% and up to 20% of inspected secondary schools rated "outstanding",
- 55 constituencies had 10% or fewer inspected secondary schools rated "outstanding",
- The constituencies with the highest proportion of "outstanding" secondary schools were in the West Midlands region (Kenilworth and Southam: 50%, and Stratford-on-Avon: 44%), but other constituencies with more than 30% of secondary schools rated "outstanding" were spread throughout England.

Figure D-2: Proportion of secondary schools rated "Outstanding" in their latest inspection, for Predominantly Rural Constituencies, at 31 July 2023 (Note D-3, Note D-5, Note D-6)

White areas on the map represent constituencies classed as Predominantly Urban or Urban with Significant Rural.

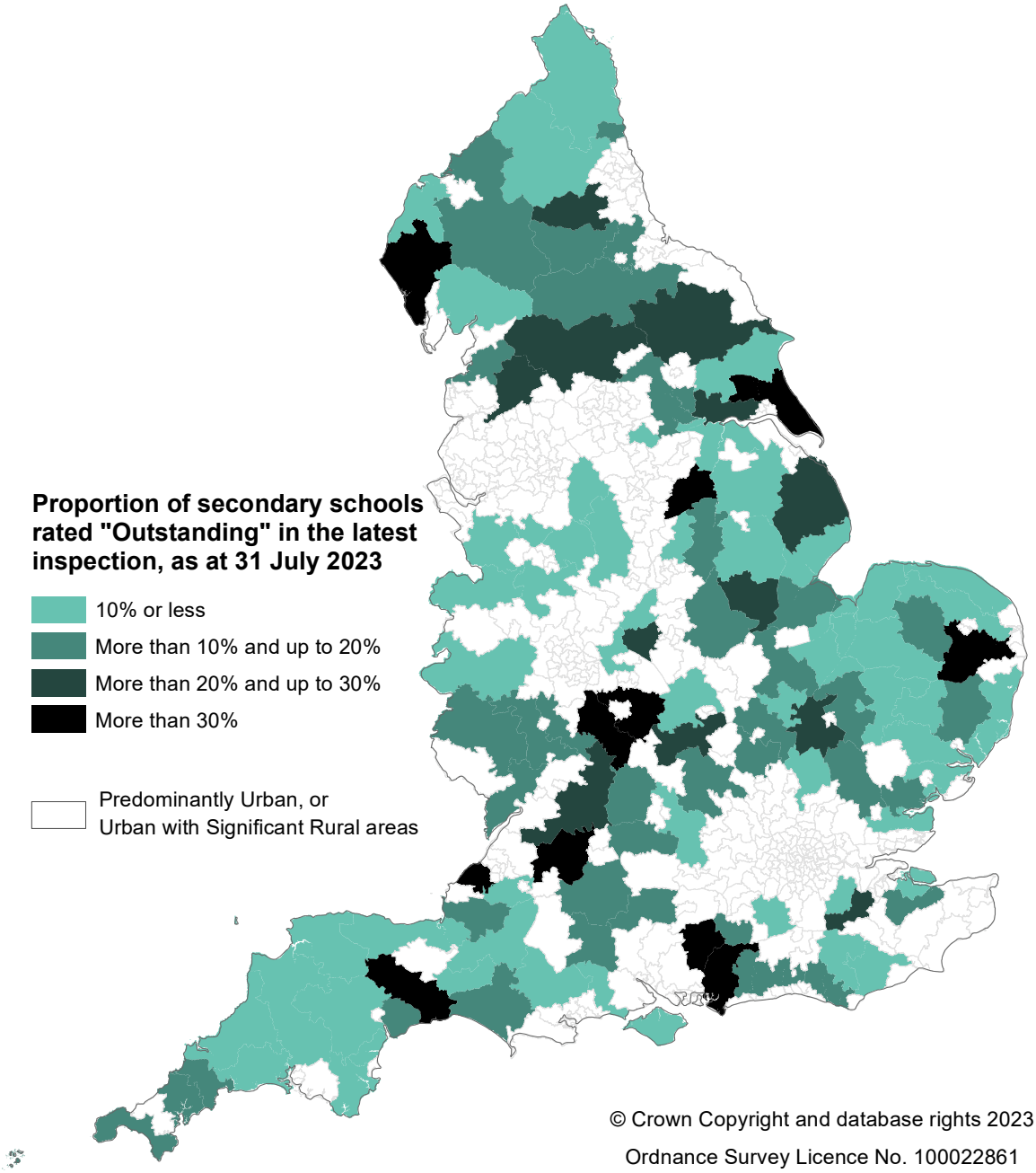
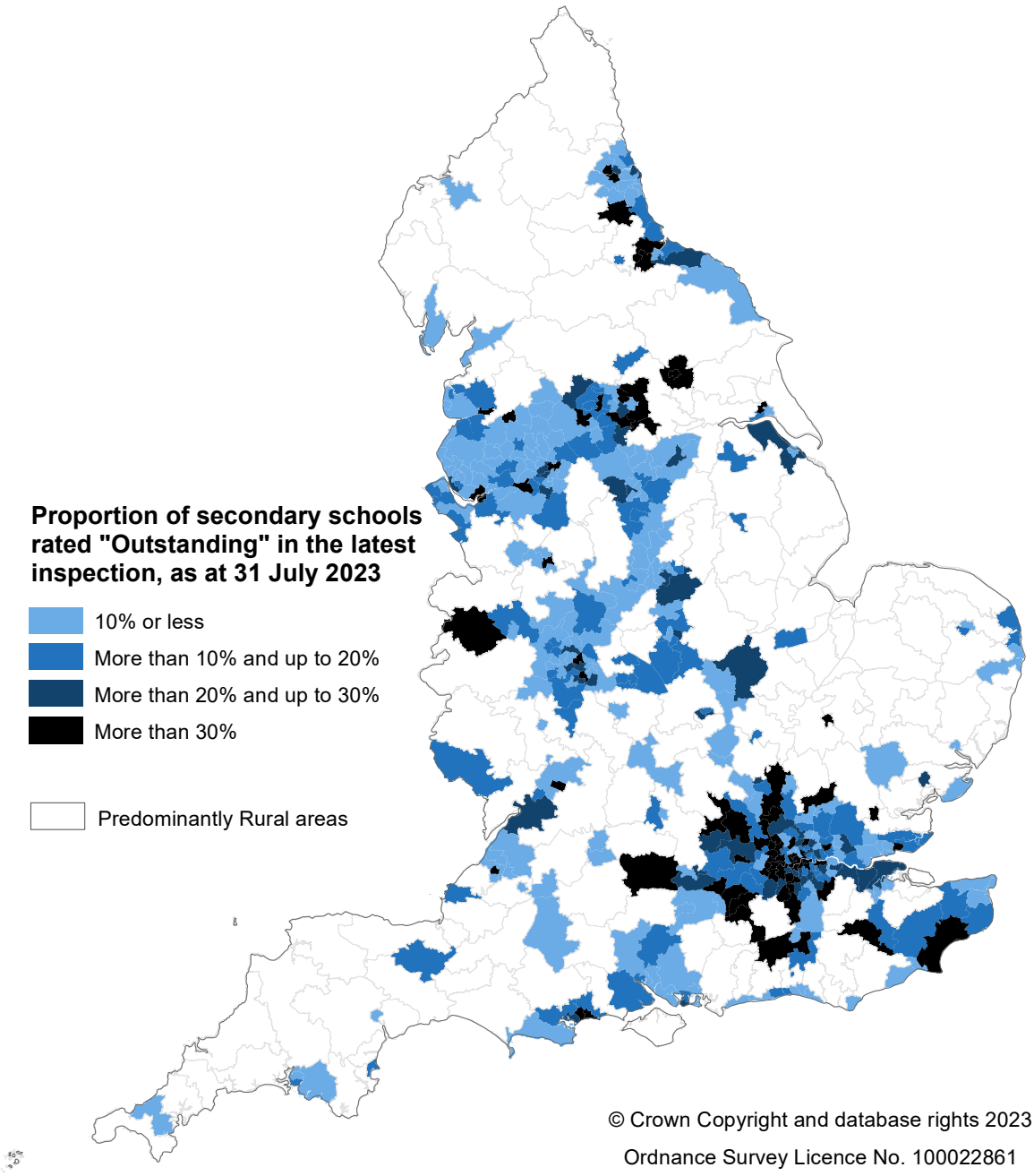


Figure D-3 shows the proportion of Urban secondary schools rated “outstanding” in their most recent graded inspection as at 31 July 2023 by Parliamentary Constituency. It can be summarised as follows: In Predominantly Urban or Urban with Significant Rural areas,

- 75 constituencies had more than 30% of inspected secondary schools rated “outstanding”,
- 54 constituencies had more than 20% and up to 30% of inspected secondary schools rated “outstanding”,
- 108 constituencies had more than 10% and up to 20% of inspected secondary schools rated “outstanding”,
- 180 constituencies had 10% or fewer inspected secondary schools rated “outstanding”,
- Of the 10 constituencies with highest proportions of “outstanding” secondary schools, most were in and around the London region (up to 75%), with the exception of Gateshead (67%).

Figure D-3: Proportion of secondary schools rated "Outstanding" in their latest inspection, for Predominantly Urban or Urban with Significant Rural Parliamentary Constituencies, as at 31 July 2023 (Note D-3, Note D-5, Note D-6)

White areas on the map represent constituencies classed as Predominantly Rural.



Primary schools

There are more primary schools than secondary schools and a child of primary school age living in a Rural area is more likely be able to attend a school in a Rural area than a pupil of secondary school age living in a Rural area. As Figure D-4 shows, a similar proportion of primary schools in Rural areas receive a “good” or “outstanding” assessment compared to those in Urban areas (89% versus 90% respectively). In Rural areas, 12% of primary schools were rated “outstanding” (compared to 15% in Urban areas), and 78% were “good” (compared to 75% in Urban areas). In both Rural and Urban areas, a primary school is less likely to “require improvement” or be deemed “inadequate” than a secondary school.

Figure D-4: Proportion of inspected primary schools with most recent graded school inspection outcome (%), as at 31 July 2023, based on Output Area Rural-Urban Classification of school location, England (Note D-3)

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars. Values smaller than 5% have not been labelled.

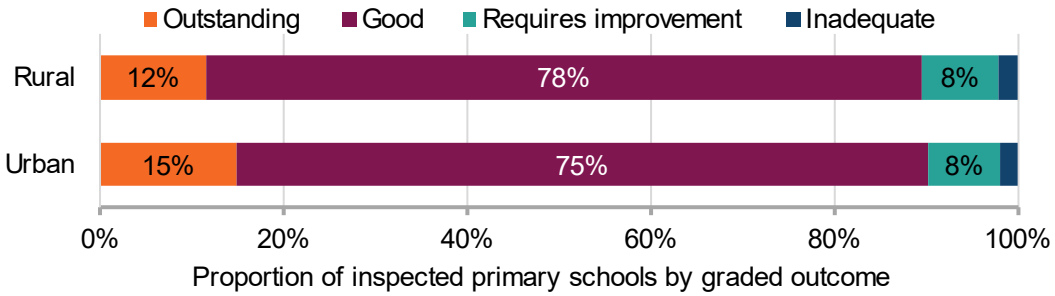


Figure D-5 and Figure D-6 show the proportion of primary schools rated “outstanding” in their most recent graded inspection by broad Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification. There were 17 constituencies where no schools were rated “outstanding”, as shown in Table D-1.

Table D-1: Selected Parliamentary Constituencies where no primary schools were rated "Outstanding" in their latest inspection, as at 31 July 2023 (Note D-7)

Parliamentary Constituency	Rural-Urban Classification	Total number of primary schools	Number of “Outstanding” primary schools
Chichester	PR	42	0
Isle of Wight	PR	38	0
North East Cambridgeshire	PR	36	0
Bognor Regis and Littlehampton	PU	18	0
Coventry North West	PU	29	0
Doncaster Central	PU	29	0
Dudley South	PU	22	0
Easington	PU	28	0
Edmonton	PU	24	0
Gillingham and Rainham	PU	23	0
Portsmouth South	PU	21	0
Sheffield South East	PU	24	0
Worthing West	PU	19	0
Cannock Chase	USR	27	0
Clacton	USR	19	0
Great Yarmouth	USR	30	0
South West Wiltshire	USR	42	0

Figure D-5 shows the proportion of Rural primary schools rated “outstanding” in their most recent graded inspection as at 31 July 2023 by Parliamentary Constituency. It can be summarised as follows: In Predominantly Rural areas,

- No constituencies had more than 30% of inspected primary schools rated “outstanding”,
- 7 constituencies had more than 20% and up to 30% of inspected primary schools rated “outstanding”,
- 53 constituencies had more than 10% and up to 20% of inspected primary schools rated “outstanding”,
- 56 constituencies had 10% or fewer inspected primary schools rated “outstanding”.

Figure D-5: Proportion of primary schools rated "Outstanding" in their latest inspection, for Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies, as at 31 July 2023 (Note D-3, Note D-6)
White areas on the map represent constituencies classed as Predominantly Urban or Urban with Significant Rural.

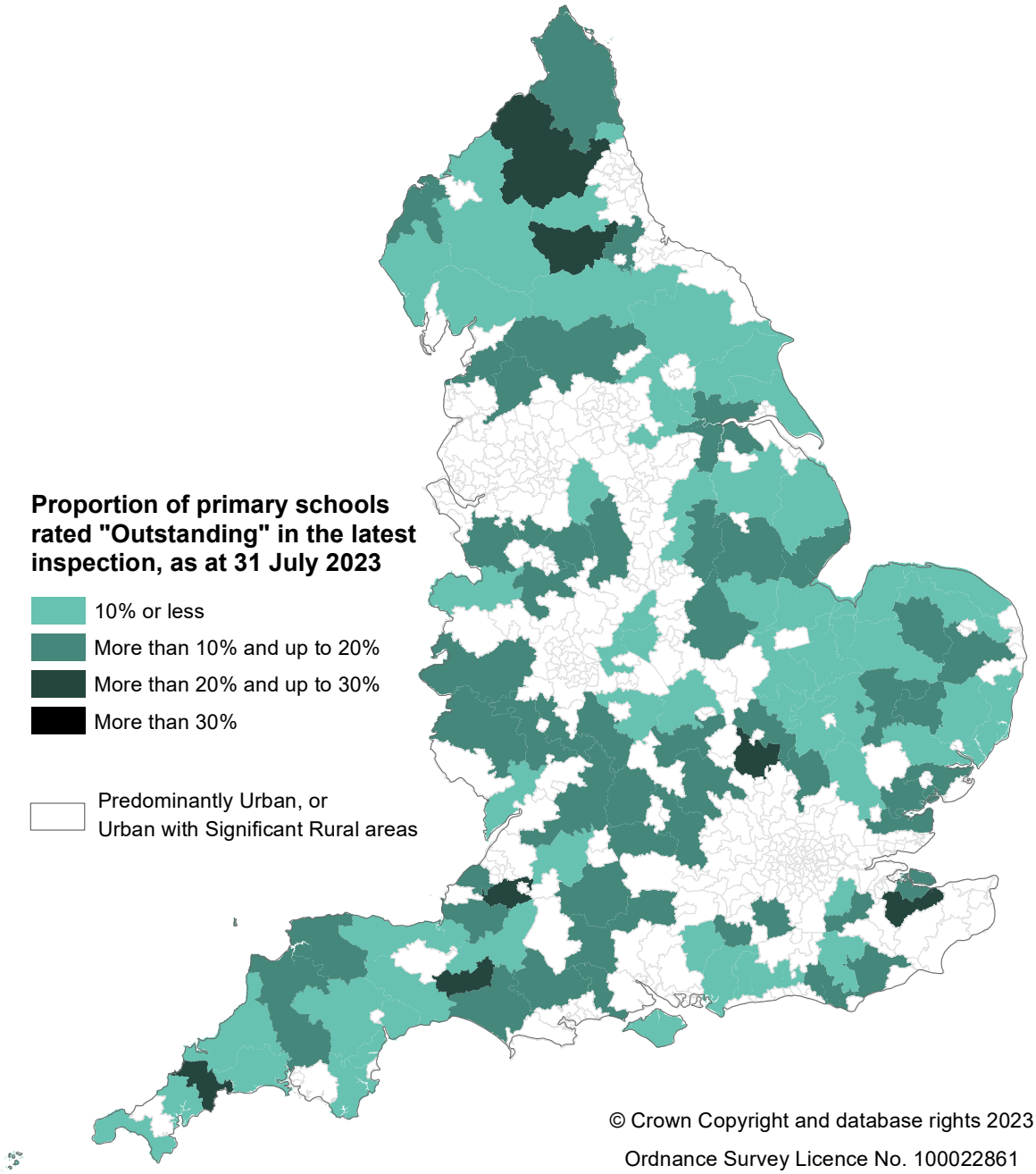
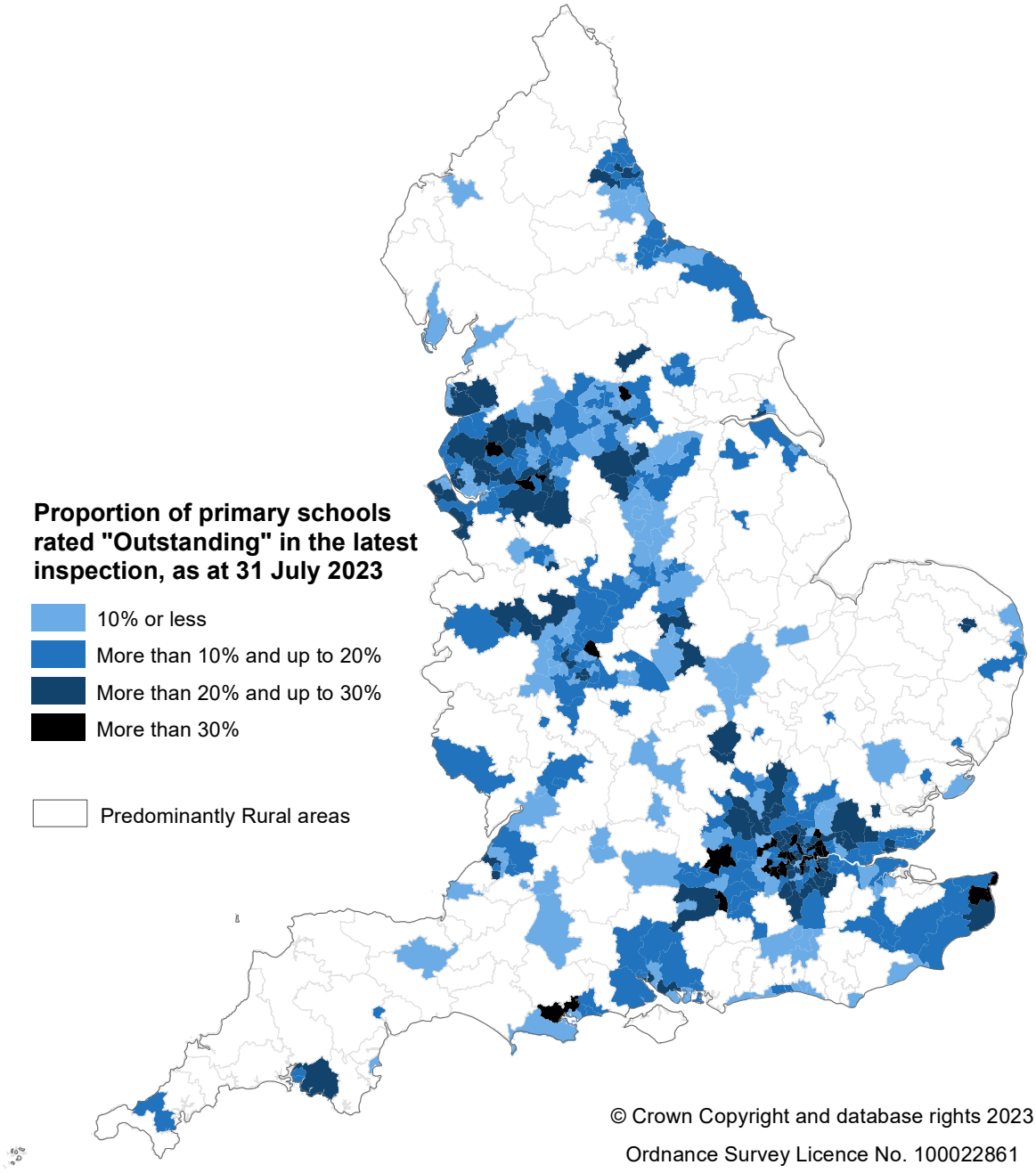


Figure D-6 shows the proportion of Urban primary schools rated “outstanding” in their most recent graded inspection as at 31 July 2023 by Parliamentary Constituency. It can be summarised as follows: In Predominantly Urban or Urban with Significant Rural areas,

- 29 constituencies had more than 30% of inspected primary schools rated “outstanding”,
- 91 constituencies had more than 20% and up to 30% of inspected primary schools rated “outstanding”,
- 161 constituencies had more than 10% and up to 20% of inspected primary schools rated “outstanding”,
- 136 constituencies had 10% or fewer inspected primary schools rated “outstanding”.

Figure D-6: Proportion of primary schools rated "Outstanding" in their latest inspection, for Predominantly Urban or Urban with Significant Rural Parliamentary Constituencies, as at 31 July 2023 (Note D-3, Note D-6)

White areas on the map represent constituencies classed as Predominantly Rural.



Change in school inspection outcomes

When a school receives a “good” or “outstanding” inspection outcome, they will typically not be inspected again for another 4 years; this second inspection will often be ungraded on most occasions. However, schools that “require improvement” or are deemed “inadequate” will be revisited after around 30 months for another graded inspection (Note D-3).

Secondary schools

Figure D-7 shows the proportion of secondary schools by change in their inspection outcome between the latest and previous inspections, where the left-hand side of the axis represents a decrease in graded outcome and the right-hand side of the axis represents an increase.

Figure D-7: Proportion of secondary schools with indicated change between latest and previous school inspection outcomes, as at 31 July 2023, by Output Area Rural-Urban Classification (Note D-3)

Top left chart shows schools previously rated “Outstanding”. Top right chart shows schools previously rated “Good”. Bottom left chart shows schools previously rated “Requires improvement”. Bottom right chart shows schools previously rated “Inadequate”. The legends are presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars.

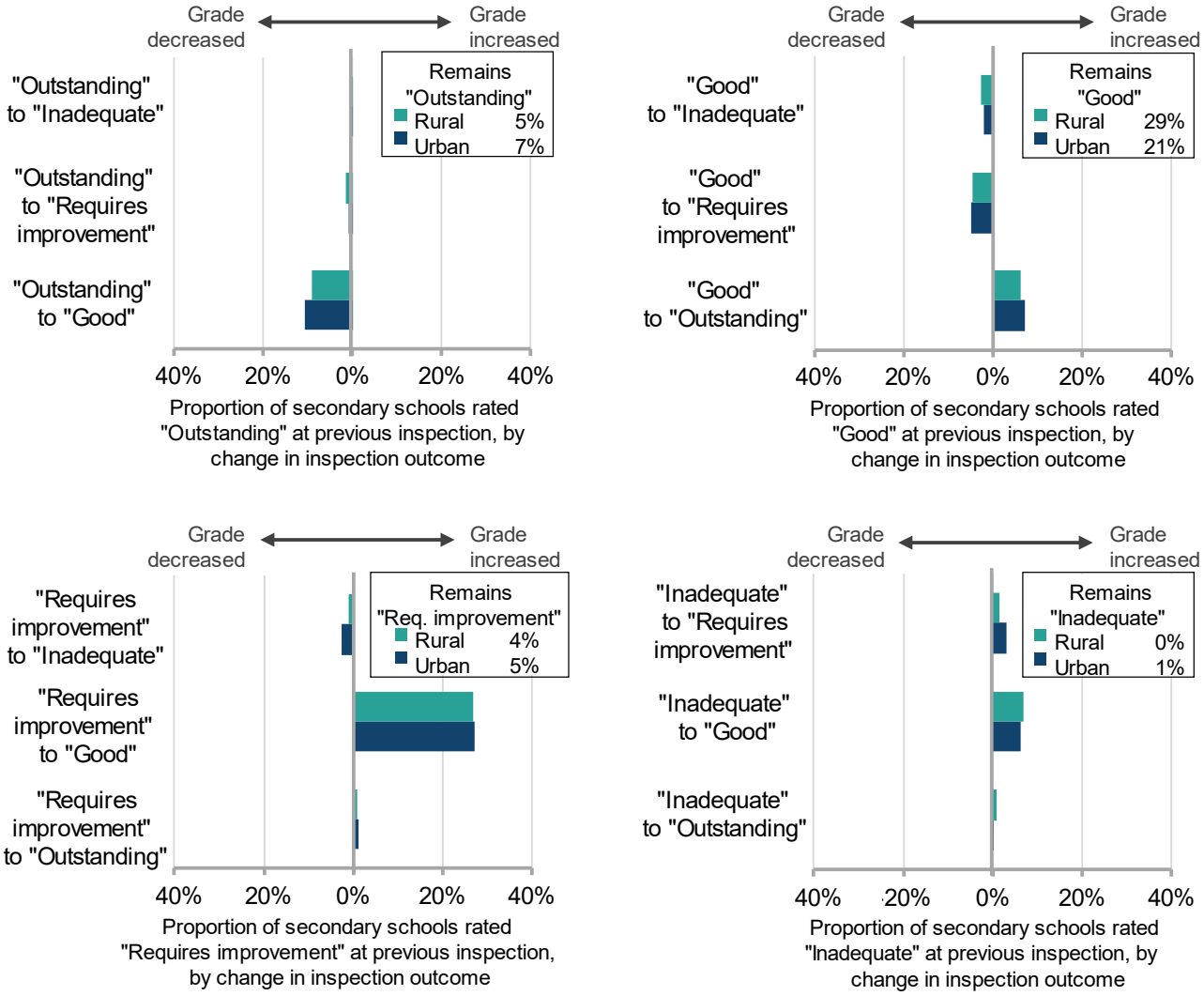


Figure D-7 can be summarised as follows:

When the inspection outcome increased,

- A smaller proportion of Rural secondary schools increased from “good” to “outstanding”, or from “inadequate” to “requires improvement”, between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection than in Urban areas.
- The same proportion of Rural secondary schools increased from “requires improvement” to “good” (27%), or from “requires improvement” to “outstanding” (1%), between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection as in Urban areas (27%.

- A larger proportion of Rural secondary schools increased from “inadequate” to “good”, or from “inadequate” to “outstanding”, between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection than in Urban areas.

When the inspection outcome did not change,

- 5% of Rural secondary schools were rated “outstanding” in both their latest and previous inspection, compared to 7% of those in Urban areas.
- 29% of Rural secondary schools were rated “good” in both their latest and previous inspections, compared to 21% of those in Urban areas.
- 4% of Rural secondary schools were rated “requires improvement” in both their latest and previous inspections, compared to 5% in Urban areas.
- No Rural secondary schools were rated “inadequate” in both their latest and previous inspection, compared to 1% of those in Urban areas.

