

What happened to the disadvantage gap in education in 2020?

In 2020, summer exams were cancelled due to the disruption caused by the pandemic. Instead, the highest of a student's grades predicted by an algorithm or assessed by their teachers was used to inform final grade outcomes. Under this approach, the grades awarded in 2020 were much higher than previous years.

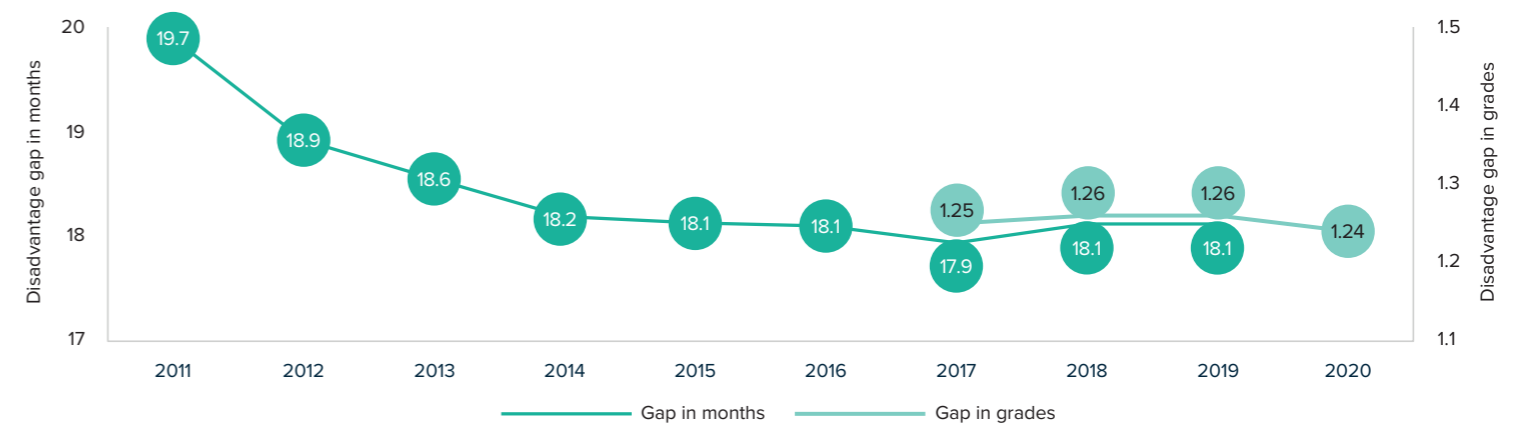
What is the disadvantage gap?

The disadvantage gap is the gap in grades awarded between disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students. A student is classified as disadvantaged if they claimed free school meals at any point during the past six years.

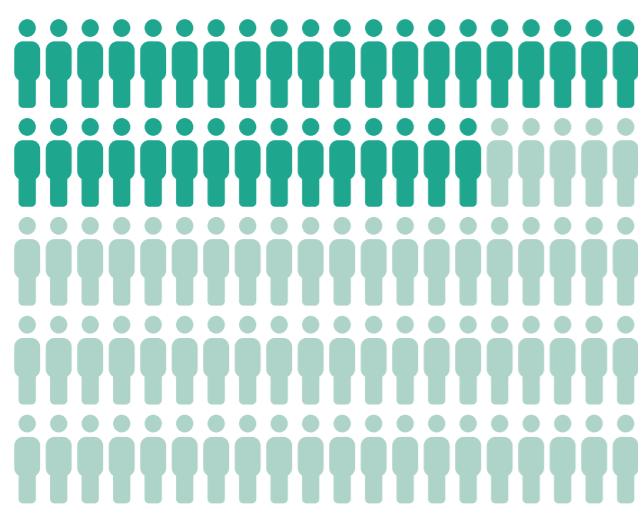
The 2020 disadvantage gaps reflect differences in awarded grades, and not the underlying learning gap.

