

## Coventry residents by qualification level

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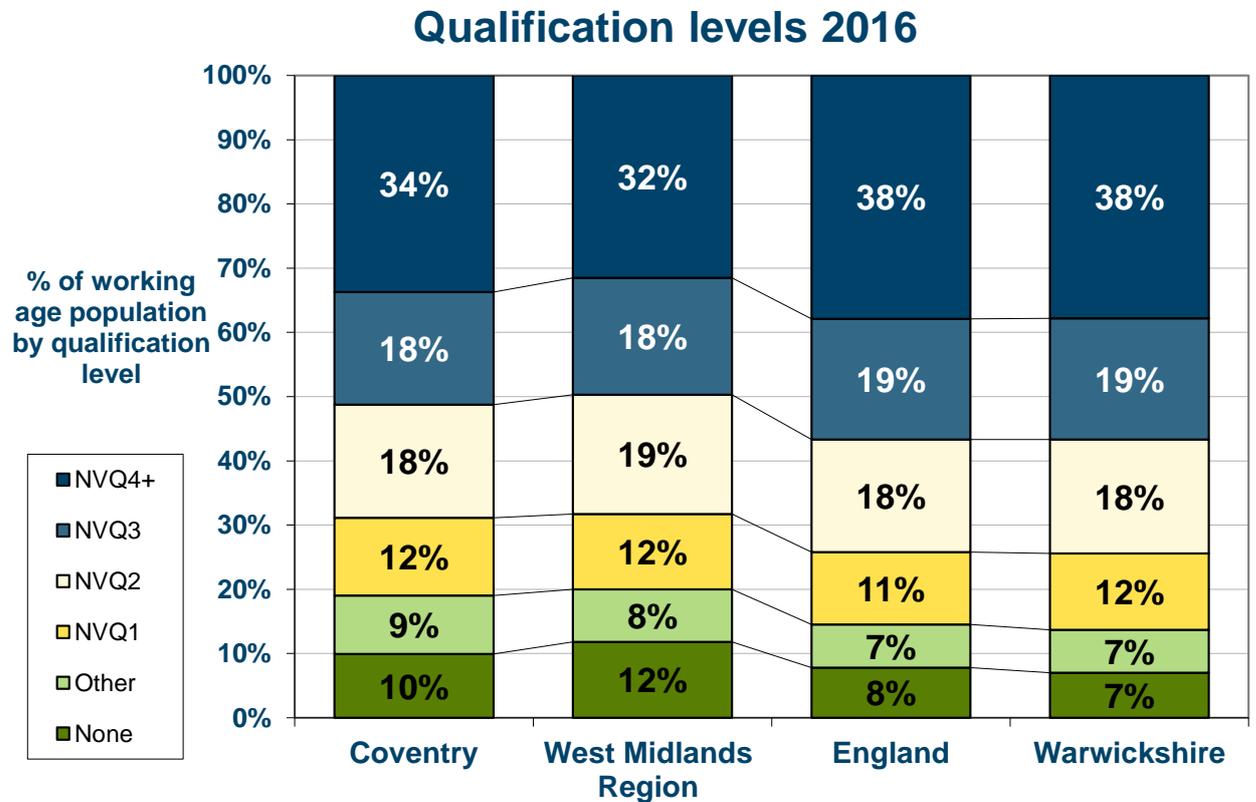
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## Executive Summary

