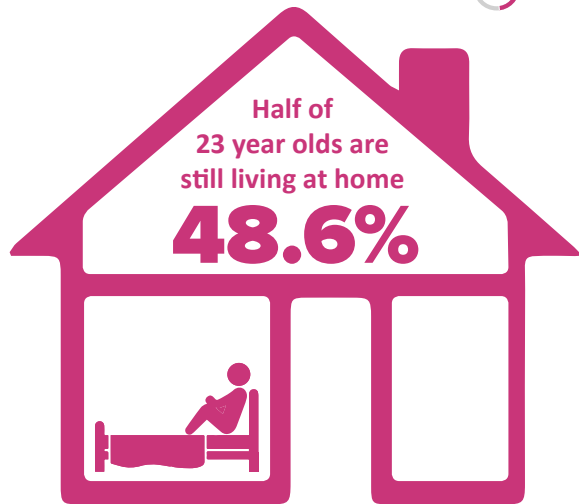


# CHAPTER 3: Living circumstances, education and employment



**71%**  
of 10-19 year olds live with  
married or cohabiting parents



**One in 8**  
secondary school children  
have free school meals

**44.6** The average GCSE  
'Attainment 8' Score for  
pupils in England in 2017



In England two thirds of pupils  
achieved grade 4(C) or above in  
GCSE English and Maths 2016/17

Between  
2013/14 and  
2016/17,  
secondary  
school  
exclusions in  
England  
increased by

**64%**



31



The official  
unemployment rate  
for young people  
aged 18-24 in the UK  
has been decreasing  
since 2012



The majority  
of 16-24 year olds  
are working



After age 18,  
approximately one  
third of the age  
group now progress  
to higher education



36% of people  
on zero hours  
contracts are  
aged 16-24

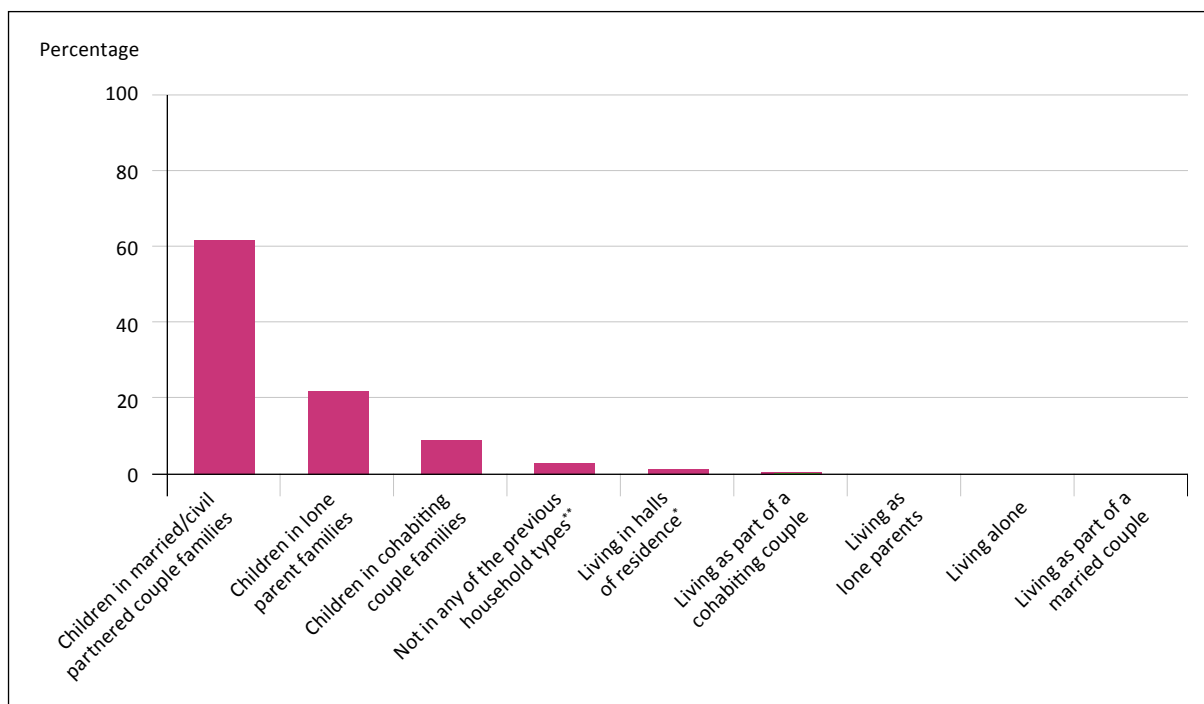
## Living circumstances, education and employment

The UK's young people between the ages of 10 and 25 experience a range of different living circumstances and economic challenges. Up to age 18 the majority are living in families and are engaged in some form of education, but this does not apply to everyone of this age, and some are in different situations. Beyond 18 the variety of their experiences increases, with some continuing in education, and others moving into training and employment, with a significant proportion spending some time unemployed.

### Family situation and living circumstances

There are approximately 27 million households in the UK, of which nearly five million (19%) contain at least one person aged 10-19 (Office for National Statistics, 2017a). The majority of young people of this age are living in families. **Chart 3.1** shows that in 2017 the majority (62%) of 10-19 year olds were living with their married parents. An additional 9% were living with cohabiting parents, and 23% were with lone parents. However, 6% live in other situations, including halls of residence (2%) or in their own newly constructed families (1% living as part of a cohabiting couple). The remaining 3% labelled 'none of these' were living in local authority care, hospitals, prisons, or as lodgers, in house shares or with other family members such as siblings or cousins.

Chart 3.1: Living circumstances of young people in the UK aged 10-19, 2017



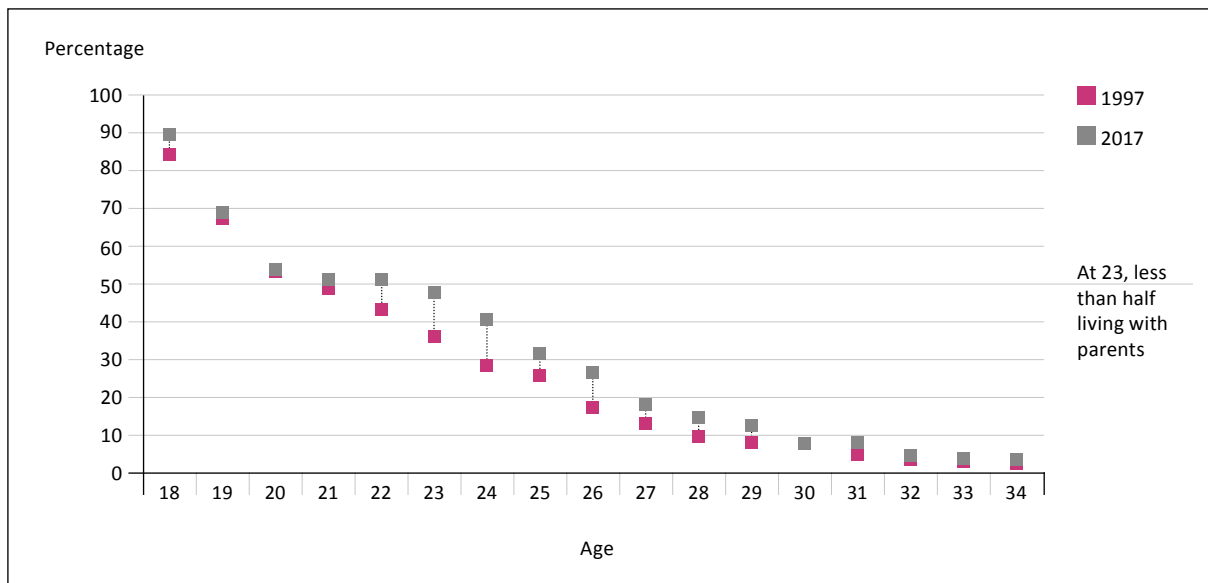
Source: Office for National Statistics, 2017 Labour Force Survey (LFS) > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

\* Only people whose parents live in the UK are included

\*\* Could be living as a lodger, in houseshare, or with other family members (not parents or children) eg. siblings

Increasing proportions of young people continue to live at home with their families into their early 20s. **Chart 3.2** shows that the numbers of young people aged 18 to 34 living at home with their parents in the UK has increased over the last two decades. In 2017 the age by which 50% or more of the age group had left home was 23 years, compared to 21 years in 2007. Overall, young men are more likely still to be at home at any age. Of men aged 18-34, 37% lived with their parents compared with 26% of women in the same age group. Living with parents is now the most common living arrangement for young adults (Office for National Statistics, 2019a).