When the inspection outcome decreased,

- No secondary schools decreased from “outstanding” to “inadequate” between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection.
- A smaller proportion of Rural secondary schools decreased from “outstanding” to “good”, or from “requires improvement” to “inadequate”, between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection than in Urban areas.
- The same proportion of Rural secondary schools decreased from “good” to “requires improvement” between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection as in Urban areas (5%).
- A larger proportion of Rural secondary schools decreased from “good” to “inadequate”, or from “outstanding” to “requires improvement”, between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection than in Urban areas.

Primary schools

Figure D-8 shows the proportion of primary schools by change in their inspection outcome between the latest and previous inspections, where the left-hand side of the axis represents a decrease in graded outcome and the right-hand side of the axis represents an increase. In summary:

When the inspection outcome increased,

- A smaller proportion of Rural primary schools increased from “good” to “outstanding”, or from “requires improvement” to “outstanding”, or from “requires improvement” to “good”, or from “inadequate” to “good”, between inspections than in Urban areas.
- The same proportion of Rural primary schools increased from “inadequate” to “requires improvement” between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection as in Urban areas.
- A larger proportion of Rural primary schools increased from “inadequate” to “outstanding” between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection than in Urban areas.

When the inspection outcome did not change,

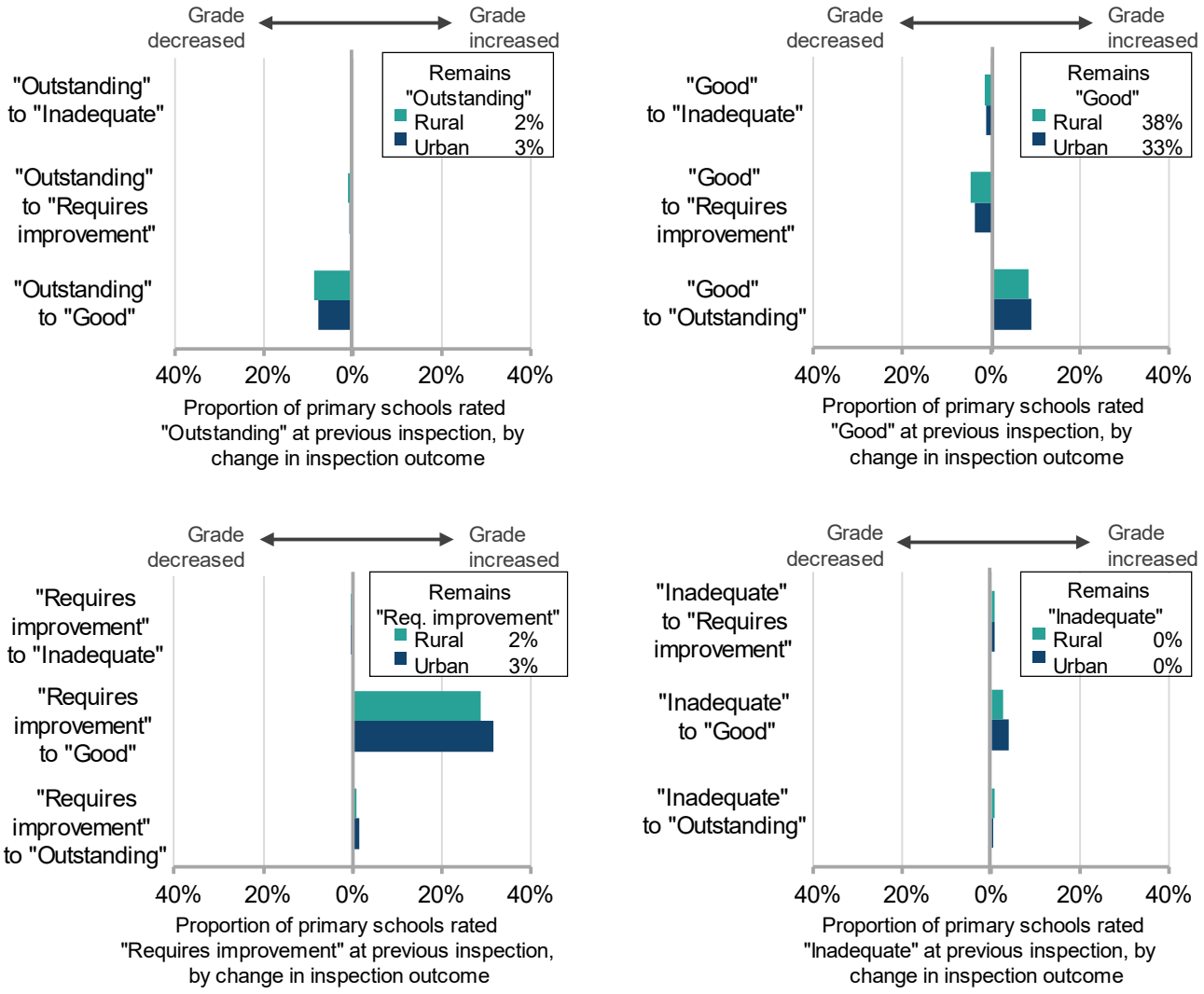
- 2% of Rural primary schools were rated “outstanding” in both their latest and previous inspection, compared to 3% of those in Urban areas.
- 38% of Rural primary schools were rated “good” in both their latest and previous inspections, compared to 33% of those in Urban areas.
- 2% of Rural primary schools were rated “requires improvement” in both their latest and previous inspections, compared to 3% in Urban areas.
- No primary schools were rated “inadequate” in both their latest and previous inspection.

When the inspection outcome decreased,

- No primary schools decreased from “outstanding” to “inadequate”, or from “requires improvement” to “inadequate”, between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection.
- The same proportion of Rural primary schools decreased from “outstanding” to “requires improvement” between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection as in Urban areas.
- A larger proportion of Rural primary schools decreased from “outstanding” to “good”, or from “good” to “inadequate”, or from “good” to “requires improvement”, between their previous and latest Ofsted inspection than in Urban areas.

Figure D-8: Proportion of primary schools with indicated change between latest and previous school inspection outcomes, as at 31 July 2023, by Output Area Rural-Urban Classification (Note D-3)

Top left chart shows schools previously rated “Outstanding”. Top right chart shows schools previously rated “Good”. Bottom left chart shows schools previously rated “Requires improvement”. Bottom right chart shows schools previously rated “Inadequate”. The legends are presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars.



Impact of deprivation on school inspections

Schools are assigned a level of deprivation based on the income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI). The IDACI scores are converted into 5 equal groups (quintiles) and included as part of the inspection dataset (Note D-4). The higher the quintile score the greater the level of deprivation amongst the pupils at the school.

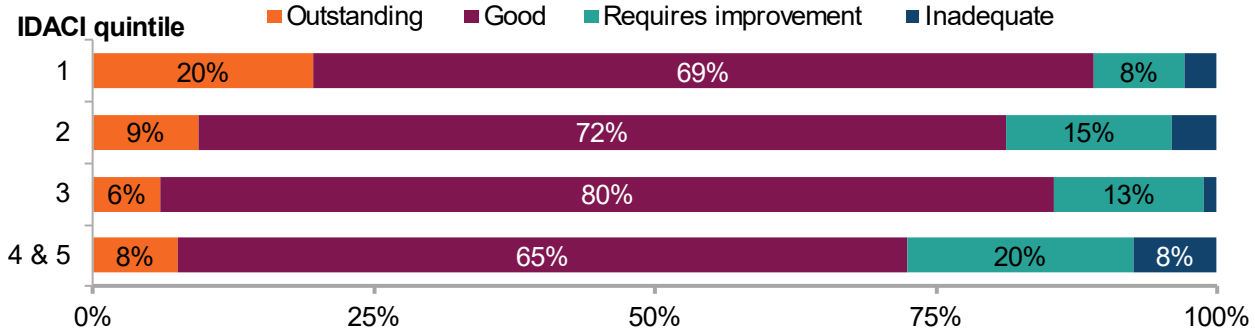
Secondary schools

In Rural areas with the least deprivation (quintiles 1 and 2) a higher proportion of secondary schools are rated “outstanding” than in the areas with higher deprivation (Figure D-9). However, in the more deprived Rural areas (quintiles 4&5) a larger proportion of secondary schools are rated as “requires improvement” or “inadequate” than in areas with lesser deprivation. In Urban areas (Figure D-10) the greater the level of deprivation the higher the proportion of schools rated as requiring improvement or inadequate (and the lower the proportion of “outstanding” schools).

For any given level of deprivation, there was a higher proportion of secondary schools with an “outstanding” rating in Urban areas than in Rural areas.

Figure D-9: Proportion of Rural secondary schools in England with most recent school inspection outcome (%), as at 31 July 2023, based on IDACI quintile of deprivation, England (Note D-3, Note D-4)

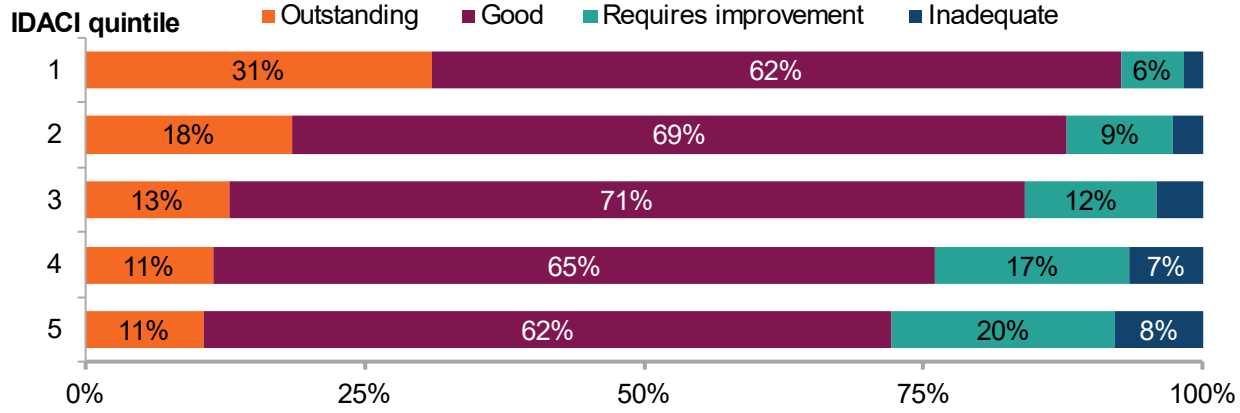
Higher IDACI quintiles indicate higher levels of deprivation. Quintiles 4 and 5 have been merged.



Proportion of Rural secondary schools by graded outcome and IDACI quintile

Figure D-10: Proportion of Urban secondary schools in England with most recent school inspection outcome (%), as at 31 July 2023, based on IDACI quintile of deprivation, England (Note D-3, Note D-4)

Higher IDACI quintiles indicate higher levels of deprivation.



Proportion of Urban secondary schools by graded outcome and IDACI quintile

Notes

- On Figure D-9 there are insufficient Rural schools within IDACI quintile 5 for a robust analysis, so quintiles 4 and 5 have been grouped together.
- Quintile 5 is the ‘most deprived’ and quintile 1 is the ‘least deprived’.
- On Figure D-9 and Figure D-10 only bars representing at least 5% of schools inspected have been labelled.

Primary schools

There was little difference between primary and secondary schools in Rural and Urban areas when consideration deprivation and inspection outcomes. In Rural areas with the least deprivation (quintiles 1 and 2) a higher proportion of primary schools are rated “outstanding” than in the areas with higher deprivation (Figure D-11). However, in the more deprived Rural areas (quintiles 4 and 5) a larger proportion of primary schools are rated as “requires improvement” or “inadequate” than in areas with less deprivation. In Urban areas (Figure D-12) the greater the level of deprivation the higher the proportion of primary schools rated as “requires improvement” or “inadequate” (and the lower the proportion of “outstanding” schools). For any given level of deprivation, there was a higher proportion of “outstanding” primary schools in Urban areas than in Rural areas.

Figure D-11: Proportion of Rural primary schools in England with most recent school inspection outcome (%), as at 31 July 2023, based on IDACI quintile of deprivation, England (Note D-3, Note D-4)

Higher IDACI quintiles indicate higher levels of deprivation.

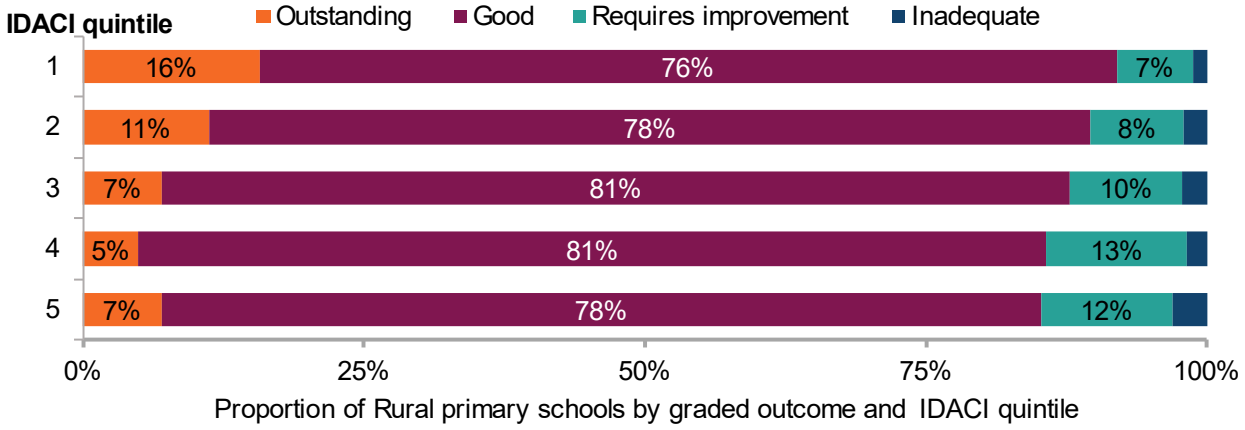
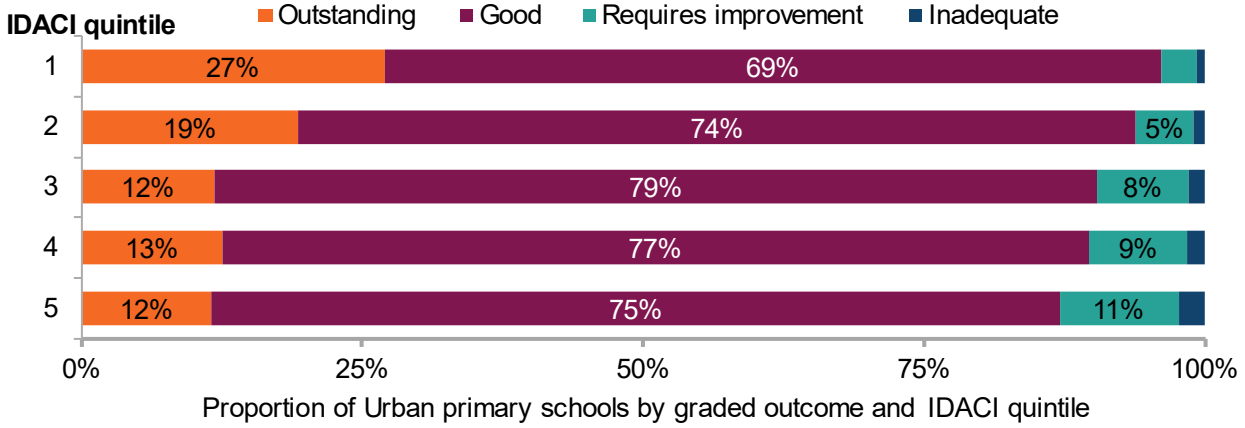


Figure D-12: Proportion of Urban primary schools in England with most recent school inspection outcome (%), as at 31 July 2023, based on IDACI quintile of deprivation, England (Note D-3, Note D-4)

Higher IDACI quintiles indicate higher levels of deprivation.



Notes

- Quintile 5 is the ‘most deprived’ and quintile 1 is the ‘least deprived’.
- On Figure D-11 and Figure D-12 only bars representing at least 5% of schools inspected have been labelled.

School inspections explanatory notes

- **Note D-1**

A table showing data on the most recent school inspection outcomes for English primary and secondary schools, broken down by a more detailed Rural-Urban classification in the Education and Skills data tables.

- **Note D-2**

Inspection source data: Ofsted Schools Management Information: http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-management-information-ofsteds-school-inspections-outcomes.

- **Note D-3**

When inspecting a school, the inspection team make 4 key judgements: (1) the quality of education; (2) behaviour and attitudes; (3) personal development and (4) leadership and management. They also make a judgement on the school's overall effectiveness.
Inspectors use the following 4-point scale to make all judgements: (1) outstanding; (2) good; (3) requires improvement and (4) inadequate. Outstanding is a challenging level to reach and requires the school to meet each and every good criterion and alongside additional criteria set under the outstanding level. A school will be inadequate under a particular judgement if one or more of the inadequate criteria applies.
Further details of the inspection grading criteria can be found in Part 3 of the Ofsted School inspection handbook.

- **Note D-4**

State-funded schools are assigned with a particular level of deprivation based on the income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI) 2015, produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government. For state-funded schools, the deprivation of a provider is based on the mean of the deprivation indices associated with the home postcodes of the pupils attending the school rather than the location of the school itself. This information is provided by the Department for Education. It is not known for nursery schools, pupil referral units or hospital schools (a type of special school), therefore they are excluded from analysis by deprivation. The schools are divided into 5 equal groups (quintiles) that are labelled as follows: 'most deprived' 'deprived', 'average', 'less deprived' and 'least deprived'. For example, the fifth of schools nationally that have the highest IDACI scores are described as the 'most deprived'.

- **Note D-5**

Out of the 533 total Parliamentary Constituencies, 231 did not have any secondary schools receiving an "outstanding" grade in their latest inspection. Of these 231 constituencies, 54 were Predominantly Rural, 147 were Predominantly Urban, and 30 were Urban with Significant Rural. This means 47% of Predominantly Rural constituencies had no "outstanding" secondary schools, compared to 42% of Predominantly Urban constituencies and 47% of constituencies in Urban with Significant Rural areas.

- **Note D-6**

Figures regarding the latest primary and secondary school inspections are measured against the total number of schools that were inspected, and therefore those which were yet to be inspected as of 31 July 2023 have not been included within the analysis.

- **Note D-7**

For conciseness, the Rural-Urban Classification has been abbreviated: Predominantly Rural (PR), Predominantly Urban (PU), and Urban with Significant Rural (USR).

E. Free School Meals – eligibility

The total percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower in Rural areas than in Urban areas. This has been the case for at least the last 5 years.

Summary

Children in state-funded schools in England are entitled to receive free school meals if a parent or carer is in receipt of certain specified benefits.

In January 2023, 16.3% of all pupils in Rural areas were eligible for free school meals, this was 8.7 percentage points lower than the 25.0% that were eligible in Urban areas.

Eligibility for free school meals has increased over time for all area types. Between January 2016 and January 2023 levels of eligibility has shown similar levels of increase in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urbans areas (increases of 9.3 percentage points and 9.6 percentage points respectively). Eligibility in Predominantly Rural areas has remained lower than in Predominantly Urban areas over this 8-year period.

Note that the figures in the trend analysis use Upper Tier Local Authority (UTLA) level data while the stand-alone January 2023 figures use school level data. The UTLA Rural Urban Classification is not as refined as that used for the school level analysis meaning estimates for January 2023 differ between the two datasets, however the basic trend is the same with Predominantly Rural areas showing lower levels of eligibility for free school meals than Predominantly Urban areas.

Free school meals – current eligibility

This section concerns free school meals and those children that are eligible for them. This analysis includes all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools, non-maintained special schools, and state-funded alternative provision schools. It does not include independent (fee paying) schools.

Eligibility for free school meals

Children in state-funded schools in England are entitled to receive free school meals if a parent or carer is in receipt of certain specified benefits (see Note E-3 for a list of relevant benefits, and further notes on eligibility criteria).

Eligibility for free school meals in the 2022/23 academic year

The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher in Urban areas than in Rural areas. In January 2023, 16.3% of all pupils in Rural areas were eligible for free school meals, this was lower than the 25.0% that were eligible in Urban areas. When looking at eligibility in sparse Rural areas the percentage increases by 1.7 percentage points to 18.0%. This is shown in Figure E-1.

Figure E-1: Bar chart showing the total percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals by Output Area Rural-Urban Classification, January 2023 (Note E-1).

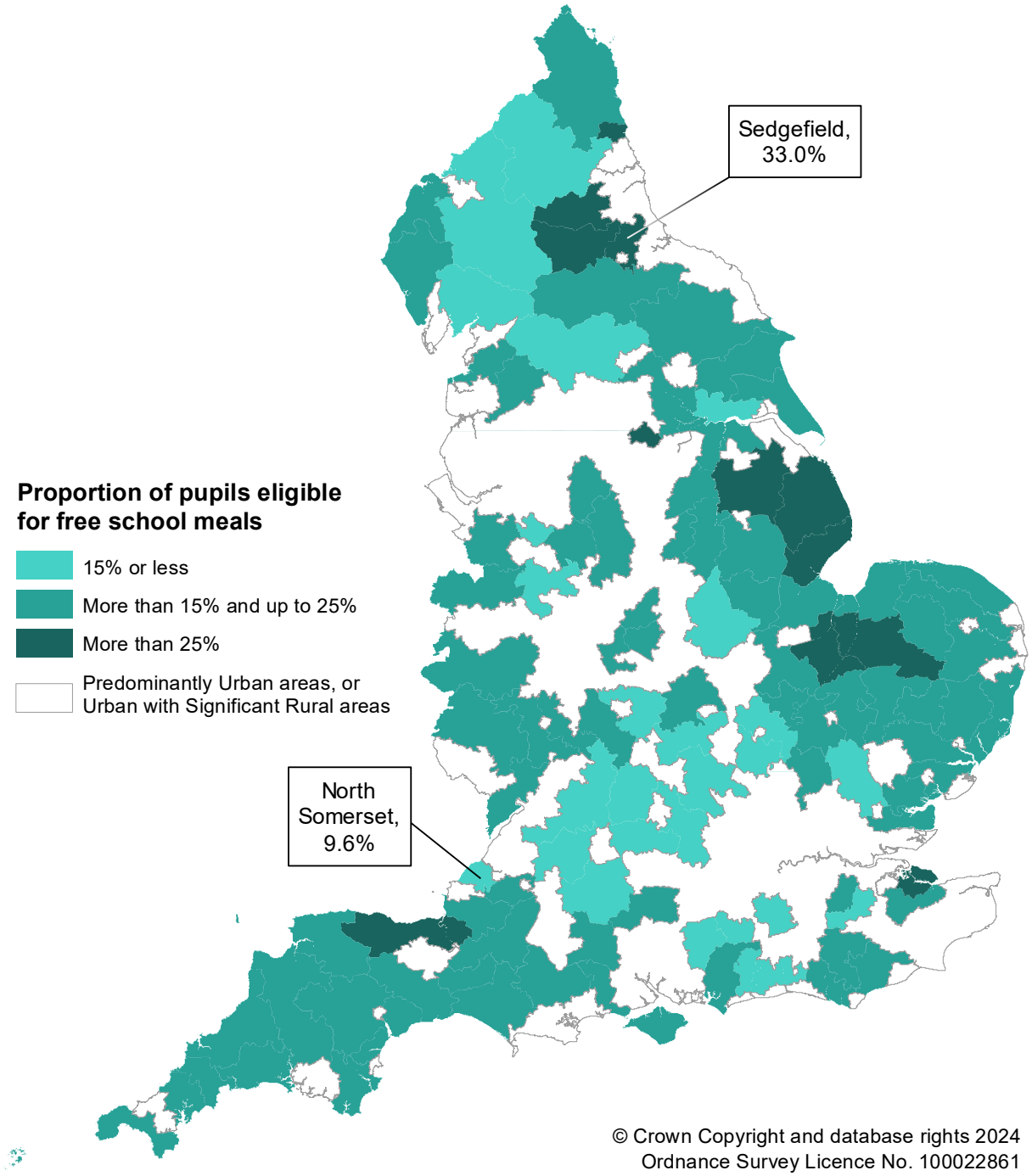
Figure E-2 and Figure E-3 present eligibility for free school meals at the Parliamentary Constituency level (Note E-4), with one map for Predominantly Rural areas (Figure E-2) and the other for Urban with Significant Rural and Predominantly Urban areas (Figure E-3). Scales differ between the two maps due to differing value ranges for the two geography types covered. Independent scales allow us to better display the information on each map.

In Predominantly Rural areas the constituency with the greatest proportion of eligibility for free school meals is Sedgefield (33.0%). There are clusters of constituencies with high eligibility around County Durham, Lincolnshire and one comprising South East Norfolk and North East

Cambridgeshire. The rural constituency with the lowest level of eligibility for free school meals is North Somerset (9.6%).

Figure E-2: Map showing percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies, January 2023

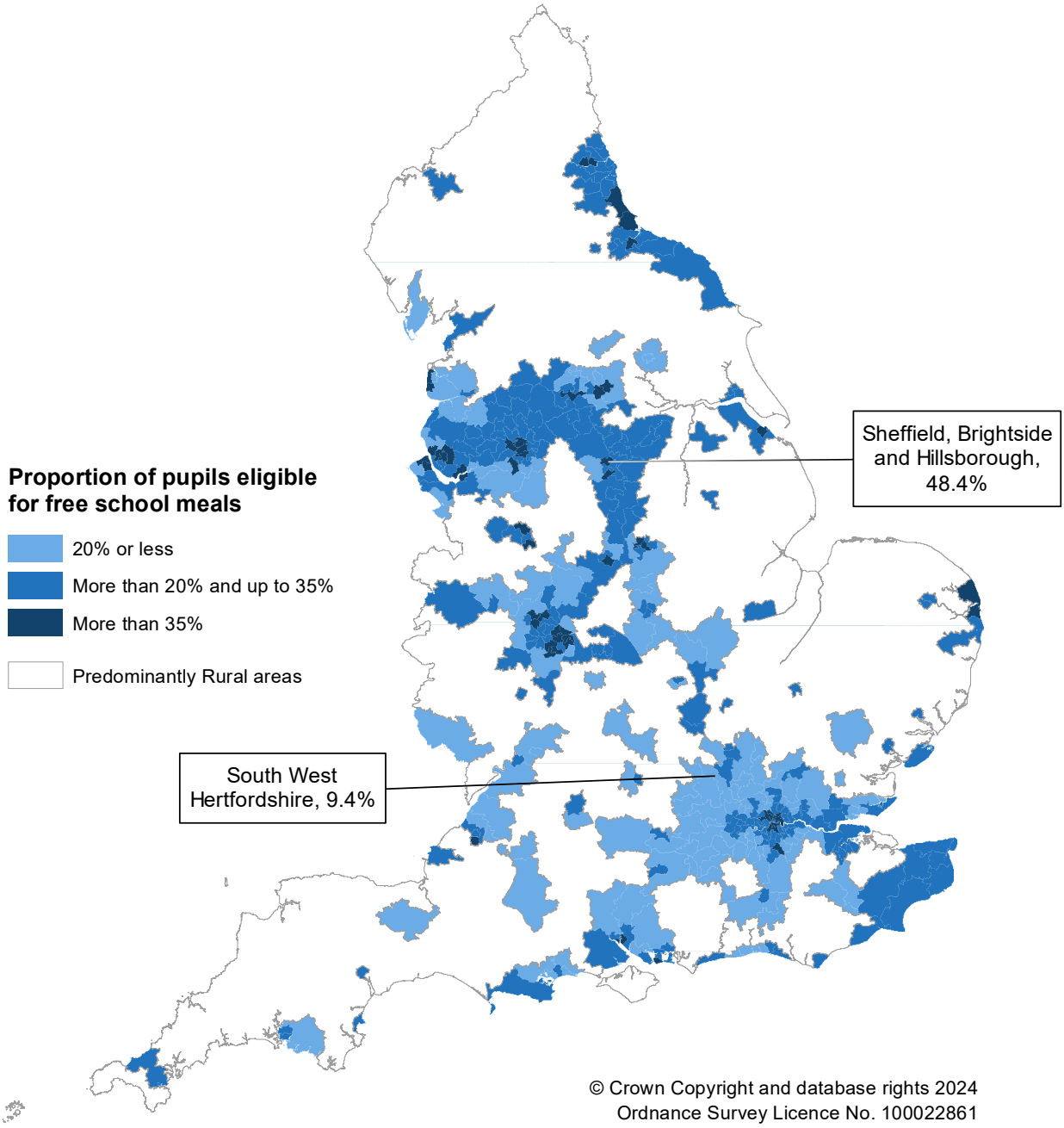
The locations of the Predominantly Rural constituencies with highest (Sedgefield) and lowest (North Somerset) percentages are shown as annotations.



In Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural areas the constituency with highest level of eligibility for free school meals is Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough (48.4%) while the lowest level of eligibility is in South West Hertfordshire (9.4%).

Figure E-3: Map showing percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in Predominantly Urban and Urban with Significant Rural Parliamentary Constituencies, January 2023

The locations of the constituencies with highest (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) and lowest (South West Hertfordshire) percentages within Predominantly Urban or Urban with Significant Rural areas are shown as annotations.

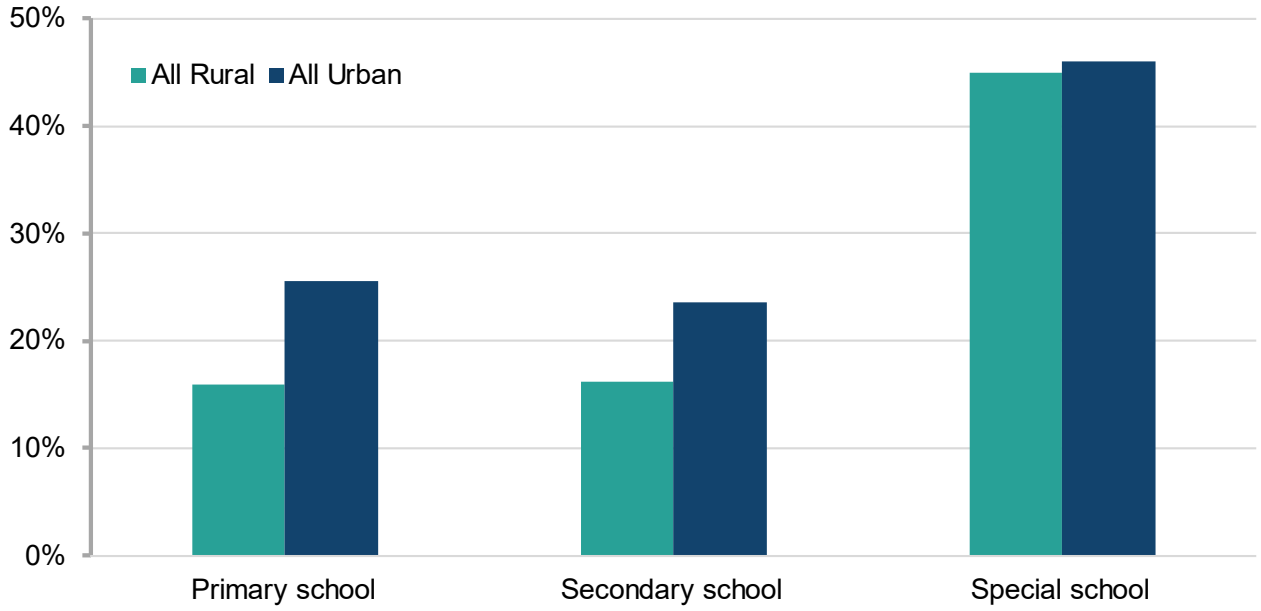


Eligibility for free school meals by school type

When considering eligibility for free school meals by school type the overall pattern is still the same with Rural areas showing a lower proportion of eligible pupils than Urban areas for state-funded primary and secondary schools.

In January 2023 eligibility for free school meals was at the same level in Rural areas for both state-funded primary and secondary schools (16%). In Urban areas eligibility was slightly higher in state-funded primary schools than in state-funded secondary schools (26% and 24% respectively). Eligibility for free school meals was considerably higher in state-funded special schools but still marginally lower in Rural areas than in Urban areas (45% and 46% respectively). This can be seen in Figure E-4.

Figure E-4: Bar chart showing the total percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals by state-funded school type and Output Area Rural-Urban Classification, January 2023.
The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the bars on the chart.



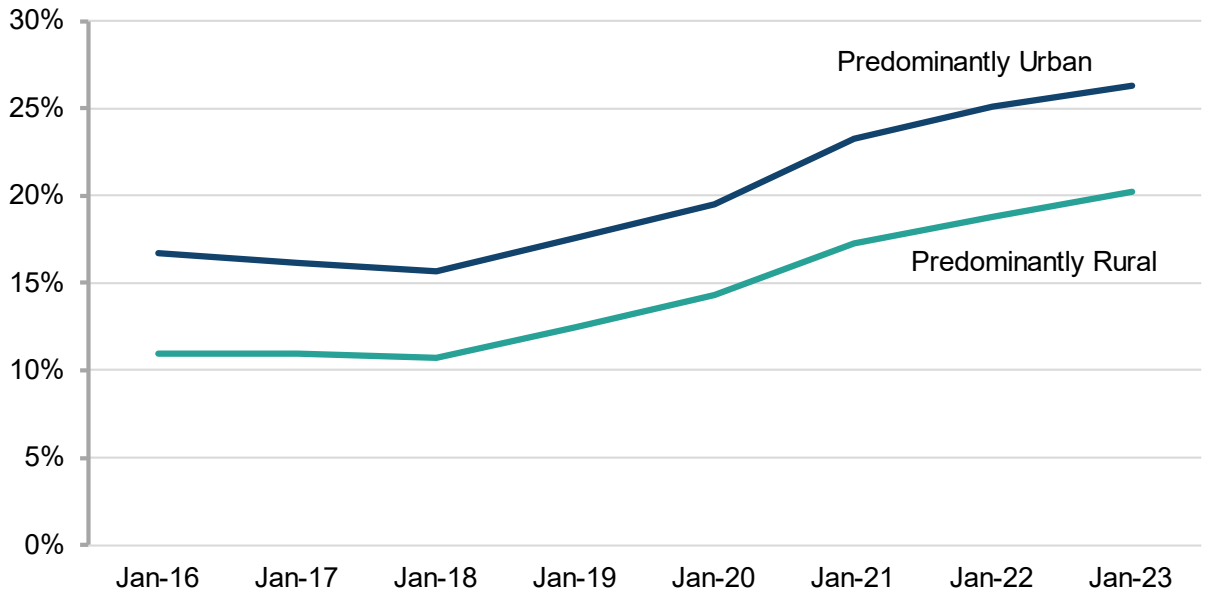
Eligibility for free school meals – long term trends

The following trend analysis uses Upper Tier Local Authority level data rather than school level data and therefore the Rural Urban Classification is not as refined as that used for the school level analysis. The basic trend is the same with Predominantly Rural areas showing lower levels of eligibility for free school meals than Predominantly Urban areas. However, the January 2023 estimate for Predominantly Rural areas is higher than that presented earlier in this section (20.2% compared with 16.3%) as it will include Urban areas that fall within Predominantly Rural Local Authorities which will raise the estimate calculated for Predominantly Rural areas.

Figure E-5 shows that in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals has increased over time, but the rate of increase has slowed in more recent years. There have been changes to the rules surrounding pupils becoming ineligible / losing eligibility to FSM over the period covered by this chart (see Note E-5). These changes might have impacted upon the trends seen. Predominantly Rural areas are consistently lower than Predominantly Urban areas in terms of eligibility for free school meals. Over the time-period shown (January 2016 to January 2023) levels of eligibility have increased by 9.3 percentage points in Predominantly Rural areas and by 9.6 percentage points in Predominantly Urban areas. From January 2016 to January 2023 the gap between Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas stayed between 5.0 and 6.3 percentage points. In 2022/23 Predominantly Rural areas had

seen an increase in eligibility of 1.5 percentage points on the previous year, compared with an increase of 1.2 percentage points for Predominantly Urban areas for the same time-period.

Figure E-5: Line chart showing the total percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, January 2016 to January 2023.



Free school meals explanatory notes

- **Note E-1**

Data comes from the publication 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' published on GOV.UK in June 2023.

- **Note E-2**

The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals at January 2023. Includes all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools, non-maintained special schools, and state-funded alternative provision schools.

- **Note E-3**

Children in state-funded schools in England are entitled to receive free school meals if a parent or carer were in receipt of any of the following benefits:

  - Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
  - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
  - the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
  - Child Tax Credit (provided they were not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and had an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs)
  - Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
  - Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits)

Pupils in families with no recourse to public funds (NPRF) can also be eligible for free school meals – see here for further information: Providing free school meals to families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Children in nursery schools are eligible if they meet the criteria and attend for full days. Pupils are still eligible for free school meals in school in sixth form, but not sixth form college or further education. These children / pupils are not included in the analysis in this section (see Note E-2 for those who are included).

- **Note E-4**

This analysis uses the set of 533 parliamentary constituencies in England that were current at the time of publication and not the ones that have recently been created and will come into being at the forthcoming 2024 General Election.

- **Note E-5**

Since 1 April 2018, transitional protections have been in place which will continue during the roll out of Universal Credit. This has meant that pupils eligible for free school meals on or after 1 April 2018 retain their free school meals eligibility even if their circumstances change. Prior to the pandemic, this had been the main driver in the increase in the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals as pupils continue to become eligible but fewer pupils stop being eligible.
Any pupil gaining eligibility for free school meals after 1 April 2018 will be protected against losing free school meals until March 2025. After March 2025, any existing claimants that no longer meet the eligibility criteria at that point (because they are earning above the threshold or are no longer a recipient of Universal Credit) will continue to receive free school meals until the end of their current phase of education (i.e., primary, or secondary).

F. Alternative and specialist education provision

In 2023 there were proportionally more Elective Home Education pupils in Predominantly Rural areas than there were in Predominantly Urban areas.

In 2022/23 the proportion of pupils needing the extra support offered by an education, health and care (EHC) plan was slightly higher in Predominantly Rural areas than it was in Predominantly Urban areas; but a much lower proportion of children with an EHC attended a state funded special school in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.

Summary

All children in England between the ages of 5 and 16 are entitled to a free place at a state school. However, parents, not the state, are responsible for ensuring that their compulsory school age child is properly educated. Most children are educated in a formal school setting, but some parents instead choose to provide education for their children at home or in some other way they desire; this choice is known as Elective Home Education (EHE). Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can affect a child's ability to learn; some of these children: (a) need more advanced levels of support detailed in education, health and care (EHC) plans and (b) attend special schools.

On the census day in Spring 2023 there were 15,700 EHE pupils in Predominantly Rural areas and 44,800 in Predominantly Urban areas. Using the school capacities as a scaling factor showed that there were proportionally more EHE pupils in Predominantly Rural Upper Tier Local Authorities (areas) than there were in Predominantly Urban areas. In Predominantly Rural areas the EHE pupils were equivalent to 1.2% of school places compared to 0.9% of school places in Predominantly Urban areas. The area with the highest proportion of EHE pupils is the Isle of Wight where EHE pupils are equivalent to 2.8% of the total school capacity on the Island.

In England in the 2022/23 academic year there was over 1.1 million school children in receipt of SEN support, but without an EHC plan; these children account for 13.7% of the pupils in Predominantly Rural areas and 13.2% of the pupils in Predominantly Urban areas. The proportion of pupils needing the extra support offered by an EHC plans was slightly higher in Predominantly Rural areas (4.5%) than it was in either Predominantly Urban areas (4.3%) or in Urban with Significant Rural areas (4.2%). Almost 150 thousand pupils attended a state funded special school in England in 2022/23 and just over 20 thousand of these children were from Predominantly Rural areas. Pupils attending state funded special schools accounted for 1.4% of pupils in Predominantly Rural areas and 1.7% of pupils in both Predominantly Urban areas and Urban with Significant Rural areas. Whilst almost all pupils at special schools have an EHC, not all pupils with an EHC attend special schools. In Predominantly Rural areas 32% of the pupils with an EHC attended a state funded special school in the 2022/23 academic year compared with 39% of pupils with an EHC in Predominantly Urban (and Urban with Significant Rural) areas.

Note that the analysis on special educational needs and disabilities focuses only on children in schools and the special schools analysis relates only to state funded special schools. Education provision is, and hence the statistics produced by the Department for Education are, done at Upper Tier Local Authority level and these are equivalent to counties and unitary authorities.

Home schooling

This section concerns Home Schooling or as it is more formally called Elective Home Education.

What is Elective Home Education (EHE)?

Parents, not the state, are responsible for ensuring that their compulsory school age child (Note F-1) is properly educated. Most children are educated in a formal school setting, but for some children, an education outside of school can be the most appropriate option. Elective Home Education (EHE) is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home or in some other way they desire, instead of sending them to school full-time. Parents can choose to engage private tutors or other adults, or use online tuition, to assist in providing a suitable education, but there is no requirement to do so. The education can take place in settings outside the family home. However there are no guarantees that these providers or settings are regulated. Ofsted has no role in the oversight of education received by individual children who are educated at home.

EHE can be a parental choice based on factors including: (a) the specific special needs of the child; or (b) the accessibility of a “Good” school / the facilities and quality of schools within reasonable proximity. A more complete list is included in Note F-2.

Legally parents of “every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable - (a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs they may have” (Note F-3). There is no legal definition of “full-time” in terms of education at home (or at school) so home-educating parents can dispense with formality like timetables, fixed school days and even terms. “Efficient” and “suitable” education are not legally defined which means that home-educating parents are not following the National Curriculum, formally assessing the progress of their child or preparing them for exams. Indeed, home educating parents are not legally required to do any of the things listed in Note F-4 .

Further information on Elective home education including guidance documents for both parents and Local Authorities is available at: Elective Home Education.

EHE in the 2022/23 academic year

In Autumn 2022 the Department for Education (DfE) collected information on the number of EHE children from Local Authorities for the first time. This was a voluntary data collection done at Upper Tier Local Authority (UTLA), which is equivalent to counties and unitary authorities. The data collected referred to the number of children at a specific point in time on the census day. The exercise was repeated for the Spring 2023 term, and this dataset was the source for our analysis, because the dataset is more complete than for Autumn 2022 (Note F-5). The Spring 2023 census day was Thursday 19 January 2023. DfE intends to collect data on a termly basis during the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years.

On the census day in Spring 2023, there were 15,700 EHE pupils in Predominantly Rural areas and 44,800 in Predominantly Urban areas (Figure F-1). In Urban with Significant Rural (USR) areas there was 21,000 EHE pupils. Three Predominantly Rural Authorities did not return data in Spring 2023 (Note F-5). So, on average there were 870 EHE pupils in Predominantly Rural areas, but as Table F-1 shows there were 5 Predominantly Rural areas with at least 1,300 EHE pupils. For comparison, in Predominantly Urban areas the mean number of EHE pupils on census day

was 430 and again there were 5 UTLAs with at least 1,300 EHE pupils (Table F-2). For Predominantly Rural areas 75% of them had at least 500 EHE pupils whereas for Predominantly Urban areas at least 75% had less than 480 EHE pupils.

Figure F-1: Bar chart showing the number of Elective Home Education (EHE) pupils on 19 Jan 2023, by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification.
This chart includes only those Authorities who returned information (Note F-5)

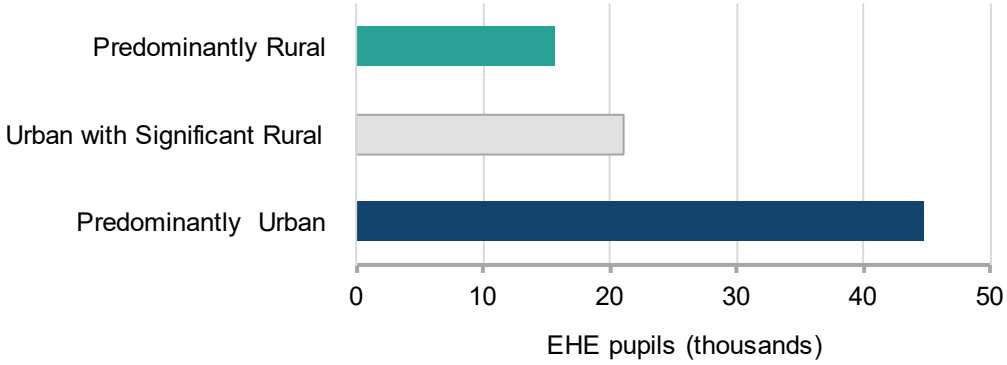


Table F-1: The 5 Predominantly Rural areas with the most EHE pupils on 19 Jan 2023 (Note F-5, Note F-16)

Predominantly Rural area	Number of EHE pupils
Norfolk	2,040
Devon	1,910
Lincolnshire	1,470
Cambridgeshire	1,440
Suffolk	1,300

Table F-2: The 5 Predominantly Urban areas with the most EHE pupils on 19 Jan 2023 (Note F-5, Note F-16)

Predominantly Urban area	Number of EHE pupils
Birmingham	2,440
Hertfordshire	2,020
Lancashire	1,990
Surrey	1,790
West Sussex	1,470

To assess the relative differences between Authorities we have related the absolute numbers to the number of available school places (school capacity). In May 2022 there was approximately 1.5 million (primary and secondary) school places in Predominantly Rural areas and in Predominantly Urban areas there was 5.4 million places (Note F-6). Using the school capacities for just those Authorities that returned information on EHE pupils shows that there were proportionally more EHE pupils in Predominantly Rural areas than there were in Predominantly Urban areas (Figure F-2). In Predominantly Rural areas the EHE pupils were equivalent to 1.2% of school places in Predominantly Rural areas. Whereas in Predominantly Urban areas the EHE pupils were equivalent to 0.9% of school places in Predominantly Urban areas. For the Urban with Significant Rural (USR) areas the EHE pupils were equivalent to 1.1% of school places in these areas

Now when we consider the five Predominantly Rural areas with the highest proportion of EHE pupils (Table F-1) we see that three of them (Devon, Norfolk, and Cambridgeshire) were also amongst the five with the most EHE pupils. But the Authority with the highest proportion of EHE pupils by quite a margin is the Isle of Wight, where EHE pupils are equivalent to 2.8% of the total school capacity on the Island. Box F-1 covers EHE on the Isle of Wight in more detail.

Box F-1: Why is the proportion of EHE pupils so much higher on the Isle of Wight?

One potential reason is educational reform on the Isle of Wight. In 2008, the Isle of Wight Council decided to switch from a three-tier school system (Note F-7) into a two-tier system and in the process phased out middle schools on the island. These reforms left the island with 48 Local Authority maintained schools or academies (Note F-8). The primary schools are distributed across the island, but this is not the case for secondary schools. There are no secondary schools in the west of the island meaning that pupils now must travel into Newport from age 11, a journey that could take at least an hour by public bus. Prior to 2011 these pupils could have attended the West Wight Middle School until they were 13 or 14. The lack of easy access to secondary schools in parts of the island will have prompted some parents to opt for EHE. This lack of a secondary school is, of course, not unique to the Isle of Wight; but because this Local Authority has only 18,600 school places (compared to an average of 77,700 for the other 17 Predominantly Rural authorities) the impact of part of a territory having no secondary school is clear from the figures.

In Predominantly Urban areas, the Authorities with the highest proportion of EHE pupils (Table F-4) are all different to the 5 Authorities with the most EHE pupils in absolute terms. For the Urban with Significant Rural areas, Gloucestershire has the highest proportion of EHE pupils (1.5%) and Kent has the highest number of EHE pupils in absolute terms (3,000).

Figure F-2: Bar chart showing Elective Home Education (EHE) pupils on 19 Jan 2023 as a percentage of the total school capacity by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, This chart includes only those Authorities who returned information (Note F-5, Note F-6)

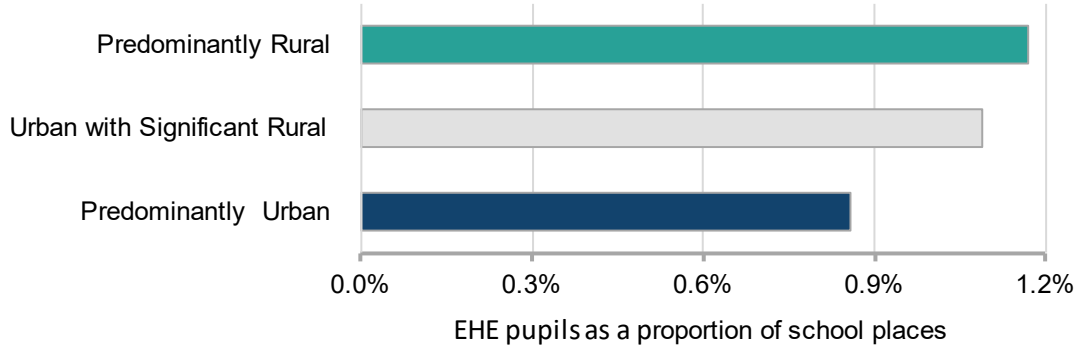


Table F-3: The 5 Predominantly Rural areas with the highest proportion of EHE pupils on 19 Jan 2023 (Note F-5, Note F-16)

Predominantly Rural area	Proportion of EHE pupils
Isle of Wight	2.8%
Devon	1.7%
Norfolk	1.5%
Cambridgeshire	1.4%
Shropshire	1.4%

Table F-4: The 5 Predominantly Urban areas with the highest proportion of EHE pupils on 19 Jan 2023 (Note F-5, Note F-16)

Predominantly Urban area	Proportion of EHE pupils
Blackpool	1.8%
Torbay	1.6%
Peterborough	1.5%
Southend-on-Sea	1.5%
Barnsley	1.5%

Special educational needs (SEN)

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can affect a child's (or a young person's) ability to learn. They can affect several aspects of the school life, including their:

- behaviour or ability to socialise, for example they struggle to make friends;
- reading and writing, for example because they have dyslexia;
- ability to understand things;
- concentration levels, for example because they have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); and
- physical ability.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities can get special educational needs (SEN) support at their school or college. By talking to the teacher or SEN co-ordinator a child can access additional support such as those things mentioned in Note F-9.

Education, health and care (EHC) plans are for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through SEN support. EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs. When requested (Note F-10), the Local Authority will carry out an assessment to determine whether the child or young person needs an EHC plan.

The Department for Education produce Special educational needs in England which combines information from the school census (state-funded schools), school level annual school census (independent schools) and general hospital school census on pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Our secondary analysis using this data focuses on SEN in schools, including EHC plans; those interested in SEN for all young people need to consult the Education and health care plans publication in Note F-11.

We use data for the 2022/23 academic year from the dataset called Pupils in all schools, by type of SEN provision - including independent schools and general hospital schools - 2016 to 2023 (Note F-12). The finest level of detail available from the dataset is Upper Tier Local Authority and unless otherwise specified we are including all schools in the analysis.

We use data for the 2022/23 academic year from the dataset called Pupils in all schools, by type of SEN provision - including independent schools and general hospital schools - 2016 to 2023 (Note F-12). Education provision is, and hence the statistics produced by the Department for Education are, done at Upper Tier Local Authority level and these are equivalent to counties and unitary authorities. Therefore, this is the finest level of detail available from the dataset; but from this point forwards they will simply be referred to as Local Authorities or areas. Unless otherwise specified we are including all schools in the analysis.

Some children need more support than offered under SEN and have an EHC plan. In Predominantly Rural areas there were 64,400 pupils with an EHC in schools in the 2022/23 academic year (Table F-5). These children plus those with SEN support but no EHC give a total of 263,000 pupils with special education needs in Predominantly Rural areas in 2022/23. In Predominantly Rural areas 4.5% of the pupils have an EHC plan (Figure F-5). The proportion of pupils with an EHC plans was slightly higher in Predominantly Rural areas than it was in either Predominantly Urban areas (4.3%) or in Urban with Significant Rural areas (4.2%).

Figure F-3: Bar chart showing the number of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support only in England by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, 2022/23 academic year

The numbers do not include children with EHC plans. (Note F-12)

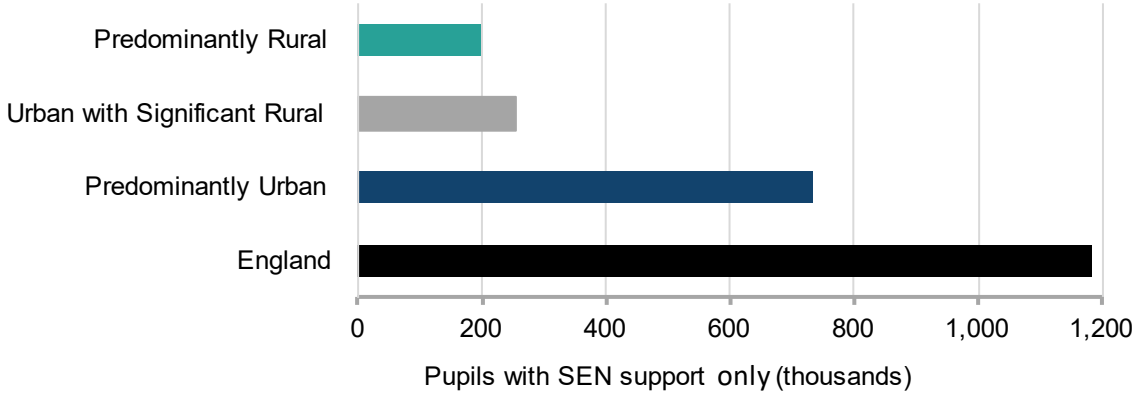


Figure F-4: Bar chart showing the proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support only in England by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, 2022/23 academic year

The proportions do not include children with EHC plans (Note F-12).