- There was a reduction in the number of Coventry working age residents who have no formal qualifications between 2015 and 2016. This has been on a downward trend overall since 2004 when data was first collected.
- Despite recent improvements the % of working age residents of Coventry who have no formal qualifications remains higher than the national average, an estimated 10% in Coventry compared to 8% across England overall.
- Coventry residents aged 50-64 are those least likely to hold any formal qualifications – an estimated 15% amongst this age group have no formal qualifications.
- The proportion of Coventry's working age residents who are highly qualified, those with qualifications equivalent to NVQ level 4 or higher, has been on an increasing trend in recent years.
- Despite recent improvements the % of Coventry working age residents who are qualified to a level equivalent to NVQ level 4 or higher remains lower than the national average. An estimated 34% of Coventry residents are highly qualified compared to 38% across England overall.
- The 'graduate gain' Coventry benefits from as a result of being home to two growing local universities is one of the reasons behind the trend of increasing numbers of higher qualified residents.
- Coventry residents aged 40 and over are significantly less likely than their peers elsewhere in England to hold higher qualifications. This could be because the jobs in Coventry in the past when the city was a manufacturing centre were less likely to require degrees.
- The greatest increase in the numbers with higher qualifications has been amongst residents in their 30s. It may be that, additional to the local work to help current residents to gain qualifications, migration into Coventry has brought higher skilled people in the city from this age group.

## Overview

Figure 1: Coventry's working age (16-64 years) residents by level of highest qualification with comparisons



Source: ONS Annual Population Survey Jan 2016 - Dec 2016, Nomis

The chart in figure 1 illustrates the estimates taken from the 2016 Annual Population Survey (Office for National Statistics) of how Coventry's working age (aged 16-64 years) population can be broken down by the level of their highest qualification. These estimates are subject to a margin of error so care must be taken in using them to compare areas or analyse change over time; the analysis presented in this report assists with this interpretation.

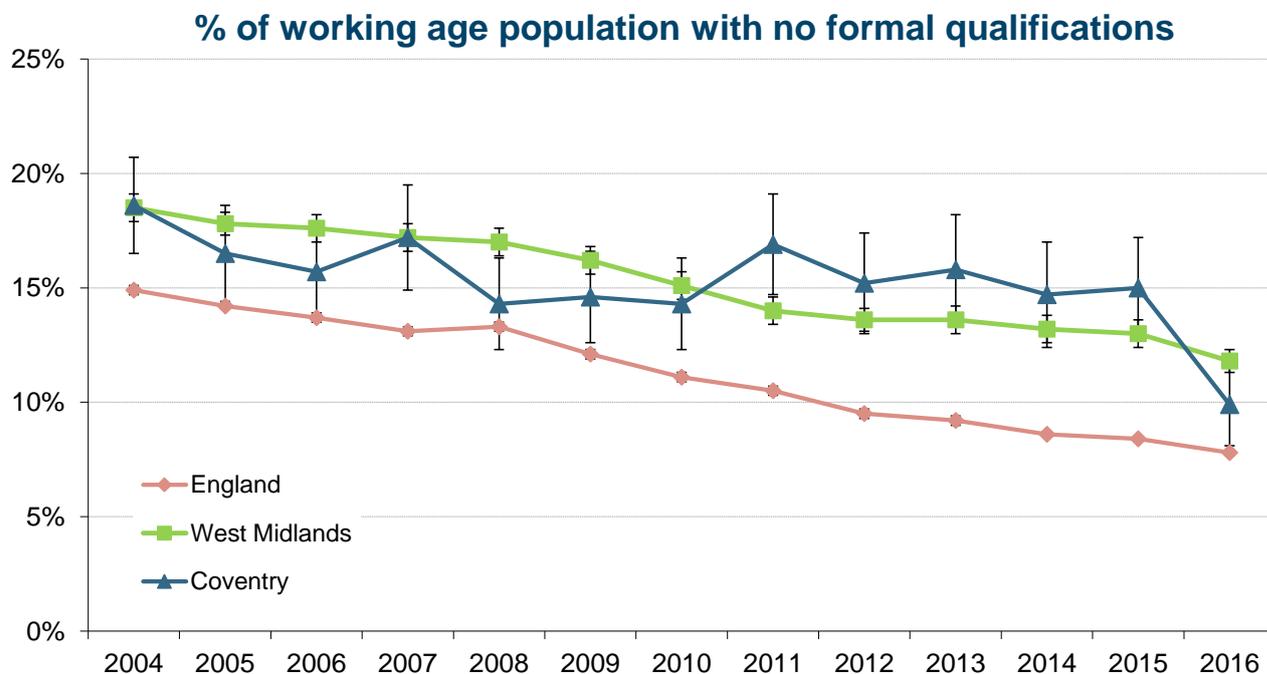
Comparing the qualification levels of Coventry residents to those elsewhere shows that the proportion whose highest qualification is at level 1, 2 or 3 is similar to the national and regional figures. It's notable that Coventry has a higher proportion of residents with no formal qualifications and a lower proportion with higher qualifications than the national average. The estimates *suggest* Coventry residents have higher qualification levels than the average for the West Midlands region, but these differences are not statistically significant.