**Chart 3.2:** Percentage of young people aged 18-34 living with parents by age, UK, 1997 and 2017



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2017 Young adults living with their parents > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

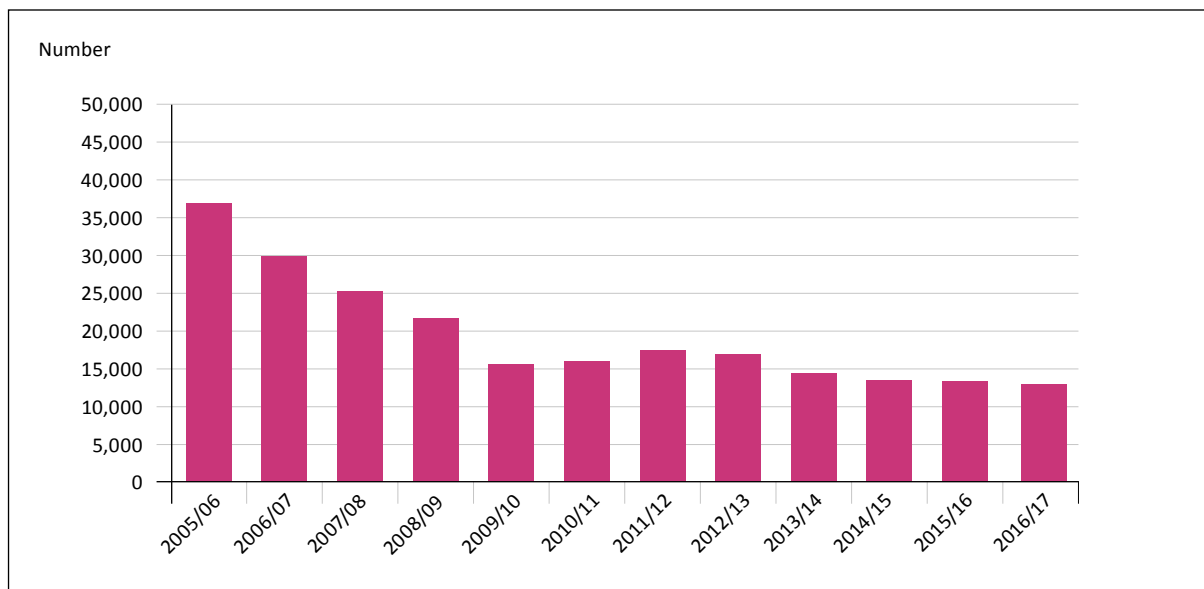
Family can mean a wide range of arrangements, including couples with children, lone parents, intergenerational co-living, and unrelated adults living together. Although there was a rise in families headed by lone parents in the 1990s, there has not been an increase in the last two decades, with the proportion of children under 18 living with a lone parent remaining at around a quarter (Office for National Statistics, 2016). There has been a general decrease in divorce rates since 2003. Alongside the trends for marriage and divorce, it is important to note that the numbers of cohabiting couples continues to rise, and there are no data on how many young people experience the separation of cohabiting parents.

A small proportion of young people establish their own family units before they are 25. The average age of moving in with a partner is between 26 and 27, and in 2017 the average age for women to have their first child was 30 (Office for National Statistics, 2019a). In 2016, of all babies born in England and Wales, 17.9% had mothers who were 24 or under (Office for National Statistics, 2017b).

Significant numbers of young people are living with families who are registered homeless, and a small number are registered homeless in their own right. The UK government reported that there were 82,310 households in temporary accommodation in England at the end of June 2018, which is a 71% increase since December 2010 (House of Commons Library, 2019). These included 123,630 children. They will have been accommodated in a mix of self-contained premises and bed and breakfast accommodation. There are significant variations in approaches to homelessness in the countries of the UK, but figures for Scotland show that 14,075 children were in households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in 2017-18 (Shelter Scotland, 2018).

**Chart 3.3** shows that the official statistics on the numbers of 16-24 year olds who were accepted as homeless in their own right has decreased in recent years. In total 12,940 households were accepted as homeless in 2016/17 where the main applicant was aged 16-24 compared with 36,770 in 2005/06.

**Chart 3.3:** Households accepted as homeless where main applicant was aged 16-24 in England, 2005/6 to 2016/17



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018) Homeless Statistics > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

However this is likely to be an underestimate of youth homelessness, as there are significant numbers who stay temporarily with friends or sleep rough. Centrepoin’s Youth Homelessness Databank provides data on young people accepted as statutorily homeless, and also on those to whom councils offered prevention and relief but did not house. According to these data there were 13,495 young people aged 16-24 who were accepted as statutorily homeless in England, Northern Ireland and Wales in 2018, with a further 28,438 who received prevention and relief. Not all local councils provided data so these will be underestimates. No comparable data were available for

Scotland. Local authority rough sleeping statistics for England have shown that on a single night in the autumn of 2018 there were 296 rough sleepers of 25 or under (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019).

In some cases responsibility for young people's welfare is taken from families, and given instead to the local authority. The local authority may then arrange for the young person to live somewhere other than at home. Reasons for being 'looked after' in this way most commonly include neglect or other kinds of abuse, family dysfunction, acute family stress, parental illness or disability, and absent parenting. **Chart 3.4** shows the numbers of looked after children in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on 31 March 2018, including all under 18s. The figures for looked after children are based on a snapshot over a census week and do not reflect the numbers in care during an entire year. Looked after children are a subset of a broader group of 'children in need' and we present more detail on this in the section on vulnerable groups in Chapter 9.

**Chart 3.4:** Total looked after children in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on 31 March 2018

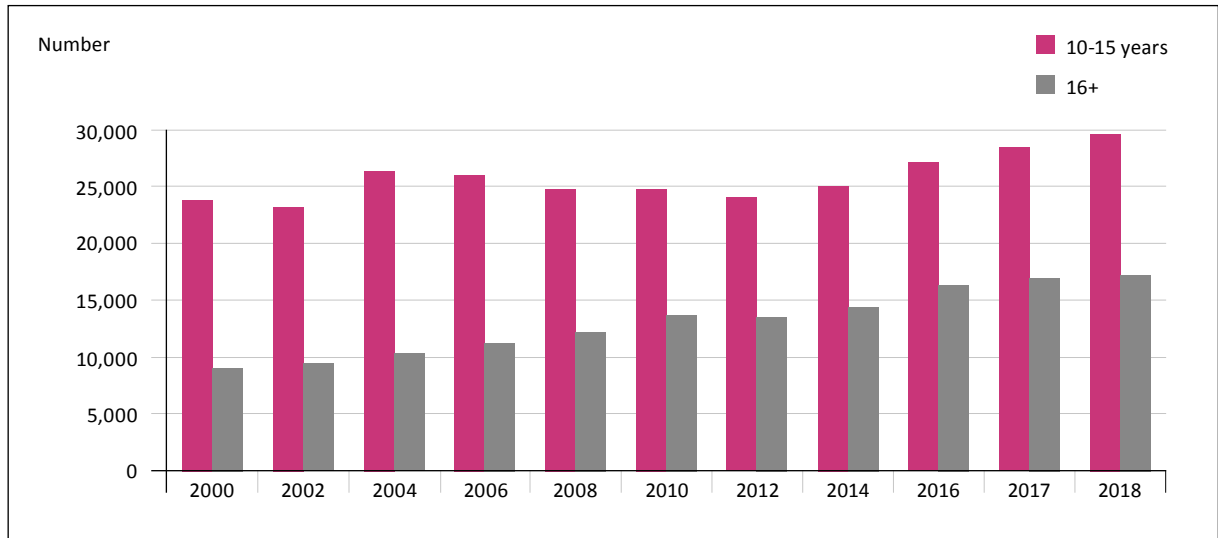
Country	Number
England	75420
Scotland	14897
Wales	6405
Northern Ireland	2325