The GCSE disadvantage gap narrowed until 2017 but progress has since stalled

The GCSE disadvantage gap across English and maths was 1.2 grades in 2020 - marking little change since 2017.

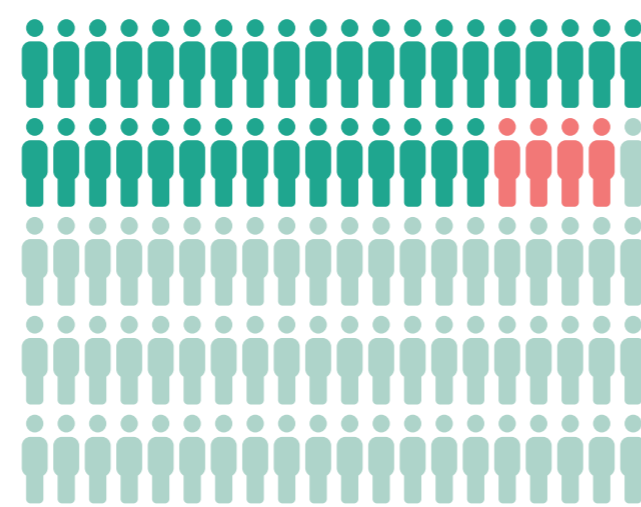


The proportion of disadvantaged pupils with a high persistence of poverty is increasing



35%

Proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently disadvantaged in 2017

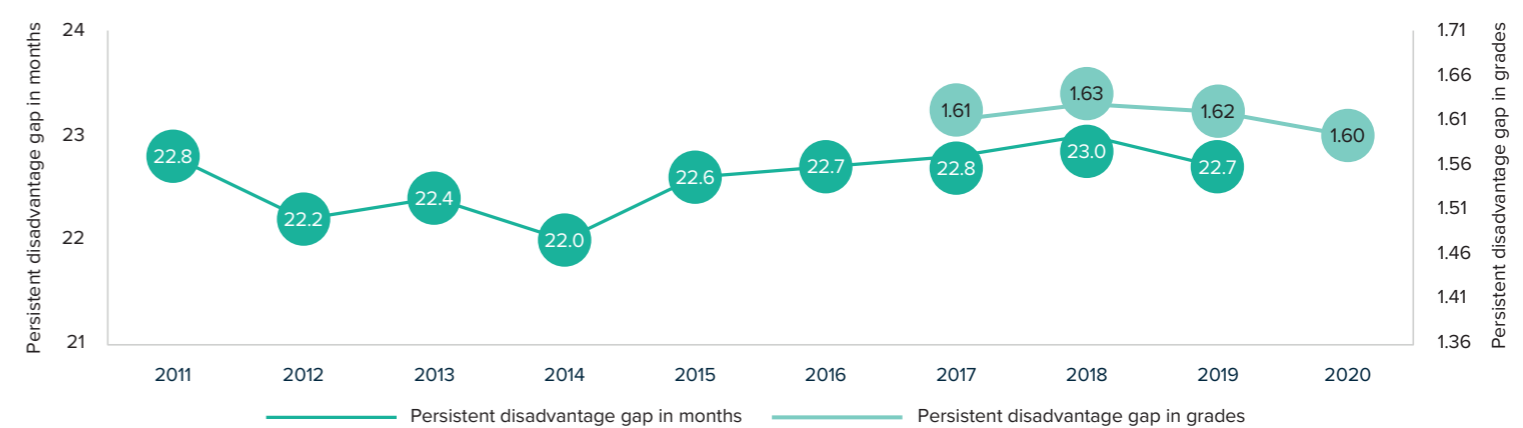


39%

Proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently disadvantaged in 2020