## Summary:

- *No qualifications:* An estimated 22,600 working age Coventry residents have no formal qualifications, 10% of all working age residents.
- *Other qualifications:* The highest level of qualification held by an estimated 9% of Coventry's working age residents, 20,800 people, are categorised under 'other'; these are qualifications not classed in the NVQ level hierarchy which typically include vocational / work related qualifications or foreign qualifications.
- *NVQ level 1:* For 12%, an estimated 27,600 working age Coventry residents, the highest level of qualification held is equivalent to NVQ level 1 – amongst other qualifications this includes 1-4 GCSEs at any grade.
- *NVQ level 2:* 18% of working age Coventry residents, an estimated 40,300, hold qualifications to a level equivalent to NVQ level 2 – this includes 5+ GCSEs at grades A\*-C.
- *NVQ level 3:* For 18%, an estimated 39,300 working age Coventry residents, the highest level of qualification held is equivalent to NVQ level 3 – this includes having 2+ A-levels.
- *NVQ level 4+:* An estimated 76,800 Coventry residents are qualified to NVQ level 4 or higher, constituting about a third (34%) of all working age residents. NVQ level 4 covers qualifications at higher education level but below degree level, level 5 includes foundation degrees and level 6 includes first degrees.

## Coventry residents with no formal qualifications

Figure 2: Coventry's working age (16-64 years) residents with no formal qualifications by year; change over time with comparisons



Source: Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics

The chart in figure 2 shows the estimated proportion of Coventry's working age population who have no formal qualifications; these estimates have a margin of error associated so care is needed when interpreting whether there has been real change over time and when comparing Coventry's estimates to other places<sup>1</sup>.

The newly published 2016 estimate of the % with no formal qualifications allows us to see a clear picture that the proportion with no formal qualifications has reduced compared to 5 years ago. It is also clear that this has been the general trend since 2004. The 2016 estimate that 22,600 Coventry residents, 10% of the working age population have no formal qualifications, is notably lower than the previous year's estimate, we can conclude that there was an improvement between 2015 and 2016<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The vertical lines on each data point illustrate the 'confidence intervals' associated with each estimate – this can be thought of a margin of error resulting from the fact that this is measured using a sample survey, only a proportion of residents are questioned. We can be confident that the proportion with no formal qualifications across the whole of Coventry's population aged 16 – 64 is within this margin of error.