**Sources:** Department for Education (2018) Children looked after in England (including adoptions and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2016 and earlier releases. Government of Scotland 2018 Children's social work statistics Scotland 2016-2017, Part of Statistics, Children and Families. StatsWales 2018 Children looked after at 31 March 2018 by local authority, gender and age Information and Analysis Directorate 2016/2017 Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

A significant proportion of children who are looked after by the Local Authority are teenagers and the proportion of older children in care has risen over the past four years. In England in 2018, 29,710 young people aged 10-15 and 17,330 young people aged 16 and over were in the looked after category at the time of the census. Overall 62% of looked after children are aged 10 or above in England (Department for Education, 2018b).

There had been a steady rise in the numbers of children in care in the 1990s. **Chart 3.5** shows that there have been recent increases both in the numbers of 10-15 year olds and those aged 16+ in recent years.

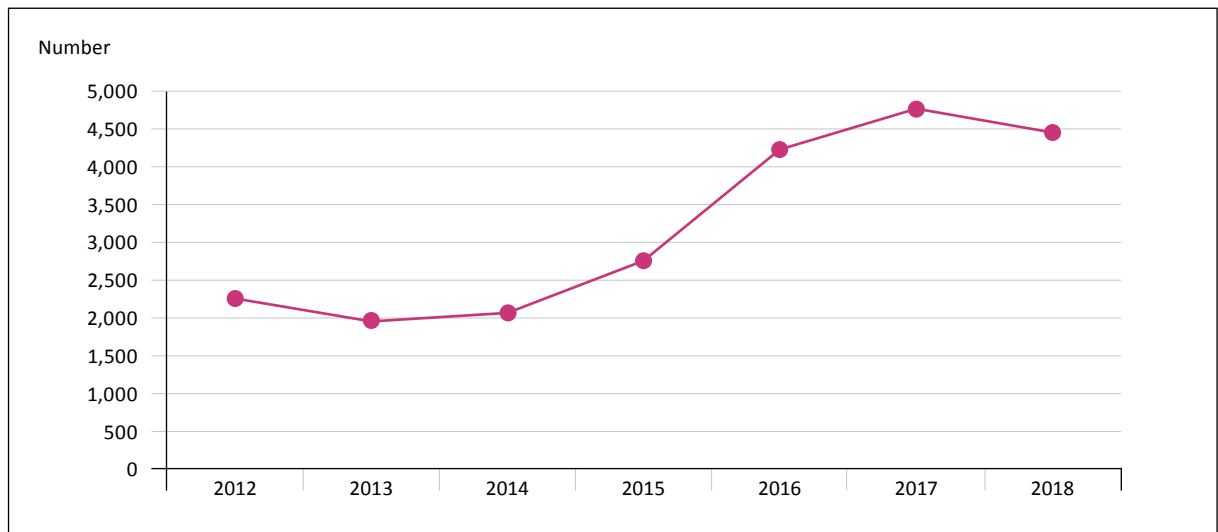
**Chart 3.5:** Looked after children in England age 10-15 years and 16+, 2000-2018



Source: Department of Education. Children looked after in England including adoption: 2017 to 2018 > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

Asylum seekers are another group potentially made vulnerable by their living circumstances. **Chart 3.6** illustrates the rise in unaccompanied asylum seeking children up to age 18 in England between 2014 and 2017, and a fall since then. In 2018 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (up to 18 years) represented 6% of the total looked after child population in England.

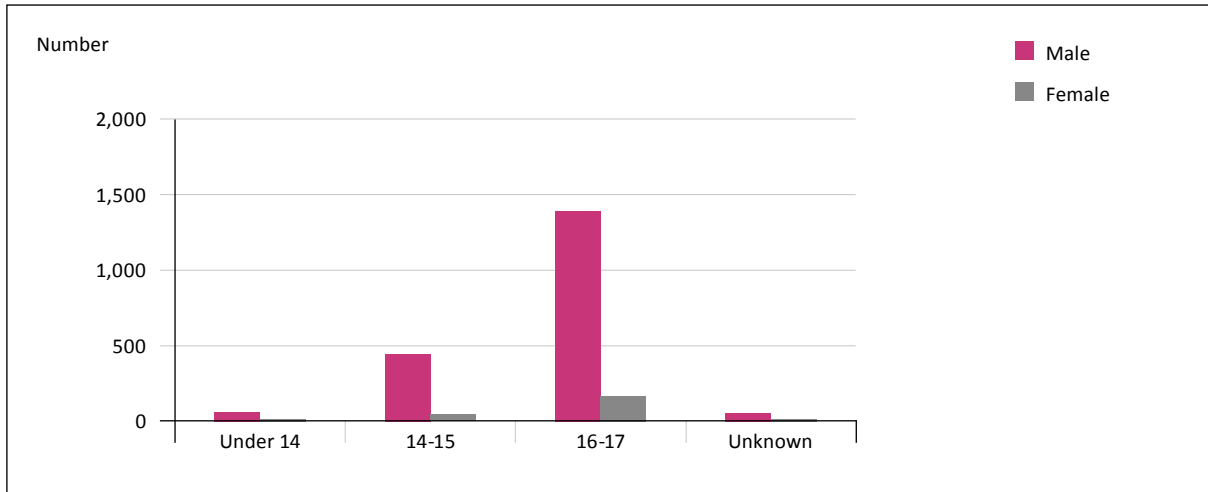
**Chart 3.6:** Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (up to 18 years) in England 2012–2018



Source: Department for Education (2018) Children looked after in England (including adoptions and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2018 and earlier releases > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

The majority of asylum seeking children are young men aged 16-17, as **Chart 3.7** demonstrates. In 2017 there were 1,390 young men and 171 young women of this age seeking asylum.