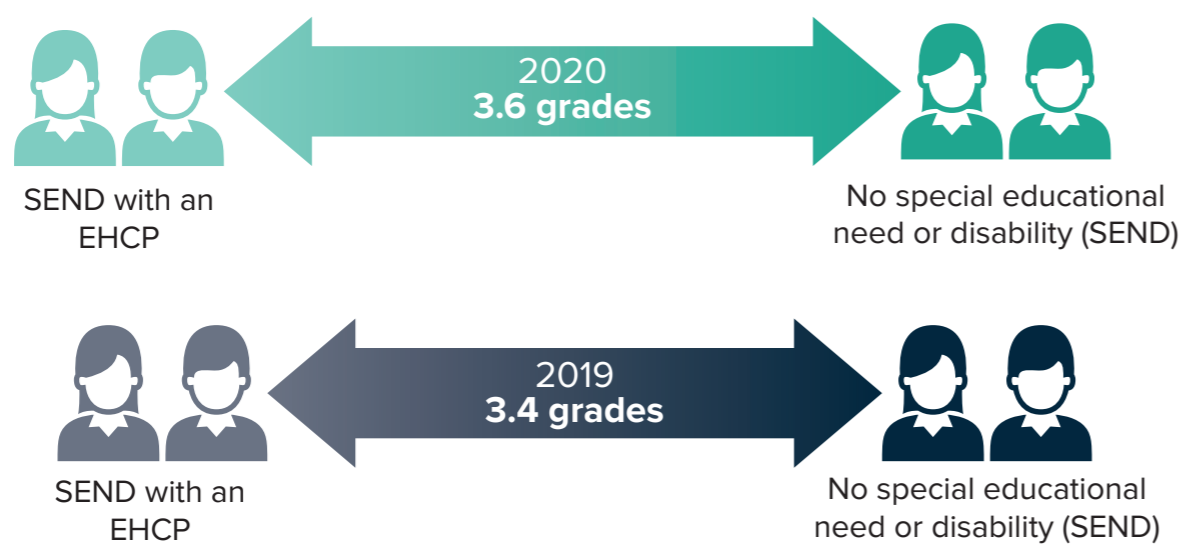
There has been no progress in closing the GCSE gap for persistently disadvantaged pupils since 2011

Disadvantaged pupils with higher persistence of poverty have larger gaps - and among these pupils, this gap is virtually unchanged over the last decade.



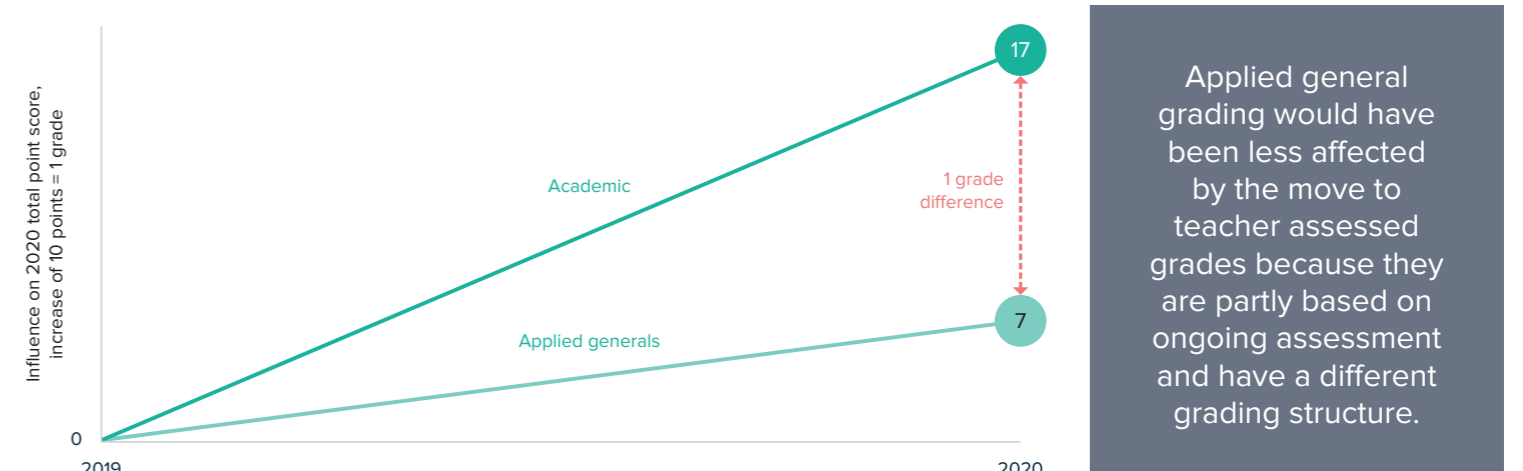
Not all pupils shared equally in the GCSE grade increases that occurred under teacher assessments in 2020