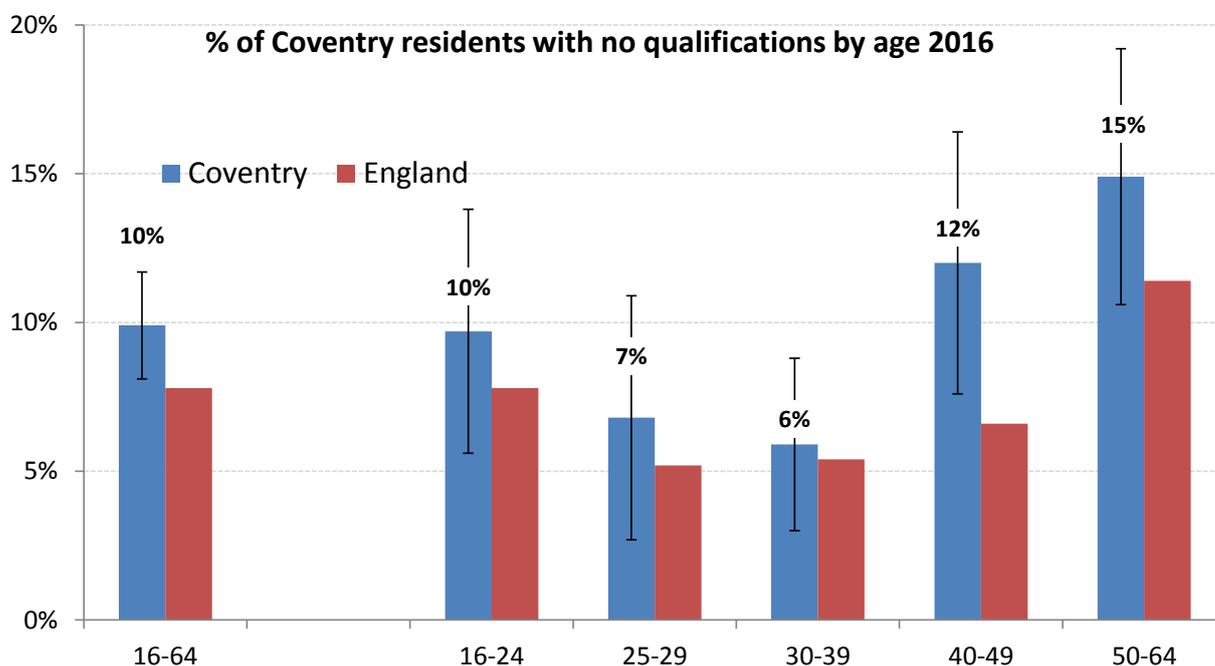
<sup>2</sup> We can see that the vertical bars around this estimate do not overlap with those from the previous year therefore there was an improvement between 2015 and 2016, the decrease in the % with no formal qualification was 'statistically significant'.

The estimated total number of residents with no formal qualifications has fluctuated around 30,000 for a number of years but it was now estimated to be 22,600 – this reduction has happened over a period when the total number of working age residents of Coventry has been increasing notably every year. It seems Coventry has been successful in getting current residents achieving formal qualifications and also attracting newcomers with qualifications.

The data shows that the working age population of the West Midlands region overall has seen a clear downward trend in the proportion with no qualifications, the Coventry rate has remained broadly the same as the whole West Midlands region. The rate across the whole of the country has also consistently improved - the proportion of Coventry residents without formal qualifications has remained higher than England overall for the whole period from 2004 to 2016.

### Coventry residents with no formal qualification by age group

Figure 3: Coventry’s working age (16-64 years) residents with no formal qualifications 2016; comparisons by age group



Coventry residents aged 50 – 64 are those least likely to hold any formal qualifications – an estimated 15% amongst this age group have no formal qualifications compared to 10% across all working age residents. We should keep in mind that the margins of error associated with these estimates are quite wide so this can only be used as an indication.

This seems to be a 'cohort' or 'generational' effect with older generations in Coventry more likely to have left school early and perhaps less likely to need qualifications to get a local job. In more recent years there is more of an emphasis on ensuring people have qualifications, in this sense we can see formal qualifications as something different from on-the-job skills.

The fact that Coventry residents aged 50-64 are the most likely to have no formal qualifications means that it is likely that the proportion of Coventry's working age population *with* formal qualifications will increase over time as the people currently in this age group retire.