**Chart 3.7:** Unaccompanied asylum seeking children under 18, applications received by age and gender, UK, 2017

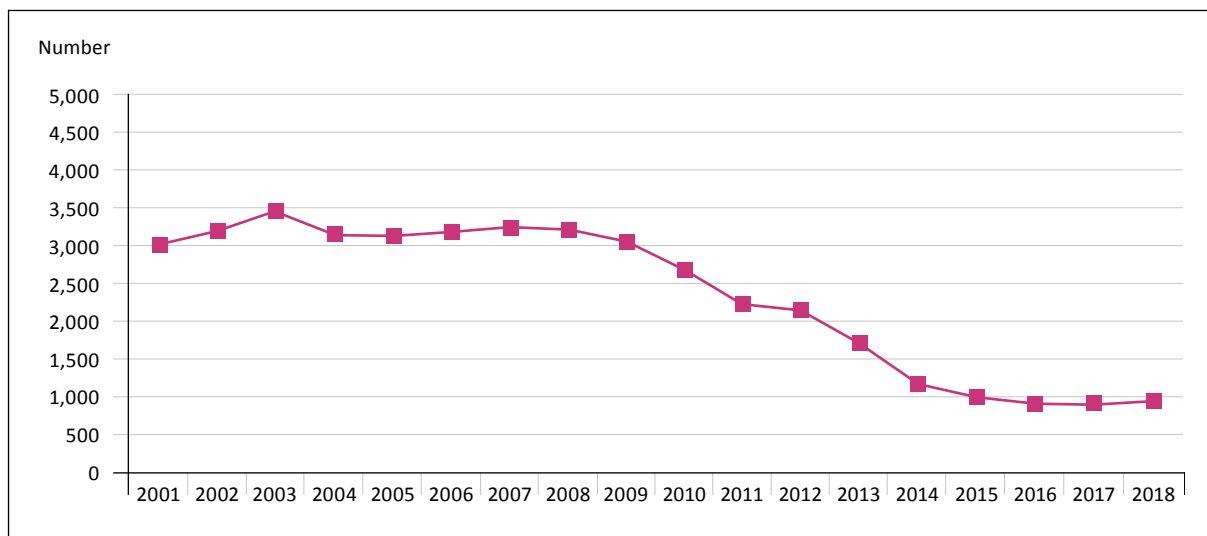


Source: Home Office (2018) Immigration Statistics – Asylum > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

A small group of children under 18 are held in secure accommodation, either on welfare grounds or as a result of being detained by the youth justice system. The number of children accommodated in secure children's homes was 204 in England and Wales on 31 March 2018, essentially the same as the previous year (203) (Department for Education, 2018a). There are a further 90 places in secure children's homes in Scotland (Gough, 2016), and Northern Ireland has just one children's home that is registered to provide secure accommodation.

**Chart 3.8** illustrates that the numbers in youth custody (11-18 years) in the prison estate in England and Wales rose in the early 2000s, reaching a peak of 3235 in 2007, but they have recently been at lower levels, with 940 young people under 18 in custody in April 2018. Again this is a snapshot of the situation during one month. As the average custodial sentence served by young people is much less than one year, many more young people will pass through custody over the course of a year. However, the general trend for lower custody numbers for this age group is to be welcomed.

**Chart 3.8:** Secure estate custody population (under 18) in England and Wales, April 2000-April 2018



Source: Ministry of Justice and Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. Youth Custody Report 2018 > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

Larger numbers of 18-24 year olds are also in the prison estate. In the middle of 2018, for example, there were 13,870 young people in this age range in custody (Prison Reform Trust, 2018). Many young people in custody are very vulnerable: there were ten deaths due to self-harm among young people aged 18-24 in prisons and youth offender institutions in 2017 in England and Wales (Inquest, 2019).

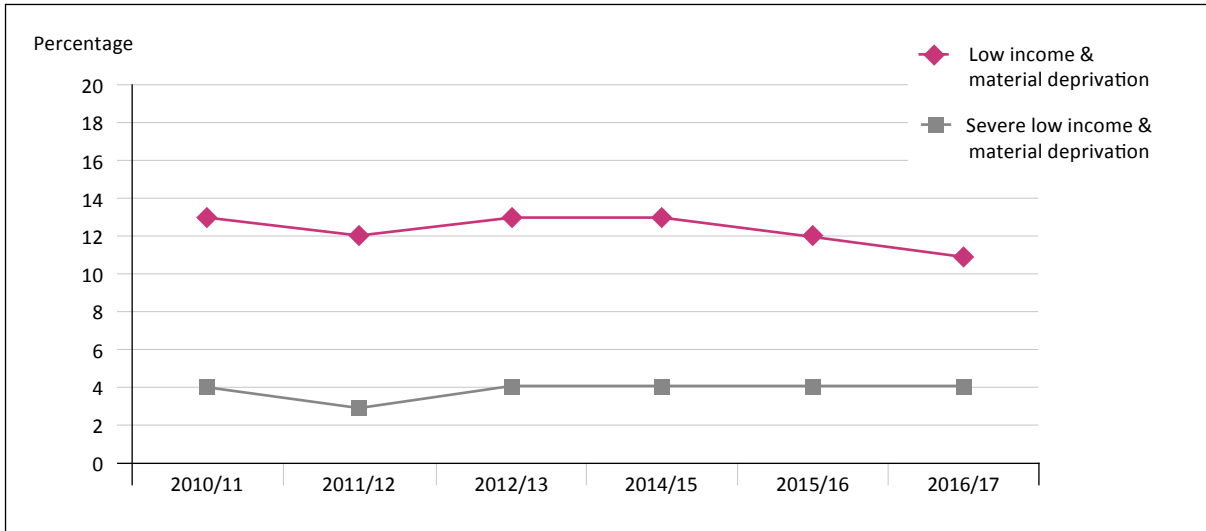
### Family income and indicators of poverty and hardship

The root causes of health inequality are bound up with economic factors such as low income.

**Chart 3.9** shows that, according to the Department for Work and Pension’s measure of income inequality, approximately one in ten of those aged 0-19 years in the UK in 2016/17 were living in households classified as low income and materially deprived. This measure reflects a lack of resources to meet daily needs. Four per cent were living in an even more constrained situation of severe low income and material deprivation, where household income had dropped below 50% of median income. The proportion in low income and materially deprived households has not changed substantially in recent years.



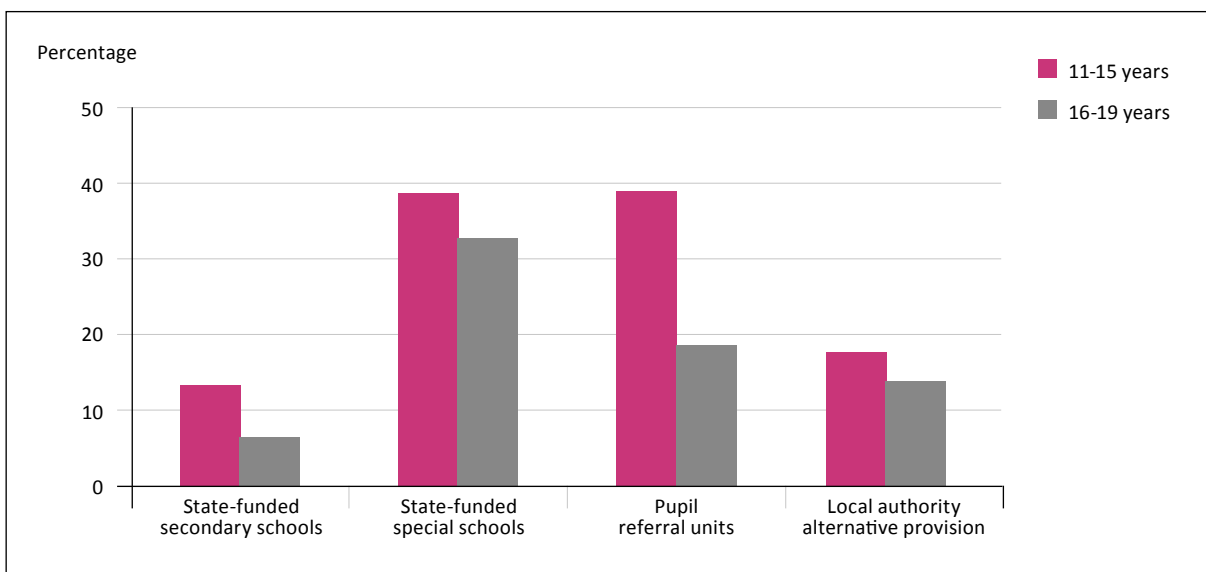
**Chart 3.9:** Children and young people (0-19) falling below thresholds of low income and material deprivation in the UK, 2010/11 to 2016/17



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2018). Households below average income 2010-2017 > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

Another measure of income inequality is provided by receipt of free school meals. Overall, 12.4% of secondary school children age 11-16 are eligible and claiming free school meals (Department for Education, 2018g). **Chart 3.10** compares the rates for different kinds of educational provision. The average for state funded secondary schools is 13.3%. In state funded special secondary schools, the rate is a third of those in the 11-19 age group. Rates are also high in Pupil Referral Units, particularly for 11-15 year olds.