Pupils with special educational needs who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) have historically one of the largest gaps of all - and in 2020, this widened further to 3.6 grades relative to their peers without SEND.



Applied General students lost out to A level students in 2020

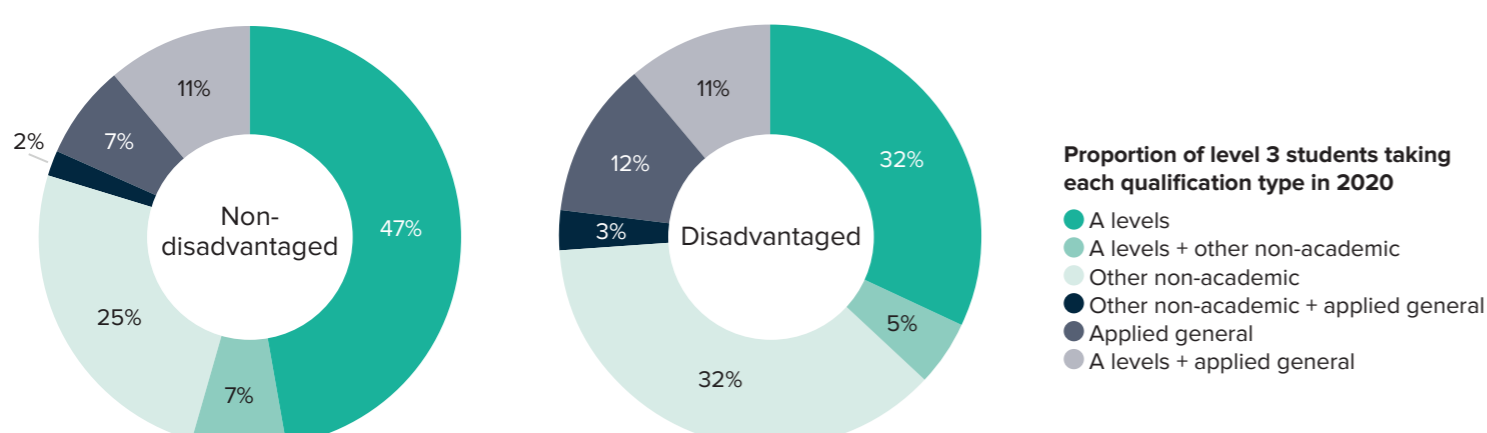
Compared to similar students in 2019, in 2020 applied general students saw an average increase to their grades of 7 points and A level students saw an increase of 17 points. This means that the applied general students' results increased by one grade less than their A level peers over their best three qualifications.



Applied general grading would have been less affected by the move to teacher assessed grades because they are partly based on ongoing assessment and have a different grading structure.

Disadvantaged students were less likely to enter A levels than their non-disadvantaged peers

Nearly 68% of disadvantaged level 3 students at the end of 16-19 study entered at least one non-academic qualification in 2020, compared with only 53% of non-disadvantaged level 3 students.



The measured disadvantage grade gap for students at the end of 16-19 study widened in 2020

Although the disadvantage gap showed slight signs of reducing over recent years, it widened significantly in 2020. This is likely due to the fact that disadvantaged students are less likely to take A levels, and these qualifications had larger grade increases than their non-academic alternatives.