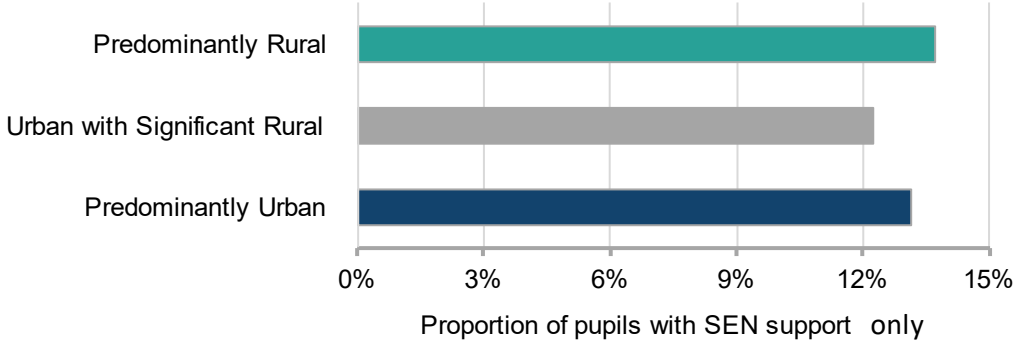
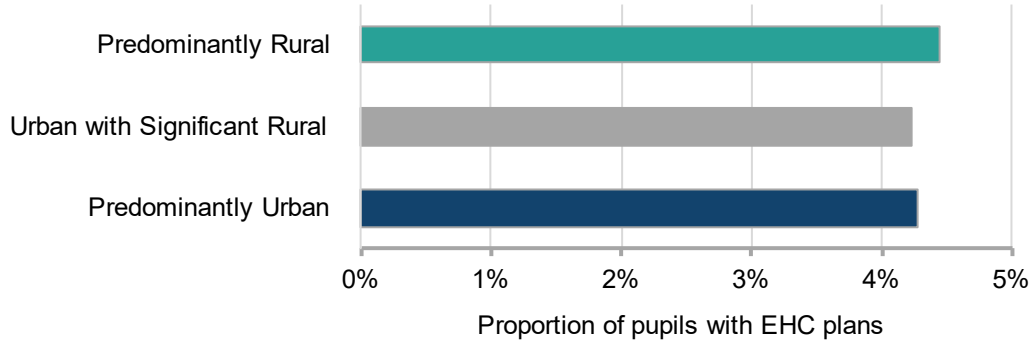


Table F-5: Number of pupils with special educational needs in England by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, 2022/23 academic year (Note F-16)

Rural-Urban Classification	Pupils with an EHC plan	Pupils with SEN support (and no EHC plan)	Total
Predominantly Rural	64,400	198,600	263,000
Urban with Significant Rural	87,400	253,100	340,500
Predominantly Urban	237,400	731,700	969,100
England	389,200	1,183,400	1,572,600

Figure F-5: Bar chart showing the proportion of pupils with an EHC plan in England by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, 2022/23 academic year
The proportions do not include children in receipt of SEN support only (Note F-12).



State funded special schools

All children in England between the ages of 5 and 16 are entitled to a free place at a state school. State schools receive funding through their Local Authority or directly from the government. There are state funded special schools to cater for children with special educational needs (SEN). Our analysis in this section is restricted to state funded special schools. Special schools with pupils aged 11 and older can specialise in 1 of the 4 areas of special educational needs:

1. communication and interaction;
2. cognition and learning;
3. social, emotional and mental health; or
4. sensory and physical needs.

Almost 150 thousand pupils attended a state funded special school in England in 2022/23 (Note F-13) and just over 20 thousand of these children were from Predominantly Rural areas (Figure F-6). Of those pupils attending state funded special schools, 99% of them had an EHC. Pupils attending state funded special schools accounted for 1.4% of pupils in Predominantly Rural areas (Figure F-7). Whereas in Predominantly Urban areas and Urban with Significant Rural areas, pupils attending state funded special schools accounted for 1.7% of pupils in those areas.

Figure F-6: Bar chart showing the number of pupils attending state funded special schools in England by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, 2022/23 academic year (Note F-13, Note F-15)

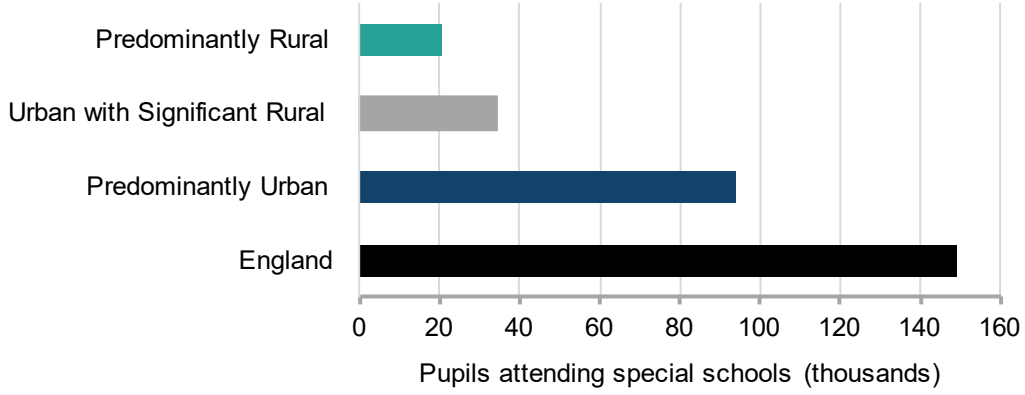
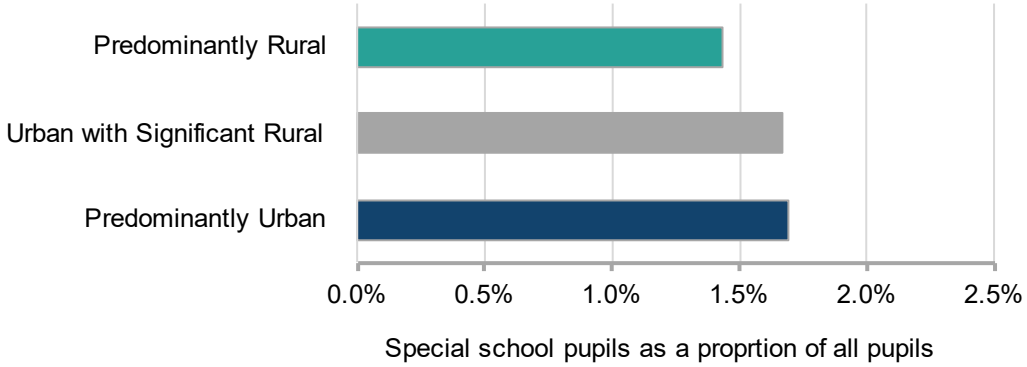


Figure F-7: Bar chart showing pupils attending state funded special schools as a proportion of all pupils by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, 2022/23 academic year (Note F-13, Note F-15)



Whilst almost all pupils at special schools have an EHC not all students with an EHC attended special schools in 2022/23, as is seen when Figure F-5 and Figure F-7 are compared. In Predominantly Rural areas 32% of the pupils with an EHC attended a state funded special school in the 2022/23 academic year (Figure F-8). In Predominantly Urban (and Urban with Significant Rural) areas 39% of pupils with an EHC attended a state funded special school in the 2022/23 academic year.

Figure F-8: Bar chart showing the proportion of pupils with an EHC who attended state funded special schools by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, 2022/23 academic year (Note F-13, Note F-15)

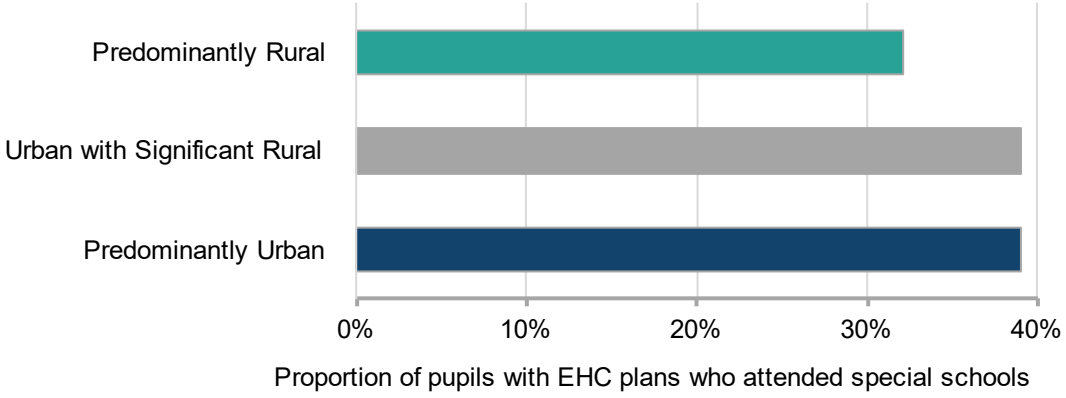


Figure F-8 shows the average proportion of pupils with an EHC who attended state funded special schools, there are some Local Authorities where the proportion is considerably higher. In County Durham 55% of children with an EHC attended a state funded special school in 2022/23; County Durham and Northumberland were the only two Predominantly Rural areas where more than half of the pupils with EHCs attended state funded special schools (Note F-14). By contrast there was 16 Predominantly Urban areas where more than half of the pupils with EHCs attended state funded special schools in 2022/23 (Table F-6). In percentage terms, this means 10% of Predominantly Rural Local Authorities have at least half of their children with EHCs attending state funded special schools compared to 15% of Predominantly Urban Local Authorities. The Predominantly Urban Local Authority with the highest proportion of pupils with an EHC attending a state funded special school was Blackpool.

Table F-6: Local Authorities where more than 50% of the pupils with an EHC attended a state funded special school in the 2022/23 academic year grouped by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification (Note F-13, Note F-15)

Predominantly Rural	Urban with Significant Rural	Predominantly Urban
County Durham, Northumberland	North Northamptonshire	Birmingham, Blackpool, Coventry, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Knowsley, Leeds, Leicester, Middlesbrough, Nottingham, Oldham, Rotherham, South Tyneside, Sunderland, Telford and Wrekin, Wirral

At the other end of the spectrum there are some Local Authorities where fewer than 20% of the pupils with an EHC attended a state funded special school in the 2022/23 academic year (Table F-7). Most of these are small areas with limited school capacities. The exceptions are Cornwall and Newham which both had over fifty thousand pupils in 2022/23. In Cornwall in 2022/23 there was 2,500 pupils with an EHC and only 18% of them attended state funded special schools, while in Newham there was 2,100 pupils with an EHC and only 10% of them attended state funded special schools.

To summarise, in 75% of Predominantly Rural areas fewer than 35% of pupils with EHCs were attending a special school in 2022/23 by contrast in 25% of Predominantly Urban areas 45% of pupils with EHCs were attending a special school in 2022/23.

Table F-7: Local Authorities where fewer than 20% of the pupils with an EHC attended a state funded special school in the 2022/23 academic year grouped by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification.
The Isles of Scilly and City of London do not have any state funded special schools. (Note F-13, Note F-15, Note F-15).

Predominantly Rural	Urban with Significant Rural	Predominantly Urban
Rutland, Cornwall, Isles of Scilly		Newham, Westminster, City of London

Alternative and specialist education provision explanatory notes

- **Note F-1**

A child becomes of compulsory school age from the first of the following dates (31 August, 31 December or 31 March) which occurs after she or he becomes five years old (or if the fifth birthday falls on one of those dates, on that day). The child remains so until the last Friday of June in the academic year in which she or he becomes sixteen.

- **Note F-2**

In Elective home education: guidance for parents, the Department for Education (DfE) list a range of reasons why parents might be considering EHE on page 10. This list, as ordered in the DfE publication, is as follows: (1) Ideological or philosophical views which you feel would be better promoted through education at home;

(2) Religious or cultural beliefs; (3) Dissatisfaction with the school system; (4) Distance to a local school; (5) Bullying; (6) As a short term intervention for a particular reason; (7) The child's unwillingness or inability to go to school; (8) Special educational needs not being met within the school system; and (9) Health reasons, particularly mental health.

- **Note F-3**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents.

- **Note F-4**

As detailed in Elective home education: guidance for parents, there are no legal requirements for parents educating a child at home to do any of the following: (1) acquire specific qualifications for the task; (2) have premises equipped to any particular standard; (3) aim for the child to acquire any specific qualifications; (4) teach the National Curriculum; (5) provide a 'broad and balanced' curriculum; (6) make detailed lesson plans in advance; (7) give formal lessons; (8) mark work done by the child; (9) formally assess progress, or set development objectives; (10) reproduce school type peer group socialisation; (11) match school-based, age-specific standards.

- **Note F-5**

Education provision is, and hence the statistics produced by the Department for Education (DfE) are, done at Upper Tier Local Authority level and that these are counties and unitary authorities. DfE undertook a voluntary data collection exercise, 95% of Authorities responded in the Spring term compared to 93% in the Autumn term. For the Spring term the 2023 census day was Thursday 19 January 2023.
Cornwall, Somerset and the Isles of Scilly were the 3 Predominantly Rural Authorities that did not return data on the number of EHE students on census day in Spring 2023.
Bolton, Brent, City of London, Hackney and Southampton were the 5 Predominantly Urban Authorities that did not return data on the number of EHE students on census day in Spring 2023.The numbers in Figure F-1 have not been uprated to account for these missing Authorities.

- **Note F-6**

We calculate the number of school places available in 2022 from using data from the Annual School Capacity (SCAP) survey published by the Department for Education (DfE). This survey includes mainstream state schools with capacity in any of the year groups from reception to year 11, on 1 May. A Table showing the total number of school places, including a primary and secondary school split for Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas is available in the Education, Qualifications and Training tables.
The proportions presented in Figure F-2 are relative to the overall capacity for those Authorities who returned data not the total capacity in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas.

- **Note F-7**

In a three-tier school system, children begin their compulsory education in a first school or lower school where they stay up to the age of 8 or 9. Children then transfer to a middle school, where they stay up until the age of 13 or 14. Children then complete the rest of their compulsory education to an upper school or high school.

- **Note F-8**

The 48 Local Authority maintained schools or academies on the Isle of Wight are made up as follows:

- 38 primary schools for pupils aged 4 to 11years;
- six secondary schools for pupils aged 11 to 19 years;
- one all-through school for pupils aged 4 to 16 years;
- two mixed-sex special schools. One for primary aged pupils and one for secondary aged and sixth form pupils; and
- one Pupil Referral Unit for pupils aged 11 to 16 years.

https://www.iow.gov.uk/schools-and-education/schools/about-island-schools/

- **Note F-9**

Teachers or the SEN co-ordinator can arrange SEN support for a child including:

- a special learning programme;

- extra help from a teacher or assistant;
- to work in a smaller group;
- observation in class or at break;
- help taking part in class activities;
- extra encouragement in their learning, for example to ask questions or to try something they find difficult;
- help communicating with other children; and
- support with physical or personal care difficulties, for example eating, getting around school safely or using the toilet.

- **Note F-10**

An assessment can be requested by parents for their child or the young person themselves can request it if they are aged 16 to 25. A request can also be made by a responsible adult who thinks an assessment may be necessary, including doctors, health visitors and teachers.

- **Note F-11**

Local Authority data on EHC plans is published in the Education, health and care plans publication. This publication covers all children and young people up to age 25 with EHC plans. It therefore includes young people and children in non-maintained early years provision, further education, home education or not in education, employment or training. All of these groups are excluded from Special educational needs in England.

- **Note F-12**

Special educational needs source data: Pupils in all schools, by type of SEN provision - including independent schools and general hospital schools - 2016 to 2023
This dataset offers the number of pupils in state-funded nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, non-maintained special schools, AP schools and independent schools by SEN provision, type of need and school type at Upper Tier Local Authority level for each academic year over the period 2015/16 to 2022/23.

- **Note F-13**

The analysis on special schools only includes state funded special schools. In some Local Authorities there are non-maintained special schools which are attended by around four thousand children with EHC plans across England. These children are not included in our special schools analyses.

- **Note F-14**

There are tables showing (a) the number of children with and EHC plan, and (b) the proportion of children with an EHC plan that attended a state funded special school, in each Upper Tier Local Authority during the 2022/23 academic year in the Education, Qualifications and Training tables.

- **Note F-15**

The Isles of Scilly are served by the Five Islands Academy which is an all-through school catering for pupils from Reception to Year 11 (age 16). There are small primary bases on St Agnes, St Martin's and Tresco and a large base located on St Mary's for both primary and secondary students.
The City of London has one state funded primary school, The Aldgate School. The secondary schools within the boundaries of this Local Authority are independent (fee paying) schools.
Therefore, neither of these Local Authorities have a state funded special school.

- **Note F-16**

The numeric tables in Section E have been rounded to an appropriate level for presentation purposes. Table F-1 and Table F-2 are rounded to the nearest 10 pupils. Table F-3 and Table F-4 are rounded to the nearest 0.1%. Table F-5, is rounded to the nearest 100 pupils, the totals in this table might not sum due to this rounding.

G. Progression to higher education

Students from Predominantly Rural areas were less likely to progress onto a university degree than students from Predominantly Urban areas; but for those students from Predominantly Rural that do progress they were marginally more likely to go to a top-class university than students from Predominantly Urban areas.

Summary

Progression to higher education statistics measure the percentage of level 3 pupils (those that studied A levels or an equivalent qualification) who continued 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. Progression onto higher education is important because higher education establishments are usually in Urban areas and therefore Rural students frequently need to leave their Rural home to attend a university.

Students undertaking a level 3 course in 2019/20 were less likely to progress onto a level 4 or higher course within the next 2 years if they lived in a Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituency (65.6% progressed) than if they lived in a Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituency (69.0% progressed). In most cases students choose a degree, thus 61.2% of the cohort living in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies progressed onto a degree compared to 64.8% of those living in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. A Russell Group University can be used as a proxy for progression to a top-class university, 17.8% of students from Predominantly Rural areas progressed to a Russell Group University compared to 17.5% for students from Predominantly Urban areas.

For the cohorts from 2015/16 to 2019/20 the progression onto a degree (level 6) course was 3.6 to 4.5 percentage points lower for level 3 students living in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies than for those living in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. However, for the same 5 cohorts the progression onto a degree at a Russell Group University was 0.2 to 0.8 percentage points higher for level 3 students living in Predominantly Rural areas than for those living in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies.

DfE calculate a progression (to university) score based on prior student attainment, positive scores indicate above expected progression to university and negative scores indicate below expected progression to universities. For the 2019/20 cohort the average progression score for students from Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies was -5.8 which is well below the level expected based on the academic of these students from Rural areas. Whereas in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies the average progression score was just above the level expected for the academic potential of the students (+1.4). Only 9 Predominantly Rural areas (8% of Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies) had a positive progression score for the 2019/20 cohort of level 3 students compared to 54% of Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies.

Defining progression to higher education

Previously in the Digest we considered full and part time entrants to higher education using the rate per 1,000 people. For 2024 we are switching to using Progression to higher education or training published by the Department for Education as our preferred metric for tracking the participation of people from Rural areas in higher education.

Progression to higher education statistics measure the percentage of level 3 pupils (those that studied A levels or an equivalent qualification) who continued 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 (Note G-1).

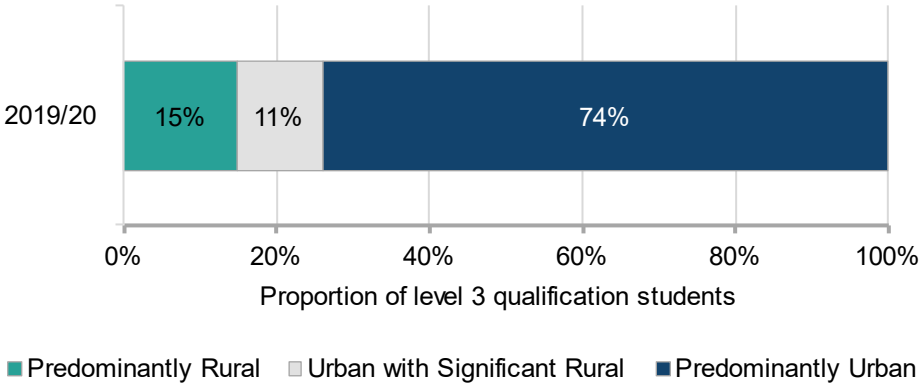
The most recent data reports on students who completed 16 to 18 study in the 2019/20 academic year and identifies their education and/or apprenticeship destinations in the two years following their last attendance at a 16 to 18 institution (Note G-2). The two-year destination window (rather than one) is designed to better report students that take gap years and similar breaks. The latest data are for the 2019/20 cohort and cover a period of disruption caused to the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic when estimated grade could have impacted upon progression rates (Note G-3). Within this 2-year progression window students must spend at least 6 months undertaking the level 4 or higher qualification for it to count as progression to higher education (Note G-4).

Progression to higher education for the 2019/20 cohort

The most recent higher education progression data are for students who completed 16 to 18 study in the 2019/20 academic year. This was a cohort of over 360,000 students of which around 54,000 lived in a Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituency (Note G-6). Students in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies accounted for 15% of the 2019/20 cohort (Figure G-1).

Figure G-1: A horizontal stacked bar chart showing the proportion of students studying a level 3 qualification in the 2019/20 academic year by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification (Note G-6)

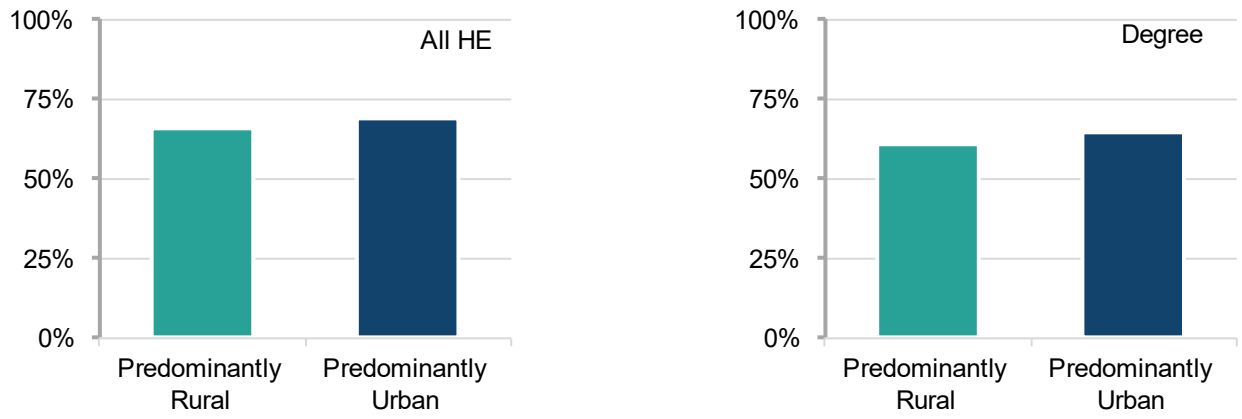
The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the cluster of bars.



Overall in England, 68% of the 2019/20 level 3 cohort progressed onto a sustained level 4 or higher qualification (Progression to higher education or training). Most of these students progressed to a degree (level 6 qualification) with smaller proportions undertaking apprenticeship at level 4 or higher (Note G-7) or other level 4 and 5 qualifications. Students undertaking a level 3 course in 2019/20 were less likely to progress onto a level 4 or higher course within the next 2

years if they lived in a Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituency than if they lived in a Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituency (Figure G-2 left-hand chart). For students living in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies 65.6% of the 2019/20 level 3 cohort progressed onto a sustained level 4 or higher qualification, whereas 69.0% of the cohort living in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies made a sustained transition to higher education. When we only considered progression to a university degree course (i.e. not considering apprenticeships and level 4 and 5 qualifications), then we see that a smaller proportion of the cohort progressed onto a degree in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas (Figure G-2 right-hand chart). Overall, 61.2% of the cohort living in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies progressed onto a degree compared to 64.8% of those living in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. The difference in the heights of the paired Rural (and Urban) columns in Figure G-2 shows that around 4% of the cohort progressed onto either apprenticeships or level 4/5 qualifications rather than onto a university degree.

Figure G-2: Bar charts showing the proportion of students studying a level 3 qualification in the 2019/20 academic year that progressed to higher education within the following 2 years by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification (Note G-6)
The left-hand chart includes progression to all types of higher education (HE) and the right-hand chart shows progression to degree courses, which are level 6 courses.



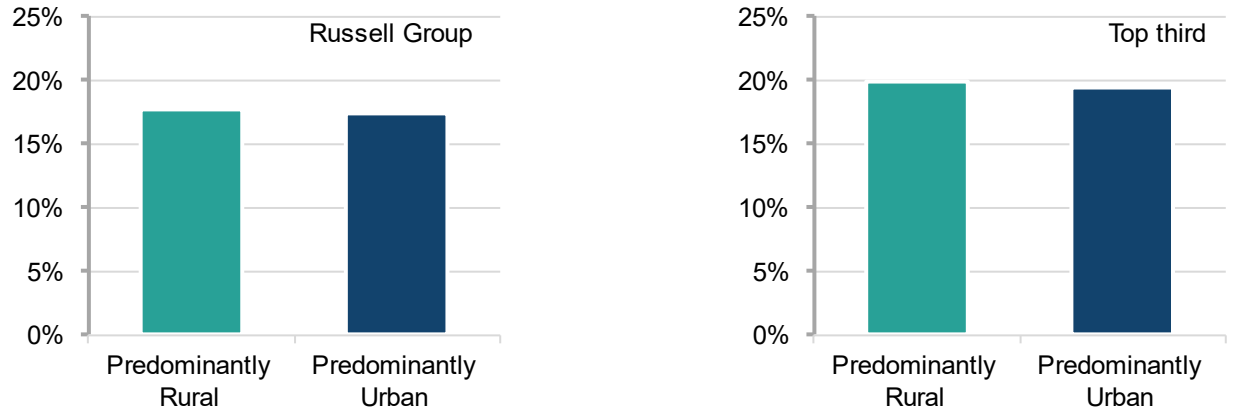
Universities have differing standards and reputations; and these do have some impact upon the future job prospects of the students attending them. Oxford and Cambridge (Oxbridge) have long been considered the elite universities in the UK, but only 1% of the 2019/20 level 3 cohort progressed onto these exclusive institutions. Therefore, instead we are going to use progression to a Russell Group University (with includes Oxbridge, Note G-8) as a proxy for progression to a top-class university. Overall, 17.7% of the 2019/20 level 3 cohort progressed onto a Russell Group University and there was a marginally greater progression rate amongst the students living in Predominantly Rural areas than for those living in Predominantly Urban areas (Figure G-3 – left hand chart). The progression rates were 17.8% for students from Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies and 17.5% for students from Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies. Similarly for top third universities (Figure G-3 – right hand chart), the progression rate of 19.9% from students from Predominantly Rural areas was marginally higher than the progression rate of 19.5% for Predominantly Urban areas.

In summary, for the 2019/20 level 3 cohort, students from Predominantly Rural areas were less likely to progress onto a university degree than students from Predominantly Urban areas, but for those students from Predominantly Rural areas that do progress they were marginally more likely to go to a top-class university than students from Predominantly Urban areas. Universities and

other higher education establishments are mainly sited in Urban areas in England. For many young people in Rural areas there will be a limited choice of establishments within commutable distance of the family home. Once course choice is factored in, then it is likely that a student living in a Rural area will need to leave their local Rural area and move to an Urban one to study at a university. Removing proximity perhaps makes the choice for a Rural student more about the course, the university and their academic ability than about the cost of attending. By contrast for some students from Urban areas, perhaps the cost savings and convenience from remaining at home could sway their choice and lead to them attending a local university even if it is one of a lower reputation and the student had achieved grades allowing entrance to one of the more prestigious institutions.