**Chart 3.10** School pupils in England claiming free school meals 2018



Source: Department for Education (2018) School, pupils and their characteristics > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

## Education and training

Education and health are closely linked in a number of different ways. There are links between higher levels of educational achievement and better health outcomes. There are also facets of the education system that can contribute to poor emotional health, such as examination pressures. In addition, schools are an important site for health education, which becomes statutory in English secondary schools in 2020.

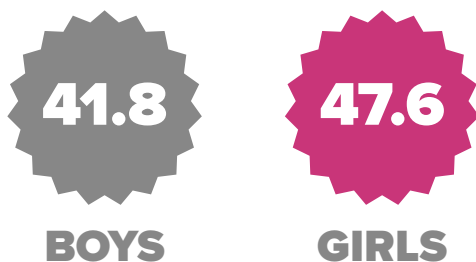
The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provides regular international comparisons of age 15 academic attainment for 36 high-income countries through the Programme for Student Assessment (PISA). The 2015 data showed that the UK's 15 year olds scored slightly above the average for reading (498 compared to 493) and maths (492 compared to 490), and better than average in science (509 compared to 493) (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019).

Almost all young people in the UK start on a programme of study at 14-16 (sometimes referred to as Key Stage 4) that is expected to lead to qualifications. For the majority of those in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, these will be from the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) series. In Scotland pupils sit 'Standard grade' or 'Intermediate' exams at the age of 15-16, as part of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). This covers eight subjects including English and maths, a language and sciences.

A new secondary school accountability system with different overall summary measures ('headline' measures) was implemented in England in 2016. In addition, from 2017 the GCSE grading system changed. In England, GCSEs are now graded 9–1, rather than A\*–G, with Grade 9 the highest grade, set above the current A\*.

As part of these GCSE scoring revisions, a new summary measure has been introduced in England called 'Attainment 8', which reports the average achievement of pupils in up to eight qualifications including English, maths, and further options from a specified list. Pupils' GCSE results are allocated to four 'buckets' that together combine to give their overall Attainment 8 score. Both maths and English have a 'bucket' of their own and are double scored. The third bucket consists of three approved 'English Baccalaureate' subjects, and the last bucket consists of three 'other' subjects. The overall maximum Attainment 8 score is 90 (18+18+27+27).

### Average Attainment 8 score by gender, England, 2017



Source: Department for Education (2018)

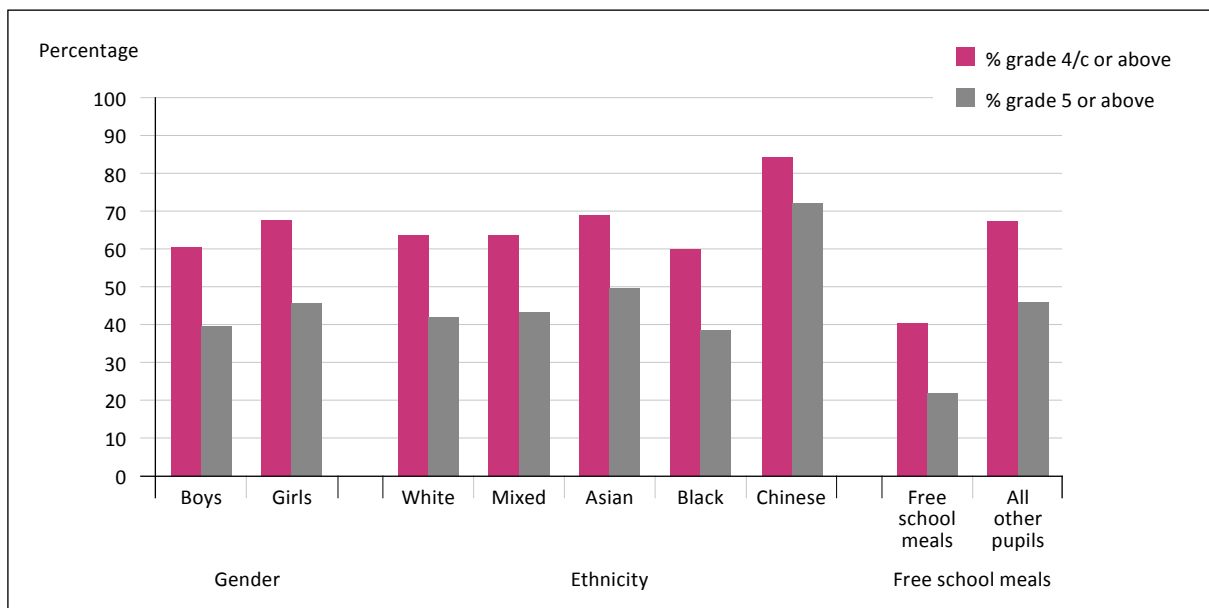
In 2017 the average Attainment 8 score for all pupils in England was 44.6. As in previous measurement systems girls do better than boys, achieving an average Attainment 8 score of 47.6, compared with 41.8 for boys (Department for Education, 2018c).

As well as gender, attainment tends to vary by other factors, including ethnic group and measures of poverty. One way of exploring variations is to look at the attainment of a key threshold that allows pupils to carry on with more education should they wish to. Before adoption of the Attainment 8 measure, a key educational outcome

measure was whether young people attained the equivalent of five GCSEs at grades A\*- C including English and maths. Although it is still possible to calculate this in some places in the UK, this is not the case in England. In addition, the old GCSE grade C is equivalent to both a grade 4 (low C) and grade 5 (high C). Both are used as a threshold for differing purposes or by different further and higher education institutions. For example, at the moment some sixth form colleges ask for 4s and other ask for 5s in their selection processes onto A levels.

Although it is not clear yet which will be the most widely used or meaningful threshold, whether or not young people achieve the English and maths components is still an important measure, as it is likely to be related to educational options at age 16-18 and beyond. **Chart 3.11** presents the proportion of young people in England achieving both grade 4 and 5 in English and maths, presented separately by gender, ethnicity and receipt of free school meals. Achievement varies by each of these characteristics. A greater proportion of girls than boys achieve higher scores. On average, young people from Asian and Chinese groups do better than other groups. Those on free school meals do least well of all these groupings.

**Chart 3.11:** Percentage of pupils achieving grade 4 or 5 or above in English and maths GCSEs, England 2016/17



Source: Department for Education (2018) GCSE and equivalent results: 2017 to 2018 (provisional) > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

Due to differences in the qualifications across the UK, the Department for Education advises that direct comparisons between countries should not be made, and cannot be taken as a measure of comparative pupil achievement or system quality (Department for Education, 2018c). With this proviso in mind, **Chart 3.12** presents the academic attainment of the populations of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland at the end of Year 11/Age 16 or the equivalent educational stage.