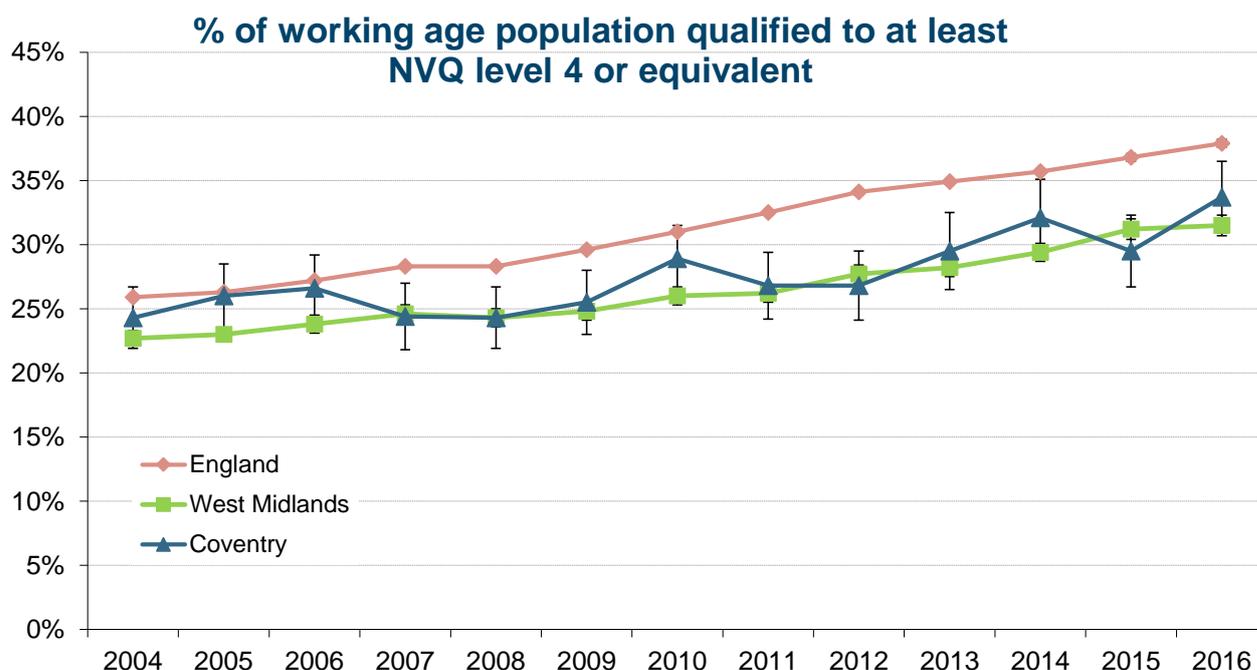
The data gives an indication that in all age groups in Coventry there are more without formal qualifications when comparing to their peers of the same age across England overall. This difference is most stark with residents age 40 and older – this could be because in the past there was less need for *formal* qualifications in Coventry jobs with its industrial economy, a large portion of employment was in manufacturing industries.

The significant decrease in the % without formal qualifications across Coventry **in 2016** was due to improvements across all age groups. The general trend of improvement over a number of years has been particularly down to improvements in the rates amongst older residents aged 50-64. This comes at least partly from a cohort effect; older residents retire every year to be replaced by those currently in younger age groups that are more likely to have formal qualifications.

## Coventry residents with qualifications equivalent to NVQ level 4 or higher

These are the more highly qualified residents, this is equivalent to a higher education.

Figure 4: Coventry's working age (16-64 years) residents with qualifications equivalent to NVQ level 4 or higher by year; change over time with comparisons