Figure G-3: Bar charts showing the proportion of students studying a level 3 qualification in the 2019/20 academic year that progressed onto a degree at a top-class university within the following 2 years by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification (Note G-6, Note G-8, Note G-9)

The left-hand chart includes progression to a Russell Group University and the right-hand chart shows progression any top-third university.



Progression to higher education for the cohorts from 2015/16 to 2019/20

Looking at progression rates for a single year in isolation does not allow determination of whether this one year is a typical year or an unusual year. The 2019/20 cohort completed their level 3 studies under lockdown conditions and therefore received predicted rather than actual grades. This has the potential to affect progression rates (Note G-3). So we have constructed a time-series using the 5 most recent cohorts (Table G-1).

Table G-1: The 5 level 3 cohorts used in our analysis and the destination period for each cohort (Note G-1, Note G-2, Note G-3, and Note G-4)

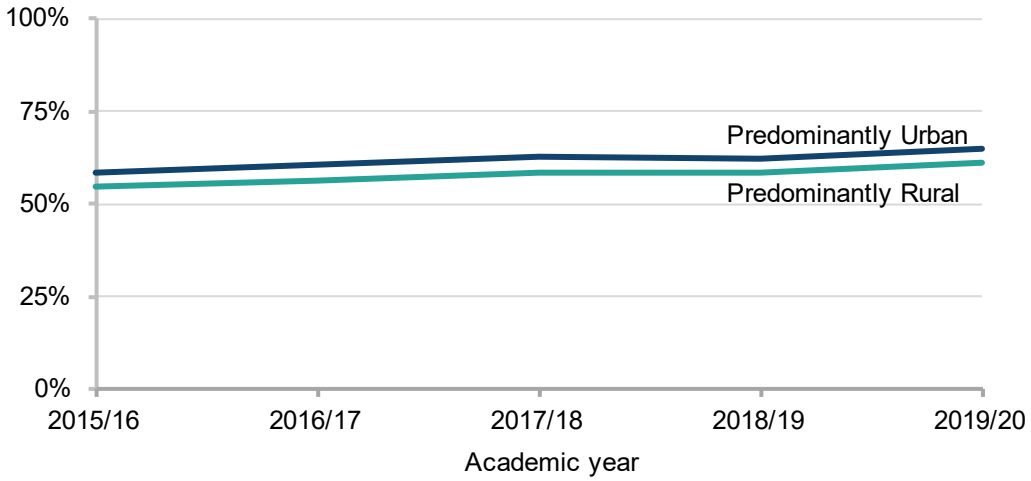
Level 3 Cohort	Destination activity up to
2015-16	Summer 2018
2016-17	Summer 2019
2017-18	Summer 2020
2018-19	Summer 2021
2019-20	Summer 2022

For the cohorts from 2015/16 to 2019/20 the progression onto a degree (level 6) course was lower for level 3 students living in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies than for those living

in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies (Figure G-4). In 2015/16 the progression rate from level 3 through to a degree was 54.8% in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies and 58.5% in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies – a difference of 3.7 percentage points. Progression rates rose in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas for both the 2016/17 and 2017/18 cohorts before levelling off in 2018/19 at 58.4% in Predominantly Rural and 62.5% in Predominantly Urban areas. For these 3 cohorts, the progression rates through to degrees remained 4.1 to 4.5 percentage points lower in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.

When we compare the 2018/19 and 2019/20 cohorts, we see a higher rate of progression for the later cohort in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas and a smaller difference between the progression rates (it was only 3.6% lower for students from Predominantly Rural areas). In other words, the progression rate improved by more (2.8 percentage points) for students from Predominantly Rural areas than for students from Predominantly Urban areas (2.3 percentage points). It is unclear how much of this observed change is purely down to estimated grades during the COVID-19 pandemic (Note G-4).

Figure G-4: Line chart showing the proportion of students studying a level 3 qualification that progressed onto a university degree (level 6 qualification) within the following 2 years by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification for the level 3 cohorts from the academic years 2015/16 to 2019/20 (Note G-10)



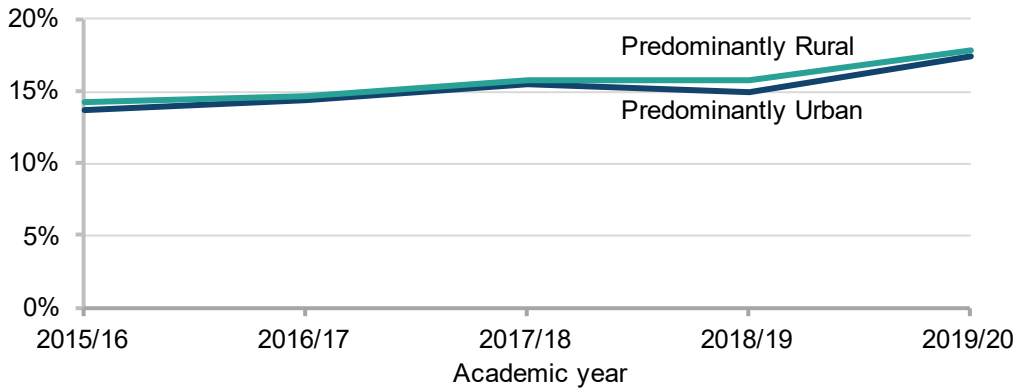
For the cohorts from 2015/16 to 2019/20 the progression to a top-class university was marginally higher for level 3 students living in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies than for those living in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies (Figure G-5). In 2015/16 this progression rate was 14.2% in Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies and 13.7% in Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies – a difference of 0.5 percentage points. Progression rates rose in Predominantly Rural areas for both the 2016/17 and 2017/18 cohorts before levelling off in 2018/19 at 15.8%, which was 0.8 percentage points higher than the progression rate for students from that cohort who lived in Predominantly Urban areas.

When we compare the 2018/19 and 2019/20 cohorts, we see a higher rate of progression for the later cohort in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas and a smaller difference between the progression rates. The progression rate improved by less (2.0 percentage points) for students from Predominantly Rural areas than for students from Predominantly Urban areas (2.5 percentage points). A 2.0 percentage point increase on the proportion of level 3 students from Predominantly Rural areas progressing to a top-class university is the equivalent of a 12.8%

increase. This supports a DfE view that predicted grades in 2019/20 led to higher levels of acceptance at universities with higher entrance requirements and hence a greater level of progression to Russel Group universities from students living in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas in 2019/20 (Note G-4).

Figure G-5: Line chart showing the proportion of students studying a level 3 qualification that progressed onto a degree (level 6 qualification) at a top-class university within the following 2 years by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification for the level 3 cohorts from the academic years 2015/16 to 2019/20 (Note G-10)

We have defined a top-class university as a Russell Group University (Note G-8) because the definition of a top third university is not consistent over our analysis period (Note G-9).



What is the added value progression score?

The probability of a student progressing to a level 4 or higher destination is strongly related to their prior attainment at key stage 4 (GCSE and equivalents) and the qualification type they study at 16 to 18. An institution with an intake of high prior-attainment pupils is likely to have a higher proportion of this intake progressing to higher education than an institution with an intake of low prior-attainment pupils. An added-value progression score was developed to provide an indication as to how institutions have performed once prior attainment and qualification types are taken into account.

Note G-5 explains how the progression score is calculated. For the purposes of interpretation, the important thing to note is that a progression score of zero shows that progression for that group was as expected according to the national average for students with similar prior attainment. Positive scores indicate above expected progression rates and negative scores indicate below expected progression rates.

Analysis of the added value progression score

For the 2019/20 cohort the average progression score for students from Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies was -5.82, a value that is very different to the average of +1.35 for students from Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies (Figure G-6). This means that progression is well below the level expected in Predominantly Rural areas, and just above the level expected in Predominantly Urban areas. Specifically, this score of almost -6 represents an almost six percentage point decrease on progression into level 4 or higher destinations for students from Predominantly Rural areas when compared to similar students nationally. When analysing the data for Upper Tier Local Authorities, DfE found that Predominantly Rural Local Authorities had an average a score of -5.7 and Predominantly Urban Local Authorities had an average score of +2.9.

We have used the Parliamentary Constituency level data throughout this section in preference to Upper Tier Local Authority data because it offers a finer spatial resolution and therefore a better distinction between Rural and Urban areas.

Figure G-6: Bar chart showing the progression score for the 2019/20 cohort by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification (Note G-5)

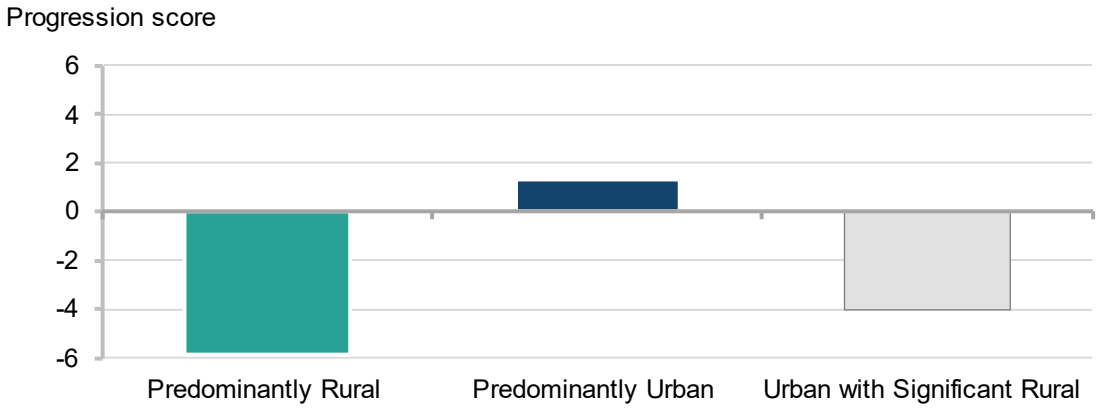
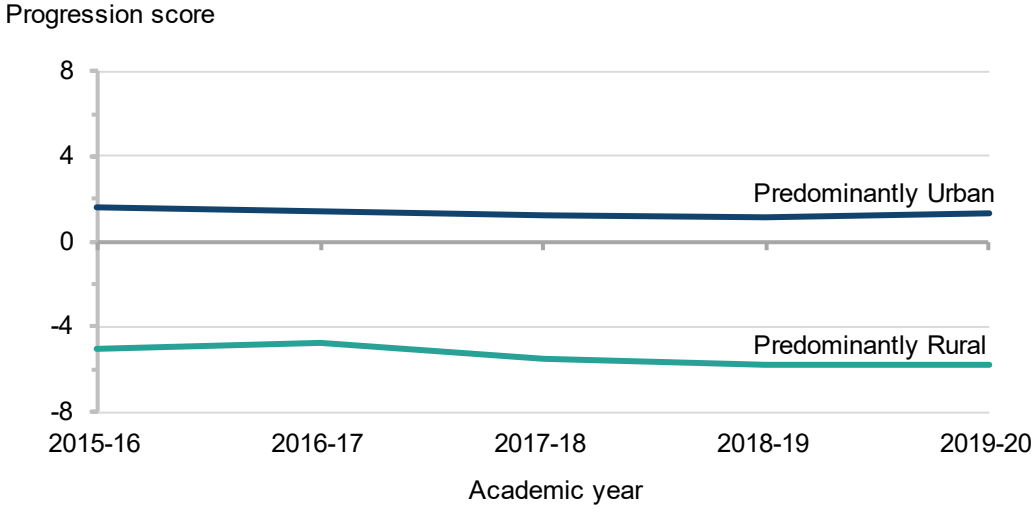


Figure G-7 shows that the large difference in the progression scores seen for the 2019/20 cohort was not a one off. For all 5 cohorts considered in our analysis, the progression score for students from Predominantly Rural areas was between -4.7 and -5.8. Whilst for students from Predominantly Urban areas the average progression scores were between 1.1 and 1.6. These scores suggest that in Predominantly Rural areas the decision of whether or not to progress to higher education is about more than academic ability. It is too simplistic to say that there are barriers to progression for students in Rural areas. For some the distance they have to move from friends and family or the costs involved in going to university might be seen as a barrier, but for others there might be less of an expectation or culture of progressing to university within their family and peer group.

Irrespective of the reasons for it, it is clear that there are proportionally more students in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas who had the academic potential to attend university but do not do so.

Figure G-7: Line chart showing the progression score for the cohorts from 2015/16 to 2019/20 by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification (Note G-5)



Whilst the average progression score for Predominantly Rural areas is negative there was a small number of Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies with a positive progression score for the 2019/20 cohort. Table G-2 shows the 9 Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies that had a positive progression score for the 2019/20 cohort of level 3 students. The Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituency with the highest progression score was Louth and Horncastle in Lincolnshire, which scored 5. This means that in Louth and Horncastle there was a five percentage point difference on progression into level 4 or higher destinations for level 3 students when compared to similar students nationally. The second and third best performing areas were Richmond in North Yorkshire and Kenilworth and Southam (in Warwickshire) where there was a four percentage point difference on progression into level 4 or higher destinations when compared to similar students nationally.

Table G-2: The 9 Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies with a positive progression score and the proportion of the 2019/20 level 3 cohort who progressed onto a university degree and onto a Russell Group university (Note G-2, Note G-3, Note G-4, Note G-5, Note G-6, Note G-8)

Region	Parliamentary Constituency	Progression score	Proportion progressing onto a degree	Proportion progressing onto a Russell University
North West	Penrith and The Border	1	76%	25%
North West	Ribble Valley	1	83%	36%
Yorkshire and The Humber	East Yorkshire	2	76%	24%
Yorkshire and The Humber	Richmond (Yorks)	4	77%	26%
East Midlands	Louth and Horncastle	5	88%	35%
East Midlands	Rutland and Melton	1	80%	20%
East Midlands	South Northamptonshire	3	72%	15%
West Midlands	Kenilworth and Southam	4	81%	27%
South West	Devizes	2	75%	25%

Table G-2 also shows that a higher progression score does not necessarily correspond to a higher progression rate. Consider the Parliamentary Constituencies of ‘Rutland and Melton’ and ‘South Northamptonshire’ whose boundaries are within about 25 miles of each other. South Northamptonshire has a higher progression score, but a lower proportion of level 3 students progressing on to a university degree. In other words, based on their GCSE performances a lot more progression was expected from the students in Rutland and Melton compared to the students in South Northamptonshire.

The 9 Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies that are shown in Table G-2 represent just 8% of Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies, so there are only 8% of Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies where progression is above the expected value for the academic ability of the students. By contrast there were 182 Predominantly Urban

Parliamentary Constituencies where the progression score was above zero. So, 54% of Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies had progression rates to higher education above their expected values.

Looking at the other end of the spectrum, there were 9 Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies where the progression score was -15 or lower (Table G-3). Four of these Parliamentary Constituencies were in the East of England and 3 were in the South West. Box G-1 discusses the situation in the South West and shows via this case study how progression is about more than just the local availability of a good university.

Table G-3: The 9 Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies with a progression score of -15 or lower for the 2019/20 level 3 cohort.
The table also shows the proportion who progressed onto a university degree and onto a Russell Group university (Note G-2, Note G-3, Note G-4, Note G-5, Note G-6, Note G-8)

Region	Parliamentary Constituency	Progression score	Proportion progressing onto a degree	Proportion progressing onto a Russell University
North East	Bishop Auckland	-15	43%	11%
East of England	Harwich and North Essex	-20	29%	4%
East of England	North Norfolk	-22	50%	8%
East of England	West Suffolk	-15	47%	6%
East of England	Witham	-17	45%	2%
South East	Lewes	-17	29%	4%
South West	Newton Abbot	-18	52%	12%
South West	St Ives	-16	49%	13%
South West	Yeovil	-21	25%	4%

The Predominantly Rural area with the lowest progression score for the 2018/19 level 3 cohort was North Norfolk. Aside from University of East Anglia in Norwich, universities are difficult to get to by public transport from this Parliamentary Constituency. Even when travelling by road the journey from this constituency to a university takes several hours because one would travel for 1 to 2 hours (depending on direction) before reaching a motorway or dual carriageway. Yeovil has the lowest proportion of the 2019/20 cohort progressing to a degree of any Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituency (25%), whilst Bristol South (24%) had the lowest proportion of the cohort progressing onto a degree course amongst the Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies.

There were 5 Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies where the progression score was -15 or lower (Table G-4). The Parliamentary Constituency with the lowest progression score amongst urban areas was North Swindon (-20). There was no geographical clustering for the Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies with progression scores of -15 or lower.

Box G-1: The lack of progression to higher education in the South West is not purely due to transport barriers

The lower level of University progression in the South West is not simply due to a lack of access to universities because geography and transport connections are creating a barrier.

A low progression score for St Ives might have been expected given its rather isolated location. Whilst Falmouth University and the Penryn campus of Exeter University are close to St Ives as the crow flies, commuting to them from St Ives would be a substantial journey. For a student with access to a car, the journey would be around 1 hour. However, for those needing to rely on public transport, the journey would be at least double that and involve multiple connections.

Whilst availability of universities might be a factor for the low progression score for St Ives, it is much harder to make such a case for Newton Abbott. Newton Abbott is within about 20 miles of Exeter, a journey that can take as little as 20 minutes on the regular direct train service. Whilst in the opposite direction Plymouth is just over 30 miles away and can be commuted to in 35 to 40 minutes by a direct and regular train. Should neither of these Universities offer the course desired, or the student wants the experience of leaving home whilst still being within easy reach of friends and family, then Bristol is as little as 80 minutes away by direct train and offers both Bristol University and the University of the West of England.

Whilst the proportion of students progressing to a degree is higher in Newton Abbot than in St Ives (Table G-3), the progression score is lower meaning that more students with university potential at Key Stage 4 (GCSE and equivalent) were not progressing onto a degree in Newton Abbot than St Ives despite Newton Abbot having much better access to universities.

Table G-4: The 5 Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies with a progression score of -15 or lower for the 2019/20 level 3 cohort.
The table also shows the proportion who progressed onto a university degree and onto a Russell Group university (Note G-2, Note G-3, Note G-4, Note G-5, Note G-6, Note G-8)

Region	Parliamentary Constituency	Progression score	Proportion progressing onto a degree	Proportion progressing onto a Russell University
North East	Easington	-15	29%	5%
East Midlands	Ashfield	-18	52%	14%
East of England	South Basildon and East Thurrock	-15	49%	9%
South East	East Worthing and Shoreham	-17	53%	9%
South West	North Swindon	-20	40%	8%

Progression to higher education explanatory notes

- **Note G-1**

The cohort used for progress to higher education 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 2019/20, and focuses on activity during the two years after they last attended a 16 to 18 provider.

- **Note G-2**

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. The latest Progression to higher education or training publication prepared by the Department for Education (DfE) reports on students that completed their 16 to 18 study in summer 2020, and considers their destination activity up to summer 2022.

- **Note G-3**

The latest release covers the 2019/20 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 2019/20, with students more likely to achieve higher grades than in previous years. This led to more students being accepted to higher education 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.

- **Note G-4**

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.

- **Note G-5**

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, DfE 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.
Individual student scores are averaged at local authority level, parliamentary constituency level, national level, and for various characteristics.

- **Note G-6**

The 2019/20 Progression to higher education or training dataset at Parliamentary Constituency level is incomplete. The dataset contains only 531 of the 533 Parliamentary Constituencies in England, the

Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies of 'Barnsley East' and 'Stalybridge and Hyde' are missing from the dataset. Furthermore, there are 15 Parliamentary Constituencies where data are missing and they have been excluded from our analysis. Only one Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituency (North West Hampshire) had missing data. 11 Predominantly Urban and 3 Urban with Significant Rural Parliamentary Constituencies had missing data. Despite the missing data there was still at least 95% coverage for all 3 broad Rural Urban Classification categories, and 99% coverage in the case of Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies.

- **Note G-7**

More details on apprenticeships can be found in Section F Apprenticeships and on the job training.

- **Note G-8**

The Russell Group represents 24 leading UK universities. All offer worldclass teaching and research. It was set up as a professional, incorporated, organisation in 2007. Its universities teach a quarter of all undergraduate students, a third of all postgraduate students, more than a third of engineers, four out of five doctors and dentists, 50% of linguists, 58% of physical scientists and 63% of mathematicians.
The following list of institutions are included within the Russell group: University of Birmingham; University of Bristol; University of Cambridge; Cardiff University; Durham University; University of Edinburgh; University of Exeter; University of Glasgow; Imperial College London; Kings College London; University of Leeds; University of Liverpool; London School of economics and political science; University of Manchester; Newcastle University; University of Nottingham; University of Oxford; Queen Mary University of London; Queens university Belfast; University of Sheffield; University of Southampton; University College London; University of Warwick; and University of York.

- **Note G-9**

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.

- **Note G-10**

The Progression to higher education or training datasets at Parliamentary Constituency level are incomplete. The datasets for 2015/16 and 2016/17 contain all 533 Parliamentary Constituencies in England, but the 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 datasets do not include the Predominantly Urban Parliamentary Constituencies of 'Barnsley East' and 'Stalybridge and Hyde'. Across the 5-year analysis period there was 11 to 15 Parliamentary Constituencies with missing data resulting in them being excluded from our analysis in the years where they are missing. In 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 only one Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituency (North West Hampshire) had missing data, whilst in 2015/16 and 2016/17. North West Hampshire and Sedgefield were both missing. In general, the missing Parliamentary Constituencies are repeat offenders. There were 9 Parliamentary Constituencies that were missing in all 5 years and a further 9 that were missing in 2 to 4 years during the reference period. Despite the missing data there was still at least 95% coverage for all 3 broad Rural Urban Classification categories, and 99% coverage in the case of Predominantly Rural Parliamentary Constituencies.

H.Apprenticeships and on the job training

There were proportionally more apprenticeship starts in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas; this is largely driven by higher levels of Intermediate and Advanced-level apprenticeship starts for Males in Rural areas.

Summary

Apprentices are aged 16 or over and combine working with studying to gain skills and knowledge in a specific job. Apprenticeships are available at “Intermediate”, “Advanced” and “Higher” levels. Level 6 and 7 “Higher” apprenticeships are equivalent to a Bachelor’s or a Master’s degree respectively.

In academic year 2022/23, there were 79,000 apprenticeship starts amongst people living in Predominantly Rural areas and 210,000 starts amongst people living in Predominantly Urban areas. This means that relative to working age population there were more apprenticeship starts in Predominantly Rural areas (11 per 1,000 working population) than in Predominantly Urban areas (9 per 1,000 working population). This difference is largely driven by a higher rate of apprenticeship starts at “Intermediate” and “Advanced” levels in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas. When compared to 2021/22, there was a marginal increase in the start rate for “Higher” apprenticeships in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas.

For both Males and Females there were more apprenticeship starts in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas. There were more Male apprenticeship starts than Female apprenticeship starts in Predominantly Rural areas, but fewer in Predominantly Urban areas. In Predominantly Rural areas there were 12 Male apprenticeship starts per 1,000 Male working age population and 10 Female apprenticeship starts per 1,000 Female working age population and in Predominantly Urban areas there were 8 Male apprenticeship starts per 1,000 Male working age population and 9 Female apprenticeship starts per 1,000 Female working age population.

The most popular apprenticeship topic to start in 2022/23 in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas was ‘Health, Public Services and Care’ (around 30% of starts). The rate of starts per 1,000 working age population was: (a) substantially higher in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas for ‘Health, Public Services and Care’ and for ‘Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies’; and (b) substantially lower in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas for ‘Business, Administration and Law’. For all other topics there was little difference between the start rates in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. For all topics, the start rates were similar to 2021/22.

In 2021, 13.9% of workers in Predominantly Rural recently received on-the-job training compared with 14.9% of works in Predominantly Urban areas. For both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas this is the highest proportion of workers that have been involved in one-the-job training over the last decade. For workers in Predominantly Rural areas the proportion who received recent training was 1.7 percentage points higher in 2021 than in 2020. For workers in Predominantly Urban areas the proportion was 1.5 percentage points higher in 2021 than in 2020.

This analysis of apprenticeship starts is based on where the apprentice live, not where they undertake the work-based training.

About Apprenticeships

Apprentices are aged 16 or over and combine working with studying to gain skills and knowledge in a specific job. They can be new or current employees and are paid at least the minimum wage. As of May 2017, reforms were made to how apprenticeship funding works, including the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and apprenticeship service. The profile of apprenticeship starts changed significantly since the introduction of the levy which, along with the introduction of apprenticeship standards (that are replacing frameworks), has impacted on the number and nature of apprenticeship starts and participation.

The apprenticeship levy is a compulsory tax on employers in England to fund the development and delivery of apprenticeships, which aims to improve the quality and quantity of those available. Apprenticeship Levy is an amount paid at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's annual pay bill (Note H-9). Employers have to pay the Apprenticeship Levy each month if:

- they have an annual pay bill of more than £3 million or
- they are connected to any companies or charities for Employment Allowance purposes and have a combined annual pay bill of more than £3 million.

Further information on the apprenticeship levy can be found in the HMRC Apprenticeship Levy payment guidance (Note H-9).

Our analysis of apprenticeship starts by level and by broad topic uses the Apprenticeships and traineeships National Statistics, produced by the Department for Education, for the two most recent complete academic years (Note H-1). This means that the current analysis is for the period 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2022 and 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023. The analysis is based on where the apprentices live not where they undertake the work-based training. The analysis for the 2022/23 academic year was undertaken for the Local Authority boundaries applicable from April 2023 (Note H-10). Data for the 2021/22 academic year was reanalysed using these updated boundaries. The boundary changes discussed in Note H-10 mean that these new 2021/22 numbers differ from those previously published.

Apprenticeships are available at "Intermediate", "Advanced" and "Higher" levels (Table H-1). "Higher" apprenticeships are those at level 4 and above. "Higher" level apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7 may also include a degree as a component qualification.

Table H-1: Apprenticeship levels and their equivalent education levels.

Apprenticeship name	Level	Equivalent educational level examples
"Intermediate"	2	• 5 GCSE passes at grade A*- C or 9 – 4
"Advanced"	3	• 2 A level passes • Level 3 Diploma • International Baccalaureate
"Higher"	4/5	• Examples of equivalent level 4 and 5 apprenticeships would be Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and foundation degrees, respectively.
	6/7	• Apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7 are equivalent in level to a Bachelor's or a Master's degree respectively, and can include a degree as a component qualification within the apprenticeship programme, which may or may not be mandatory.

The published data on apprenticeship starts includes the number of starts at Tier 1 subject level (from this point forwards we refer to this as apprenticeship topic). For several of these apprenticeship topics, the overall number of apprenticeship starts is low. For the purposes of our analysis, we only use the topics with at least 5,000 apprenticeship starts in England. This minimises the volume of supressed data included in our analysis thereby increasing the robustness of the figures presented (Note H-3).