**Chart 3.12:** Attainment by age 16 or equivalent educational stage across the UK, 2016/17

<b>England</b>	In England <b>66%</b> of pupils (typically age 16) achieved grade 4 (C) or above at GCSE in English & Maths
<b>Wales</b>	In Wales <b>54.6%</b> of pupils (typically age 16) achieved 5 or more GCSE or equivalent passes at grade A*-C inc English & maths
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	In Northern Ireland, <b>70.3%</b> of pupils (typically age 16) achieved 5 or more GCSE or equivalent passes at grade A*-C incl English & maths
<b>Scotland</b>	In Scotland, <b>61.7%</b> of school leavers (between 16 and 18) obtained 1 or more qualifications at SCQF Level 6 or better

Source: Department for Education (2018) Education and Training Statistics for the UK 2018 > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

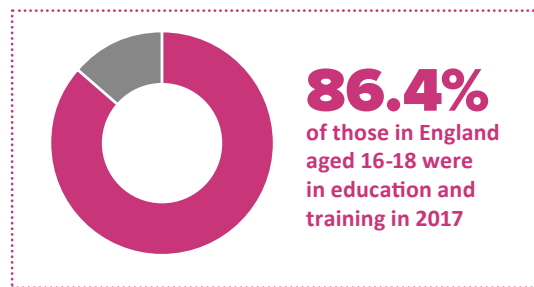
Being excluded from school clearly impacts on educational attainment and acts as a marker for a range of problems (Timpson, 2019). Over the years, successive governments have made strenuous attempts to keep down the numbers permanently excluded. **Chart 3.13** shows the trends since 2000/1, reflecting a slight rise to the middle of the 2000s and then a fall. However the latest available figures show that the numbers are rising again. By 2016/17 they had increased by 64% since 2012/13, although they are not yet back at the levels of the early 2000s. The most common age for exclusion is age 14, and many more boys than girls are excluded across the whole of secondary school (Department for Education, 2018f).

**Chart 3.13:** Permanent exclusions from secondary schools in England, 2000/1 to 2016/17



Source: Department for Education (2018) Permanent and fixed period exclusions by type of school > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

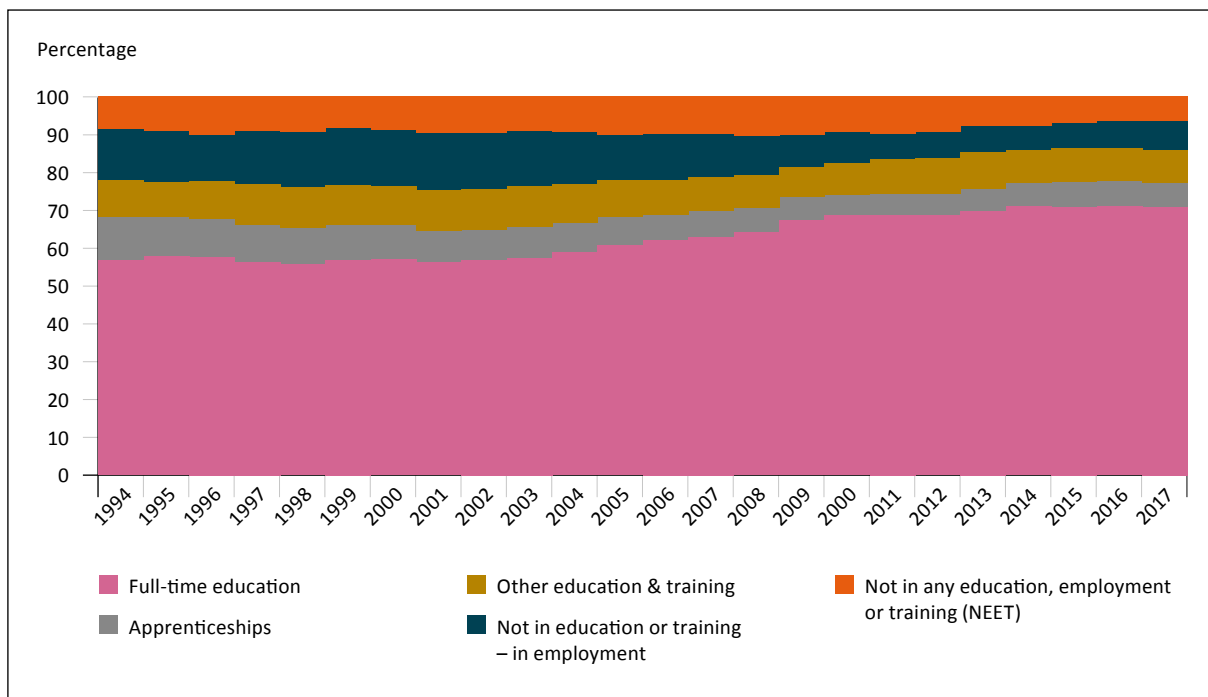
After formal examinations at age 16, there is now a legal requirement on young people in England and Wales to continue with some form of education or training until they are 18. In Scotland the school leaving age remains at 16 although most stay on. A number of choices are open to 16 year olds in the UK at this age, depending on their examination achievements. The majority remain in full time education, usually pursuing academic qualifications, but others move into flexible pathways including various combinations of education, training and employment. By the end of 2017, nearly nine out of ten of young people aged 16-18 in England were staying on in education and training. Overall, only 7.7% were in employment at the end of 2017 (Department for Education, 2018d).



Source: Department for Education, June 2018

**Chart 3.14** shows the time trends for participation in education and training at age 16-18 in England, from 1994 until 2017, demonstrating the rise in the proportion of young people in full time education.

**Chart 3.14:** Trends in participation in education and training age 16-18, England 1994-2017



Source: Department for Education (2018) Participation in Education, Training & Employment by 16-18 year olds in England: End 2017  
[> DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

Scottish statistics show where their school leavers (16-18) are a year after leaving. In 2017/18, 94.4% of Scottish school leavers were in a positive follow-up destination, consisting of education, employment or training. Two thirds of young people were staying on until the year they turned 18 (Scottish Education Statistics, 2019).

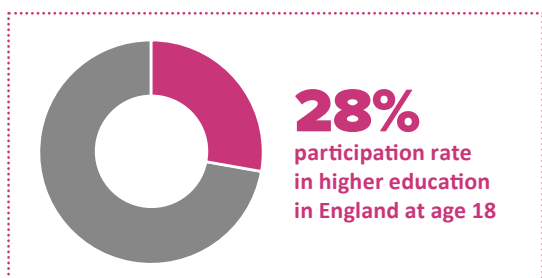
Again, comparing qualifications achieved at age 18 across the UK is not possible given the different systems, but **Chart 3.15** presents a summary of attainment at this age by country for information.

**Chart 3.15:** Attainment by age 18 or equivalent educational stage across the UK, 2016/17

<b>England</b>	In 2016/17, <b>56.9%</b> of the population aged 17 in England achieved at least two substantial level 3 passes
<b>Wales</b>	In 2016/17, <b>27.4%</b> of the population aged 17 in Wales passed two or more A levels (or equivalent)
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	In 2016/17, <b>52.2%</b> of the 17-year-old population in Northern Ireland passed two or more A levels (or equivalent) at grades A*-E
<b>Scotland</b>	In 2016/17, <b>61.2%</b> of school leavers in Scotland obtained one or more qualifications at SCQF level 6 or better

Source: Department for Education (2018) Education and Training Statistics for the UK 2018 > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

After age 18 approximately one third of the age group now progress on to higher education, particularly to study a degree at university. In England 2016/17 the initial participation rate in higher education for 18 year olds was 28% (Department for Education, 2018e). This does not include those who take a gap year.