Source: Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics

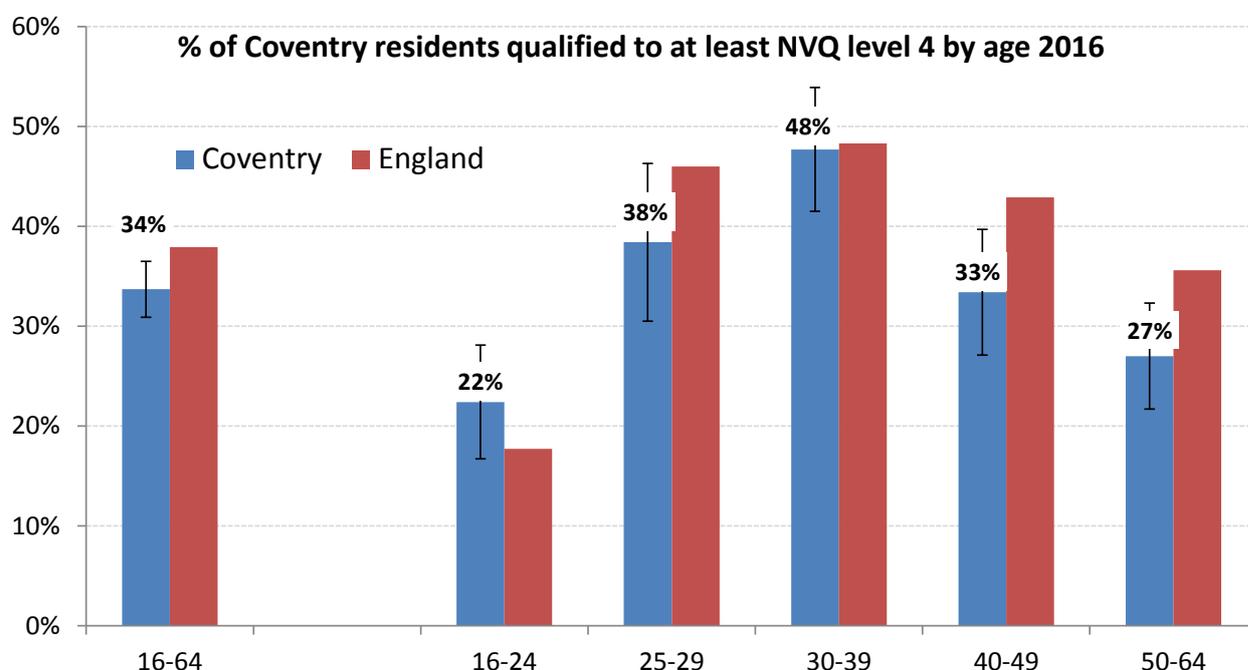
In 2016 the estimated proportion of working age residents of Coventry who are qualified to at least level 4 increased to 34% of working age residents, an estimated 76,800 residents; about a third of local residents aged 16-64 are highly qualified. These estimates are subject to a margin of error and as such the estimates have fluctuated year to year and short term trends have been difficult to discern. However, it is clear that the proportion qualified to this level has been on a generally increasing trend since 2004, similar to regional and national trends. The number of residents qualified to this level has been increasing notably, from an estimated 45,300 in 2004 to an estimated 76,800 in 2016.

Comparing Coventry to elsewhere, there have been improving trends across the West Midlands region and across England overall; Coventry has remained at a similar level to the regional average but consistently lower than England.

We know from a recent [report by the Centre for Cities](#) that, like many other cities that are home to universities, Coventry experiences a ‘graduate gain’ with more recent graduates coming to work in the city<sup>3</sup> than there are young people from Coventry who move elsewhere to go to university. This gain of recent graduates is one of the factors that has contributed to the increase in the proportion qualified to higher education level, particularly amongst young people; this will likely filter through to older age groups over time to some extent.

### Coventry residents with qualifications equivalent to NVQ level 4 or higher by age group

Figure 5: Coventry’s working age (16-64 years) residents with qualifications equivalent to NVQ level 4 or higher 2016; comparisons by age group



The estimates of those qualified to at least level 4 by age group in Coventry in figure 5 show that those aged 16-24 are least likely to be highly qualified, this is because most haven’t reached an age to complete higher education yet. Also residents aged 50 and over are less likely to have higher qualifications, this appears to be a generational effect as fewer people in this generation went to university compared to today’s young people. While this is also the case nationwide, it is notable that those aged 40 and over in Coventry are significantly less likely than their peers elsewhere in England to hold higher qualifications. This could be because the jobs in Coventry in the past when the

<sup>3</sup> Either those who study in Coventry and stay to work or those who move to work in Coventry after study.

city was a manufacturing centre were overall less likely to require degrees than jobs elsewhere in the country.

Improvements amongst 16-29s were particularly prominent in 2016 – this could be a reflection of the recent ‘graduate gain’ with the universities in Coventry growing in recent years. Over the long term the % of 50-64s who are highly qualified has been increasing, this is the ‘generation effect’ mentioned above. The greatest increase has been amongst residents in their 30s. It may be that, additional to the local work to help current residents to gain qualifications, migration into Coventry has brought higher skilled people in to the city from this age group.

# Insight

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