Apprenticeship starts by level of apprenticeship

In academic year 2022/23, there were 79,000 apprenticeship starts amongst people living in Predominantly Rural areas and 210,000 starts amongst people living in Predominantly Urban areas (Note H-2). These numbers are smaller than for the 2021/22 academic year which were 83,000 and 218,000 in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas respectively. This is a reduction in starts of 4.6% in Predominantly Rural areas and 3.4% in Predominantly Urban areas.

As shown in Table H-2, “Advanced” apprenticeships are the most common apprenticeship level in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. Figure H-1 is a bar chart displaying proportion of apprenticeship starts at each level in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas of England.

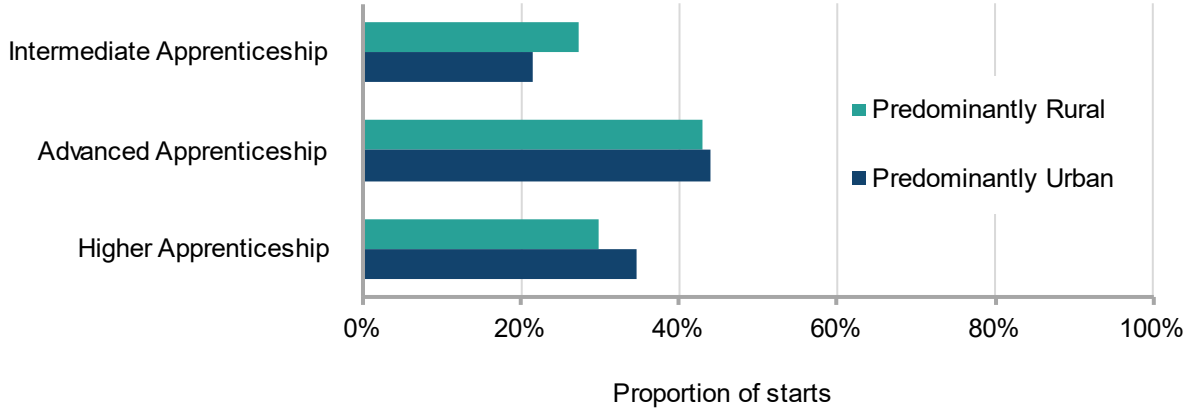
Table H-2: Number of apprenticeship starts by level of apprenticeship and broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2022/23 academic year (Note H-1, Note H-2, Note H-4, Note H-10)

Table H-1 explains the different levels of apprenticeship.

Rural-Urban Classification	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher	Total
Predominantly Rural	21,700	34,000	23,700	79,300
Urban with Significant Rural	8,900	20,000	14,900	43,700
Predominantly Urban	45,100	92,400	73,100	210,400
England	75,700	146,400	111,700	333,400

Figure H-1: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of apprenticeship starts at each level by broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2022/23 academic year (Note H-1, Note H-4)

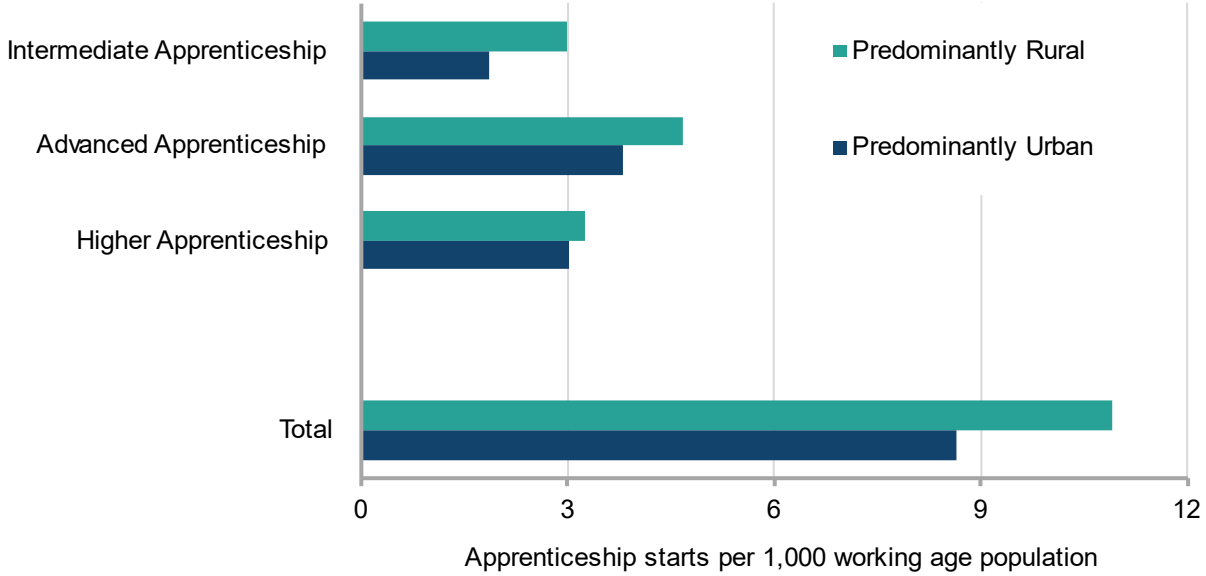
Table H-1 explains the different levels of apprenticeship. The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars.



In Predominantly Rural areas 43% of apprenticeship starts were at an “Advanced” level, and similarly in Predominantly Urban areas the proportion was 44%. The second most common apprenticeship type in in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas was "Higher" level apprenticeships with 30% and 35% respectively.

Figure H-2 is a bar chart comparing the rate of apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age population in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. It shows that, overall, there are proportionally more apprenticeship starts in Predominantly Rural areas (11 per 1,000 working age population) than in Predominantly Urban areas (9 per 1,000 working age population). These overall rates are broadly the same as they were for the 2021/22 academic year (Note H-6).

Figure H-2: Bar chart showing the number of apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age population by level of apprenticeship and broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2022/23 academic year (Note H-1, Note H-2, Note H-4, Note H-5, Note H-10)
The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars. Table H-1 explains the different levels of apprenticeship.



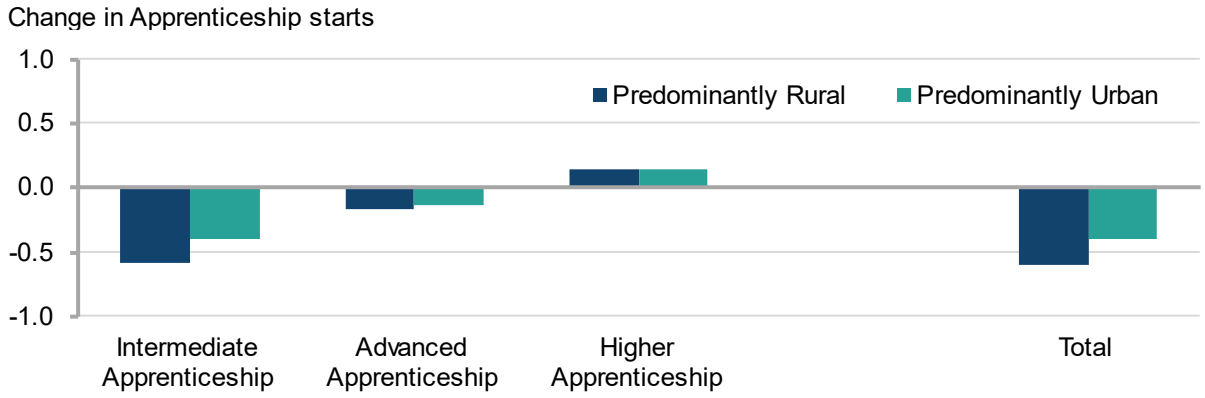
The higher rate of starts in Predominantly Rural areas is largely driven by a higher rate of apprenticeship starts at “Intermediate” and “Advanced” levels in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas. For both levels there is 1 start per 1,000 working age population more in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas. In Predominantly Rural areas “Intermediate” starts are 3 per 1,000 working age population and “Advanced” are 5 per 1,000 working age population. For “Higher” level apprenticeships the start rate is 3 starts per 1,000 working age population in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas.

The change in apprenticeship starts between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years was small. Figure H-3 is a bar chart showing a reduction in apprenticeship starts at “Advanced” and “Intermediate” levels but an increase in the rate of starts for “Higher” apprenticeships. This pattern occurred in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas.

Degree level apprenticeships are still a fairly new concept and as shown in a research briefing by Joe Lewis and Paul Bolton (Note H-7). Degree level apprenticeships have grown from only a few thousand starts in 2016/17 to 47,000 thousand starts in 2022/23. The Skills Funding Agency worked with Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to put in place information and

guidance on ucas.com from September 2016 to promote "Higher" and Degree apprenticeships and enable people to apply for them centrally (Note H-8). In parallel, employers were encouraged to advertise their Degree apprenticeships in advance where possible so young people can plan ahead as they would for university. All of these factors will have aided the growth of Degree level apprenticeships and some of this growth might have reduced the take-up of lower-level apprenticeships.

Figure H-3: Bar chart showing the change in the number of apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age population by level of apprenticeship and broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England (Note H-1, Note H-2, Note H-4, Note H-5, Note H-10)
The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars Table H-1 explains the different levels of apprenticeship. The change is measured as start rate for 21/22 academic year minus the start rate for the 22/23 academic year.



Males and Female apprenticeship starts

Of the 333,000 people to start an apprenticeship in 2022/23, 162,000 were Male and 171,000 were Female. Figure H-4 is a stacked bar chart showing that, in Predominantly Rural areas Males make up a larger proportion of the apprenticeship starts (52%), whereas in Predominantly Urban areas it is Females that make up a larger proportion of apprenticeship starts (52%).

Figure H-4: A stacked bar chart showing the proportion of Male and Female apprenticeship starts by broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 22/23 academic year (Note H-1, Note H-2, Note H-4, Note H-10)
The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacked bars

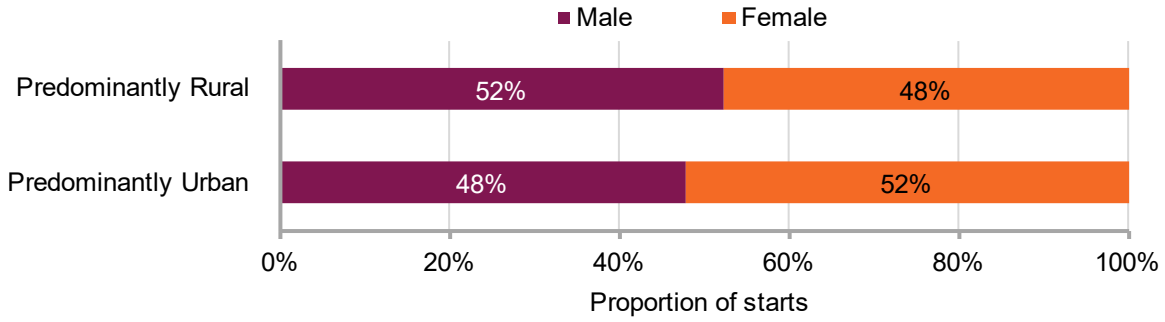
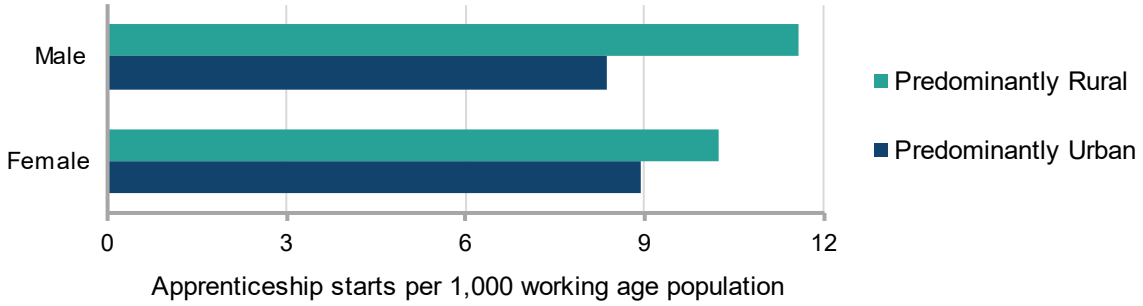


Figure H-5 is a bar chart showing starts per working age Male and Female populations; overall, for both Males and Females there were more apprenticeship starts in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.

In Predominantly Rural areas there were more Male apprenticeship starts than Female apprenticeship starts (12 Male apprenticeship starts per 1,000 Male working age population and 10 Female apprenticeship starts per 1,000 Female working age population). Whereas in Predominantly Urban areas there were fewer Male apprenticeship starts than Female apprenticeship starts (8 Male apprenticeship starts per 1,000 Male working age population and 9 Female apprenticeship starts per 1,000 Female working age population)

Figure H-5: Bar chart showing the number of Male and Female apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age Male and Female population respectively by broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2022/23 academic year (Note H-1, Note H-2, Note H-4, Note H-5, Note H-10)

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars.



Analysis of apprenticeship starts by apprenticeship level for Males and Females is shown as a bar chart by broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification for the 2022/23 academic year on Figure H-6. Overall, for both Males and Females the number of starts per 1,000 working age population is greater in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas for all apprenticeship levels.

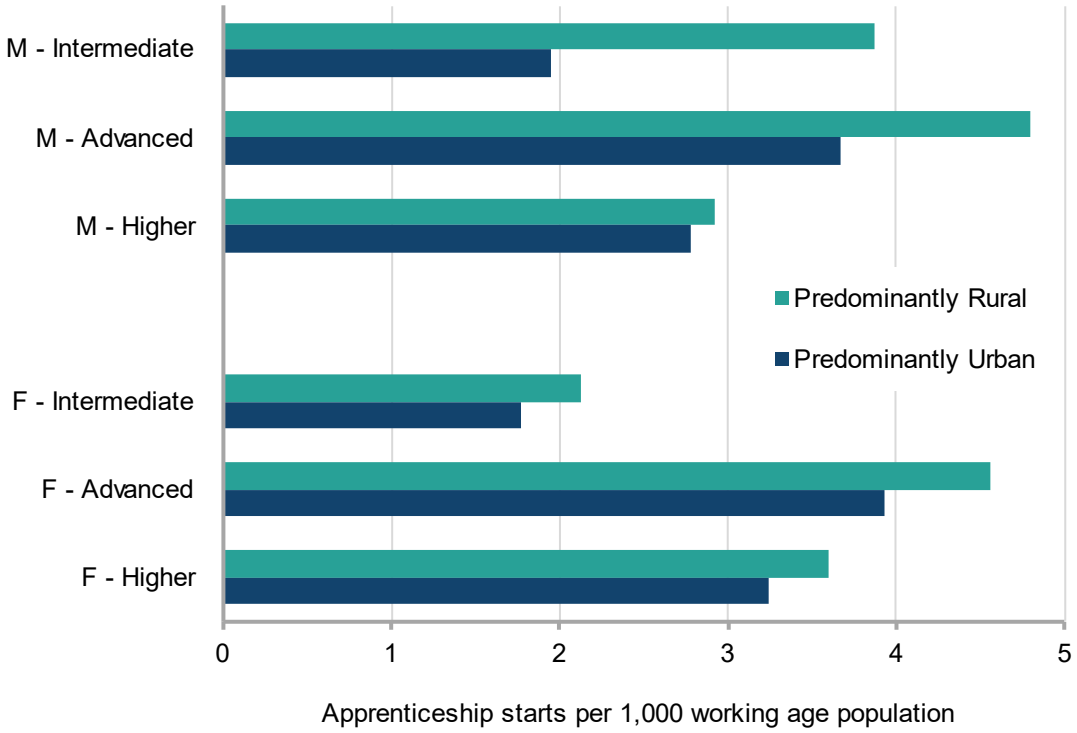
This difference between Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas is most noticeable for Male apprenticeship starts at “Intermediate” and “Advanced” levels. Male intermediate apprenticeship starts in Predominantly Rural areas were 4 per 1,000 working age male population in 2022/23. This was double the start rate of 2 per 1,000 working age Male population seen for Male “Intermediate” apprenticeship starts in Predominantly Urban areas. This could be due to a higher start rate for engineering and construction “trades” within Predominantly Rural areas. Male “Advanced” apprenticeship starts were higher than “Intermediate” apprenticeship starts in both Predominantly Rural (5 per 1,000 working age Male population) and Predominantly Urban (4 per 1,000 Male working age population) areas. Male “Higher” apprenticeship starts were similar in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas at 3 starts per 1,000 working age Male population.

For Female apprentices the gap between start rates in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas was smaller than for Males at “Intermediate” and “Advanced” levels. Female intermediate apprenticeship starts in Predominantly Rural areas were just over 2 per 1,000 working age Female population in 2022/23, whilst in Predominantly Urban areas they were just under 2 per 1,000 working age Female population. This means that in Predominantly Rural areas the start rate for Males on “Intermediate” apprenticeships was double that of Females on the same level course in 2022/23. By contrast in Predominantly Urban areas, the start rate on “Intermediate” apprenticeships is similar for Males and Females.

For “Higher” apprenticeships the start rate is greater for Females than it is for Males in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. In Predominantly Rural areas the Male start rate on “Higher” apprenticeships was 3 per 1,00 working age Males and for Females it was 4 per 1,000 working age Females.

Figure H-6: Bar chart showing the number of Male and Female apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age Male and Female population respectively, by apprenticeship level and broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2022/23 academic year (Note H-1, Note H-2, Note H-4, Note H-5, Figure H-6, Note H-10)

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars. “M” = Males and “F” = Females, such that the upper part of the chart is Male starts by apprenticeship level and the lower part is Female starts by apprenticeship level.



Not all of the numbers relating to Figure H-6 have been mentioned in the commentary, however, all of the values represented by the bar chart in Figure H-6 can be found in TableHA3A (for Males) and Table HA3b (for Females) on Sheet HA in the of the Education and Skills data tables.

Apprenticeship starts by topic

In both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years, 8 different topic areas each had at least 5,000 apprenticeship starts in England. These 8 topics are listed in Table H-3. With the exception of Information and Communication Technology, which grew by 2,000 thousand starts, and Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care, which stayed the same, there were fewer apprenticeship starts in 2022/23 than in 2021/22.

In both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas, the two most common topics combined account for more than half of apprenticeship starts. These topics are: ‘Business Administration and Law’; and ‘Health, Public Services and Care’. Figure H-7 is a bar chart that shows that in Predominantly Rural areas the most popular apprenticeship topic to start in 2022/23 (as in 2021/22) was ‘Health, Public Services and Care’ with 31% of starts. Whilst in Predominantly

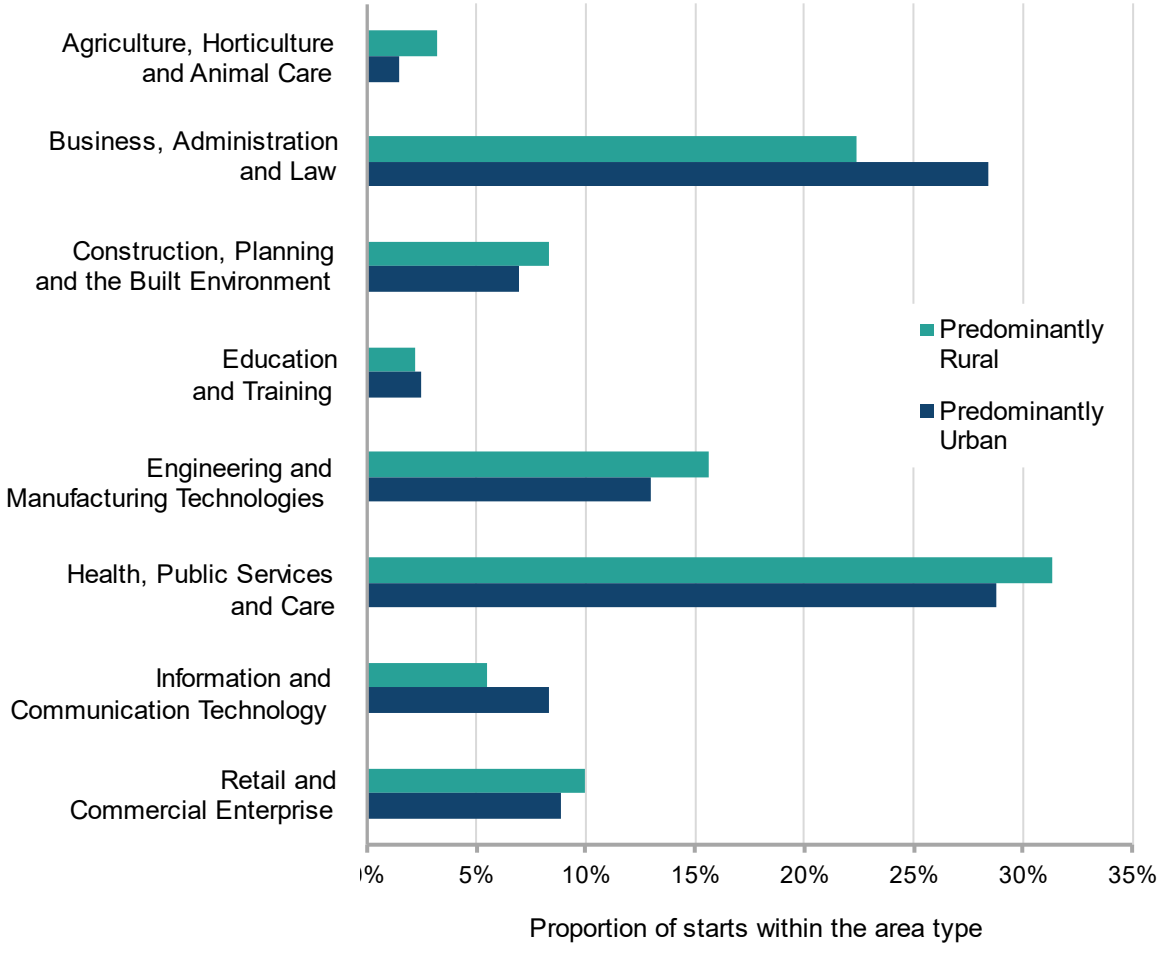
Urban areas the most popular apprenticeship topic to start in 2022/23 was also 'Health, Public Services and Care' with 29% of starts. This is a change from 2021/22 when 'Business Administration and Law' was responsible from the highest proportion of starts in Predominantly Urban areas. 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' was the only other topic to account for more than 10% of starts in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas.

Table H-3: Number of apprenticeship starts by topic, England, 2021/23 and 2022/23 academic years (Note H-1, Note H-2, Note H-4, Note H-10)

Apprenticeship topic	2021/22	2022/23
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	6,700	6,700
Business Administration and Law	92,900	89,700
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	26,000	24,400
Education and Training	8,500	8,200
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	48,600	45,500
Health, Public Services and Care	99,200	98,200
Information and Communication Technology	22,700	24,900
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	35,600	30,700

Figure H-7: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of apprenticeship starts for the eight most popular apprenticeship categories by broad Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2022/23 academic year (Note H-1, Note H-2, Note H-3, Note H-4, Note H-5, Figure H-6)

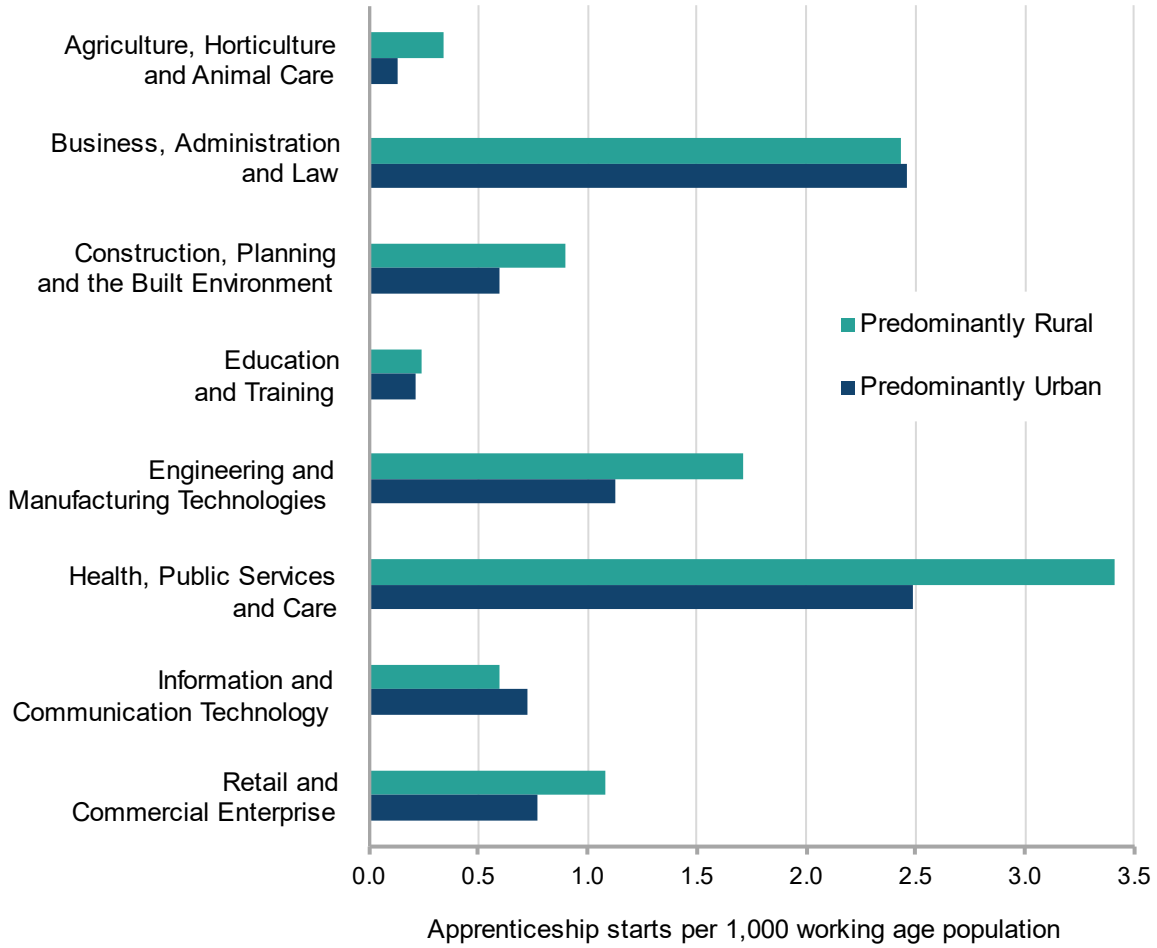
The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars



When we compare the rate of apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age population for each topic, we get a fairer comparison between Rural and Urban areas than using absolute numbers. We see that in 2022/23 the rate of starts was substantially higher (more than 0.5 starts per 1,000 working age population) in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas for 'Health, Public Services and Care' and for 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (Figure H-8).

Figure H-8: Bar chart showing the number of apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age population, by apprenticeship topic and broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2022/23 academic year (Note H-1, Note H-2, Note H-3, Note H-4, Note H-5, Figure H-6)

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars



The following bullets summarise the bar chart showing of apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age population for each topic Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas (Figure H-8).