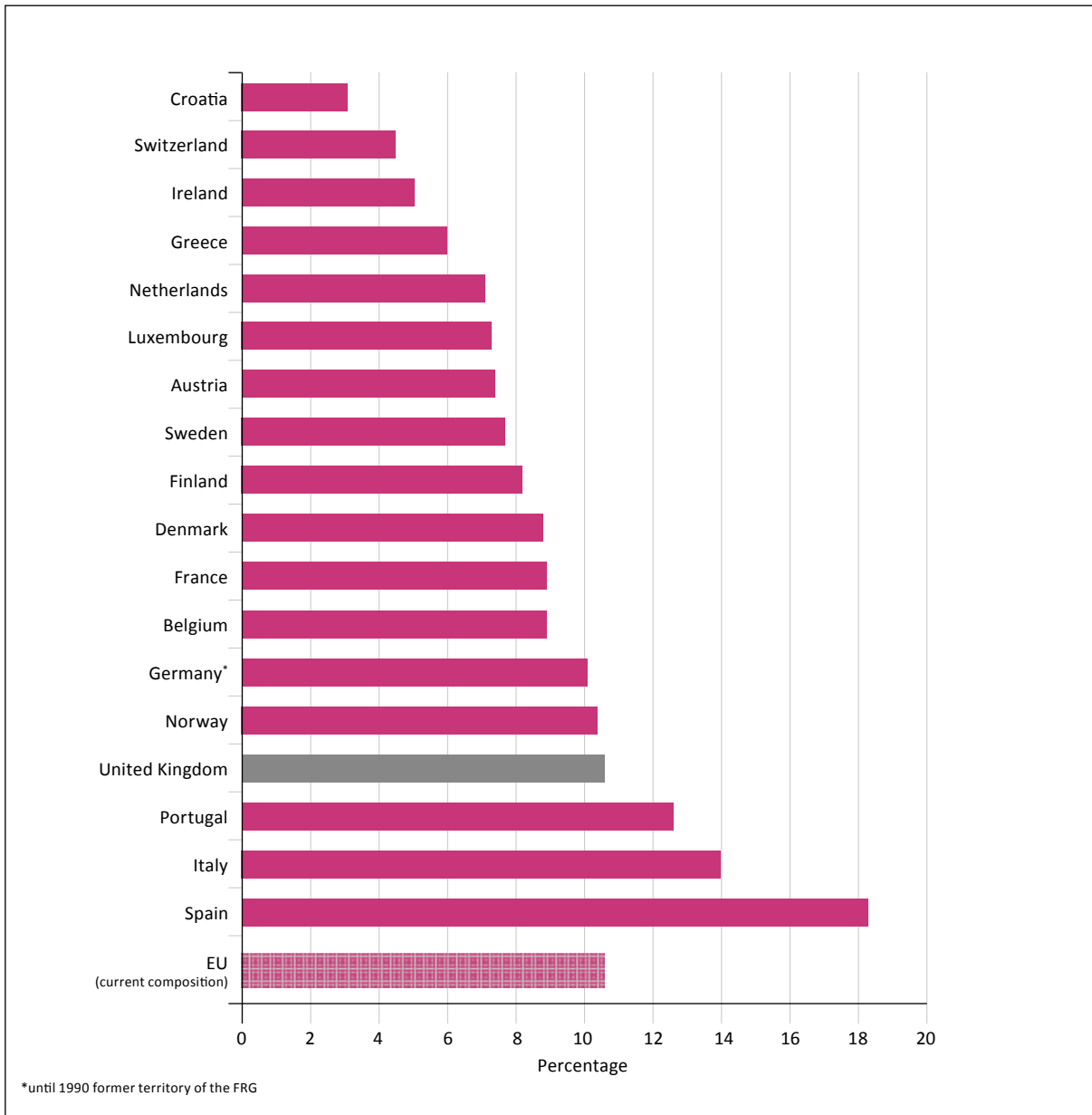


Source: Department for Education 2018e

The number of full time undergraduate students in higher education (mostly universities) in the UK has increased over the last few years, and stood at 2,343,095 in 2017/18, an increase of 1% on the previous year. The numbers of full time students aged 20 and under have increased year on year since 2013/14, but the number of part time students has fallen (Higher Education Statistics Authority, 2019).

Clearly not everyone goes on to further or higher education or training. Evidence from Eurostat makes it possible to compare rates of early leavers from education and training across the European Union (EU). Early leavers are those who have, at most, lower secondary education, and who are not in further education or training. **Chart 3.16** shows that the UK has the fourth highest percentage (10.6%) of early leavers aged 18-24 in the EU by this definition.

Chart 3.16: Early leavers from education and training in the EU: % population 18-24 years with, at most, lower secondary education and not in further education or training, 2017



Source: Eurostat > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

## Youth employment

Recent official statistics suggest that the majority of 16-24 year olds are working (3.87 million), with over half a million formally unemployed, and 2.6 million economically inactive (including full time students) (Office for National Statistics, 2019b).

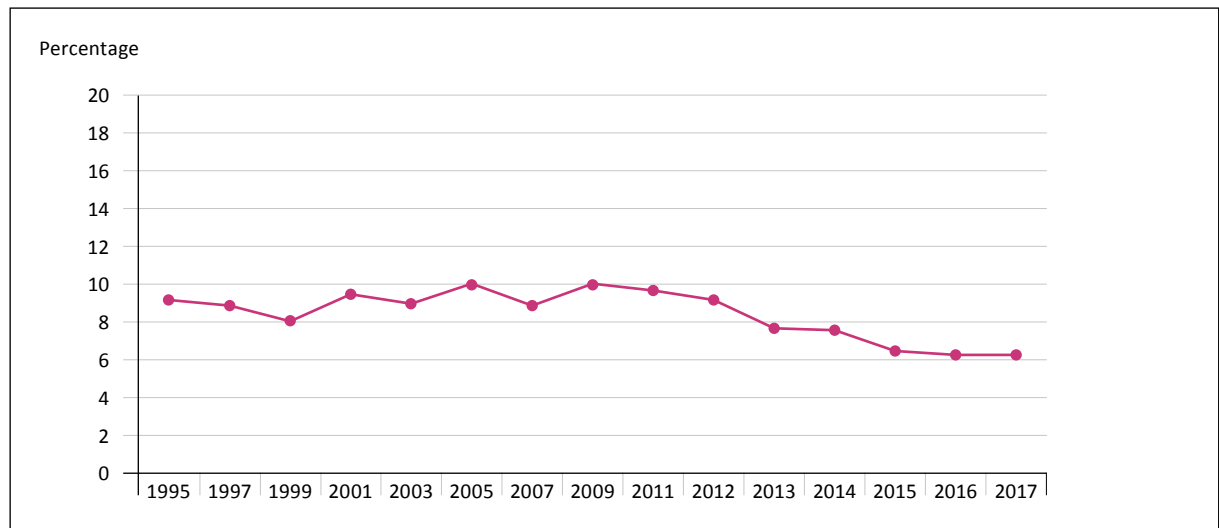
For those young people who are in employment, there is a concern that some may be disadvantaged by working practices such as lower rates of the minimum wage and zero hour contracts. For those on the minimum wage, current hourly rates are £4.35 for those under 18, £6.15 for those 18-20, £7.70 for those 21-24 and £8.21 for everyone over 25. Young people on zero hour contracts receive a lower weekly pay compared to those who are not and work fewer hours on average. The prevalence of such contracts is higher among young people than any other age group. Over a third (36%) of people on zero hours contracts are aged 16-24 (Office for National Statistics, 2018).



Source: Office for National Statistics (2018)

**Chart 3.17** portrays the percentage of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the UK from 1995 to 2017. The rate of being NEET among 16-18 year olds has slowly been decreasing since 2009 in the UK and stood at 6.3% in 2017.