- For 'Health, Public Services and Care' the rate of starts was 3.4 per 1,000 working age population in Predominantly Rural areas compared to only 2.5 per 1,000 working age population in Predominantly Urban areas.
- For 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' the rate of starts was 1.7 per 1,000 working age population in Predominantly Rural areas compared to only 1.1 per 1,000 working age population in Predominantly Urban areas, a difference of 0.6 starts per 1,000 working age population.

- Whilst the rate of starts for 'Business Administration and Law' is very similar in Predominantly Rural (2.4 per 1,000 working age population) and Predominantly Urban areas (2.5 per 1,000 working age population).
- For all other apprenticeship topics shown on Figure H-8, the rate of apprenticeship starts differs by up to 0.3 starts per 1,000 working age population. Furthermore, the rate of starts is marginally higher in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas for all of these other topics except for 'Information and Communication Technology'.

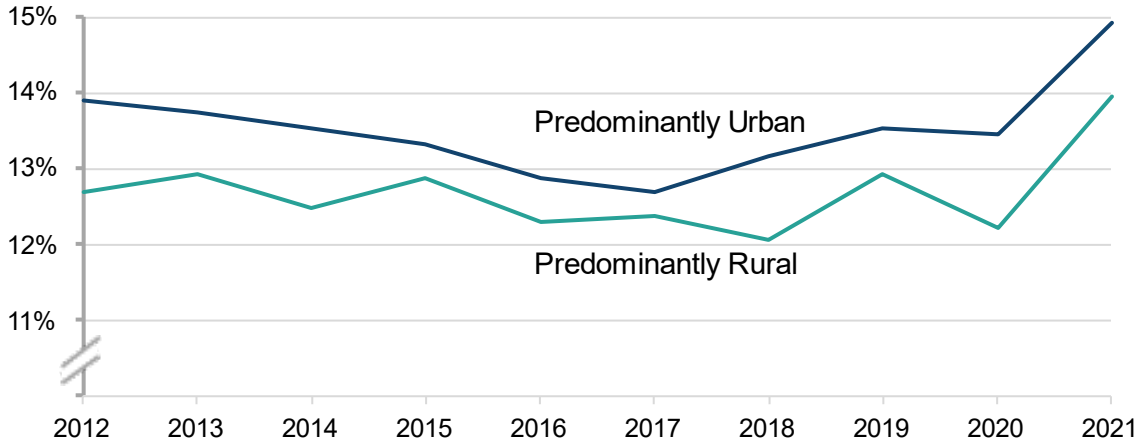
In both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas the rate of apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age population was similar in 2022/23 to the values for 2021/22 for all topics. Any users wishing to see the very small differences (0.1 starts per 1,000 working age population or less) should consult Table HA1b and Table HA2b on Sheet HA in the of the Education and Skills data tables.

On-the-job training

It is not only apprentices who learn on-the-job. Workers in many occupations receive training with an employer. For newer employees this can be in order to learn core skills essential for regular tasks in their role. Whereas with more established employees this can be as continued professional development.

In many cases this training will be done at their workplace. As Figure H-9 shows, throughout the 10 years from 2012 to 2021 a higher percentage of people working in Predominantly Urban areas received on-the-job training than people working in Predominantly Rural areas. In 2021 in Predominantly Rural areas the percentage receiving on-the-job training was 13.9% compared with 14.9% in Predominantly Urban areas. These figures represent a 1.7 and 1.5 percentage point increase respectively on the figures for 2020. Indeed, for both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas these 2021 figures represent the highest proportion of workers being involved in one the job training over the last decade.

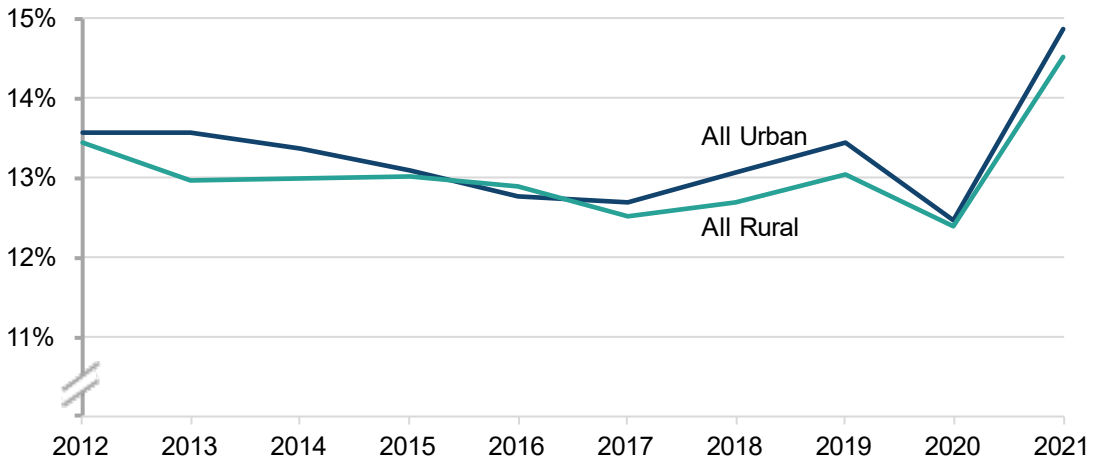
Figure H-9: Line chart showing the proportion of employees and self-employed people of working age receiving on-the-job training in last 4 weeks, by broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification for their workplace, 2012 to 2021 (Note H-5)



It is possible to analyse on-the-job training based on where the worker lives. As Figure H-10 shows, in most years over the period 2012 to 2021 a smaller proportion of workers living in Rural

areas received on-the-job training than in Urban areas. In 2021, the proportion of workers who undertook recent training increased by over 2 percentage points on the 2020 figure in working living in both Rural and Urban areas. In the period since 2011, this was the first time that more than 14% of workers living in Rural (or Urban) areas had undertaken recent on-the-job training. With the shift to more home working for certain occupations following the COVID-19 pandemic and increased availability of online training the importance of the breakdown by residence is likely to increase in the future.

Figure H-10: Line chart showing the proportion of employees and self-employed people of working age receiving on-the-job training in last 4 weeks, by broad Output Area Rural-Urban Classification for their residence, 2012 to 2021 (Note H-5)



Notes

- In the 2 figures in this section, the population comprises those who responded yes and no to the question 'have you received on-the-job training in the last 4 weeks' and those who responded that the question was not applicable. Those who skipped the question were excluded.

Apprenticeships and on the job training explanatory notes

- **Note H-1**

The source data for apprenticeships is the Apprenticeships and traineeships National Statistics produced by Department for Education (DfE). DfE update their dataset throughout the academic year. We wait until they release full-year final data on apprenticeships and traineeships in England for the most recent academic year. In this analysis we are using full data for the 2021/22 academic year (1 August 2021 to 31 July 2022) and the 2022/23 academic year (1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023).
We have refrained from presenting any analysis from either 2019/20 or 2020/21 academic years because the figures for these years were affected by COVID-19.

- **Note H-2**

Numbers of apprenticeships are a count of the number of starts at any point during the period. Learners starting more than one apprenticeship will appear more than once. Where the number of apprenticeship starts have been quoted in the body of the text these are rounded to the nearest 1,000 unless specified otherwise. For additional precision, Table H-2 and Table H-3 was rounded to the nearest 100.

- **Note H-3**

The published apprenticeship start data includes several tier one level subjects where the overall number of apprenticeship starts in England is low. The result is that when these smaller categories are presented by DfE in a Local Authority table, the data for many Local Authorities has been suppressed and replaced with

LOW. In this instance LOW means less than 5 starts within the Local Authority. Having a lot of suppressed data prevents us from calculating robust Rural and Urban estimates for these tier one subjects.

For our analysis we only retained tier one subjects with a minimum of 5 thousand apprenticeship starts in England. The retained subjects and their total number of starts are included in the table below. The 5 subjects that did not meet this threshold and were subsequently removed were: (1) 'Science and Mathematics'; (2) 'Social Sciences'; (3) 'Leisure, Travel and Tourism'; (4) 'History, Philosophy and Theology'; and (5) 'Arts, Media and Publishing'.

In the 2021/22 data, for most of the retained subjects only 1 or 2 Local Authorities have been suppressed which means that we are missing less than 10 starts for these subjects. Even for the subjects where more Local Authorities have been supressed, missing data accounted for a maximum of 0.5% of starts. Once the overall Rural and Urban estimates are rounded to the nearest hundred any missing data is obscured by the rounding. The same set of topics were retained for 2022/23 for consistency purposes.

Tier 1 level subject	Total starts in England	Number of Local Authorities with supressed data (LOW)	Maximum number of missing starts (If LOW=4)	Proportion missing starts (%)
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	6,790	8	32	0.47%
Business, Administration and Law	94,100	1	4	0.00%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	26,160	2	8	0.03%
Education and Training	8,560	9	36	0.42%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	49,180	2	8	0.02%
Health, Public Services and Care	99,870	1	4	0.00%
Information and Communication Technology	6,790	1	4	0.02%
Retail and Commercial	94,100	2	8	0.02%

- **Note H-4**

The Rural-Urban classification is based upon the home postcode of the apprentice rather than the location their employer or trainer. Where the postcode is outside of England or not known the data is excluded from the analysis. DfE used Geographies taken from the National Statistics Postcode Lookup based on boundaries.

- **Note H-5**

The Working age population is defined as those aged 16 to 64.

- **Note H-6**

Tables showing apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age population for both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years are available on sheet HA of the Education and Skills data tables.

- **Note H-7**

Degree apprenticeships, research briefing by Joe Lewis and Paul Bolton, published 08 May, 2024, House of Commons Library Degree apprenticeships .

- **Note H-8**

English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 vision.

- **Note H-9**

Apprenticeship Levy guidance, HM Revenue & Customs, first published December 2016: Apprenticeship Levy guidance.

- **Note H-10**

New Local Authorities came into operation in April 2023. These changes relate to 3 parts of England: (1)

North Yorkshire, (2) Cumbria and (3) Somerset. This reduced the total number of Local Authorities from 309 down to 296.

1. A new unitary authority called North Yorkshire replaced the 7 existing districts of Craven, Hambleton, Harrogate, Richmondshire, Ryedale, Scarborough and Selby. We have classified this single North Yorkshire UA as Predominantly Rural, however previously the Harrogate and the Scarborough Local Authorities were Urban with Significant Rural.
2. The 6 districts within Cumbria were abolished and replaced with 2 new unitary authorities. Allerdale, Carlisle and Copeland have been merged to form Cumberland and Barrow-in-Furness, Eden and South Lakeland have been merged to form Westmorland and Furness. We have classified Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness as Predominantly Rural, however the Barrow-in-Furness and the Carlisle Local Authorities were classified as Urban with Significant Rural.
3. The districts of Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton, and South Somerset have been merged to form a new unitary authority known as Somerset. We have classified this single Somerset UA as Predominantly Rural.

This amalgamation of Local Authorities moves some data from the Urban with Significant Rural category to the Predominantly Rural category. Data for the 2021/22 academic year has been recalculated using the newer geography to permit year on year comparisons. It will therefore not match previously published estimates.

- **Note H-11**

Tables showing the proportion employees and self-employed working age people receiving on-the-job training in the last 4 weeks broken down by the Rural-Urban classification 2011 to 2021 are available in the Education and Skills data tables. There are tables where the classification is done according to the workplace of the employee and according to the residence of the employee.

I. Workforce education level

Educational attainment levels of the workforce differ depending on whether you are considering where people work or where they live. Attainment levels based on workplace locations tend to be higher in Predominantly Urban areas. Residence based analysis shows higher levels of attainment in Predominantly Rural areas for Level 1 and 2 qualifications (GCSEs and NVQs Levels 1 and 2), while more recent years have shown the opposite for higher level qualifications like degrees.

Summary

This section considers the education of the workforce according to both where individuals work and where they live. Many people who live in Rural areas will travel to Urban areas for work therefore the skills they have acquired through education are utilised in Urban areas rather than in the Rural areas where they live.

The education levels used in this section are based on the nine qualification levels used in England. The section focuses on Level 1, 2 and 4 to 6 qualifications. These range from lower grade GCSEs and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 1 through to a degree with honours.

When considering education level by work location there is little difference between Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas for attainment levels of Level 1 qualifications. For Level 2 qualifications, attainment levels were consistently higher for those working in Predominantly Urban areas. This pattern continues for Level 4 to 6 qualifications with the gap between Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas widening, so that in 2021 attainment levels for Predominantly Urban areas were 10.5 percentage points higher than levels in Predominantly Rural areas.

Looking at education levels based on where a person lives shows a different pattern. For both Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications, attainment levels were consistently higher in Predominantly Rural areas. For Level 4 to 6 qualifications the pattern is not so straightforward. Attainment levels were generally similar for both settlement types up until 2016 then in 2017 attainment levels in Predominantly Urban areas rose above those for Predominantly Rural areas and have remained consistently higher since then.

Defining education levels

The following hierarchical qualification levels are used based on the nine qualification levels used in England (Note I-1).

- Level 1 qualification: at least one formal qualification - including lower grade GCSEs such as Grade D or E / Grade 3 or 2, and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 1
- Level 2 qualifications: NVQ Level 2, or 5 GCSE at Grade A* to C / 9 to 4
- Level 4 to 6 qualifications: NVQ 4, 5 or 6, higher national certificate (HNC) or higher apprenticeship (Level 4), higher national diploma (HND) or foundation degree (Level 5), degree with honours (e.g., or example bachelor of the arts (BA) hons, Bachelor of Science (BSc) hons) or degree apprenticeship (Level 6).

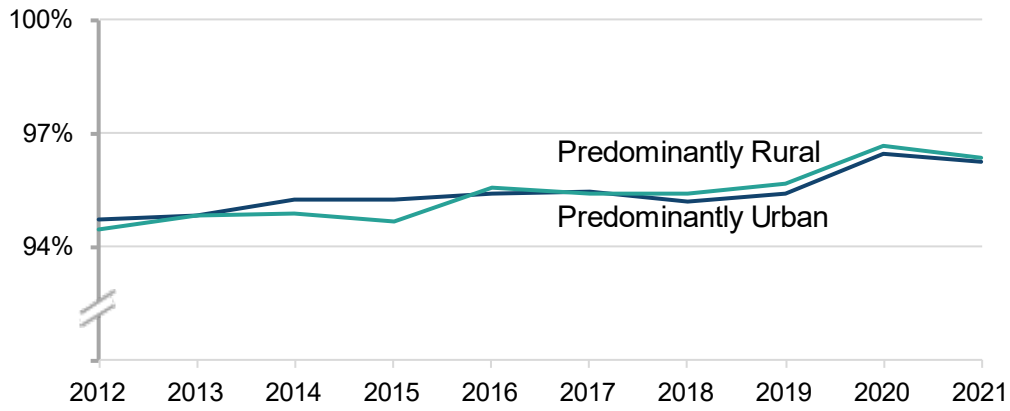
Level 3 qualifications (for example A-levels and NVQ 3) and Levels 7 and 8 post graduate study and not explicitly covered. Although when an individual has achieved a Level 4 to 6 qualification suitable Level 3 qualifications will usually be a course entry requirement. Individuals often will have only one qualification at Levels 4, 5 or 6 because entry requirements frequently do not demand sequential progression through Levels 4, 5 and 6 so these have been grouped together. Some of the cohort labelled as Level 4 to 6 will also have post graduate Level 7 or 8 qualifications.

Education Level by work location

In many cases the skills people acquire through education are utilised in their place of work. Many people who live in Rural areas will travel to Urban areas for work and therefore the skills are utilised in Urban areas rather than in the Rural areas where they live.

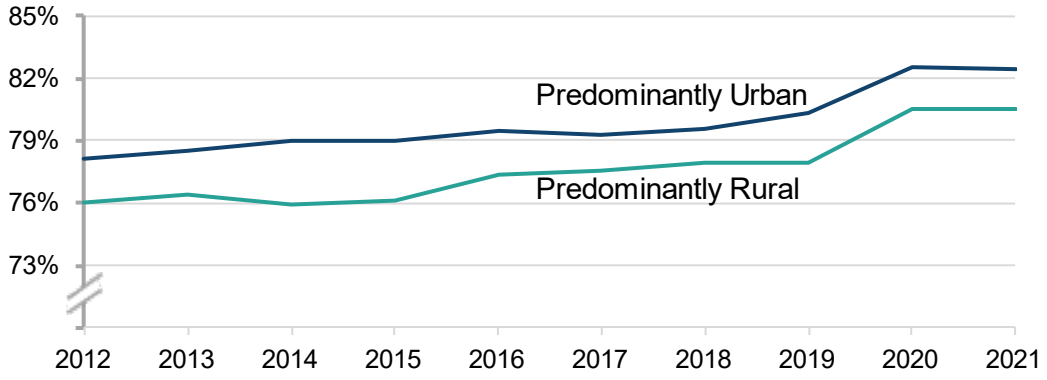
Figure I-1 shows that the proportion of working age people with a Level 1 qualification has increased amongst workers in both Predominantly Rural and Urban areas since 2012. In 2021 the proportions of working age population with a Level 1 qualification was 96.4% for Predominantly Rural areas and 96.2% for Predominantly Urban areas. Attainment levels fell slightly for both settlement types between 2020 and 2021 but they were still higher than they have been since 2012. The proportion of the working age population with a Level 1 qualification was similar for those working in Predominantly Rural areas and in Predominantly Urban areas, but whilst the proportion for Predominantly Urban areas was marginally higher at the start of the series, since 2018 the proportion has been marginally higher for Predominantly Rural areas.

Figure I-1: Proportion of working age population with a Level 1 qualification, based on the Rural-Urban Classification of the Local Authority where they work, 2012 to 2021



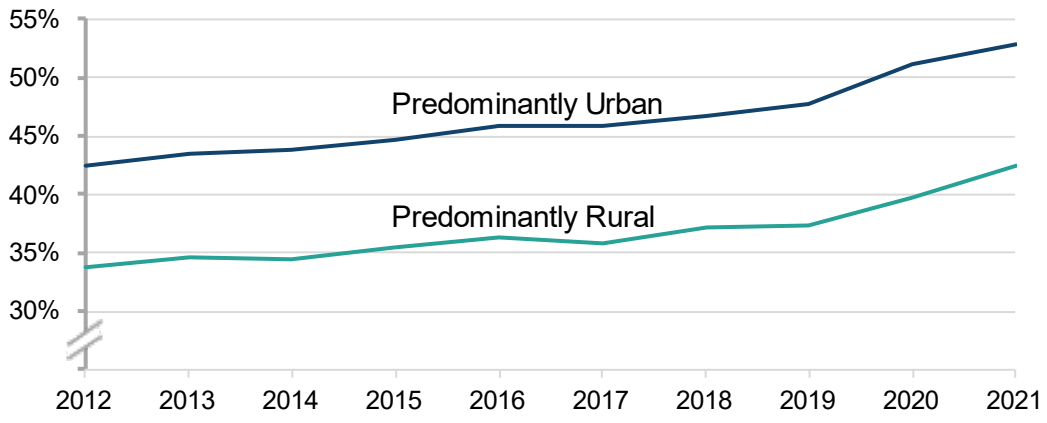
In 2021, the proportion of working age population with at least Level 2 qualifications working in Predominantly Rural areas was 80.6% which was lower than in Predominantly Urban areas at 82.5%. As Figure I-2 shows, a consistently higher proportion of people working in Predominantly Urban areas have at least Level 2 or above, than people working in Predominantly Rural areas. For both Predominantly Rural and Urban areas there has been an increase in the proportion of workers with at least Level 2 qualifications over the period 2012 to 2021 (by 1.9 and 1.5 percentage points respectively), however between 2020 and 2021 there was very little change for both settlement types.

Figure I-2: Proportion of working age population with at least Level 2 qualifications, based on the Rural-Urban Classification of the Local Authority where they work, 2012 to 2021



As with Level 2 qualifications, the proportion of the working age population with at least Level 4 to 6 qualifications increased between 2012 and 2021. In 2021, the proportion of the working age population with at least Level 4 to 6 qualifications was 42.4% in Predominantly Rural areas, compared with 52.9% in Predominantly Urban areas. The proportion of working age population with at least Level 4 to 6 qualifications has been much higher for people working in Predominantly Urban areas, than those working in Predominantly Rural areas (Figure I-3). Over this 10-year period the proportion of working age population with at least Level 4 to 6 qualifications increased faster for people working in Predominantly Urban areas than in Predominantly Rural areas, with the difference between settlement types increasing from 8.8 percentage points in 2012 to 10.5 percentage points in 2021. Businesses that can utilise individuals with high education levels are often based in Predominantly Urban areas where the business can benefit from better infrastructure and a larger potential workforce.

Figure I-3: Proportion of working age population with at least Levels 4 to 6 qualifications, based on the Rural-Urban Classification of the Local Authority where they work, 2012 to 2021

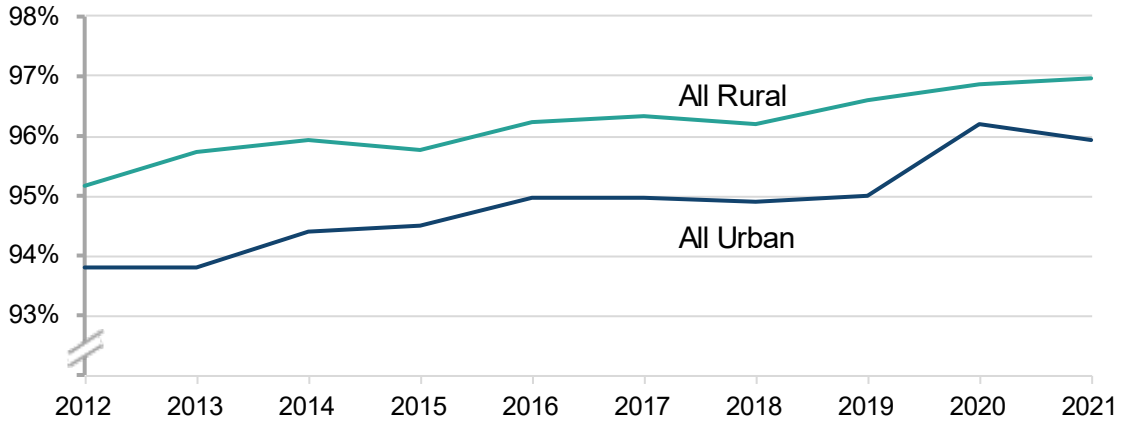


Education Level by residence

The working world is changing and for some jobs it is possible to work from home at least some of the time (Note I-3). This can be particularly relevant to jobs requiring a higher level of education. It is therefore relevant to also look at the education Level according to where people live.

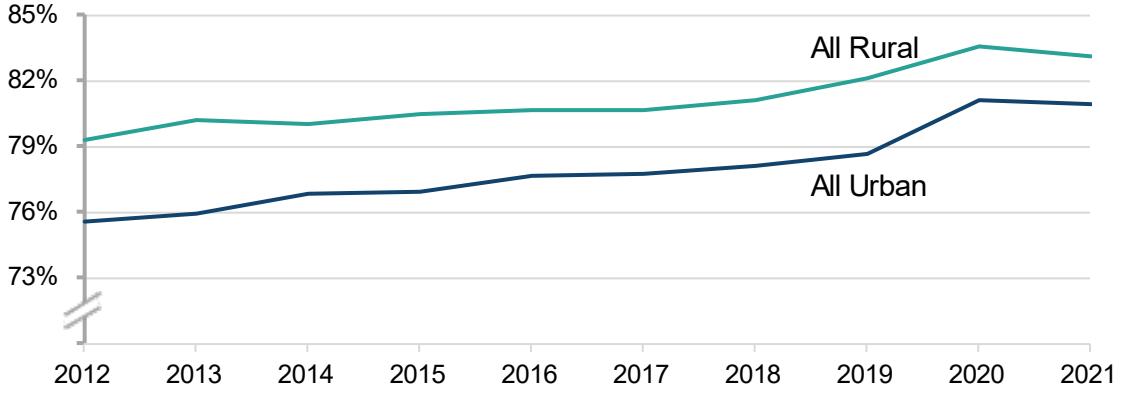
The proportion of working age people with no qualifications in England fell from 6.0% in 2012 to 3.9% in 2021. In 2021, the proportion of the resident working age population that had a Level 1 qualification was 97.0% in Rural areas, a slight increase on 2020. In Urban areas the proportion fell by 0.3 percentage points to 95.9%. As Figure I-4 shows the proportion of working age population with a Level 1 qualification has risen in both Rural and Urban areas between 2012 and 2021. Further, the Figure also shows that in each of the years during this period the proportion of the working age population with a Level 1 qualification has been higher in Rural areas, however the difference has narrowed over time.

Figure I-4: Proportion of working age population with a Level 1 qualification, based on the Rural-Urban Classification for their residence, 2012 to 2021



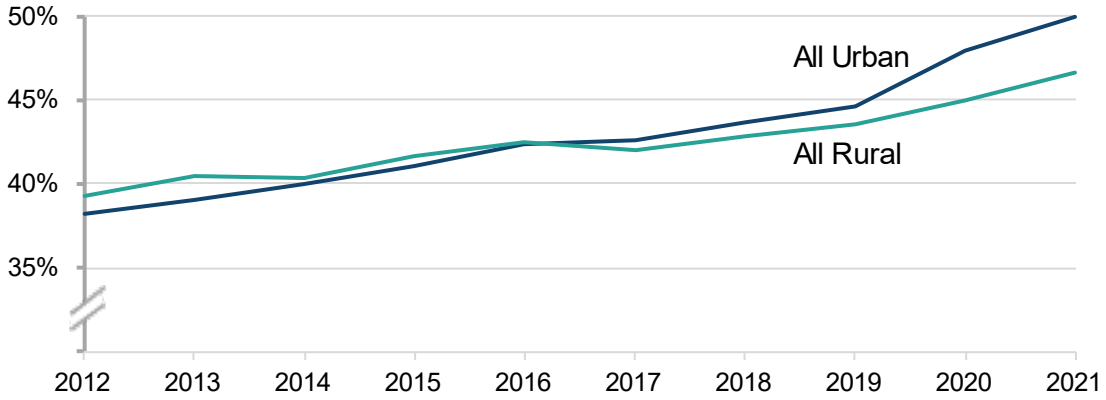
For qualifications at Level 2 and above, the proportion of working age people with these qualifications in 2021 was 83.1% for people living in Rural areas and 80.9% for people living in Urban areas, with both settlement types seeing a small drop when compared with 2020. The proportion of the working age population with at least Level 2 qualifications has been higher for people living in Rural areas than for those living in the Urban areas over the period 2012 to 2021, but the difference has narrowed in recent years (Figure I-5). The level of attainment in GCSEs in Rural and Urban areas is described in Section C.

Figure I-5: Proportion of working age population with at least Level 2 qualifications, based on the Rural-Urban Classification for their residence, 2012 to 2021



In 2021, 46.7% of working age people living in Rural areas had a qualification of at least Level 4 to 6, and in Urban areas the proportion was 49.9%. The proportion of the working age population with Level 4 to 6 qualifications and above increased between 2012 and 2021 in both Rural and Urban areas. Figure I-6 shows the proportion of working age population with such qualifications was broadly similar for people living in Rural and Urban areas between 2012 and 2016, with Rural areas slightly higher than Urban areas. Since 2017 the proportion for Urban areas has risen above that for Rural areas, with the gap becoming much wider over the last two years. When considering the difference between levels of attainment in Rural and Urban areas, the gap is smaller for residence-based analysis than workplace-based analysis (in 2021 Urban areas were 3.2 percentage points higher for residence-based analysis compared with 10.5 percentage points higher for workplace-based analysis).