Chart 3.17: 16-18 year olds not in education, training or employment (NEET) in England, 1995-2017



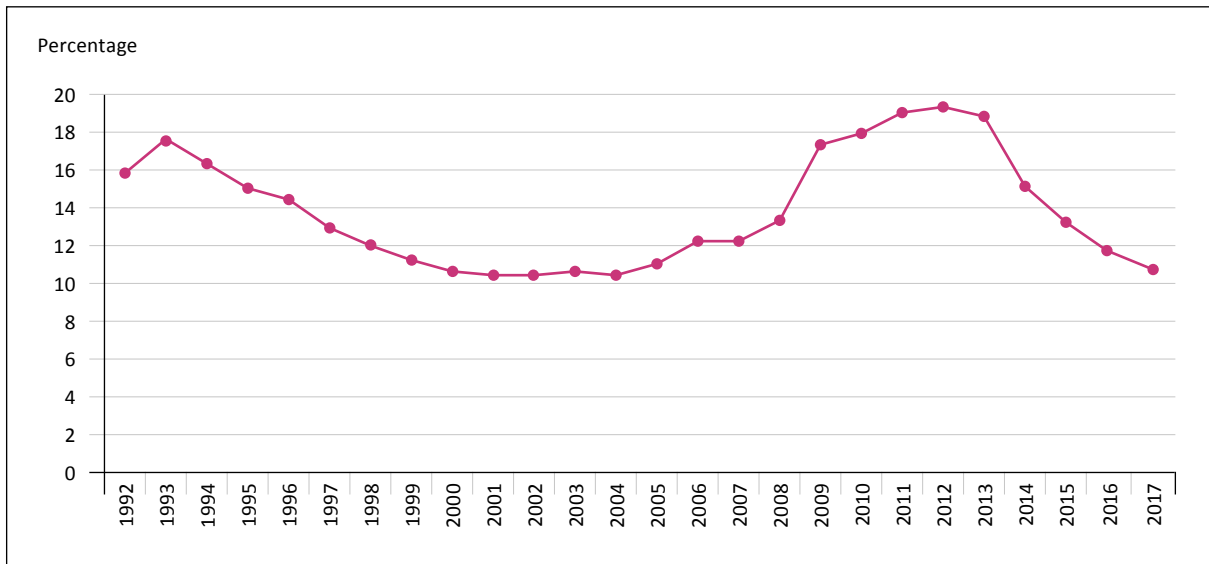
Source: Department for Education (2018). Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 year olds in England: End 2017 > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)



Welsh statistics report a 2017 NEET rate of 9.5% for 16-18 year olds (Welsh Government, 2019). Other UK countries present the data in various ways. Scotland now publishes the Annual Participation Measure relating to the 15-19 cohort. This showed that in 2018 3.4% of this age group were not participating in education or training, and 4.7% had an unconfirmed status (Skills Development Scotland, 2018). The rate of NEET for 19-24 year olds is generally higher: 13.8% in 2017 in England, for example (Office for National Statistics, 2019c).

**Chart 3.18** demonstrates that the official unemployment rate amongst 18-24 year olds in the UK has been decreasing since 2012. Data from April-June 2017 show an unemployment rate of 10.7%, down from 19.3% at its peak in 2012.

**Chart 3.18:** Unemployment rate for young people aged 18-24 in the UK 1992-2017



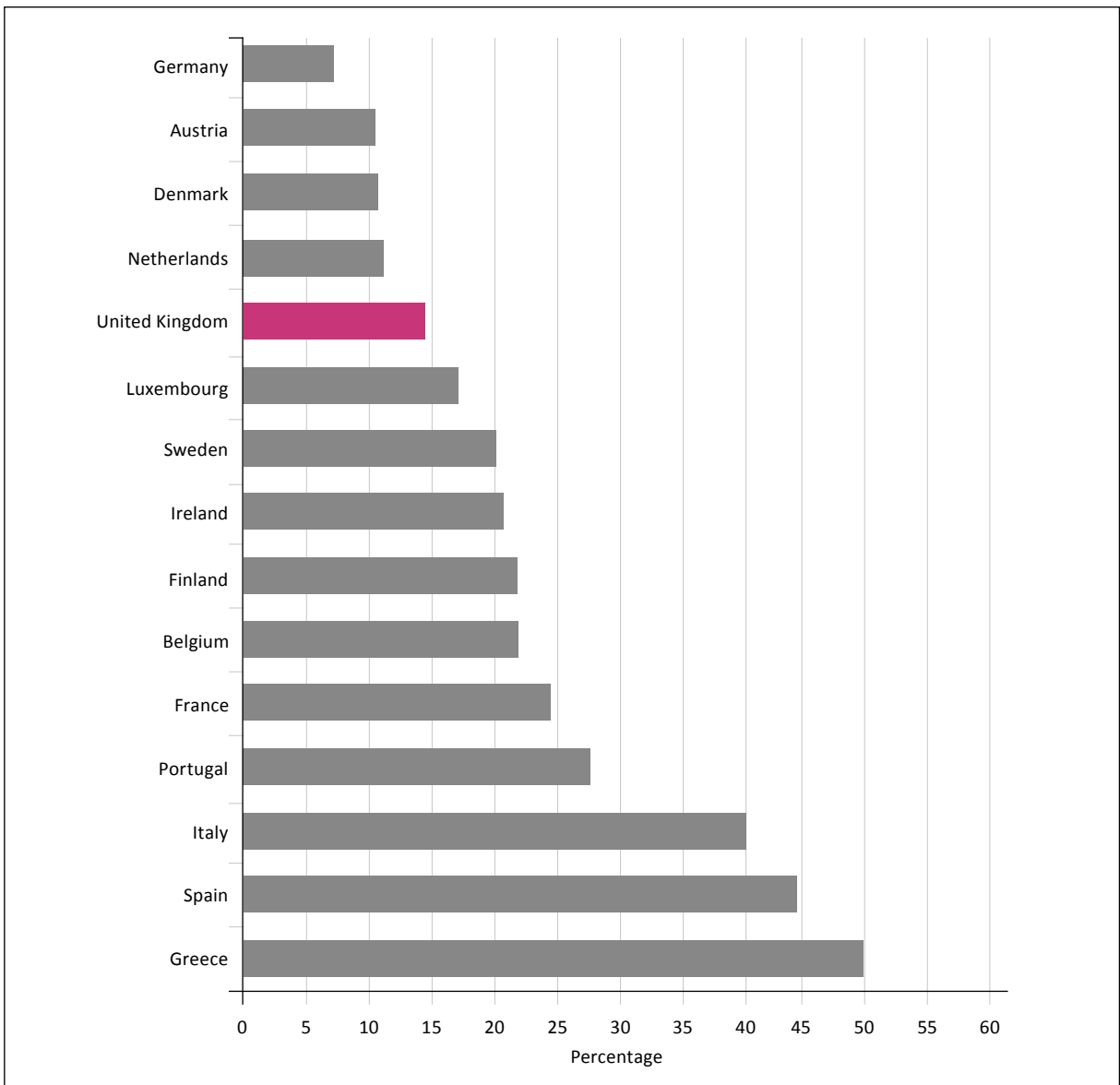
Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey 2019 > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

Eurostat data enables us to compare youth unemployment amongst 15-24 year olds across the EU. **Chart 3.19** shows that in 2015 the UK had the fifth lowest unemployment rate amongst 15-24 year olds among the European Countries included in the comparison, with rate of 14.6% in this age group.

As Youth Employment UK has recently pointed out, official statistics provide only a partial picture of the labour market experiences of young adults. Unemployment statistics do not, for example, include details of the number of young people who are unemployed and not claiming benefits (Youth Employment UK, 2018).

Recent analyses by Impetus UK and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research have demonstrated that disadvantaged young people are twice as likely to not be in employment, education or training, as 26% of disadvantaged young people were NEET, compared to 13% of their better-off peers (Impetus UK, 2019).

**Chart 3.19:** Percentage of young people age 15-24 unemployed, OECD comparisons, 2015



Source: <https://data.oecd.org/youthinac/youth-not-in-employment-education-or-training-neet.htm> > [DOWNLOAD DATA](#)

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