Figure I-6: Proportion of working age population with at least Levels 4 to 6 qualifications, based on the Rural-Urban Classification for their residence, 2012 to 2021



Workforce education Level explanatory notes

- **Note I-1**

A full set of all of the qualifications included at each of the 9 qualification Levels is available at: https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels

- **Note I-2**

Tables showing the proportion of working age population with at least Level 1, at least Level 2 and at least Levels 4-6 qualifications, based on the Rural-Urban Classification for their residence are available in the Education and Skills data tables.

- **Note I-3**

Further analysis in relation to working from home can be found in the Digest of Rural England report on Connectivity and Accessibility.

- **Note I-4**

Tables showing the proportion of working age population with at least Level 1, at least Level 2 and at least Levels 4-6 qualifications, based on the Rural-Urban Classification of the Local Authority where they work are available in the Education and Skills data tables.

- **Note I-5**

The Working age population is defined as those aged 16 to 64.

Appendix 1: The 8 thematic reports that make up the Statistical Digest of Rural England (and the topics included within them)

1. Population

A. Population level and change
B. Population age profile
C. Ethnicity
D. Internal migration
E. Local Authority population data

2. Housing

A. Housing stock: age and type
B. Housing stock: additions and affordable housing
C. Housing costs: purchases and rentals
D. House purchase affordability
E. Second and empty homes
F. Homelessness
G. Land use change for housing
H. Housing quality

3. Health and Wellbeing

A. Life expectancy and Mortality
B. Wellbeing
C. NHS Dentistry provision
D. NHS General Practices
E. Childcare provision
F. Loneliness
G. Volunteering and charity

4. Communities and Households

A. Deprivation
B. Poverty due to low income
C. Household expenditure
D. Police recorded crime and outcomes
E. Crime surveys: local police and businesses
F. Feelings about the local neighbourhood

5. Connectivity and Accessibility

A. Broadband and mobile
B. Travel behaviours
C. Access to personal transport
D. Access to services
E. Home working

6. Education, Qualifications and Training

A. Schools and their workforce
B. Class sizes
C. Secondary education attainment
D. School inspections
E. Free school meals - eligibility
F. Alternative and specialist education provision
G. Progression to higher education
H. Apprenticeships and on-the-job training
I. Workforce education level

7. Rural Economic Bulletin

A. Employment
B. Earnings
C. Redundancies
D. Claimant count - Jobseeker's Allowance
E. Output and productivity measured by Gross Value Added (GVA)
F. Business demographics
G. Businesses by industry
H. Business survival and growth
I. Innovation and investment

8. Energy

A. Fuel poverty
B. Energy Performance Certificates: average Energy Efficiency Score
C. Energy Performance Certificates: achieving energy efficiency category C
D. Energy Costs
E. Energy Consumption
F. CO_2 emissions

Each of the 8 themes also has their own set of supplementary data tables that include the larger source data that could not be included in the presented document. The chapter headings above are hyperlinked to the home page for that specific digest theme. The supplementary tables can be accessed from these home pages.

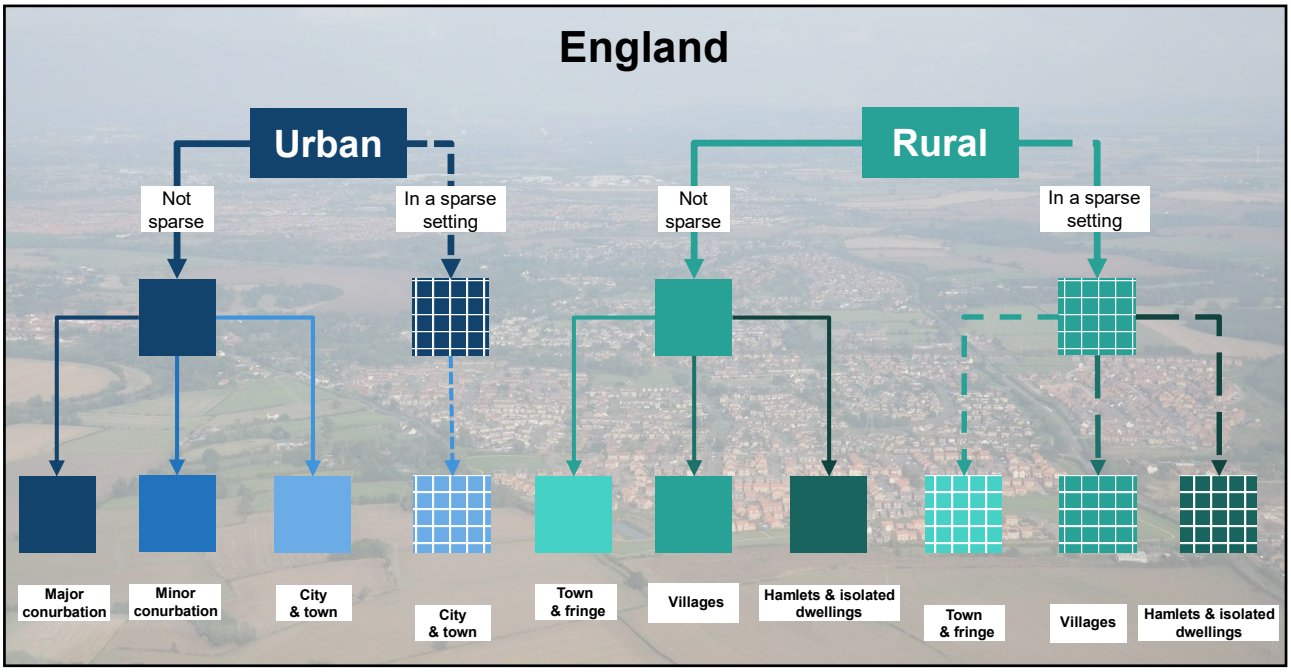
There is a further document including the individual Local Authority data tables, which have been separated for ease of use.

Appendix 2: Defining Rural areas

Wherever possible, the Rural-Urban Classification is used to distinguish Rural and Urban areas. The Classification defines areas as Rural if they fall outside of settlements with more than 10,000 resident population.

Census Output Areas are the smallest areas for which data are available from Censuses. These Census Output Areas are assigned to one of four Urban or six Rural categories (Figure X-1) based on dwelling densities. Those described as "in a sparse setting" reflect where the wider area is sparsely populated (again based on dwelling densities). From Census Output Areas, other small area geographies can be classified based on how they map to Census Output Areas (such as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), Wards, and postcodes – Note 1).

Figure X-1: Classifying Rural and Urban areas for small geographical areas



A map showing the distribution of the Rural and Urban Census Output Areas is shown in Figure X-2.

When data are not available at a small geographical scale, it may be possible to apply the Rural-Urban Local Authority Classification or a similar classification for other larger geographies. This classification categorises districts and unitary authorities on a six-point scale from Rural to Urban. It is underpinned by Rural and Urban populations as defined by the Census Output Area Classification. A map of the geographical distribution of the Rural and Urban Local Authorities is shown in Figure X-3.

However, the Local Authority Classification also considers some Urban areas as Hub Towns (with populations of between 10,000 and 30,000). These Hub Towns have met statistical criteria (based on dwelling and business premise densities) to be considered hubs for services and businesses for a wider rural hinterland and their populations are therefore classified as effectively Rural for the purposes of determining the classification of the authority.

Figure X-2: Map of the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Census Output Areas in England

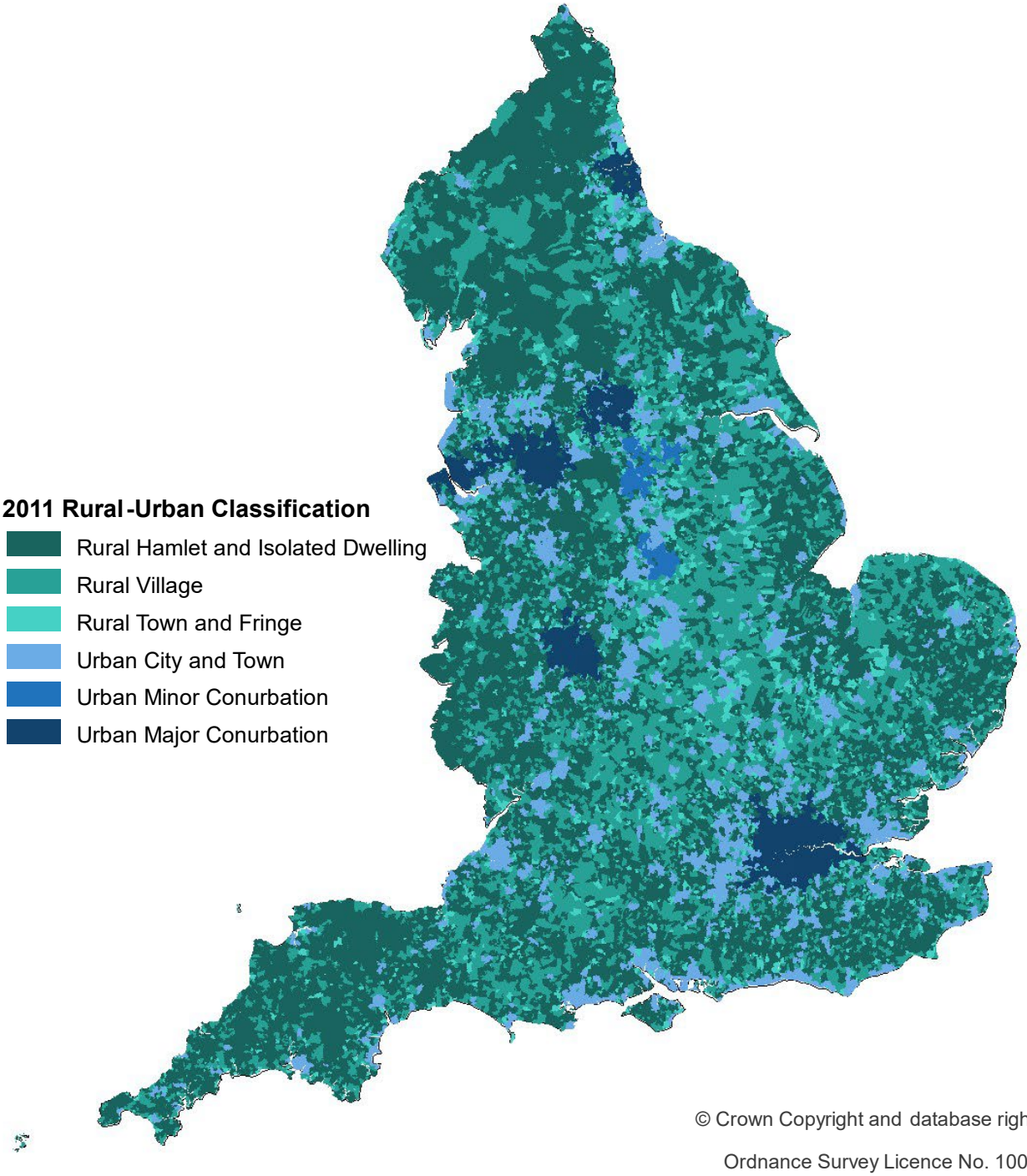
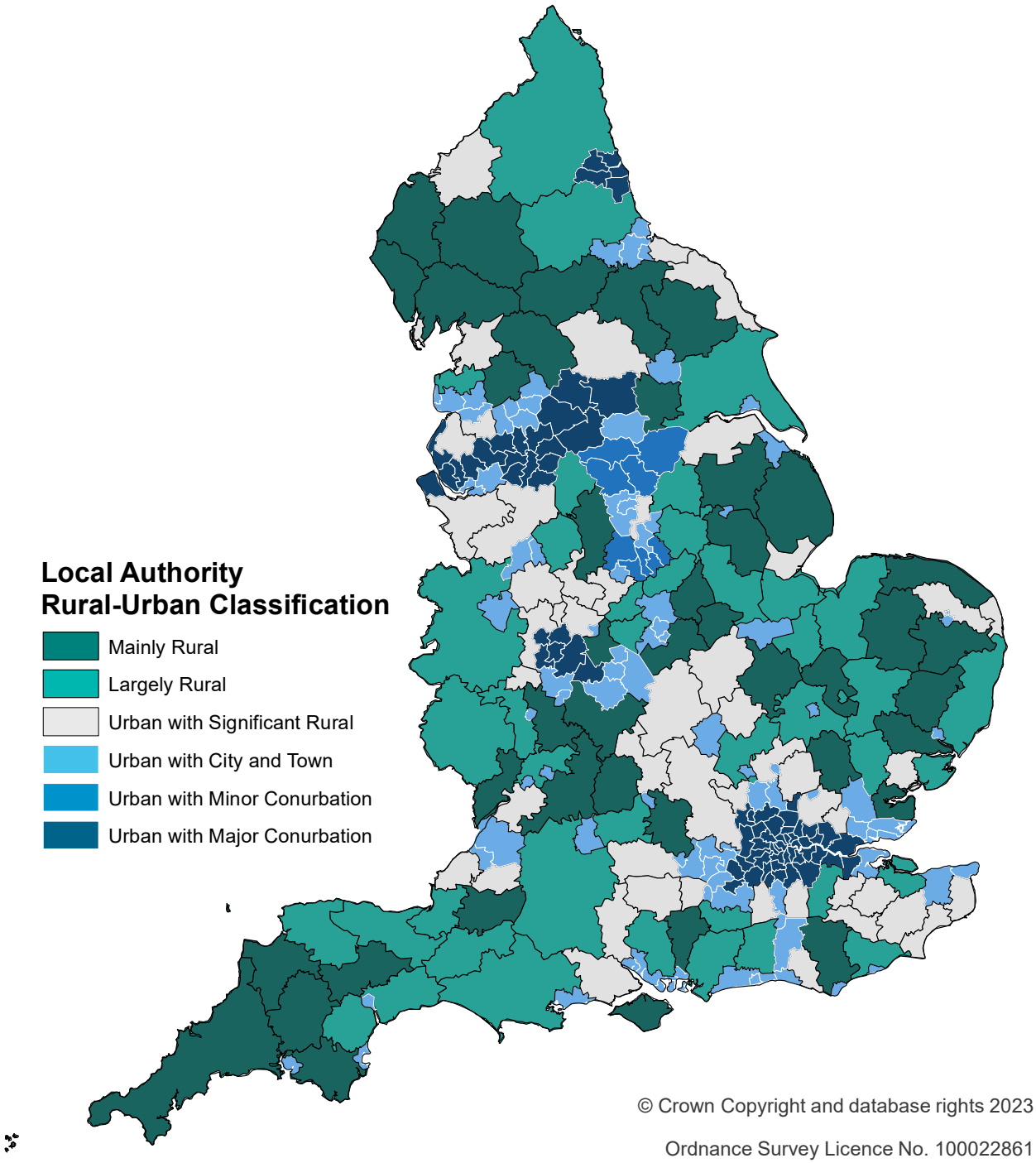
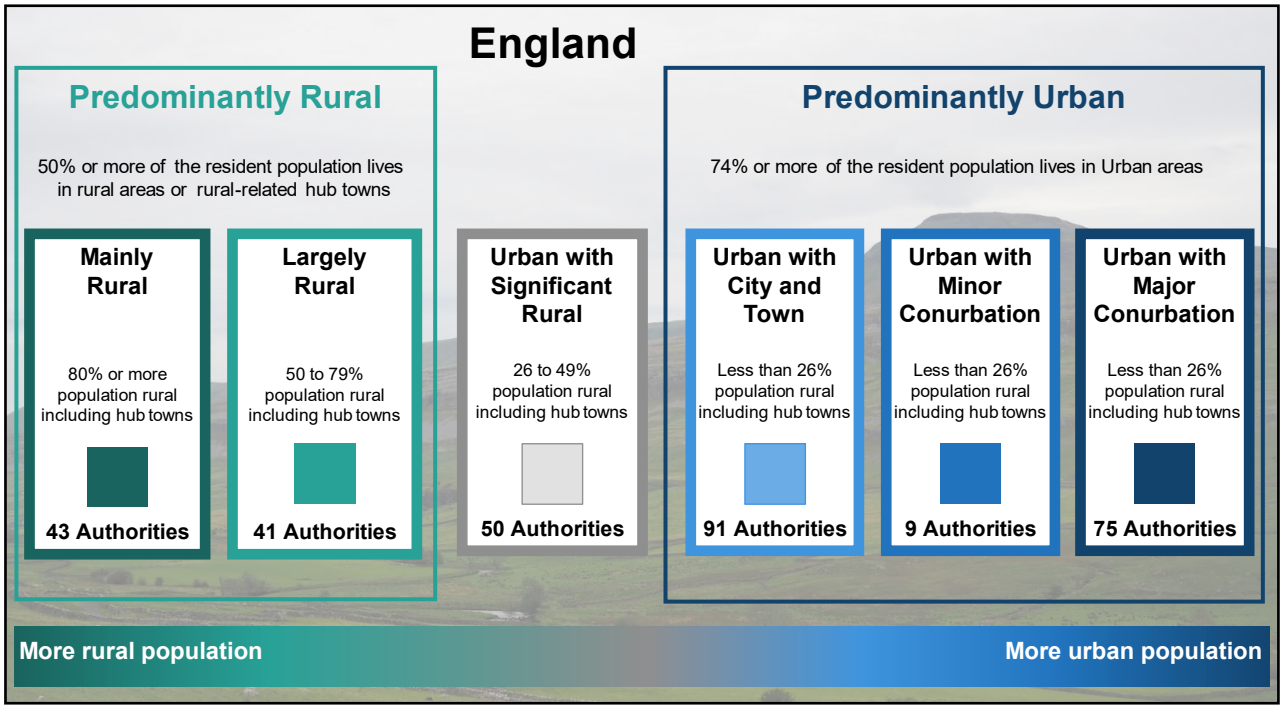


Figure X-3: Map of the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authority Districts and Unitary Authorities in England



Under the classification, which is shown in Figure X-4, each Local Authority is assigned to one of six categories on the basis of the percentage of the total resident population accounted for by the combined Rural and Hub Town components of its population and its 'conurbation context'. The Local Authority Classification categories are frequently aggregated to ‘Predominantly Rural’, ‘Urban with Significant Rural’ and ‘Predominantly Urban’ as shown on Figure X-4.

Figure X-4: 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authorities in England



The Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification is based on populations and settlement patterns, not on how much countryside there is. Authorities classified as Urban may have wide areas of countryside and may have sizeable Rural populations. The classification has been made according to the proportions of the population residing in Urban settlements and outside Urban settlements. More information on the classifications can be found at: The Rural-Urban Definition.

A similar approach to that for Local Authorities was used to create a classification for Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies. Under this classification, which is shown in Figure X-5, each Parliamentary Constituency is assigned to one of six categories on the basis of the percentage of the total resident population accounted for by the combined Rural and Hub Town components of its population and its 'conurbation context'. A map of the geographical distribution of the Rural and Urban Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies is shown in Figure X-5. This map depicts a classification for the new rebalanced Parliamentary Constituencies that were introduced for 2024 General Election. The Parliamentary Constituency Classification categories are frequently aggregated to ‘Predominantly Rural’, ‘Urban with Significant Rural’ and ‘Predominantly Urban’ as shown on Figure X-6.

Figure X-5: Map of the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies in England

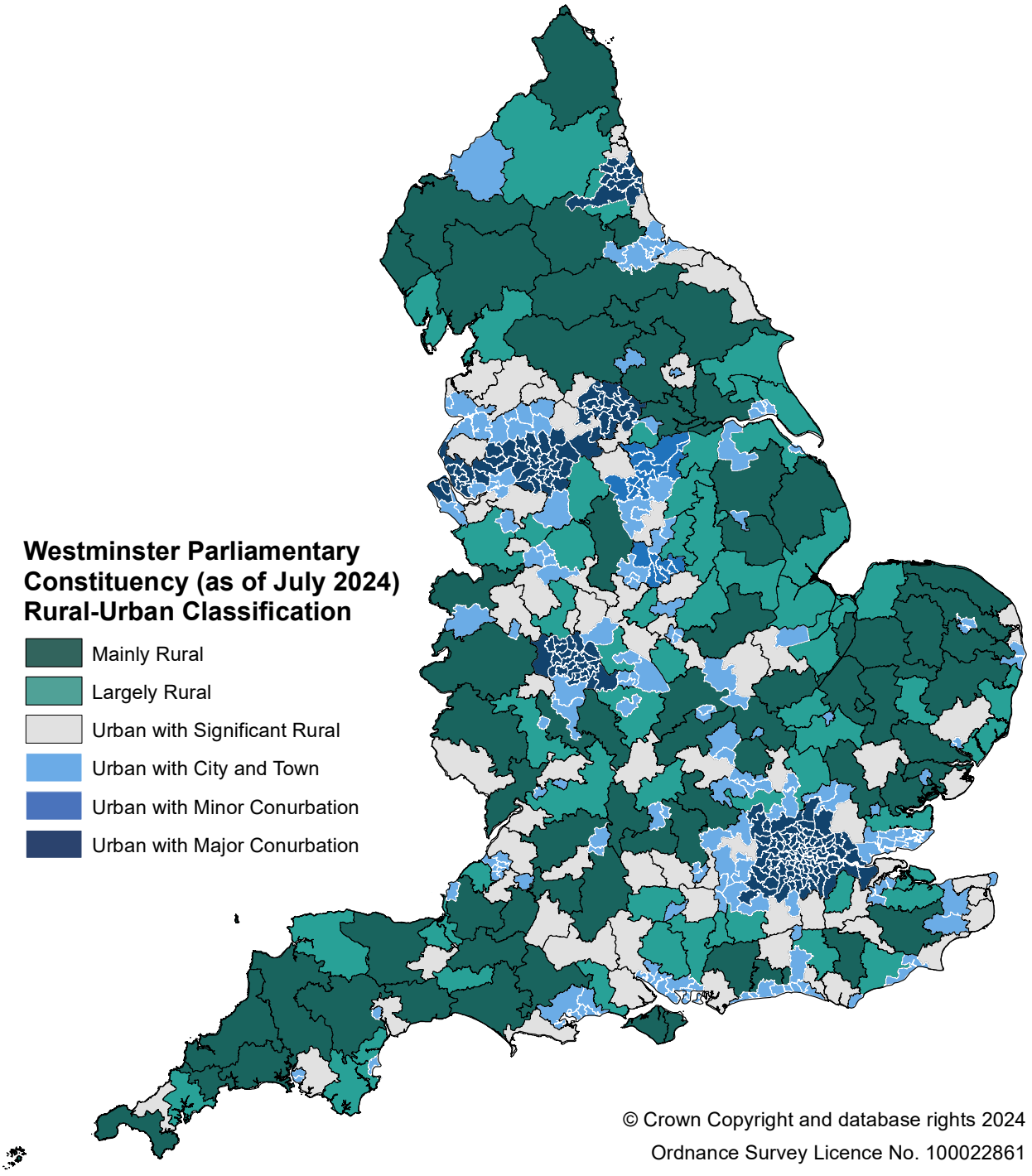
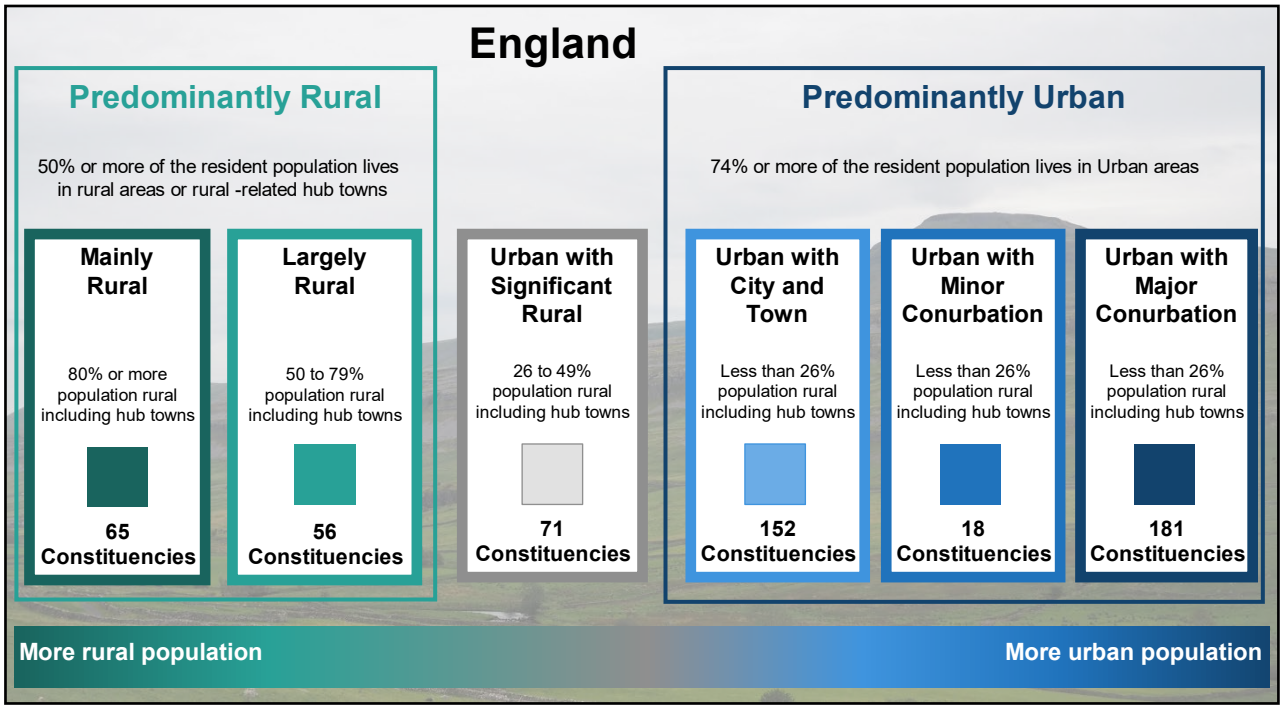


Figure X-6: 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies in England



Defining Rural areas explanatory notes

- **Note 1:** Defining Super Output Areas and Wards

Census Output Areas (OAs) were created for publication of the results of the recent Censuses. They cover around 125 households. In practice few datasets are produced at OA level. However, other larger geographies can be built up from OAs. These include *Lower Layer Super Output Areas* (LSOAs) which typically contain 5 OAs, so contain approximately 625 households or a population of approximately 1,500 and a minimum 1,000. Their Rural-Urban Classification is based on the majority category of OAs they contain. Some other geographies, for example postcodes are classified based on the location of their central point and the classification of respective OA.

- **Note 2:** Accessibility of Figure X-2

We accept that this map might not be accessible for all users, but it is difficult to develop a map containing six colours that will provide enough contrast between all colours to enable every user to see them, especially when the shaded areas are small. Separate maps (showing only three levels of shading) for Rural and Urban areas are available on request from: rural.statistics@defra.gov.uk